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**Field Operations Memo 98-17**  
**March 10, 1998**

**To:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff  
**From:** Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations  
**Re:** Transitional Assistance Casework Activities

**Background**

In November 1995 the Department began the implementation of the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. This program was a result of Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1995 which reformed the Massachusetts welfare system. Chapter 5 contained a number of major provisions, including Time-Limited Benefits, Work Program, Teen Parent Living and School Attendance, Family Cap, Learnfare and Immunization. In November 1995 necessary waivers were obtained from the federal government to implement all provisions except Time-Limited Benefits.

In August 1996 the President signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This act completely overhauled the federal welfare system by eliminating AFDC as a federal entitlement and removing many of the restrictions on states which had previously constrained them. Passage of this act allowed Massachusetts to implement the Time-Limited Benefits provision of Chapter 5 without obtaining a federal waiver.

On December 1, 1996 the Department promulgated regulations implementing Time-Limited Benefits. Since December 1996, implementation of Time-Limited Benefits has been our most challenging initiative. Less than one year from now benefits will end as Transitional Assistance recipients begin to reach their 24-month time limit. As this time approaches, workers must continue to focus their efforts on assisting recipients in overcoming employment barriers and finding employment in preparation for leaving Transitional Assistance. This focus, which is a new direction for Transitional Assistance Workers, must be the **primary** focus of all activity.

**Background  
(Continued)**

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Recipients must receive information about resources and have access to the opportunities and tools which will enable them to become independent. We must continue to focus on moving recipients into employment and /or preparing them for employment with skills training and educational opportunities. To better enable recipients to achieve these goals and workers to assist them, the Department has developed a schedule for meeting with those recipients subject to the time limit and a Transition Plan to be used during this process.

While the primary focus is on those recipients currently subject to the 24-month time limit, we must also work with those recipients who will have a time limit in the near future. This time should be used to inform them of the opportunities available to them and to ensure they understand they will soon be receiving time-limited benefits.

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**Purpose of  
Memo**

This Field Operations Memo:

- ◆ Defines how casework activity should be managed for both exempt and nonexempt cases.
  - ◆ Introduces the new Transition Plan (TAFDC-TP (3/98), see Attachment A) to document recipients' plans and current efforts in becoming independent. **This form replaces the Notice of Transitional Time Limit Status Update (TAFDC-TLN).**
  - ◆ Obsoletes Field Operations Memos 97-43 and 97-25.
  - ◆ Explains the frequency of contacts that will be conducted with recipients subject to the 24-month time limit. See *The Schedule of Contacts with Recipients Subject to the 24-Month Time Limit* in Attachment B.
  - ◆ Establishes procedures for the development of the Transition Plan for all recipients.
  - ◆ Establishes the frequency of contacts for those recipients who will soon be subject to the time limit.
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**Transitional  
Assistance  
Worker  
Responsibilities**

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As the role of the Transitional Assistance Worker continues to focus on assisting recipients in finding a job in preparation for leaving Transitional Assistance, workers must:

*For All Cases*

- ▶ **continue to conduct full eligibility reviews at a minimum of once a year on every case.** The Transitional Status Report form (Rev. 5/97) and the Transition Plan must be used at all eligibility reviews;
- ▶ complete a Transition Plan for all cases at application, at each eligibility review and whenever a case which has been exempt becomes nonexempt;
- ▶ actively monitor and support recipients' job search efforts, market Employment Assistance Services (EAS), FEP, Supported Work and skills training opportunities in addition to emphasizing the effects of the 24-month time limit;
- ▶ inform recipients of MassHealth and child care services that are available when their cases close;
- ▶ at each eligibility review, ensure child support information is current and accurate and that the recipient understands the benefits of child support cooperation (see page 12 for specific Child Support Responsibilities);

*For Nonexempt Cases*

- ▶ work with each nonexempt recipient to complete a Transition Plan, either monthly or quarterly, according to the schedule found in Attachment B;
- ▶ complete eligibility reviews for nonexempt teen parent cases at least three times per year in conjunction with the schedule in Attachment B;

*For Exempt Cases*

- ▶ complete eligibility reviews for exempt teen parent cases at least three times per year. When the teen parent turns 20, the case must be reviewed and, if appropriate, have additional contacts made in accordance with Attachment B. PRISM II contains an alert to identify when a teen parent is turning 20;
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**Transitional  
Assistance  
Worker  
Responsibilities  
(Continued)**

- ▶ complete eligibility reviews for exempt cases with the youngest child under two at least once a year. When the child turns two, review the case and schedule additional contacts in accordance with Attachment B. PRISM II contains an alert to identify these cases; and
- ▶ complete eligibility reviews for cases which are exempt due to a medical disability at least once a year. When the disability duration expires and another Disability Supplement has not been submitted, review the case and, if appropriate, schedule additional contacts in accordance with Attachment B.

