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Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Joseph Gallant
Secretary
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Field Operations Memo 97-41
June 25, 1997

To: Local Office Staff
From: Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Elimination of AFDC Control Group

Overview

The Department is eliminating the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) control group effective June 30, 1997. The AFDC control group is no longer required under Federal Welfare Reform. **All** applications received on or after June 30, 1997 will no longer have their eligibility determined by AFDC rules. Workers will now follow TAFDC regulations and procedures to determine eligibility.

This Field Operations Memo:

- explains how the system will code all active AFDC control group cases to TAFDC cases;
- describes the system-generated notice that will be mailed to all AFDC control group cases after the case is coded on TAFDC;
- details procedures for implementing TAFDC policy for all active AFDC control group cases; and
- contains instructions for approving cases when an AFDC application was taken before June 30, 1997 and the case is established on PACES on or after June 30, 1997.

**System Coding
of Ongoing AFDC
Control Cases as
TAFDC**

At the close of business on June 27, 1997, all *ongoing* AFDC control group cases will be coded as TAFDC cases. The system will automatically replace program code "3" with program code "0" (on the RECD screen next to the program code field) and send the system-generated notice described on the following page and shown in Attachment A.

These *ongoing* cases are considered TAFDC cases even though a transition review may not yet have been completed. Any subsequent action taken on these cases must follow TAFDC rules and use TAFDC action reasons. For any action being taken on or after June 30, 1997, a transition review for TAFDC eligibility must be done before making any changes on the system. **Workers must use the correct TAFDC action reasons and program codes for these cases. This will allow the system to produce accurate recipient notices and correct grant calculations.**

Note: Data entry must return to the unit supervisor all unprocessed AFDC PID's that were submitted but were not data entered by the close of business on June 27, 1997. The supervisor must have the worker schedule a priority TAFDC transition review on the case and then take appropriate action using TAFDC action reasons and program codes.

On June 16, 1997 the systems froze the \$30 and 1/3 monthly counters on all *ongoing* AFDC control group cases. This action prevents reductions and closings on cases with income, due to the expiration of current disregards, until the worker completes the TAFDC transition review.

**System Coding
of Pending AFDC
Control Group
Cases with an
Action Reason
"03"**

At the close of business on June 27, 1997, all *pending* AFDC Control Group Cases open on the system with an action reason "03" will be coded on the system as TAFDC cases. The system will automatically replace program code "3" with program code "0" (on the RECD screen next to the program code field). The system-generated notice described below will be suspended for these cases until they have been approved for AFDC. This will ensure that the recipient receives an approval notice for the AFDC program before receiving a notice explaining that he or she is now a TAFDC recipient. For these cases, workers must follow the AFDC approval procedures for applications made before June 30, 1997 and approved on or after June 30, 1997. These procedures are detailed on page 7 of this memo.

**System-
Generated Notice**

A system-generated notice will be mailed to all *ongoing* AFDC control group recipients, when the program code is changed from "3" to "0." This notice will be mailed on or about June 30, 1997.

Attachment A contains a copy of the notice. The notice explains:

- ◆ that the AFDC control group has been eliminated,
- ◆ that TAFDC rules will now apply to recipients,
- ◆ that an appointment for a TAFDC transition review will be scheduled by the worker,
- ◆ **that recipients are subject to the Family Cap rule and their Family Cap date is 10 months from the date of their face-to-face TAFDC transition review. This is the same date the recipient signs the Transitional Status Report form (TER-TAFDC (Rev. 5/97)), and**
- ◆ that family planning and crisis pregnancy information is available at the clinic.

**AFDC Control
Group Case
Transition
Process**

TAFDC transition reviews must be scheduled for all AFDC control group recipients beginning in July.

A system-generated printout will be sent to local offices during the week of June 30, 1997 entitled "AFDC Control Group Listing." Local offices will receive three copies of each printout. This printout will list cases to be reviewed for transition to TAFDC. The printout will be sorted by local office and CAN. It will contain the name, SSN and address of each recipient.

