



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2008-30 A
November 21, 2008

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: TAFDC – Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program Expansion: Public Housing Authority (Brockton) While Continuing in Somerville and Framingham

Overview

In partnership with Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Regional Non-profits (RNPs), DTA continues to market the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program.

Field Operations Memo 2008-30 provided TAO staff information related to the expansion of the existing DTA/FSS initiative to the Somerville and Framingham Public Housing Authorities. The goal of this expansion was to give nonexempt clients who are public housing residents or whose Section 8 housing is administered by the public housing agency and who are not participating in a work program activity, an additional resource to meet the work program requirement and become self-sufficient.

This Field Operations Memo adds the Brockton Housing Authority to the list of Housing Authorities offering the FSS Program to its tenants. This portion of the DTA/FSS initiative begins December 1, 2008 in Brockton. The existing DTA/FSS initiative continues in the Somerville and Framingham Public Housing Authorities.

Obsolete Memos This Field Operations Memo obsoletes Field Operations Memo 2008-30.

**Purpose of
Memo**

Due to the importance of ensuring that clients are enrolled in an activity that can lead to economic self-sufficiency, as well as meet their work program requirement, the marketing of the FSS program is being expanded to a new group of clients, those who live in the Brockton Public Housing Authority (PHA) or have their Section 8 certificate administered by the Brockton PHAs. A list of the clients who have been asked to participate will be e-mailed to the Brockton, Dudley Square, Malden and Taunton TAOs.

The purpose of this Field Operations Memo is to:

- remind TAO staff about the FSS program;
- explain the benefits of the FSS program;
- advise case managers and Full Engagement Workers of their roles;
- give TAO staff information about the PHA participating in the FSS program; and
- give the FSS contact list for the RNPs and the PHAs.

FSS Program

The purpose of the FSS program expansion is to coordinate public housing residents with public and private resources to assist eligible families to achieve greater economic independence and self-sufficiency. The DTA/FSS collaboration will foster a partnership between TAOs and PHAs that expand the number of clients building assets and making progress towards self-sufficiency. DTA's work program participation rate could increase as well.

The program will be marketed in PHA/FSS informational sessions to nonexempt TAFDC clients who are public housing residents and work program required.

**FSS Program
(continued)**

At the initial FSS informational session, FSS staff will describe the FSS program and its benefits to the clients. Those attending the informational sessions will be introduced to the FSS program and become aware of how to build assets as part of the program.

At that time, the client will sign a release of information form (Attachment A) allowing DTA staff and FSS staff to communicate with each other. The release form will be faxed to the TAO and given to the appropriate case manager. The FSS worker will telephone the case manager within 24 hours to discuss the client's work program requirements and limits on activities the client can do to meet the work program requirement.

IMPORTANT: DTA has a 12-month limit on education and training activities meeting the work program requirement. Some clients may have already used 12 months of an education and training program prior to enrolling in FSS. The amount of time the client has used in the 12-month limit (found on the TAFDC tab of the Work Requirements window on BEACON) and the client's work program hourly requirement (20, 24 or 30) must be used when developing the FSS Program Individual Training and Services Plan. The first activity listed on this plan must be an activity that meets the client's work program requirement. The PHA will work with the client and the case manager or Full Engagement Worker to ensure that the client successfully meets DTA's work program participation rules while enrolled in FSS.

The client will then go through an intake process with the FSS case manager that will take approximately two hours to complete. The intake process is generally conducted in person, but may be done telephonically or by mail.

**FSS Program
(continued)**

*FSS Program
Individual Training
and Services Plan*

Each client will work with an FSS case manager to establish a five-year plan to achieve his or her goal of self-sufficiency. The plan will ensure that clients obtain a job or acquire employment-based opportunities prior to the termination of TAFDC benefits (either time-limited or extension).

The program is tailored to a client's specific needs as they relate to:

- job training and networking to get work;
- skills education and post-secondary education;
- child care;
- resource planning; and
- credit repair.

The five-year plan (the FSS Program Individual Training and Services Plan) will become part of a contract (the Program Contract of Participation) that the client will sign once accepted in the FSS program. The contract includes the responsibilities required of both the client and the PHA to ensure the client achieves employment and self-sufficiency through the FSS program.

**FSS Program
Enrollment
Update**

The FSS staff will contact the case manager with the status of the client's enrollment in the FSS Program and to update the case manager relative to the first ESP activity the client must enroll in as part of the five-year plan. Once enrolled, the client will be provided case management services by PHA's FSS case manager to:

- ✓ identify and set realistic career goals,
- ✓ address barriers,
- ✓ maintain employment, and
- ✓ locate resources and services necessary for economic self-sufficiency by developing an action plan and agreement specific to the family's goal and objectives.

