

having one of the most improved job-entry rates, we rank 48th in terms of the number of recipients who actually enter the workforce. This is a reflection of the fact that, under current state law, only about one-quarter of our TAFDC clients are required to work. That is why we are looking to design new programs, services and/or incentives aimed at engaging both the exempt population and those nonexempt clients who are not currently meeting their work program requirements. One of the ways we plan on doing this is by creating new job support and training programs that balance the needs of working parents with the demands of current market forces. Examples include the addition of ABE/ESOL classes in our skills training programs, using distance learning resources when available, and expanding services with community colleges.

By investing in the job prospects of all of our TAFDC families, we'll be improving the Massachusetts economy. By maintaining a job-first strategy for all of those who are job-ready, we'll be helping families stay strong. Your continued hard work in this direction is recognized and greatly appreciated.

At this time of year, my thoughts are also with our friends in the Gulf states as well as those on our own coast who have been hit hard by natural disasters or homelessness. As they work towards rebuilding their lives and their neighborhoods, remember that the COMECC Campaign begins this month. I'd like to invite you all to participate in the Campaign. It's an easy, convenient way to lend a helping hand.

Enjoy your Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,



From the Hotline

The questions and answers in this month's "From the Hotline" column concern verification requirements in the Food Stamp Program. Further information on this topic is available at 106 CMR 361.600 through 106 CMR 361.660 and 106 CMR 366.320.

- Q.** I received a completed, pre-filled USR form from one of my food stamp recipients. She has reported no changes since her last recertification. Given the fact that her household circumstances have remained the same, are there any verification requirements for this recipient?
- A.** No. In this situation, as long as the verification requirements were met at the last recertification and there is no questionable information reported, your recipient does not need to verify any additional information.
- Q.** Another one of my recipients completed her pre-filled USR form. On the form, she indicated that she now pays a higher rent but she did not provide verification of this change. How do I proceed?

A. Send a Verification Checklist (VC-1) to the recipient requesting verification of the new shelter amount. If the shelter amount remains unverified, it must be zeroed out since it was reported as part of the recertification process. The USDA has clarified that unverified expense amounts must be zeroed out if reported at initial application, reapplication or recertification.

Q. I zeroed out my recipient's expenses because he reported an unverified increase in his housing payment on his pre-filled USR form. He later contacted me and indicated that he is rarely able to get written verifications from his landlord. How should I proceed?

A. If you know that your recipient is having difficulty obtaining verifications, you should assist him in obtaining the required verifications and also consider using alternate forms of verification, such as collateral contacts with persons outside of the household. Refer to 106 CMR 361.640(B). For example, if you know that

your recipient's landlord is unlikely to write a rent receipt, you can either use a different source to verify the rent amount or obtain permission from your recipient using the Voluntary Authorization to Release Information form (available in Policy Online-Online Forms) to contact his landlord and verify the new rent amount.

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

Q. Must I require a birth certificate to verify certain food stamp eligibility requirements?

A. No, not necessarily. Although the birth certificate *can* be used to verify certain eligibility requirements in the Food Stamp Program, there are other ways to verify these requirements. For example, when your recipient is unable to obtain a birth certificate and you need verification of identity, you use a driver's license or school ID. To verify the age of an elderly recipient, an approved collateral contact with a different social service agency is acceptable when the primary, documentary evidence is unavailable. Again, a note explaining these situations is required on the BEACON Narratives Tab.

Bay State CAP Outreach: Phase Two

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Field Operations Memo 2005-50

Field Operations Memo 2005-50A

Field Operations Memo 2005-50 provides information about the Phase Two Bay State CAP Outreach process. Phase Two will target approximately 28,500 SSI recipients who meet Bay State CAP eligibility criteria and are coded as "State Living Arrangement B" for SSI purposes. This target population includes individuals who live with others and share expenses. Also included in this group are licensed group home residents and homeless individuals living in shelters. Phase Two will also target about 4,500 SSI recipients coded as "State Living Arrangement A" who were screened out of Phase One.