***Note:** The transition process must be completed for each case under review within 90 days of the date of the first scheduled appointment. Each recipient shall be given the opportunity to reschedule the transition review when he or she is unable to attend due to good cause.*

**Worker
Responsibilities**

- ◆ Review the printout and send each recipient an appointment letter (TP/TAFDC/AL (9/95)) informing him or her of the date and time of the transition review. Attachment C contains a copy of this appointment letter. You must include with each appointment letter a TAFDC Program Brochure. The TAFDC Program Brochure will introduce the recipient to the program and help him or her to prepare for the transition review.

Note: Cases that contain a teen parent should have both the grantee and teen parent present at the transition review. This will ensure that both the grantee and the teen parent are made aware of the TAFDC requirements. Teen parent transition reviews should be completed by the Teen Parent Specialists.

- ◆ If the recipient fails to keep the transition review without good cause and does not contact the worker to reschedule the review, the worker must close the case for failure to appear for a scheduled TAFDC transition review, using AR 26 (see 106 CMR 701.440 and 106 CMR 365.150).
- ◆ If the recipient is unable to keep the first transition review appointment and contacts the worker to request another appointment, the worker must:
 - Schedule a subsequent appointment for the earliest possible available date; and
 - Advise the recipient that failure to keep the subsequent transition review appointment without good cause will result in the closing of the case (see 106 CMR 701.440 106 CMR 365.150).
- ◆ The Transitional Status Report form (TER-TAFDC (Rev. 5/97)) must be completed at the transition review. The recipient must sign and date this form. The worker must ensure that the recipient understands his or her rights and responsibilities. Give the recipient a verification checklist (VC-1) indicating the verifications required to complete the transition process and advise the recipient to submit them within 10 days. If needed or requested, assist the recipient in obtaining the required verifications.

**Worker
Responsibilities
(Continued)**

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- ◆ During the transition review, the worker must fill in the recipient's Family Cap date on the Family Cap notice and hand it to the recipient. Attachment B contains a copy of this notice. The Family Cap date is 10 months from the date of the face-to-face review (the same date the recipient signs the Transitional Status Report form (TER-TAFDC (Rev. 5/97))).

 - ◆ The transition review for nonexempt assistance units must focus on the 24-month time limit and the steps for the recipient to take to prepare for the end of the 24-month time-limited benefits. The initial continuous 60-month period begins on the date that an assistance unit first becomes eligible for TAFDC. Workers must use the Notice of Transitional Time Limit Status/Update form for all assistance units. Instructions for using this form are contained in Field Operations Memo 97-25.

 - ◆ Following the face-to-face review, when a determination of either continued eligibility or ineligibility for TAFDC is made, the worker must:
 - Make the appropriate entries on the PID, PACES Worksheet and ESP-MIS, if necessary; and

 - Submit the completed case to the supervisor. **The date of the face-to-face transition review (the date the recipient signs the Transitional Status Report form) is the date that must be entered on the PID block 37.** This entry will generate the correct Family Cap date.

 - A system-generated notice will be mailed to the recipient explaining his or her TAFDC status.
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**Changing the
Program Code**

The program code "0" must be replaced with a new program code and action reason if the only verification outstanding is the immunization form; or if an assistance unit which meets all other TAFDC requirements is subject to the work program, but has not yet provided verification of work or community service. It is very important to use the appropriate TAFDC action reason in combination with the program code. *The program code and action reason determines which Need and Payment Standard and earned income disregard shall be applied to a case. They also allow the system to produce the correct recipient notice and correct grant calculation.*

**Multiple
Transactions**

If you are transitioning a case from AFDC to TAFDC and two or more actions are required which will separately impact the grant, then these actions should be taken separately on separate days. The worker must ensure that these actions are data-entered on separate days. This is critical for properly noticing the recipient of each issue. These actions are commonly referred to as "multiple transactions." Workers should ensure that the first action has taken place before submitting the second.

