



Transitions

A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

Happy Year 2000 to you and your families. As this is being written, we are in the waning days of a century and a millenium—it is truly a once in a lifetime experience and, like many of you, I view it with a mixture of excitement and some minor concern. Our dependence as a society on computers has made “Y2K” part of our everyday language. Even those with no technological inclination are aware of potential issues. It has been impossible to pick up a magazine or watch a news show on television without hearing something about Y2K preparedness. My concerns, though, have been closer to our shared professional home, the Department of Transitional Assistance.

When I wrote to you in November about the Department’s goals I talked about our Y2K plans. Since that time, work has continued and I am confident that all possible steps have been taken to ensure a smooth Y2K transition. In addition to a tremendous effort by our MIS staff to remediate all of our systems, other central office divisions have also participated in developing our contingency plans. The Finance Unit has worked with our EBT and EFT vendors to coordinate efforts and to develop backup plans. Facilities has reviewed all of our leases and contacted landlords to ensure that building systems such as HVAC and elevators have been reviewed for compliance. Field Operations has developed a plan which will result in every local office being visited on January 1, 2000 to check that all vital systems are up and running. Policy and Procedure worked with these divisions to develop and issue backup procedures to be implemented in case something does not go as planned. This is a tremendous amount of

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Emergency Assistance Eligibility Standards Effective July 1, 1999

EA State Letter 1184 Field Operations 99-34

State Letter 1184 transmits two EA standards.

- The assistance unit's (AU's) gross income must be equal to the EA Non-Shelter Standard; or
- The AU applying for temporary emergency shelter benefits whose gross income is more than the EA Non-Shelter Standard must have gross income less than or equal to the EA Shelter Standard.

Field Operations Memo 99-34 provides instructions for determining eligibility for temporary emergency shelter benefits for an AU denied or terminated from shelter on or after July 1, 1999 because its gross income was greater than the TAFDC Eligibility Standard. Transitional Assistance Workers or Homeless Coordinators must review the eligibility for shelter benefits for these AUs by comparing the AU's gross income to the EA Shelter Standard. When the income is equal to or less than the EA Shelter Standard, the AU is eligible for temporary emergency shelter benefits. Select code B in block 12 or the EA-1 to identify an AU whose eligibility for temporary emergency shelter is based on the EA Shelter Standard.

Emergency Assistance Reference Guide

EA *Emergency Assistance Reference Guide*

The *Emergency Assistance Reference Guide* has been created to provide TAO staff with instructions for determining EA eligibility for rent arrearage payments, shelter placements, housing search services or disaster benefits, monitoring compliance with shelter placement rules, and completing the necessary EA forms. This reference guide obsoletes Chapter 10: Emergency Assistance, in the old *AFDC Reference Guide*.

FYI

Supervisory Signoff on Match Logs

According to Department procedures, all Match Logs, i.e., Prison, Interstate, etc., sent to Centralized Eligibility Operations have required the signature of a Director or designee.

Effective immediately, this process is the responsibility of the Transitional Assistance Supervisor. Transitional Assistance Supervisors are to review the information provided for accuracy and completeness and to sign and send all match logs to Centralized Eligibility Operations.

FYI

Noncitizen Desk Guide Online

The Noncitizen Desk Guide is now available online. To access the Noncitizen Desk Guide Online go to Policy Online and select the bullet called "Noncitizen Desk Guide Online." Select "Instructions" for navigating the desk guide.

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FYI

Acosta Payment

The Department issued a special *Acosta* payment on December 20, 1999 to certain TAFDC recipients whose TAFDC cases closed for more than 60 days and were not issued the *Acosta* payment they were due. This *Acosta* payment was the total amount of the *Acosta* payments owed for the months of September, October and/or November 1999. The ViewDirect DOR/CSE Acosta File Report screen shows the cumulative *Acosta* payment. An *Acosta* payment (support payments exceeding the TAFDC grant) is noncountable for TAFDC unless the recipient receives two consecutive payments; action to terminate the TAFDC case must then be taken.



work for what everyone involved, including me, believes will be a “non-event.” But it is work which was very necessary and I am pleased that all of my reports show it has been completed successfully.