*Other Responsibilities Include, But Are Not Limited To:*

- ▶ monitoring of all monthly reports and PRISM Alerts; and completion of the necessary actions required;
- ▶ processing of child care and transportation requests in a timely manner;
- ▶ reviewing PACES and ESP-MIS codes whenever a case action is required on these respective systems;
- ▶ monitoring of sanctioned cases on a monthly basis including PA/FS cases with type "FS" income on file;
- ▶ monitoring recipients fulfillment of the work program requirements on monthly reports and Community Service Participation Records; and
- ▶ updating the Learnfare Tracking System by adding dependents or changing school codes whenever appropriate.

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**Transition Plan**

The goals of the Transition Plan are to:

- ▶ record the number of months remaining in the 24-month time limit total and discuss with recipients how this affects them (For months remaining information, look at the State Clock Tab of the Client Detail Screen on PRISM II and view the "data current as of date." This information could be several weeks old. Therefore, review the case record for any additional months for an accurate total of months remaining);
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**Transition Plan  
(Continued)**

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**Note:** Months when the recipient is exempt or not receiving TAFDC for the entire calendar month do not count toward the 24-month time limit total (see *PRISM II User's Guide*, Appendix C for more information).

- ▶ facilitate a discussion on what steps the recipient has taken to find a job or to increase his or her hours if currently working;
- ▶ review past and present ESP component participation, education and work experiences;

**Reminder:** Transitional Assistance Workers must use this information to review and update ESP coding and the recipient's education and work history in Blocks 98, 99 and 100 on the PID.

- ▶ identify the skills the recipient has acquired;
- ▶ provide an opportunity to inform recipients of all the services available through the Employment Services Program; and
- ▶ record the recipient's statement of how he or she will support the family when the 24-month time limit expires.

**Note:** In a nonexempt two-parent household each parent must have a Transition Plan regardless of the parent's exempt or nonexempt status.

*Worker Responsibilities*

- ▶ document the fact that the Transitional Assistance Worker explained to the recipient the time-limit and work requirement rules, the availability of child care, transportation, etc., and made referrals to Employment Assistance Services, education and/or training programs;
  - ▶ document what supports are necessary for the recipient to find and keep a job;
  - ▶ document what the recipient needs to do to access these supports;
  - ▶ record any referrals that were made and follow up on comments listed on the previous Transition Plan;
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**Transition Plan  
(Continued)**

- ▶ explain that the recipient may request his or her case be closed to "bank" some of his or her 24 months of eligibility;
- ▶ give the recipient a copy of the Transition Plan signed by the recipient and the Transitional Assistance Worker; and
- ▶ submit the case record copy of the Transition Plan to the supervisor for review and signature.

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**Initial Transition  
Plan**

All nonexempt recipients must have their next quarterly review scheduled between March 1, 1998 and May 31, 1998. During this quarterly review Transitional Assistance Workers must use the Transition Plan (TAFDC-TP (3/98)) and schedule the recipient's next contact in accordance with the schedule shown in Attachment B. By following this procedure all nonexempt cases will have an initial Transition Plan completed by June 1, 1998. All Leading Edge cases should be given priority when scheduling initial contacts. Leading Edge cases are those whose benefits will end in December of 1998 due to the 24-month time limit.

The initial contact for all current nonexempt recipients must be a face-to-face review to ensure each recipient has a signed Transition Plan. Subsequent contacts will be either by phone or in person, depending on the recipient's current activity as detailed in this memo. For each of these contacts recipients should be asked to state their plans to become independent on the Transition Plan.

**Note:** Recipients who volunteer or are mandated to participate in an ESP activity must complete an EDP and a Transition Plan.

