



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

JUDYANN BIGBY, M.D.
Secretary

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
Lieutenant Governor

JULIA E. KEHOE
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2008-33
June 18, 2008

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From: John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Food Stamp Program – Waiver Exemption for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)

Overview

In an effort to increase food stamp participation among the ABAWD population, the Department applied for and received a waiver to exempt individuals in certain areas of the state from Work Program rules. These waived areas do not have sufficient job opportunities to ensure ABAWD compliance with work and/or community service requirements. Since the implementation of the ABAWD rules, many individuals have lost food stamp eligibility. This change will allow more ABAWDS to participate in the Food Stamp Program.

In addition, the Department is eliminating the use of *Inappropriate Candidate for CS* and *No Available FS CS Site* designations in BEACON.

A State Letter issuing policy revisions related to the ABAWD waiver is in progress.

Purpose of Memo

This memo implements the ABAWD waiver and describes:

- BEACON changes to the Work Requirements window;
- data-fix and clean-up activities (pre-conversion, conversion and post-conversion)
- procedures for processing:
 - ABAWDs (applicants and reapplicants) residing in waiver-approved areas; and
 - ABAWDs who move into or out of a waiver-approved area.

The memo also introduces a new job aid that will assist AU Managers to appropriately code ABAWDs on BEACON.

**BEACON
Changes to the
Work
Requirements
Window**

A series of changes will be made to the Food Stamp tab of the Work Requirements window in BEACON to facilitate the implementation of the ABAWD waiver. Other window changes include the elimination of the designations *Inappropriate Candidate for CS* and *No Available FS CS Site*, the merging of designations and the addition of new ones. Designations deemed inaccurate will be eliminated from the window, as needed, to facilitate correct coding. These collective changes will improve navigation on the Work Requirements window.

Changes in the Work Program Field When Coded Work Program Required - Yes

- **Referred to Work** will be eliminated as a Required Status Reason. This is not an eligible status reason under Food Stamp Work Requirements.
- **No Available FS CS Site** will be eliminated as a Required Status Reason.
- **Inappropriate Candidate for CS** will be eliminated as a Required Status Reason.
- **No FS CS Site Available** will be eliminated as a Meets Compliance Reason.
- **Inappropriate Candidate** will be eliminated as a Meets Compliance Reason.

Changes in the Work Program Field When Coded Work Program Required - No

- **Food Stamp Work Program Participant** will be eliminated as a Required Status Reason. This reason is inconsistent since a client who is not Work Program Required should not be a FS Work Program Participant.
 - **Employed at least 30 hrs/wk and Wkly wages = min. wage x 30 hrs** Required Status Reasons will be combined to form a new designation: **Employed 30 hrs/wk or min wage=30 hrs.**
 - **ABAWD Waiver** will be added as a Required Status Reason when a client is coded as Work Program Required - No.
 - **Unfit for Work Observed** will be added as a Required Status Reason when a client is coded as Work Program Required - No.
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**BEACON
Changes to the
Work
Requirements
Window
(Continued)**

**Changes in the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FS ET)
Field When Coded FS ET – No**

- **Employed at least 30 hrs/wk and Wkly wages = min. wage x 30 hrs**
Required Status Reasons will be combined to form a new designation:
Employed 30 hrs/wk or min wage=30 hrs.
 - **FS Work Program Participant** will be combined with the new *ABAWD Waiver* Required Status Reason to read **ABAWD Waiver/FS WP Participant.**
 - **Unfit for Work Observed** will be added as a Required Status Reason.
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**Data Fix and
Clean-Up
Activities**

As part of this project, a series of data-fixes and manual changes will be made to recode clients affected by the BEACON window changes. Additionally, certain clients incorrectly coded as Work Program required will be fixed prior to implementation of the waiver. These changes will occur, as outlined below, during the weekend of June 21, 2008.

**Pre-Conversion
Activities**

In the pre-conversion stage, cases that were incorrectly coded will be recoded through a data-fix.

1. Bay State CAP clients incorrectly coded as Work Program Required – Yes will be automatically changed to Work Program Required – No, FS ET Required – No with a Required Status Reason of Physically or Mentally Unfit. An entry will be added to the BEACON Narratives tab that reads: *Food Stamp Work Program reason changed to Physically or Mentally Unfit.*
 2. Clients who do not meet the ABAWD age criteria (under 18 or age 50 or over) will be automatically changed to Work Program Required - No with a Required Status Reason of *Under age 18 or Age 50 or over* because they are not Work Program Required. An entry will be added to the BEACON Narratives tab that reads: *Food Stamp Work Program reason changed to under Age 18 or Age 50 or over.*
 3. Clients who are residing with a person under the age of 18 but who are currently coded as Work Program Required - Yes will be automatically changed to Work Program Required - No with a Required Status Reason of *Residing with Person < 18* because they are not Work Program Required. An entry will be added to the BEACON Narratives tab that reads: *Food Stamp Work Program reason changed to Residing with Person < 18.*
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**Data Fix and
Clean-Up
Activities
(Continued)**

