

Transitions



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

Transitions

From the Forms File	2
FYI - BEACON Online Part 2	2
Income/Expenses Report	3
From the Hotline	4
Access to Jobs	5
Family Cap	6
FYI - Calling the Policy Hotline-Please Don't Hang Up!!!	6
FYI - Learnfare Reminder	7
<i>The Online Update 030</i>	7
Changes in the TAFDC Unemployment Deprivation Factor	7
FYI - Using TAFDC or EAEDC Disability Determinations to Establish a Disability for Food Stamp Purposes	8
Medex Premium Rate Changes	8

From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

During March many of you participated in the Department's celebration of cultural diversity. Although March was particularly designated for this celebration, acknowledging cultural diversity and all that it implies is something that goes on throughout the year. In some ways, cultural diversity has become one of the catch phrases of our society. But cultural diversity is much more than a term. Recognizing cultural diversity acknowledges the differences among us. These differences run the gamut from language to race to religion to land of origin. They are a reflection of the uniqueness of each of us and also the sameness of each of us. Because as different as we may be, we share many things in common. One of the main things which we share is a desire for a mutual understanding of one another. This understanding is based on a respect and acknowledgment of the history, language and culture which each group has brought to this country. We, as a whole, have been enriched by these varied backgrounds and this enrichment continues with each new wave of immigrants.

Cultural diversity allows us to recognize and learn from one another's backgrounds and to respect and appreciate the cultural differences which do exist. These differences do not exist only in newer immigrants. Many families who have been here for generations maintain cultural traditions through language or holiday or religious celebrations. Continuing these traditions strengthens the culture we all share because it acknowledges our diversity while building a stronger common culture.

Continued on Page 3

From the Forms File

New Form

02-452-0300-05

IncExp-3 (3/2000)

Supervisor's Summary Sheet for Income/Expenses Report

TAO Supervisors use this form to record results of the cases on their workers' reviews of the Income/Expenses Report. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2000-2A for more information.

Revised Forms

02-451-0300-05

IncExp-2 (Rev. 3/2000)

Director's Summary Sheet for Income/Expenses Report

TAO Directors use this form to notify Regional Directors of the results of case reviews on the Income/Expenses Report. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2000-2A for more information.

02-610-0300-05

02-609-0300-05 (S)

FCWDN (Rev. 3/2000)

Notice of Denial of Family Cap Waiver

This revised notice will be sent to recipients when their written requests for a Family Cap waiver are denied. Refer to *The TAFDC Procedural Guide*, Chapter 6 for more information.

Revised Brochure

The following brochure is now available in the following languages.

DVU (Rev. 3/2000)

02-616-0200-05 (S) *Spanish*

02-650-0300-05 (P) *Portuguese*

02-651-0300-05 (R) *Russian*

02-652-0300-05 (V) *Vietnamese*

02-653-0300-05 (C) *Cambodian*

You and Your Children Deserve to be Safe

New Posters

09-370-0200-05

09-371-0200-05 (S)

Food Stamp Poster

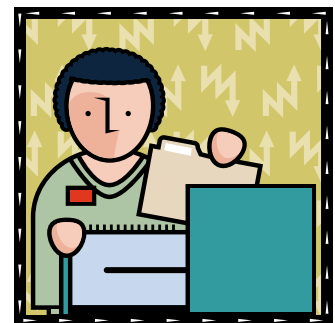
This poster must be displayed in TAO reception areas. It reminds recipients to ask their TAO Worker if they qualify for food stamp benefits.

FYI

BEACON Online Part 2

Additional topics have been added to BEACON Online Help in Policy Online. Online Help allows direct access to information transmitted by various BEACON *Bulletins*.

BEACON *Bulletins* will continue to be issued as a paper document but will no longer be added to Online. However, the topics and information transmitted by *Bulletins* will be added to Online Help.



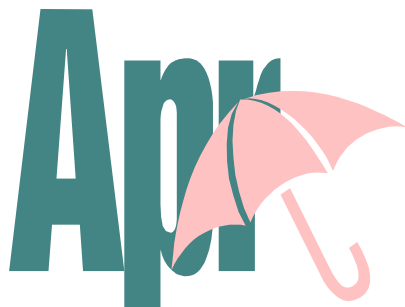
Random Moment Sampling (RMS)	9
September 1999 Clothing Allowance for TAFDC	9
TAFDC Casework Activity and Expanded ESP Participation	9

Income/Expenses Report

All Field Operations Memo 2000-2A

This Field Operations Memo:

- clarifies the procedures described in Field Operations Memo 2000-2, which is now obsolete.
- explains the changes in select criteria for the report; and
- issues a new form for Transitional Assistance Supervisors to compile the results of their workers' reviews of the cases on the report.