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**Scheduling the  
Appointment**

Send the recipient an appointment letter to schedule an office visit to fill out the new Transition Plan. Appointment letters are available on PRISM II. (Refer to *PRISM II User's Guide* Chapter III for instructions to generate letters.)

- If the recipient fails to keep the appointment without good cause, process the case termination using AR 41.
  - If the recipient has good cause for not keeping the appointment, reschedule it as soon as possible.
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**Frequency of  
Contacts for  
Recipients  
Subject to the  
24-Month Time  
Limit**

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*The Schedule of Contacts with Recipients Subject to the 24-Month Time Limit* shows the number of contacts that need to be made, monthly or quarterly, for each recipient within his or her 24-month time limit period. See Attachment B for a copy of this chart. **Frequency of contact will increase depending on the activity the recipient is participating in and as the recipient gets closer to the end of the 24-month time limit as described below.**

Recipients must be contacted, either by phone or by a face-to-face review, depending on their activities in accordance with Attachment B. Each of these contacts must be documented on a Transition Plan to monitor progress and to offer access to appropriate services.

*If contact is by phone*, the Transitional Assistance Worker will document the recipient's responses on the Transition Plan and check off *Yes* for phone contact on the bottom of the plan. Mail the recipient a copy of the completed plan. If several phone attempts are made and the recipient cannot be reached, send the recipient an appointment letter for a face-to-face contact.

*If contact is face-to-face*, the recipient will fill out and sign the front side of the Transition Plan and the Transitional Assistance Worker will complete the reverse side. Give the recipient a copy of the completed plan.

All other recipient contacts that occur throughout the 24 months (i.e., group activities) should be documented in the case record but do not warrant the use of a Transition Plan.

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**Individuals Not  
Participating in  
Any Component**

- Face-to-face contact is required on a quarterly basis for the first 12 months of the 24-month time limit.
  - The remaining 12 months shall consist of monthly face-to-face contacts.
  - Transitional Assistance Workers must review the recipient's needs, abilities and interests.
  - Inform him or her of vacancies in training programs and EAS programs.
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**Individuals Not Participating in Any Component (Continued)**

- Complete an Employment Development Plan, if necessary.
- Encourage him or her to begin an ESP component.
- Transitional Assistance Workers must **stress** the ramifications of the 24-month time limit to each recipient.

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**Community Service/Work Program Alternative / Earning Less than the Minimum Wage**

*Work Program Alternatives* include foster parenting, babysitting a grandchild, housing search, internship or work study or admittance into a substance abuse shelter.

*Individuals who are employed but are being paid less than minimum wage* will be reviewed on the same schedule as those doing community service.

- Face-to-face contact is required on a quarterly basis for the first 12 months of the 24-month time limit.
  - The remaining 12 months shall consist of monthly face-to-face contacts.
  - Transitional Assistance Workers should focus on the recipient's efforts in finding paid employment.
  - Provide additional referrals to ESP activities as appropriate.
  - Review the skills the recipient has acquired through his or her current activities.
  - Promote EAS and/or Supported Work.
  - If the recipient is participating in Community Service, ask about the possibility of a paid job at the site, or moving to another Community Service site where employment might be easily found.
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**Community Service/Work Program Alternative / Earning Less than the Minimum Wage (Continued)**

- Recommend to the supervisor that a recipient participating in Community Service be moved to a new Community Service site when the current site appears to be unproductive.
- At the TAO's discretion, recipients may be required to submit their Community Service Participation Record (ESP-TEMP) at these scheduled meetings.
- Complete an Employment Development Plan, if necessary.

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**Combination of 20 Hours of Employment and Community Service**

- Face-to-face contact is required on a quarterly basis for the first 18 months of the 24-month time limit.
- The remaining six months shall consist of monthly face-to-face contacts.
- Again, the focus is on full-time employment.
- Ask the recipient about the possibility of increasing hours at work and about the efforts made toward finding a new job with more hours.
- Review the skills the recipient has acquired through his or her job and Community Service placement.
- Continue to inform the recipient of the full range of services available.
- Promote EAS and/or Supported Work.

