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**Field Operations Memo 98-32**  
**August 14, 1998**

**TO:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff

**FROM:** Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

**RE:** Temporary Emergency Shelter Benefits and Twenty-Mile Rule for Temporary Emergency Shelter Placements

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**Background** In the FY99 budget the legislature approved two changes to the Emergency Assistance (EA) Program.

- 1) **Temporary emergency shelter benefits** may be authorized if the otherwise eligible EA household received EA benefits within the past 12 months for a rent arrearage payment but is now homeless. To be eligible for the temporary emergency shelter benefits the EA household must meet the homelessness criteria.
- 2) Placement in a temporary emergency shelter must be **within 20 miles** of the EA household's home community, unless the EA household requests otherwise. When a temporary emergency shelter is not available within the 20 miles, temporary emergency shelter will be provided in another Department-approved temporary emergency shelter as an interim measure.

Revised Emergency Assistance regulations will be issued as soon as possible. The regulation changes will be retroactive to July 1, 1998. Until the regulations are issued, Transitional Assistance Workers must provide temporary emergency shelter benefits based on the information in this memo.

**Temporary  
Emergency  
Shelter  
Within 12-  
Month Period**

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The Transitional Assistance Worker may authorize temporary emergency shelter benefits to an otherwise eligible EA household that had received EA benefits for a rent arrearage payment within the past 12 months. The EA household must meet the EA eligibility rules and meet the criteria for homelessness as specified in 106 CMR 309.040(A)(2), i.e., disaster, eviction, health and/or safety reasons, mistreatment or medical reason.

The EA procedures remain the same for authorizing this EA benefit and completing the SSPS invoices for the temporary emergency shelter benefits.

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**20 Mile-Rule**

The Department is required to place an EA household in a temporary emergency shelter that is within 20 miles of the EA household's home community unless:

- the EA household requests otherwise, or
- there is no appropriate Department-approved temporary emergency shelter available within 20 miles.

The appropriateness of the shelter is based on available vacancies, size and/or composition of the family, or other Department concerns about a particular shelter. When an appropriate Department-approved temporary emergency shelter is unavailable, the Department will place the EA household in the closest possible appropriate Department-approved temporary emergency shelter beyond the 20-mile limit. The EA household is to be transferred into an appropriate Department-approved temporary emergency shelter within 20 miles of its community at the earliest possible date, unless the household requests otherwise.

The Department must report quarterly to the legislature the number of EA households placed in temporary emergency shelters beyond the 20-mile limit, unless so requested by the EA household. A PC-based tracking system is currently being developed but until it is ready, the Transitional Assistance Worker must track placements beyond 20 miles, on the *Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement Beyond 20 Miles* log. See Attachment A. Complete the log by entering, for each EA household placed beyond the 20-mile limit unless so requested by the EA household, the date, recipient's name, SSN, name of the town/community where the recipient requested placement, and the name of the shelter and the address where the recipient was placed. Keep the completed log(s) until the tracking system is finalized.

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**Questions**

If you have any questions on this memo, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478. Systems-related questions should be directed to the Customer Service Center at (617) 348-5290.