At the Department of Transitional Assistance, we have a very diverse workforce and the people we serve are equally diverse. I believe that our diversity as a workforce makes us better able to serve the people who come to us for help. Appreciating and understanding the differences among our colleagues improves our ability to do the same with those we serve. Personal history, either immediate or from past generations, allows us to encourage those who fear that apparent cultural differences may hold them back as they seek a better way to support their family.

I am proud to be part of an agency which so reflects the cultural diversity of this country. I think that the celebrations of that diversity which occurred in March are important. But more important is the day-to-day acknowledgment that we all contribute in a unique way to our jobs, our families and our country. Celebrate that diversity every day.

Sincerely,

Claire McIntire
Commissioner

*WORKING TOGETHER
WE CAN*



*MAKE
A DIFFERENCE!*

From the Hotline

- Q. Can teen parents be placed on vendor payments to ensure they pay their program fees to the TLPs?
- A. Yes, like any other household, a teen parent can be placed on vendor payments. Either the teen can request that she be placed on vendor payments, or if the teen parent fails to pay her program fees, at the request of the TLP, the teen parent may be put on vendor payments due to mismanagement. (Refer to 106 CMR 760.600 - 706.690.) In such cases, the TLP is not required to have a certificate of occupancy as they are licensed by the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS).
- Q. If a teen parent is sanctioned for poor attendance in school, she is no longer eligible for child care. To cure the sanction, she must attend school for two consecutive weeks; however, she can't attend school without child care. Can the teen parent obtain child care so that she can cure the sanction?
- A. Yes. As noted in *TAFDC Update No. 14* dated July 30, 1996, the Department will authorize child care in such circumstances so that the teen parent can cure her sanction.
- Q. Some TLPs have child care on site, but this doesn't mean that every child in the TLP receives child care on site. Can the worker authorize child care elsewhere in such circumstances?
- A. Yes. The teen specialist should speak with the TLP staff who will inform the teen specialist if an alternative child care provider is needed, so the teen parent specialist can complete the appropriate authorization.
- Q. Teen parents are often placed in TLPs outside their community of origin. If we know a long distance placement is about to happen, are there *special* steps that should be taken prior to having the teen parent picked up by the TLP?
- A. Regardless of the location of the TLP, the teen specialists must inform the teen parent that she must have clothing for herself and the child, and other important belongings. In cases involving great distances, however, other matters should be taken into consideration. For example, if there are immediate medical needs, the teen specialist should encourage the teen parent to have them addressed by the teen's medical provider prior to departure because TLPs are

not responsible for transporting the teen parent back to the community of origin for such appointments. In some cases this would involve round trips of four hours or more, and would present serious staffing problems for the TLP. Similarly, the teen specialist must direct the teen parent to take important documents, such as MassHealth cards, birth certificates, SSNs, etc. with her to the TLP.

In emergency placements, it is even more critical that teen parents bring essential belongings and provisions (clothes, diapers, etc.) if possible, so that the purchase of these items will not become the burden of the TLP.

- Q. Are teen parents who are placed in emergency beds required to attend school while undergoing an assessment?
- A. Not necessarily. If a teen parent is placed in a TLP in her community of origin, she may be able to continue in school. However, if she is placed elsewhere, it may not be practical to enroll her in a school in her new community, since emergency placements are intended to be short term. The TLP staff

Continued on Page 5

and the teen specialist should discuss such cases, and jointly make a decision whether the teen parent should be enrolled in school while placed in the emergency bed, or wait until the teen is permanently placed. The teen specialist must contact the TLP staff to obtain information about the plans for teen parents placed in emergency beds. Obviously, a teen parent who is not going to be enrolled in school until she leaves the emergency bed should not be sanctioned for failing to attend school while in the emergency bed.

Q. If the case of a teen parent residing in a TLP is sanctioned or closed, who should inform the TLP – the teen or the teen specialist?

A. The teen specialist should inform the TLP as soon as possible, preferably at the sanction stage – or earlier – when it is still possible to avoid a case closing. TLP staff may be able to help the teen parent resolve the problem which led to the

sanction.

Moreover, only TAFDC-eligible teen parents are referred to TLPs by the Department. Therefore, a teen parent whose case is closed is no longer eligible for the TLP, so the TLP must be informed when the action is taken to close the case.

Q. I have a teen parent in a Structured Living Program which is not one of the Department's Teen Living Programs (TLPs) as listed in the Teen Living Program Directory. Is this teen parent meeting the Living Arrangement requirement as specified in 106 CMR 203.630? If so, is the teen parent exempt or nonexempt?