This work will smooth our entrance into the next century and millennium and will also allow us to focus on the major initiatives which we will pursue in 2000. First on this list is the implementation of BEA-CON 2.0. Work on the implementation plan is ongoing and you will all become more involved as the new year progresses. I am confident that its implementation will provide us more of the tools we need to support our recipients as they transition to work. Coupled with this will be our increased emphasis on maximizing the use of Information Technology. This maximization will enable us to do our jobs in a fashion which fully utilizes the technological tools available to us.

We will continue our emphasis on serving those families transitioning to work, with a particular emphasis on post-employment services. I continue to believe in the importance of offering continued support to those who have recently begun working. Helping a family through their initial months at a new job is the best way to ensure their long term success. I am also committed to looking at the Emergency Assistance program to refocus it from a program which only addresses the current emergency to one which tries to address the possible cause of the emergency and to offer solutions.

Alone this is a formidable list of initiatives. And being a realist, I know it is a list which will grow and change. It is also a list which offers exciting opportunities for us as an agency and for the families we serve. I look forward to the new year and the challenges we will face together. Happy New Year!!

Sincerely,

Claire McIntire
Commissioner

THE
GOAL
OF
TAFDC!



From the Forms File

New Forms

02-566-1299-05

DVCONTREQ (12/99)

*Request for a Waiver Continuation of TAFDC Program Requirement(s)
Due to Domestic Violence*

There is a new waiver request form for victims of Domestic Violence. Refer to the FYI on page 8 in this issue of **Transitions** for more information. The Spanish version will be available soon.

13-200-1299-05

13-201-1299-05(S)

HM-NT (12/99)

*Notice To Recipients of Emergency Assistance (EA) Staying in
Hotels/Motels*

This notice must be given to and signed by recipients who are being temporarily placed in a hotel/motel while the Department looks for another shelter placement. Refer to the *Emergency Assistance Reference Guide* (12/99) for more information.

Revised Forms

The following Emergency Assistance forms have been revised. Refer to the *Emergency Assistance Reference Guide* (12/99) on the use of these forms.

13-001-1299-05

EA-1 (Rev. 12/99)

Authorization for Emergency Assistance Benefit

13-004-1299-05

13-021-1299-05 (S)

EA-6 (Rev. 12/99)

Emergency Assistance Application

13-007-1299-05

EA-9 (Rev. 12/99)

Assignment of Potential Fire Insurance

13-100-1299-05

13-101-1299-05 (S)

EA-13 (Rev. 12/99)

*Notice of Shelter Transfer - After
One Year*

13-030-1299-05

EAN-1 (Rev. 12/99)

EA Noncompliance Referral

02-202-1299-05

02-204-1299-05(S)

TES-TR-1 (Rev. 12/99)

Notice of Shelter Transfer

13-039-1299-05

13-042-1299-05(S)

NFL-ST (Rev. 12/99)

Notice of Termination of

Temporary Emergency Shelter

13-040-1299-05

13-044-1299-05(S)

TES-WN-1 (Rev. 12/99)

Warning Notice of Noncompliance

13-041-1299-05

13-043-1299-05 (S)

TES-WN-2 (Rev. 12/99)

Warning Notice of

Noncompliance - Temporary

Emergency Shelter Placement

The following forms have been revised to reflect a change in Department procedures regarding Match Logs. Refer to the FYI on page 2 in this issue of **Transitions** for more information. Please note that Centralized Eligibility Operations sends the Match Logs to the Transitional Assistance Offices.

