

employment and over \$5 million was granted for helping parents keep their jobs. In addition, the Commonwealth received over \$500,000 from the federal government for improvement in the Family Formation and Stability category – a measure of the increase in the percentage of children in each state who reside in married couple families.

- In the area of Housing and Homeless Services, not only have we managed to maintain our “no motel” record, we have done so while implementing state legislative changes which increased eligibility for Emergency Assistance. Through the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development) and the Housing Assistance Program, *we’ve managed, in many instances, to prevent homelessness and shorten shelter stays.* By the end of this year, we anticipate spending \$2.75 million in Toolbox funds to directly assist families in retaining or securing housing. We have also reached the goal of 100 units committed by Local Housing Authorities for the Local Housing Authority Transitional Housing Program. Thirty families have graduated and are now lease holders in their own, affordable units. In addition, for our shelter and service provider partners, we’ve begun the deployment of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to help provide more timely statewide information on homeless individuals and families in Massachusetts, to give us a better understanding of our homeless population -- particularly those that are chronically homeless -- and identify gaps in services. HMIS deployment should be completed by the spring of 2006.

These accomplishments are the result of improved interagency collaboration, of coordination with our nonprofit partners and, most importantly, of the commitment of a superb staff. It is gratifying to look back and see all that we have achieved together.

We want to do all we can to ensure continued progress. For this reason, last month we hired 39 new case-carrying employees. As many of you know, this new group of employees follows the hiring of ten food stamp workers who came on board in July of this year. I’d like to welcome them all to our Agency. This is also a good time to extend a special thanks to our Training Unit for responding

From the Hotline

- Q.** Last month, I took an application from a man applying for TAFDC and food stamp benefits. He and his nine-year-old nephew were victims of Hurricane Katrina. I issued him emergency food stamp and cash benefits. He was also approved for ongoing TAFDC and food stamp benefits as he intends to remain in Massachusetts. At the time of the application, he couldn’t verify his relationship to his nephew. How long can he remain eligible for food stamp benefits and TAFDC without this verification?
- A.** Beginning in January, to continue receiving TAFDC, the uncle will need to have verified his relationship to his nephew. If he is having difficulty in obtaining original documents, assist your recipient by exploring alternate forms of verification. If he is having difficulty obtaining the birth certificates that demonstrate his relationship to his nephew, you can use other forms of verification. (Refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-46(B) as well as 106 CMR 203.570 and 203.585 for more details.)

In the Food Stamp Program, the uncle would not need to verify relationship for continued eligibility. Refer to the "Parental Control" rule at 106 CMR 361.200(A)(2) for more details.

Q. Is the Voluntary Authorization to Release Information form available for TAFDC and EAEDC recipients?

A. Yes, this form is intended for TAFDC, EAEDC, FS and EA. To obtain verification that may rely on a consultation with a third party, the Voluntary Authorization to Release Information form should be used first (available in Policy Online Forms). Refer to 106 CMR 702.311 and 702.340 for more information.

Note: Collateral contact must be documented on the BEACON Narratives Tab and in the AU record. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-49 for further details.

Q. A man came into our office to apply for EAEDC as well as food stamp benefits. He recently lost

quickly and working closely with these new colleagues so that they're better prepared to carry a full caseload. During 2005, the Training Unit has also provided HMIS instruction to over 400 housing and shelter providers.

Before signing off for the year, I'd like to share one last point. I realize that it's not always easy to notice breakthroughs in your day-to-day work. That's why this end-of-the-year recap is so important. It shows just how effective we've all been over the past 12 months. I'm certain that with the right blend of energy, inspiration and pragmatism, we can have an even larger impact in 2006.

Best wishes to you all this holiday season.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will review two NPA errors, one related to shelter and the other to the child care deduction. Remember: Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) provides considerable protection from Quality Control errors, but only if the certification is done correctly.

Shelter Error

On the USR Form for February 2005, the recipient reported her rent as \$525. On the subsidy question, she reported that she paid \$91 and the housing authority paid the remainder. The AU Manager apparently failed to notice this detail in the recipient's answer. Consequently, the recipient's rent was incorrectly entered onto the Shelter Expenses window as \$525. At the previous recertification, the recipient submitted a Tenant Profile from the housing authority. This clearly showed that the recipient's portion of the rent was \$91. In fact, the recipient had been paying this rental amount for some time. Quality Control verified that the shelter expenses for this AU had not changed, resulting in an overissuance.

his job providing child care for his cousin's child. The cousin was paying the applicant directly, and there is no unemployment compensation associated with this job. Now that he is claiming a disabling back problem, is he required to apply for Unemployment Compensation benefits?

- A. No, not in this applicant's situation. If you are aware of reasons why an applicant would not be entitled to Unemployment Compensation benefits, as in the situation you describe above, then the requirement is not applicable.

However, it's often in the applicant's best interest to seek out and apply for additional benefits. In both the EAEDC and TAFDC Programs, the development of other benefits is a requirement. If your applicant fails to follow-through with the Unemployment Compensation benefit application *when you know that he may be eligible for these benefits*, the EAEDC application must be denied. Refer to 106 CMR 702.700 for more details.

Note: The Food Stamp Program does not have this requirement.

Season's Greetings

from

Policy and

Program Management