The client will be instructed by the FSS staff to return to the TAO to enroll in the ESP activity. If the client does not contact the case manager to enroll within two days from the intake process, the case manager must schedule an appointment with the client to enroll him or her in the ESP activity.

Case Manager or Full Engagement Worker Responsibilities Once the client returns to the TAO, the case manager or Full Engagement Worker will enroll the client in the first activity listed on the plan by going to BEACON and enrolling the client following established procedures. That activity will meet the client's work program requirement.

Once the client is enrolled, the DTA case manager or Full Engagement Worker will meet with the FSS case manager and client, as needed, to answer questions that may arise. He or she will also monitor the client's progress and participation monthly (following established procedures) to ensure that the client is meeting the work program requirement. The case manager or Full Engagement Worker will also case conference on a monthly basis (or more frequently, if needed) with the FSS case manager about the client's progress.

Escrow Account As part of the Program Contract of Participation, clients will accrue money in an escrow account. This begins once a client becomes employed and his or her Section 8 rent increases. That increase (the greater amount minus the lesser amount of rent) is the amount that is deposited by the FSS program into an escrow account. The escrow account has limited access by the client during participation (only 25% of the total of the account may be withdrawn once a year for a specific purpose and only if approved by the FSS program coordinator). The escrow account is a noncountable asset for purposes of:

- TAFDC financial eligibility (see 106 CMR 204.140 (W));
- SNAP eligibility: If a client withdraws 25% of the total of the escrow account, that amount is countable asset for Food Stamp purposes, for a household subject to SNAP asset rules (see Field Operations Memo 2008-27: Maximized Categorical Eligibility for NPA Food Stamp Households).
- Emergency Assistance eligibility (see 106 CMR 309.021).

At the end of the five-year period of successful participation in FSS, if the client is employed, has been off of TAFDC for 12 months and has no one in the household receiving TAFDC, he or she will receive the total amount in the escrow account plus interest. The money is nontaxable income. The FSS program case manager will explain the rules of the escrow account to the client.

DTA Case Closes

Once the client is placed on Monthly Reporting due to employment, the case manager or Full Engagement Worker must inform the client that even though the TAFDC case will close, he or she must successfully complete the FSS program to receive the escrow account.

RNP Contact List The following is the listing of FSS Contacts:

RNP FSS Worker	RNP Region	Regional Organization
Jane Pixley Lisa Wright (Spanish)	Berkshire County	Berkshire Housing Development Corporation 413 499-1630
Kathleen Mulligan Andrea Gauntlett Fernanda Faria (S)	Essex and North Middlesex Counties	Community Teamwork, Inc. 978 459-0551
Jan Nelson Marjorie Sanson (S)	Cape Cod and Islands	Housing Assistance Corporation 508 771-5400
Luz Rivera Lauren Voyer (TAO Director contact only)	Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties	HAP, Inc. 413 233-1533 (Luz) 413 233-1666 (Lauren)
Thomas Graham Sue Nohl	Greater Boston	Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, Inc. 617 859-0400
Kathleen Whitham	Worcester County	RCAP Solutions, Inc. 978 630-6600
Stasi Parchesky Tania DiDuca (S)	South Middlesex, Greater Framingham	South Middlesex Opportunity Council 508 620-2645
Joanne Wilmot Jan Nickerson Roger Goguen (S)	Southeastern Mass.	South Shore Housing Development Corporation 781 422-4200

PHA Contact List The following is the listing of PHA FSS Contacts:

PHA FSS Worker	PHA Region	Phone Number
Gay Cataldo Idyle Blanc	Somerville	617-625-1152
Rosemary Garneau Darlene Herweck	Framingham	508-879-7562
Cynthia McDonough	Brockton	508-588-6880

With the issuance of this memo, the RNP and PHA Contact list will be updated in DTA Online. To access the Contact list in DTA Online, click on the “Resource Inventories” button on the left-hand side of DTA Online. Click on “FSS Contact Lists.”

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

Attachment A

INFORMATION SHARING POLICY

As a participant in the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS) and a Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) TAFDC client, you will be working with both the Public Housing Authority (PHA) and DTA. In order to help you work toward self-sufficiency, information about you may be shared between the two agencies. This sharing will be limited to information that will assist in coordinating services for your family and meeting cross-program objectives, as well as allowing the agencies to measure the success of the FSS Program.

By signing below, I, an FSS Program participant, understand that information regarding my FSS case may be shared between the PHA and DTA.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date