After the pre-conversion activities have been completed, BEACON will automatically convert all nonexempt ABAWDs in waiver-approved areas. The following BEACON changes will be made on the Work Requirements window for each ABAWD waiver case:

Conversion of
Existing Cases

- The Work Program Required radio button will be set to *No*;
- The Work Program Required Status Reason field will be set to *ABAWD Waiver*;
- The FS/ET field will be set to *ABAWD Waiver/FSWP Participant*;
- An entry will be added to the BEACON Narratives tab that reads: *Food Stamp Work Program Reason changed to ABAWD Waiver*.

Note: Homeless clients with a P.O. box mailing address will be converted to the ABAWD waiver exemption if the address of the P.O. box is in an area of the state classified as waiver-approved for FS purposes.

A streamweaver notice (Attachment A) will be sent to each converted household. The notice explains the waiver exempting the household member(s) from the Food Stamp Work Program.

Remember: Streamweaver notices are not available in Document History.

Post Conversion
Activities

After the ABAWD waiver has been applied to eligible ABAWDs (i.e. they are made exempt based on residence), some ABAWDs, ineligible for the waiver but affected by the BEACON window changes, will be recoded.

1. Clients originally coded as Work Program - No and a Required Status Reason of *Employed at least 30 hrs/wk* or FS ET - No and a Required Status Reason of *Wkly wages = min. wage x 30 hrs* will be automatically changed to the newly merged Required Status Reason *Employed 30 hrs/wk or min wage=30 hrs*.
 2. Clients originally coded as Work Program - Yes and a Required Status Reason of *Inappropriate Candidate for CS* will be automatically changed to Work Required – No and a Required Status Reason *Unfit for Work Observed*. This Required Status Reason (i.e. Unfit for Work Observed) will also populate as the client's FS ET - No Required Status Reason. An entry will be added to the BEACON Narratives tab that reads: *Food Stamp Work Program Reason changed to Unfit for Work Observed*.
 3. Clients originally coded as Work Program - Yes and a Required Status Reason of *Referred to Work* will be manually changed to appropriate Work Program and FS ET Required Status Reasons based on the circumstances of the case. This change will be made by Central Office Food Stamp staff who will contact the AU Manager prior to making the change.
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**Data Fix and
Clean-Up
Activities
(Continued)**

Post - Conversion
Activities

4. Clients originally coded as Work Program - Yes with a Required Status Reason of *No Available FS CS Site* and a Compliance Reason of *No FS CS Site Available* will be manually changed to appropriate Work Program and FS ET Required Status Reasons based on the circumstances of the case. This change will be made by Central Office Food Stamp staff who will contact the AU Manager prior to making the change.
 5. Clients originally coded as Work Program Required but who are either *under age 18* or *age 50 or over* or who are *Residing with a person < 18* will have their FS ET status manually fixed after conversion. This change will be made by Central Office Food Stamp staff who will contact the AU Manager prior to making the change.
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**Processing
Applicants or
Reapplicants
Who Reside in
Waiver-Approved
Areas**

When processing the application of an ABAWD who lives in a waiver-approved area, the AU Manager must make the following entries on the Work Requirements window:

- select the *No* radio button in the Work Program Required Field;
- select the Required Status Reason of *ABAWD Waiver* from the dropdown list (the FS/ET field will automatically populate with the corresponding exemption reason of *ABAWD Waiver/FSWP Participant*).

An email listing the cities, towns and zip codes that qualify for the ABAWD waiver will be issued to all TAOs with the distribution of this memo. This list will also be available as a link within the job aid *NPA Food Stamp Coding for ABAWD Work Requirements* (Attachment C), available on Policy Online.

**Processing
ABAWDs Who
Move Out of or
Into a Waiver-
Approved Area**

ABAWD Moves from a Waiver-Approved Area to Non-Waived Area and the Move Results in a Transfer

The AU Manager in the TAO transferring the case must:

- change the address on the case; and
- transfer the case to the appropriate TAO.

Note: The AU Manager transferring the case must not make any BEACON Work Requirements window changes for the ABAWD(s) being transferred.

The AU Manager in the TAO receiving the case must:

- adjust the coding on the Work Requirements window to reflect the appropriate Required Status Reason and Compliance Reason; and
 - refer the client to ABAWD programs such as Education and Training for ABAWDS (available in Dudley Square, Newmarket Square, Holyoke,
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**Processing
ABAWDs Who
Move Out of or
Into a Waiver-
Approved Area
(continued)**

Springfield, New Bedford, North Shore and Worcester TAOs) or refer to community service, if appropriate.