A. If a teen parent is residing in a residential program licensed by the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS), then the teen parent is meeting the Living Arrangement requirement specified in 106 CMR 203.630. As long as the teen parent is in the residential program, and is under the age of 20, the teen parent is exempt from the time limit, and is not subject to the reduced need and payment standard. If you are uncertain whether a program is licensed by OCCS, please have your hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

Access to Jobs

TAFDC

The TAFDC Procedural Guide Update 032

- Chapter 5 of *The TAFDC Procedural Guide* has been updated to include a section on Access to Jobs (AtJ) including more information on Demand Response (DR) Services. Since DR services are costly, every effort is made to offer some form of cost-effective transportation. A Transportation Planning Team (TEAM) will be formed before providing DR services. The TEAM is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the AtJ customer's transportation plan.
- Chapter 19 of *The TAFDC Procedural Guide* has been changed in the following ways: AtJ information has been removed and Transitional Assistance Workers are referred to Chapter 5.

Family Cap

TAFDC

The TAFDC Procedural Guide Update 033

Field Operations Memo 2000-8

Systems User's Guide Update 143

The Online Update 029

A change has been made to allow TAO Directors to make waiver decisions for situations in accordance with 106 CMR 203.300(D)(1).

The TAO Director will make waiver determinations when a dependent child ineligible due to Family Cap provisions is no longer able to live with his or her parent(s) because of one or more of the following reasons (in a two-parent family both parents must each meet one of the reasons):

- the death of the child's custodial parent(s);
- the incapacity of the child's custodial parent(s) such that the parent(s) cannot care for the child, and such incapacity and inability to care for the child are documented by a physician;
- the custody or guardianship of the child has been legally transferred to another parent, relative or custodian (custody or guardianship cannot be verified by a petition but must be verified by a final decree);
- the incarceration of the custodial parent(s) except that the child shall not receive assistance if the parent(s) is released and living with the child; or
- the custodial parent(s) is institutionalized in a mental health facility or hospital, provided institutionalization is expected to last for more than 30 days; the child shall not, however, receive assistance if the custodial parent(s) is released from the institution and lives with the child.

Refer to 106 CMR 203.300 for further details on acceptable verifications for waivers. With the exception of death, the information to verify the above circumstances must be reviewed for changes at each eligibility review.

Central Office Staff will continue to make waiver determinations if:

- none of the above apply and an applicant or recipient makes a

written request explaining the extraordinary circumstances why a waiver should be granted in accordance with 106 CMR 203.300(D)(2); or

- the TAO Director requests assistance in making a waiver decision.

To assist in this change Code "Z" entered in Block 97 - Marital Status/Relationship has been redefined. Code "Z" is now defined as: "Central Office Waiver approval or a TAO Waiver approval for child born after the family cap date."

FYI

Calling the Policy Hotline—Please Don't Hang Up!!!

The Policy Hotline number, 617-348-8478, is actually four phone lines. If you call and Hotline staff are on the phone with another office, you will not get a busy signal. Your call will "hunt" through all four lines until it reaches voice mail. It will usually take 12-13 rings before your call reaches voice mail, much longer than the usual four rings.

We are working with Telecommunications to modify the phone line setup but until then please be patient and don't hang up!!

FYI

Learnfare Reminder

Field Operations Memo 99-30A issued a revision to the Learnfare procedures. If a dependent child is subject to Learnfare and the grantee does not provide verification of the school the dependent child is attending, close only the dependent child. Do not close either the grantee or the entire case for failure to provide the required information.

If the grantee submits a completed *School Identification Request Form* or other verification of the school the child is attending within 30 days of the dependent child's termination date, the dependent child must be reopened.

The Online Update 030

All Volume 1: PACES User's Guide Appendix D: Service Area Listing/Service Area Listing By Office Number

Appendix D: Service Area Listing/Service Area Listing By Office Number has been revised to reflect the closing of the Nantucket TAO and the transfer of cases to the Hyannis TAO.

Changes in the TAFDC Unemployment Deprivation Factor

TAFDC, EAEDC
State Letter 1187
Field Operations Memo 2000-11
The TAFDC Procedural Guide Update 031
EAEDC Reference Guide Update 029

- The TAFDC regulations revised the unemployment deprivation factor by eliminating the work history requirement and the designation of a principal earner.
- The deprivation factor of unemployed or underemployed has been redefined. A parent who is not employed meets the requirement for unemployment. A parent is considered underemployed if he or she is working, but still meets the financial eligibility requirements of the TAFDC program.
- The change in the TAFDC regulations affects three types of assistance units:
 - > All family members on EAEDC as a parental family case,
 - > Some family members receiving TAFDC and some family members receiving EAEDC as a parental family case,
 - > Family members in two separate TAFDC cases: these cases are commonly referred to as "yours, mine and ours."
- This Field Operations Memo provides details about how to handle each type.