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**20 Hours (Part-Time Employment at Minimum Wage or Greater)**

- Either phone or face-to-face contact is required on a quarterly basis for the first 18 months of the 24-month time limit.
  - The remaining six months shall consist of either monthly phone or face-to-face contacts.
  - At least one of the last quarter contacts must be a face-to-face contact.
  - The Transitional Assistance Worker must focus on explaining the importance of the recipient seeking full-time employment.
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**20 Hours (Part-Time Employment at Minimum Wage or Greater)  
(Continued)**

- Ask the recipient about the possibility of increasing hours at work and about the efforts made toward finding a new job with more hours.
- Review the skills and abilities the recipient acquired through part-time employment.
- Promote EAS participation.
- Complete an Employment Development Plan, if necessary.

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**Participation In Skills Training/Educational Programs**

- Either phone or face-to-face contact is required on a quarterly basis for the first 18 months of the 24-month time limit.
- The remaining six months shall consist of either monthly phone or face-to-face contacts.
- At least one of the last quarter contacts must be a face-to-face contact.
- Transitional Assistance Workers must focus on the knowledge the recipient gained while participating in the component.
- Help the recipient identify skills and abilities that would make him or her marketable to prospective employers.
- Inform the recipient that training programs assist in finding employment and make him or her aware of other employment related services that are currently available.

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**Supported Work Participation**

- Either phone or face-to-face contact is required on a quarterly basis for the first 18 months of the 24-month time limit.
  - The remaining six months shall consist of either monthly phone or face-to-face contacts.
  - At least one of the last quarter contacts must be a face-to-face contact.
  - Transitional Assistance Workers should review the skills the recipient gained through Supported Work.
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**Supported Work Participation (Continued)**

- Case conference with the Supported Work contractor to ensure that the recipient and the Supported Work contractor are taking appropriate steps to obtain and maintain gainful employment.

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**Full-Time Employment Earning Minimum Wage or Greater**

- Either phone or face-to-face contact is required on a quarterly basis for the first 18 months of the 24-month time limit.
- The remaining six months shall consist of monthly phone or face-to-face contacts.
- At least one of the last quarter contacts must be a face-to-face contact.
- Concentrate on the recipient's efforts to find a job with better pay or a second job.
- Complete an Employment Development Plan, if necessary.

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**Identifying Recipient Barriers**

During the recipient contact the Transitional Assistance Worker should discuss possible employment barriers with the recipient. Employment barriers may include but are not limited to child care, transportation, noncitizen status, domestic violence, homelessness, language literacy, medical and substance abuse. The worker must assist the recipient as much as possible in overcoming any issues which may prevent them from becoming independent.

Workers must be familiar with Department programs as well as the resources available through Community Service Agencies in the area.

The following are a few examples of potential barriers and recommendations for assisting recipients in overcoming them.

1. Recipients may disclose during a review that they are victims of domestic violence. The worker should discuss and make referrals to community-based domestic violence programs for support if there are any questions, concerns or needs for emergency safety planning as a result of domestic violence (these supports are listed in the *You and Your Children Deserve to Be Safe* brochure). The worker should also explain how to apply for a waiver due to domestic violence.
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**Identifying  
Recipient  
Barriers  
(Continued)**

2. A recipient is participating in a job search activity but is concerned about paying for child care when his or her case closes. The Transitional Assistance Worker must explain that child care services can be received for 12 consecutive months from the date the case closes when the recipient is employed.
3. A recipient explains that he or she has been looking for work but is not getting hired. The Transitional Assistance Worker realizes that the recipient does not speak English very well and identifies this as a possible barrier for obtaining employment. The worker should refer this individual to an English as a Second Language (ESL) course. A referral should also be made to DET or a career center to identify appropriate employment.

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**Supervisor's  
Responsibilities**

Supervisor's Responsibilities for the Transition Plan process include:

- ▶ reviewing and signing all Transition Plans (The supervisor's signature does not need to be on the form at the time it's given to the recipient);
- ▶ reviewing alternative activities and making suggestions for the recipient to the Transitional Assistance Worker;
- ▶ preplanning with the Transitional Assistance Worker for Transition Plan contact on more complex cases;
- ▶ participating in case conferences with recipients and Transitional Assistance Workers or service providers when necessary; and
- ▶ reviewing recommendations made by the Transitional Assistance Worker for a change in a recipient's Community Service Site and bringing the recommendation to the manager or designee for approval.