For example, you are converting a nonexempt assistance unit case to TAFDC and during the course of the review you determine that the family has begun receiving Social Security benefits which must be entered on PACES. These are *two separate actions* which will affect the grant. The use of a nonexempt program code will reduce the grant by 2.75 percent and entering the Social Security income on PACES will further reduce the grant. These *separate actions* must be submitted for data entry on two *separate* days.

**Supervisor
Responsibilities**

Review the Transitional Status Report form (TER-TAFDC (Rev. 5/97)) after its completion by the worker for completeness and accuracy of PIDs, PACES Worksheets and all related forms. If the review is approved, sign and date the TER-TAFDC form and **ensure that the date of the face-to-face transition review (the same date the recipient signs the Transitional Status Report form) is the same date that is entered in block 37 of the PID.** This entry will generate the correct family cap date.

**AFDC Approval
for Applications
Made before
June 30, 1997
and Approved on
or after June
30, 1997**

Applicants who apply before June 30, 1997 and are approved or denied on or after June 30, 1997, must be approved or denied based on AFDC regulations. If approved, **applicants must be established as an AFDC control group case using AFDC rules and action reasons.** Workers must code all AFDC applicant cases with a Program Code "3" on the PID in block 44 including:

- ◆ those action reason "03" cases that were changed on the system from a program code "3" to a program code "0" on June 27, 1997; and
- ◆ those action reason "03" cases entered on the system after June 27, 1997. The system will automatically change the program code from a "3" to a "0."

These cases will appear on the system as unreviewed TAFDC cases. Although established as TAFDC on PACES, **eligibility for these applicants must not be determined using the TAFDC eligibility criteria until they have received a transition review.** If a change needs to be taken after the case has been approved for AFDC, a transition review for TAFDC eligibility must be done before entering the change.

Every two weeks in July, systems will do a match to identify those *cases that were approved on or after June 30, 1997 with a start date on or before June 30, 1997.* The same system-generated notice described earlier on page 3, will be mailed to these AFDC control group cases during July. Attachment A contains a copy of this notice. Local offices will receive updated printouts of the "AFDC Control Group Listing" which will add these cases to the list of cases to be reviewed for transition to TAFDC.

Family Cap

The Family Cap date for all ongoing AFDC control group cases coded at the close of business on June 27, 1997 and applicants (who apply before June 30, 1997 and are approved on or after June 30, 1997) will be 10 months from the date of the face-to-face transition review.

Note: *The date of the face-to-face review is the same date the recipient signs the Transitional Status Report form (TER-TAFDC (Rev. 5/97)). This date must be entered on the PID in block 37 to ensure the system generates the correct family cap date.*

Correct Coding

Workers are reminded of the importance of correct coding for all cases. The action reason (block 33), EP code (block 40), SAVE code (block 43), program code (block 44) and dependent action reason (block 89) all must be correct. ESP/MIS must be updated as required.

For the proper program code, action reason, SAVE code and EP code entries, refer to the *Systems User's Guide*, Volume 1; PACES.

Reminder: If reviewing eligibility on any case with an action reason 17 or action reason 14 (block 33), be sure to enter the corresponding SAVE code (block 43).

Questions

If you have any policy or procedure questions, have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478.

If you have any systems-related questions, have your Hotline designee call the Customer Support Services at (617) 348-5290.

Dear Recipient,

Effective June 30, 1997, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Control Group will be eliminated. You are now a Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) recipient and must follow the TAFDC rules. Your worker will send you a letter that tells you the date and time you should come to the Department's Transitional Assistance Office to have your continued eligibility for TAFDC reviewed.

Unless your circumstances change, you will continue to receive assistance until the Department reviews your TAFDC eligibility. If you continue to be eligible for TAFDC, you will receive a notice telling you what your TAFDC benefits will be. If you are not eligible for TAFDC, you will receive a notice telling you why you are not eligible and when your benefits will stop. You will be able to appeal the decisions regarding your TAFDC eligibility.

