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**Executive Office of Health and Human Services**  
**Department of Transitional Assistance**  
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**Field Operations Memo 99-5**  
**February 12, 1999**

**To:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff  
**From:** Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations  
**Re:** Unique "999" Numbers for Applicants/Recipients Awaiting SSNs

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**Background**

Due to the implementation of PRISM II and BEACON Release 1.0, the Department changed the process for assigning identification numbers for recipients awaiting assignment of a social security number (SSN) from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Field Operations Memo 98-25 transmitted procedures for establishing a new dependent awaiting an SSN with the dummy number 999-88-8888. PACES then converts 999-88-8888 to a unique "999" number for the dependent.

Additionally, on 6/29/98 all dummy numbers for active or closed dependents in PACES were replaced with unique "999" numbers. These dependents could then be added to the PRISM II database.

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**Issue**

The 6/29/98 conversion of dummy numbers to unique "999" numbers resulted in *multiple* unique "999" numbers for dependents with dummy numbers on file in more than one case in PACES.

**Example 1:** Jimmy Jones was a dependent in both his mother's closed category 9 case and open category 2 case with dummy number 999-05-1098. The 6/29/98 conversion resulted in two different unique numbers being assigned to him; one for the closed category 9 case, one for the open category 2 case.

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**Issue (cont.)**

**Example 2:** Susie Smith's mother applied for TAFDC and expedited food stamp benefits. The worker completed two PIDs to open both a category 2 and a category 9 case with AR 03 and assigned Susie the dummy number 999-88-8888. PACES then created two different unique numbers for Susie.

Assigning two (or more) unique numbers to the same person in PACES resulted in the addition of two (or more) persons in PRISM II, causing invalid data and multiple alerts. Additionally, since PRISM II is the link through which data are transferred from PACES to BEACON, multiple instances of a person in PRISM II would result in multiple instances of that person in BEACON.

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**Purpose of Memo**

This memo:

- transmits new procedures relating to the assignment of unique numbers to all applicants/recipients;
  - obsoletes Field Operations Memo 98-25; and
  - explains Systems actions taken to correct the above described problem.
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**Establishing New Dependents on PACES**

When establishing a new dependent for whom an SSN has not yet been assigned:

- Check PACES, FMCS and MMIS to see if the dependent is known to the system with a unique "999" number.
  - If the dependent appears in another case with a unique "999" number, use the same unique number on the new case.
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**Establishing New Dependents on PACES (cont.)**

- If the dependent is not known to the system, enter 999-88-8888 in block 83 (Social Security No) of the PID. PACES will then assign a unique "999" number to that dependent. **If you must establish the dependent on more than one case, for example, a TAFDC applicant requests expedited food stamp benefits, then you must:**
    - ▶ **on Day One establish the dependent on the first case, in this example, the category 9 case; then**
    - ▶ **on Day Two establish the dependent on the second case, in this example, the category 2 case, using the unique number PACES assigned to the first case.**
- Note: Temporary MassHealth cards can still be issued on Day One. When establishing the category 2 case, make sure the start date accurately reflects the date of application.

*Reminder: Unique "999" numbers are temporary numbers intended only for individuals awaiting assignment of SSNs by SSA. These numbers must be replaced with valid SSNs on **both open and closed cases** as soon as possible.*

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**Reopening Dependents with Unique "999" Numbers**

**When reopening a dependent with a unique "999" number:**

- Reopen the dependent **and make no entry in block 83**. PACES will reopen the dependent using the same unique "999" number.
  - If the dependent now has a valid SSN, change the unique "999" number to the valid SSN **the next day. A two-day process is required to ensure that PRISM II correctly picks up both the reopening and the SSN change.**
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**Facsimile Number Assignment Process Unchanged**

These procedures pertain only to the assignment of dummy numbers for individuals awaiting assignment of a valid SSN from SSA. When assigning a facsimile number (991-998) to an applicant unable to obtain an SSN, follow current TAO procedures.

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**Systems Actions**

The following steps have been taken by Systems staff to correct the problem outlined in this memo:

- All dependents with unique "999" numbers were removed from PRISM II pending resolution of this problem.
- No newly-added dependents with unique "999" numbers were brought over to PRISM II pending this resolution.
- An initiative to merge multiple unique numbers for the same dependent was implemented. Where a dependent existed in two (or more) cases with two (or more) unique "999" numbers, demographic data were evaluated. If name, date of birth and sex all matched, the lower unique "999" number was selected and the number changed on the other case(s).

Example: Jane Doe, SSN 012-34-5678 has a category 2 and a category 9 case with a dependent as follows:

	Name	SSN	DOB	Sex
Cat 2	Doe, Sally	999-05-4321	10/27/98	F
Cat 9	Doe, Sally	999-07-2222	10/27/98	F

Since all demographic data match, Systems changed the category 9 number to 999-05-4321.

In instances where there was not an exact match of name, date of birth and sex, Systems staff researched the cases and determined if the dependents were the same person. If so, the demographics were updated, the lowest unique number was retained and the other number(s) changed in PACES. Cases where it was not certain that the dependents were the same person were not changed.

- This cleanup will be completed again before all dependents with unique "999" numbers are brought back into the PRISM II database. You will be notified when this takes place.
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**Obsolete Memo**

This memo obsoletes Field Operations Memo 98-25 and any prior instructions regarding the assignment of unique numbers to applicants/recipients awaiting a valid SSN from SSA.

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**Questions**

If you have any questions about this memo, 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.

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