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02-400-1299-05
DOR NEW HIRE-LOG
DOR New Hire SSN Only Match
Log (Rev. 12/99)

18-098-1299-05
BSI-FH (Rev. 12/99)
BSI Fraud Hotline

18-078-1299-05
DIA/MATLOG (Rev. 12/99)
DIA Match Log

02-635-1299-05
DSS/MATLOG (Rev. 12/99)
DSS IV-E Match Log

02-612-1299-05
DYS/MATLOG (Rev. 12/99)
DYS Match Log

02-572-1299-05
NHREG/LOG (Rev. 12/99)
New Hampshire Division of Motor
Vehicles Computer Match Log

18-138-1299-05
SSN/Match Log (Rev. 12/99)
SVES Match - SSN Validation

02-619-1299-05
LOT/MATLOG (Rev. 12/99)
Lottery Match Log

18-096-1299-05
DOC-1 (Rev. 12/99)
Department of Corrections Match

Year 2000 (Y2K) Business Continuity Plans

All Field Operations Memo 2000-1

- This Field Operations Memo describes the Department's Y2K plans. These plans have been developed to deliver benefits without interruption in the event that "business as usual" is affected by the transition into the new millennium.
- Directors received a more detailed memo describing the contingency plans which the Department may select for manual issuance of benefits if there is a Y2K problem which prevents the Department from issuing system-generated benefits.
- Central Office will notify Directors if a plan is to be implemented. Transitional Assistance Office Staff should not take any action or implement any contingency plan unless told to do so.

FYI

Condominium Fees Now Fully Allowable as Shelter Costs for Food Stamp (FS/SSFSP) Purposes

Several recent quality control errors have involved the incorrect allowance of condominium fees as shelter costs. A federal policy change will eliminate this type of error in the future.

Condominium fees must be fully allowed as shelter costs. For example, an assistance unit has a \$750.00 mortgage and a \$125.00 condominium fee each month. The allowable shelter cost is \$875.00 (Block 54 of the PACES Input Document). Workers need not determine what portion of a monthly condominium fee is paid toward allowable shelter or utility costs. A breakdown of the monthly condominium fees from the applicant or recipient is no longer required.

Poverty is the Problem...

A JOB IS THE SOLUTION!

From the Hotline - FS/SSFSP Noncitizen Questions

Q. Do the food stamp proration rules (Field Operations Memo 98-8) apply to a food stamp AU containing ALL federally-eligible noncitizens?

A. No.

Q. Do the food stamp proration rules (Field Operations Memo 98-8) apply to a food stamp AU containing ALL SSFSP-eligible noncitizens?

A. No.

Q. Do the food stamp proration rules (Field Operations Memo 98-8) apply to a combination food stamp AU containing both FS-eligible and SSFSP-eligible noncitizens?

A. The noncitizen proration rules may apply to a combination food stamp AU.

(a) If an SSFSP-eligible member has income (earned or unearned, including part of a cash assistance grant), the SSFSP-eligible noncitizen's income must be prorated.

(b) If an SSFSP-eligible noncitizen has income AND is billed/pays shelter costs, the shelter costs must be prorated.

Q. Why is Type GR income always attributed to Client 00 on the PACES Worksheet?

A. Type GR income was programmed under Client 00 because for purposes of the proration calculation it does not matter to whom the grant is paid. PACES attributes GR income to all active AU members represented on the PACES Input Document (PID). The GR entry tells PACES to prorate the grant among all active AU members. **Do not use Type GR income unless all members are included in the grant.**

Q. I have a combination case in which several members share in a TAFDC grant and one member receives EAEDC. If I enter Type GR with these grants, will the grants be prorated properly?

A. No. The GR entry tells PACES to prorate the grant among all active AU members represented on the PID. In this situation, both the TAFDC grant and EAEDC grant must be prorated manually and entered on the PID as OU income. **Do not use Type GR income unless all active members are included in the grant.**

Q. How are child support payments treated in a combination (FS/SSFSP) case?

A. According to a recent clarification from USDA, child support income belongs to the child(ren). It is only prorated if the child(ren) is SSFSP-eligible.