You will not receive an increase in your cash benefits for children born more than 10 months after the date of your TAFDC transition review. This is referred to as the "Family Cap" rule. Children born more than 10 months from the date of your TAFDC transition review will be expected to share in the TAFDC cash benefits paid to the other household members and will be eligible for other benefits such as Food Stamps, MassHealth and, in certain circumstances, child care. A child born as a result of rape or incest is not subject to the "Family Cap" rule. There are other limited exceptions to this rule.

For certain recipients there is a 24-month time limit for TAFDC benefits. This means for certain recipients TAFDC benefits may stop after 24 months. This may apply to you and your family. During your transition review your worker will discuss the 24-month time limit and if it applies to you and your family. If the 24-month time limit applies to you, you are expected to find a job. You can get help from the Department for job search, child care, training and education to prepare you for independence. In a two-parent household, each parent must have a specific exemption reason for the 24-month time limit not to apply to the household.

You can get family planning services at a clinic of your choice. These services are confidential, voluntary and covered by MassHealth. You do not need a referral from your health care provider or your HMO to get:

- Medical and GYN exams
- Birth control education and methods
- Pregnancy testing and counseling
- Breast exams, pap smears, and other tests
- Testing for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

If currently or if in the future you face an unexpected or crisis pregnancy, you should contact your worker for a list of available community resources.

The regulations used in determining your TAFDC eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 202.000, 203.000, 204.000, 207.000 and 701.000 et seq.

If you disagree with these decisions, you have the right to appeal to the Department's Division of Hearings as described on the back of this notice. If the reason for your appeal is that you do not agree that the AFDC program should have been eliminated, your request for an appeal will be denied.

If you have questions about this notice or you would like to ask about free legal services, please call your worker at the phone number listed above.



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97-41
Attachment B

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance

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FAMILY CAP NOTICE

Dear Recipient,

Because you are a TAFDC recipient, you will not receive an increase in your cash benefits for children born more than 10 months after the date of this interview. This is referred to as the "Family Cap" rule. Children born on or after ___/___/___ will be expected to share in the TAFDC cash benefits paid to the other household members and will be eligible for other benefits such as Food Stamps, MassHealth and, in certain circumstances, child care.

A child born as a result of rape or incest is not subject to the "Family Cap" rule. There are other limited exceptions to this rule.

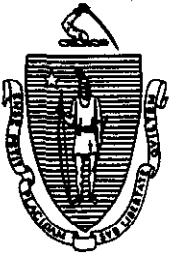
You can get family planning services at a clinic of your choice. These services are confidential, voluntary and covered by MassHealth. You do not need a referral from your health care provider or your HMO to get:

- Medical and GYN exams
- Birth control education and methods
- Pregnancy testing and counseling
- Breast exams, pap smears, and other tests
- Testing for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

If you are currently or in the future facing an unexpected or crisis pregnancy, you should contact your worker for a list of available community resources.

The regulations used for the Family Cap rule is 106 CMR 203.300.

TP-FCN
02-630-0797-05



The Department of Transitional Assistance
Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Appointment Letter

____/____/____
Date

To _____

Dear _____,

As part of Welfare Reform, everyone currently receiving AFDC must have his or her case reviewed to see if he or she is eligible for the new program called Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC). An interview at the Transitional Assistance Local Office is a required part of the review. This review must be completed within 90 days of the date of this notice.

I have scheduled an appointment with you on ____/____/____ at ____ in the
Date Time

_____ Transitional Assistance Office at _____
so that we can review your eligibility for the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program.

I have enclosed a brochure about the TAFDC program. Please read the brochure. It is intended to help you prepare for this appointment.

If you cannot keep this appointment, you must call me at (____) _____ before the day of the appointment to reschedule.

Failure without good cause to complete this review shall result in the termination of benefits.

If you do not keep this appointment or call me to reschedule before the appointment day, your benefits will be stopped. You will receive a separate notice if your benefits are going to stop.

Worker's Name (please print)