FYI

Using TAFDC or EAEDC Disability Determinations to Establish a Disability for Food Stamp Purposes

If a TAFDC Disability Determination Tracking Form or an EAEDC Disability Determination Tracking Form from the Department's Disability Evaluation Services (DES) indicates that an individual's disability meets criteria listing (decision code 100) or equals criteria listing (code 110) for SSI, the DES disability decision can be used to establish that the individual is disabled for food stamp purposes. These DES disability decision codes mean that the individual has been certified disabled using SSI criteria in accordance with 106 CMR 362.210(A)(1).

The disability determination entitles the disabled individual to special treatment including: waiver of the in-office interview (*see* 106 CMR 361.510); gross income standard exception (*see* 106 CMR 364.370); excess medical deduction (*see* 106 CMR 364.400(C)); uncapped shelter deduction (*see* 106 CMR 364.400(E)); food stamp work requirement exemption (*see* 106 CMR 362.310(B) and 362.320(B)); and 165 percent income standard for individuals who are both elderly and disabled (*see* 106 CMR 361.200(B)).

This DES decision is particularly important in determining a noncitizen's eligibility for federal food stamp benefits. In accordance with 106 CMR 362.220(A)(9) a disabled noncitizen is eligible for federal food stamp benefits if he or she:

- (a) is currently a legal permanent resident (green card holder); an asylee under section 208 of the INA; a refugee under section 207 of the INA; a deportee being withheld under section 243(h) or 241(b)(3) of the INA; a Cuban/Haitian entrant (as defined in section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980); an Amerasian immigrant (as defined in section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1988); a parolee under section 212(d)(5) of the INA; or a conditional entrant under section 203(a)(7) of the INA; and
- (b) was lawfully residing in the U.S. on 8/22/96.

Medex Premium Rate Changes

NPA FS
Field Operations Memo
2000-14

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts has announced Medex premium rate changes to six non-group plans, Basic, Bronze, Gold, Standard, Core and Silver, effective March 2000.

This memo:

- identifies the plans that have changed and the corresponding rate changes;
- identifies the date of the changes and the effect these changes will have on the amount of food stamp benefits;
- transmits information for the Medex Premium Rate - Update Report; and
- provides information of updates to food stamp benefits and the Medex premium amounts on PACES.



Random Moment Sampling (RMS)

All
Field Operations Memo
2000-9

Random Moment Sampling is very important to the Department and the cooperation of the Transitional Assistance Workers is essential in ensuring its accuracy and reliability. This Field Operations Memo addresses many of the questions and issues raised regarding the purpose of RMS and the implementation process.

- Federal regulations require the Department to determine administrative expenses for federal and state programs. The Department chose telephone observations as the method to comply with the federal requirement because it is the least disruptive method to Transitional Assistance Workers.
- The RMS Coordinators' primary objective is to complete the observations timely and accurately, and not to measure work performance or attendance.
- The selection of who will be called and at what time is computer-generated and is completely random. Consequently, it is possible that one Transitional Assistance Worker may be called more often than another.

September 1999 Clothing Allowance for TAFDC

TAFDC
State Letter 1188
Field Operations Memo 2000-12

- Due to a delay in the implementation of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 budget, the clothing allowance paid in September 1999 was not based on an increased TAFDC standards.
- Certain applicants did not receive the clothing allowance benefit that they would have otherwise received had the standards (eligibility, need and payment) been increased.
- Since the FY 2000 budget has been signed, the Department is now providing the clothing allowance benefit that may be owed to these former applicants.
- The Field Operations Memo provides instructions on how the clothing allowance will be paid to these families.
- The State Letter transmits changes to the TAFDC Eligibility, Need and Payment Standards for the month of September 1999 to provide a \$150 clothing allowance to TAFDC applicants and recipients under the age of 19.

This material is retroactive to September 1, 1999.

TAFDC Casework Activity and Expanded ESP Participation

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo 2000-7A and 2000-7B
The TAFDC Procedural Guide Update 032

Field Operations Memo 2000-7B corrected information transmitted by Field Operations Memo 2000-7 and incorporated corrected information transmitted by 2000-7A. Specifically, the number of times Teen Parent Cases had to be reviewed was corrected from four times a year to three times a year and the number of times all cases with certain exceptions must be reviewed was corrected from twice a year to once a year. Field Operations Memo 2000-7B also obsoletes Field Operations Memos 2000-7 and 2000-7A.