Q. How are DEFRA payments treated in a combination (FS/SSFSP) case?

A. According to a recent clarification from USDA, DEFRA income belongs to the parent. It is only prorated if the parent is SSFSP-eligible.

Q. Certain Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) are eligible for food stamp benefits without having 40 quarters if they were adjusted to permanent resident from a previous status of refugee, asylee, deportee, Cuban/Haitian or

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Amerasian within seven years of the original status granted date. Are there codes on the I-151 or I-551 which identify that the LPR was adjusted from a previous status?

A. Yes, the following codes on an I-551/151 indicate that the noncitizen was adjusted to LPR status from a previous status:

(a) I-551/151 coded RE-6, RE-7 or RE-8 indicates that a Refugee was adjusted to LPR status.

(b) I-551 /151 coded AS-6, AS-7 or AS-8 indicates that an Asylee was adjusted to LPR status.

(c) I-551/151 coded AM-1, AM-2, AM-3, AM-6, AM-7 or AM-8 indicates an Amerasian was adjusted to LPR status.

(d) I-551/151 coded CU6, CU7 or CH7 indicates a Cuban/Haitian was adjusted to LPR status.

Note: There is no code on the I-551/151 to indicate a noncitizen was previously in a Deportation Withheld status.

Structured Job Search Program

TAFDC

The TAFDC Procedural Guide Update 026

The TAFDC Procedural Guide Update adds the description of the Structured Job Search Program to Chapter 5 where ESP components are explained. This material adds specific references for the inclusion of BEACON into the current procedures.

Smith v. McIntire Lawsuit

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 99-10 L

This Field Operations Memo informs Transitional Assistance Office Staff of an additional court order that impacted recipients in the *Smith v. McIntire* lawsuit. Three groups must be reviewed in conjunction with this order:

- former recipients previously denied for failure to keep an appointment;
- former recipients who were denied for withdrawing their request for reinstatement; and
- former recipients denied due to excess income.

FYI

MassHealth Benefits Desk Guide

The Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) developed a second MassHealth Benefits desk guide. The new desk guide lists the coverage types for people who are age 65 or older, institutionalized or receiving home- or community-based services, and for certain other eligibility groups.

This desk guide is being distributed to Transitional Assistance Workers as a reference tool. It is in addition to the MassHealth Benefits desk guide that was issued in September 1998 for people under age 65 who are not institutionalized.

Food Stamp Work Program

FS, SSFSP

The Food Stamp Procedural Guide Update 001

- Chapter 1 of *The Food Stamp Procedural Guide* has been updated to include fixes to the FS/Work Program functionality on BEACON.
- A new section has been added to instruct the TAO staff on how to process FS/Work Program cases regarding eligibility.

Food Stamp 36-Month Clock

FS/SSFSP

The Food Stamp Procedural Guide Update 002

- Language has been added to *The Food Stamp Procedural Guide* explaining the fixed 36-month clock for all food stamp applicants and recipients between the ages of 18 and 50. The current 36-month clock begins on January 1, 2000 and ends on December 31, 2002.
- Also, due to the increase in the minimum wage, *The Food Stamp Procedural Guide* is being updated to change the maximum number of community service hours from 24 hours to 21 hours per month.



FYI

Request for a Waiver Continuation of TAFDC Program Requirement(s) Due to Domestic Violence

There is a new waiver request form for victims of domestic violence which will be completed by a recipient who has been granted a domestic violence waiver, and is requesting a continuation of that waiver. The form was designed so that victims would not have to repeat information contained in the previous waiver, but rather focus on new information. This would include, for example, any incidents of domestic violence which occurred after the original waiver was granted, and services the recipient and/or the recipient's children may have obtained during that time. The Domestic Violence Specialist and/or the Transitional Assistance Worker will help the recipient complete the form and obtain verifications if requested.

Recipients requesting a domestic violence waiver for the first time will continue to complete the Request for a Waiver of TAFDC Program Requirement(s) Due to Domestic Violence form.