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**Child Support  
Responsibilities**

At each eligibility review ensure the information on the absent parent is accurate and up to date, and that a referral to DOR is made. Be sure to ask questions such as "Is there anything different you can tell us now about him or her?" or "Have you seen him or her lately?" Child Support will be a valuable resource to the recipient at the end of the 24-month time limit.

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**Child Support  
Responsibilities  
(Continued)**

If the absent parent information *has changed*, submit new A34/36 and CA/CS forms to DOR with a current recipient signature and date unless good cause exists. If the absent parent information *has not changed*, review the "old" CA/CS for completeness and accuracy and write on the form "**no new information.**" Sign and date it and submit the form to DOR.

On each CA/CS show that the case has been reviewed by checking the change box and writing "review" after the word "change." Keep a copy for the case record.

For cases in which a child is deprived of support by the death of a parent, be sure to attach to the CA/CS a copy of the verification of death. See 106 CMR 203.510.

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**Questions**

Policy questions should be referred to the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478. Systems questions should be referred to the Systems Customer Support Services at (617) 348-5290.

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**Transition Plan**  
(To be completed by each grantee)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

SSN \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Case SSN \_\_\_\_\_

All adults without an exemption and members of their Transitional Assistance (TAFDC) household are limited to receiving Transitional Assistance for a cumulative total of 24 months within a continuous five-year (60-month) period. If you meet one of the exemptions described in the TAFDC Program Brochure which you have already received, the 24-month time limit rule may not apply to you. Refer to the TAFDC Program Brochure for a description of the exemptions. If you need another copy of this brochure or if you have any questions about these exemptions, ask your worker.

60-Month Start Date

I do want services at this time.

Months Remaining of Transitional Assistance

I do not want services at this time.

If you do not want help, why not?

**Review of Eligibility Changes:** Have you had any changes in income, assets, household size, shelter costs or other circumstances that may affect your eligibility?

What steps are you taking or can you take to prepare you to support your family when your 24-month time limit expires?

What steps have you taken or could you take to find a job or increase your hours if you are currently working?

How will you support your family when your 24-month time limit expires?

I have had the 24-month time limit rule explained to me and I am aware that my Transitional Assistance will stop after receiving benefits for 24 months. The Employment Services Program and available support services have also been explained to me.

Recipient/Applicant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Worker Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Contact  yes  no

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Call \_\_\_\_\_

# Transition Plan

(To be completed by worker)

	Explained time limit rule and number of months remaining and date of last payment
	Explained work requirement rules
	Explained domestic violence waiver from certain program requirements and provided brochure
	Referred to Employment Assistance Services (EAS)
	Referred for education and/or training program
	Explained child care and transportation support services
	Explained eligibility for one year of transitional child care and transitional MassHealth
	Provided handout on available earned income credits and how income is figured when grantee becomes employed
	Explained the Full Employment Program (FEP)
	Completed Employment Development Plan (EDP)
	Explained "banking" some of his or her 24 months of eligibility

What supports are necessary for the applicant/recipient to find and keep a job?

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What does the applicant/recipient need to do to access these supports?

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Referrals made/Follow-up from prior Transition Plan

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Eligibility review follow-up

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	<input type="checkbox"/> I have reviewed all sections of this plan.
Worker Signature	Supervisor Signature
Date	Date



**Schedule of Contacts with Recipients Subject to the 24-Month Time Limit**

MONTHS LEFT	Application																							
	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
MONTHS USED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
<b>ESP COMPONENT</b>																								
<b>No Current Component</b>	F			F			F			F			F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
<b>Community Service/ Work Program Alternative*/Employed Earning Less Than Minimum Wage</b>	F			F			F			F			F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
<b>Combination of 20 Hours of Employment and Community Service</b>	F			F			F			F			F			F			F	F	F	F	F	F
<b>20 Hours Employment at Minimum Wage or Greater</b>	F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F
<b>Skills/Training Educational Programs</b>	F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F
<b>Supported Work</b>	F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F
<b>Full Time Employment Earning Minimum Wage or Greater</b>	F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F			P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F

\* foster parent, grandmother babysitting a grandchild, housing search person, recipient in an internship or work study or person in a substance abuse shelter

Key:  
 F= Face-to-Face Contact  
 P/F= Face-to-Face or Phone Contact  
 • all initial contacts must be face-to-face  
 • at least one contact must be face-to-face in the last quarter.