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FAX 98-7

**Field Operations Memo 97-72A**  
**January 15, 1998**

**TO:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff  
**FROM:** Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations  
**RE:** Clarification of Field Operations Memo 97-72, PRISM II 24-Month Clock Exception Report

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**Introduction**

Field Operations Memo 97-72, PRISM II 24-Month Clock Exception Report, issued December 29, 1997, describes the report dated December 19, 1997 and sent to Transitional Assistance Offices for review and possible clock adjustment. A number of questions have been received about the report, specifically regarding:

- recipients appearing in multiple cases and appearing on reports in multiple offices; and
- closed cases appearing on the report (some cases closed for several years).

The procedures described in Field Operations Memo 97-72 remain the same. However, this memo clarifies the data on the exception report and explains more fully procedures to be followed in reviewing the report for possible clock adjustment.

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**Example of  
Recipient in  
Multiple Cases**

Many recipients have been in different cases at different times. For example,

Mary Jones has been a recipient in three cases:

- As dependent 01 in her mother's case in Brockton (recipient and case closed with AR 41 in 1991);
- As dependent 00 in her own case in Fall River (recipient sanctioned with AR 66 in 1994, case closed with AR 38 in 1995); and
- As dependent 99 in her husband's case in New Bedford (case opened in 2/97, case and recipient currently active with AR 06).

**PRISM II is a person-based system.** When identifying recipients with insufficient data to accrete the clock, **PRISM II matched each recipient with all cases in which that recipient was ever a member.** Therefore, using the above example, on the PRISM II 24-Month Clock Exception Report, Mary Jones will appear on Brockton's report as a member of her mother's case, on Fall River's report as a member of her own case, and on New Bedford's report as a member of her husband's case. **The same month(s) in question and reason will appear on each office report.**

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**PRISM II Clock  
Sweep Process**

When the clock sweep process takes place, **PRISM II looks at the individual's personal action reason and not the status of the case.** In the above example, PRISM II "sees" Mary Jones as closed in Brockton, sanctioned in Fall River, and active in New Bedford. Since sanctioned individuals are subject to the 24-month clock, PRISM II cannot "decide" which of Mary's data to evaluate: the AR 66 in Brockton or the AR 06 in New Bedford.

When PRISM II is unable to decide if a month should be added to the recipient's clock, it **does not add the month.** Months in question are identified on the exception report. Beginning January 14, 1998, PRISM II alerts the worker with the active case whenever it is unable to make a clock accretion determination.

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**Worker Action**

For each case on the report, check PACES to determine if:

- the case has been active at any time since 12/96; and
- the recipient has been active or sanctioned in the case at any time since 12/96.

If not, there is no need to review the case for clock accretion. **However, check the case to see if the recipient was removed from the case with a sanction action reason ( 27, 55, 66, 73, 74, 79, 87, 88, 89 or 96 with SAVE Code S, T, U,W or Z). This situation is likely to exist with recipients identified on the reports with reason "Sanctioned". If yes, change the sanction action reason to an appropriate closing action reason.** For closed cases, use the same AR that closed the case, if possible. Use AR 43 if the sanctioned recipient is no longer in the household.

*Note: Closed cases do not have to be reopened to overlay closing action reasons on top of sanction action reasons.*

In the example on page two, the Brockton worker does not need to review the case for clock accretion as the case containing the recipient closed in 1991, and does not need to take any action on the case as the recipient was not removed with a sanction action reason.

The Fall River worker does not need to review the case for clock accretion as it closed in 1995. However, the Fall River worker sees on PACES that the recipient had been sanctioned with AR 66 prior to the actual case closing. The worker must submit a PID to change AR 66 to AR 38, the case closing action reason. Changing the sanction AR to a closing AR will allow PRISM II to make clock determinations in future months without alerting the worker for review and manual clock accretion.

The New Bedford worker must review the month(s) in question to determine if it should be added to the recipient's 24-month clock.

**It is important for workers to know that correct coding on cases will resolve most PRISM II clock accretion exceptions. However, corrections to a closed case, if the recipient is sanctioned in that case, will be needed to prevent ongoing clock accretion problems on active cases.**

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**Review Cases  
Active At Any  
Time Since  
12/96 for  
Possible Clock  
Adjustment**

For cases active at any time since 12/96, and the recipient identified on the report has been active or sanctioned in the case at any time since 12/96, check to see if the recipient was active or sanctioned **in the month(s) in question** on the report. If yes, review the case for possible clock adjustment. Follow the instructions in Field Operations Memo 97-72, using *PRISM II User's Guide*, Appendix C, 24-Month Clock Specification Details, as a guide to determine if the month(s) in question should be added to the recipient's clock.

**This review process must take place even if the case is currently closed and/or the recipient is no longer receiving TAFDC. If the case reopens, the recipient will then have the correct number of months counted toward the 24-month limit.**

**Example:** A recipient appears on the report with the months of June, July and August identified as "Benefit Less Than \$10." The recipient was active in the case until it closed in 10/97. Even though the case is now closed, the months of June, July and August must be reviewed for adjustment because the case meets the criteria of having been open at any time since 12/96, and the recipient was active or sanctioned at that time.