Note: The AU Manager must look on the sanctions tab of the AU Comp Results window to see how many Work Program disqualifications, if any, the client has. If the client has three Work Program disqualifications listed in the window, he or she **must be** referred to community service.

ABAWD Moves from Non-Waived Area to a Waiver-Approved Area and the Move Results in a Transfer

The AU Manager in the TAO transferring the case must:

- change the address on the case;
- adjust the coding on the Work Requirements window to reflect the ABAWD waiver for all nonexempt ABAWDs in the household; and
- transfer the case to the appropriate TAO.

To assist TAOs in the maintenance of accurate BEACON coding on the Work Requirements window the *Checklist for Transfer AUs* form (Attachment B) has been revised to include two new questions under the *Case Actions* section of the form. The questions will prompt the AU Manager or TAO designee to review the case and make appropriate BEACON window changes if the client who is being transferred has moved into or out of a waiver-approved area.

In addition, two Actuate reports *FS ABAWD Clients Moving Out of Waiver Area Detail Report* and the *FS ABAWD Clients Moving Into Waiver Area Detail Report* will be generated monthly. Supervisors will be able to monitor activity in their unit by accessing the monthly summary reports. The summary reports *FS ABAWD Clients Moving Out of Waiver Area Summary Report* and the *FS ABAWD Clients Moving Into Waiver Area Summary Report* compile cumulative numbers for each unit. Both reports (i.e. detail or summary) can be accessed through BEACON/Actuate Report Viewer/ BEACON 2/Field Ops Staff TAO Reports.

The reports are not available at this time. They are expected to be in production approximately one month after the implementation of the ABAWD waiver. An email will be sent to all TAOs when these reports become available.

Job Aid

This memo transmits a job aid entitled *NPA Food Stamp Coding for ABAWD Work Requirements*, available on Policy Online, Job Aids. The job aid will help AU Managers identify an ABAWD, and subsequently lead the AU Manager to correct BEACON coding of the Work Requirements window based on a series of Yes or No questions. AU Managers must follow the path of the Job Aid to ensure accurate coding.

**Job Aid
(Continued)**

If the ABAWD appears to be unfit for employment, the new ABAWD exemption reason *Unfit for Work Observed* must be used. ABAWDs who are unfit for work are often incapable of providing medical verification.

Important: The ABAWD waiver only exempts ABAWDs who reside in certain areas of the state. All other aspects of the Food Stamp Work Requirements not discussed in this memo remain unchanged.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.

Attachment A

200 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148
Cuidadosamente

Important Notice - Read Carefully
Este Mensaje Es Importante - Lea

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street.
DTA
Malden, MA 02148

999-99-9999
Malden TAO -

05/01/2008

A Food Stamp Work Program Rule Change that Affects Your Household

Dear Mary Jones:

The Department is pleased to tell you about a new rule that makes it easier for your household to receive food stamp benefits. Under the new rule, food stamp recipients living in certain areas do not have to meet the Food Stamp Work Program requirements because of a lack of jobs. The new rule affects your household.

Effective immediately, the household member(s) named below is exempt from the Food Stamp Work Program.

Mary Jones

If the household member(s) named above moves to a new address, the household member(s) may be required to again participate in the Food Stamp Work Program.

If you have questions about this letter, please call 617-999-9999 and ask for your worker Mary Smith.

You may also call Recipient Services at 1-800-445-6604, if you have trouble reading or understanding this notice.

To ask about free legal services, call: Greater Boston Legal Services at 1-800-323-3205.



Checklist for Transfer AUs

TAO Name

Telephone Number

AU Name

Social Security Number

ADA Accommodation:

Is there an ADA Accommodation? [] yes [] no

If yes, is the Request for ADA Accommodation form in the AU record? [] yes [] no [] n/a

Living Arrangement:

Is SUA adjusted? [] yes [] no [] n/a

Is client the primary tenant? [] yes [] no

Is rental allowance correct? [] yes [] no

Type of Housing [] private [] subsidized [] pays no rent

Is rent receipt, lease, host statement or utility bills in the AU record? [] yes [] No

AU Actions:

Protective payments stopped? [] yes [] no [] n/a

Does this household include a FS ABAWD who has moved from a waived area into a nonwaived area? [] yes [] no

Does this household include a FS ABAWD who has moved from a nonwaived area into a waived area? [] yes [] no

If yes, ensure the appropriate coding on the Work Requirements window.

Review for missing and/or pending actions? [] yes [] no

AU meets special criteria for transfer to Centralized TAFDC Office. [] yes [] n/a

Explain here

Reviewed by

Date

Title

NPA Food Stamp Coding for ABAWD Work Requirements