If the case has been active at any time since 12/96, but the recipient has *not* been active or sanctioned in the case since 12/96, take no action to review for clock adjustment. **However, if the recipient's closing action reason is a sanction action reason, change the sanction action reason to an appropriate closing action reason, such as AR 43 if the recipient is no longer in the household.**

If the sanction action reason is not changed to a closing action reason, each month during the clock sweep process PRISM II will "see" what seems to be conflicting data (ie., sanctioned in one case, active or sanctioned in another case). PRISM II will not accrete the month, and will alert the worker with the active case to review the month for possible adjustment. Alerts will continue monthly on the active case until the closing action reason change is made.

*Note: Do not change the action reason for a recipient who is currently sanctioned in an active case unless it is verified that the recipient is no longer in the household.*

**Review Cases  
Active Since  
12/96 (continued)**

**Example:** John Smith appears on two workers' reports with the month of September 1997 in question due to "System Error." A check of FMCS reveals that he has been a member of 2 cases:

- as dependent 01 in his mother's case (Worker 244). He has been closed from that case since 3/96, although his mother continues to receive assistance for her other children; and
- as dependent 00 in his own case, opened 5/97 and closed 11/97 (Worker 222).

In this situation, both cases have been active at some time since 12/96 but the recipient has only been active in one case since 12/96. Worker 222 must review the case for clock adjustment, since that is the case in which he was active in September. Worker 244 (who has the mother's case) must only check to make sure that he is not closed for a sanction action reason in that case. If so, the sanction action reason must be changed.

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**Report Reason  
"System Error"**

In some instances it may be unclear why a recipient appears on the exception report. Reasons identified on the report are meant only to provide a suggestion to the worker as to why the month(s) could not accrete. For example, a recipient may be listed with reason "System Error", which can refer to any one of a number of internal system failures in the PRISM II clock accretion process.

**When reviewing the case with "System Error" to see if the month(s) in question should be added, check the "State 60-Month Period" on the "State Clock" tab. "System Error" cases on the exception report which have already been checked for possible clock adjustment should be rechecked to ensure that the "State 60-Month Period" dates are correct. If incorrect, contact Systems Customer Support Services. 60-Month periods can only be corrected centrally.**

*Note: See PRISM II User's Guide, Chapter V, 24-Month Time-Limited Benefits, for details on the State 60-Month Period.*

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**Director/Assistant  
Director  
Responsibility**

Directors and assistant directors are responsible for:

- approving the decision to accrete or not to accrete the month(s);
- adding the month(s) to PRISM II, if required; and
- ensuring that corrections to cases as described in this memo are completed.

Some corrections may involve closed cases, cases with reassigned CANs or cases in other offices. Managers must follow up in these situations to ensure that these cases are properly corrected.

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**PRISM II "Check  
Clock" Alerts**

Beginning January 14, 1998, PRISM II issues the alert "Check Clock" whenever it is unable to determine if a month should be added to a recipient's clock. Alerts will only be issued to **active cases**, and will identify the reason why the month could not be added. Workers are reminded that although only active cases will be alerted, corrections may be necessary to closed cases. A check of FMCS and/or MMIS will identify all cases in which the recipient has been a member.

Refer to *PRISM II User's Guide*, Chapter II, Alerts, for details on these clock-related alerts.

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**Summary**

In reviewing the cases on the exception report, consider the following:

- ◆ **Recipients who have been in more than one case will be on more than one report.**  
First, determine if the case was active for the month(s) in question. Then determine if the recipient was active or sanctioned in the case in the month(s) in question. If so, that is the case that must be reviewed for possible clock adjustment.

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**Summary  
(continued)**

- ◆ **For clock accretion purposes, a recipient can be active or sanctioned in only one TAFDC case.**  
If a recipient is active or sanctioned in one case, *and* is also sanctioned in another case, *and* either
    - the other case is now closed OR
    - the recipient is no longer in the other household,change the sanction action reason in the other case to a closing action reason. (Closed cases do not need to be reopened to overlay a closing action reason on a sanction action reason.) This action will prevent future alerts on active cases with months unable to accrete due to this situation.
  
  - ◆ **Follow the instructions in Field Operations Memo 97-72 and use Appendix C of *PRISM II User's Guide* to determine if the month(s) in question must be added to the recipient's 24-month clock.**  
Months which meet the criteria should be added to the recipient's clock **even if the recipient is not currently receiving benefits.**
  
  - ◆ **Correct recipient coding on PACES is necessary to resolve some exceptions and prevent future alerting when PRISM II can not determine if a month should accrete.**
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**Completion of  
Exception Report  
Project**

Field Operations Memo 97-72 instructed staff that all manual adjustments made to the clocks as a result of the exception report were to be completed no later than January 23, 1998. Additionally, annotated reports are to be returned to the Regional Directors no later than January 23, 1998. Directors are advised to contact their Regional Director if there is a problem in meeting this deadline.

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**Questions**

If you have any questions related to 24-month policy, have your designee call the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478. System-related questions or specific questions about individual recipients on the exception report should be directed to Systems Customer Support Services at (617) 348-5290.

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