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## Dear Fellow Employees,

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do."

**Eleanor  
Roosevelt**

Check out the "New Initiatives" option in Policy Online and you'll notice that our list continues to grow. "New Initiatives" memos provide previews of DTA's future. The initiatives are first introduced in selected local offices and then gradually phased in across the state. By starting small, we're able to identify potential glitches and opportunities for improvement before statewide implementation. Since these new initiatives will eventually arrive in your local office, it makes sense to begin learning about them when they are first introduced. This month, I'd like to take a closer look at the Card Issuance System (CIS) and the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP) initiative.



The CIS initiative was created in response to feedback I received from many of you during local office visits. I heard a number of you suggest that the former photo identification system was burdened with complications. First introduced in the Taunton and Brockton local offices in late May, the Bay State Access Card is replacing the facial image identification card process in stages. The new-card creation process is integrated into BEACON and as a result produces a smoother workflow and client delivery process: for the client, there are no fees to replace the card if it is lost or stolen, and for our agency staff, there are no photos to take or fees to collect when issuing a replacement. As the implementation plan has broadened to include all local offices, the feedback I am receiving is generally positive.

The MBHP initiative also began in May. As of this writing, it is being conducted in the Lawrence, Lowell, North Shore and Revere local offices. The initiative aims to work more closely with some of our homeless families in hotels and motels. Certain homeless families facing mental health challenges may now volunteer for a referral, mental health assessment and follow-up services. Recommendations from the family's assessment and referral will help our clients complete their self-sufficiency activities and transition to stable, permanent housing. This initiative attempts to leverage our resources by forging partnerships with three agencies that will assist with referrals and follow-up services. These agencies are the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Family Continuity Program and the Children's Friends and Family Services.

Each of you may be involved with these and other initiatives in the coming months. Your efforts toward making new initiatives successful underscore your outstanding commitment to our clients. With your help, I will continue *my* commitment to finding better, more efficient ways to deliver benefits.

In closing, I want to recognize that, for many of us, our attention is also focused overseas with the troops in our nation's armed forces. Your attention may at times be diverted by friends or family members who have been called to active duty. I want to take this moment to acknowledge their courage and offer a prayer for peace as well as hopes for their safe return.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner

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## From the Forms File

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The following form is now available in Spanish.

02-208-0604-05 (S)  
TAFDC-5 (Rev. 6/2004)  
*Two-Parent Exempt/Nonexempt Status Notice*

## Revised Brochure

02-211-0704-05  
YRTK (Rev. 7/2004)  
*Your Right to Know*

This revised brochure now has new and/or revised information in the following sections: Availability of Benefits, Social Security Numbers and Your Right to Privacy, Citizenship Outreach Project, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Civil Rights - Nondiscrimination. AU Managers must destroy the old brochure and be sure to give the revised brochure to applicants and recipients. Other languages will be available soon.

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**Q.** A TAFDC recipient came to our office this month to report that her son turned 18 in May. She also told me that, although he had completed high school, he failed to pass the MCAS Exam and intends to retake the test. In preparation for retaking the exam, her son plans to enroll in an MCAS review course over the summer months. This dependent is an only child. Is this AU still eligible for TAFDC?

**A.** Yes. Although this dependent child has turned 18 and has completed his high school course work, he may remain a part of the TAFDC AU for a period of time not to exceed six months.


A dependent child age 18 who has received a Certificate of Completion or can otherwise demonstrate that he or she has successfully completed the high school course work, and who is pursuing an MCAS remedial program will continue to be eligible until turning 19, taking the MCAS retest or for six months, whichever is soonest. The six-month period starts the month following the successful completion of high school course work. Refer to 106 CMR 203.575 for more information on dependent children who have turned 18.

**Q.** I have a TAFDC recipient with a 17-year-old son who graduated from high school. This child is planning to attend college starting in the fall. Over the summer months, he has been taking care of a neighbor's child. He is working full time and his earnings have been above the minimum wage. Is this income countable?

**A.** No. Although this 17-year-old is not currently attending classes, he intends to return to school in the fall and is still considered an eligible dependent child and a full-time student until his 18th birthday. This means that his wages are disregarded for a period not to exceed six months in a calendar year. The six-month period begins with the first month in a calendar year in which the dependent child has earned income. When this child turns 18, he is no longer eligible. For more information on TAFDC student earnings, refer to 106 CMR 204.260.

**Q.** The recipient described in the question above is also receiving food stamp benefits. How is the income treated for food stamp purposes?

**A.** For food stamp purposes, the 17-year-old's earnings are countable since the child is no longer attending secondary school (or a lower level school) or a GED Program at least half-time. For more information on excluded income in the Food Stamp Program, refer to 106 CMR 363.230 (H).

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This month we will review three errors caused in large part by not paying attention to important details affecting ongoing eligibility for food stamps.

## Child Support Income

When the applicant applied for food stamps, she reported both SSI income and \$60 per week of child support. At the time she supplied one child support check from DOR for \$86 to verify the child support. The AU Manager entered this amount for one week and put zeros in for three weeks. BEACON calculated this income prospectively and used \$93 for child support in the food stamp calculation. Clearly there was conflicting information in this case about the amount of child support being received.

## What Can an AU Manager Do?

The best way to resolve this discrepancy is to access the DOR child support screen. Using the DOR screen, QC found that the absent parent was consistently paying \$86 each week, and had been prior to the certification. Realizing that recently there were problems with the DOR computer system, the AU Manager should have resolved the inconsistency directly with the recipient by requesting more child support check stubs to verify the amount and frequency of the payment being received. Since the recipient originally reported a \$60 weekly child support amount, this is a clue that the payment could have been weekly. Entering zeros for the remaining three weeks resulted in an error.

When possible, AU Managers must access automated sources to obtain current information. If the automated source is not up-to-date, a verification checklist must be issued to the recipient asking for the same item to be verified. Ultimately, a failure to resolve inconsistent information will very often result in an error that could have been avoided.

## What Can an AU Manager Do?

The AU Manager should always try to resolve discrepancies. If possible, use automated sources if they are up-to-date. You can always request verification from the recipient if reported information is inconsistent. Failing to resolve inconsistent information will very often result in an error that could have been avoided.

## Misread Pay Stub


A recipient was being recertified and provided her verifications, including earnings, in a timely manner. Unfortunately, the AU Manager misread the pay stub by using the year-to-date retirement contributions as the gross income amount and entering this amount onto BEACON. This caused a large underpayment error for the review month and the AU remained in error during the rest of the certification period.

## What Can an AU Manager Do?

Many pay stubs are confusing and not easy to read. It is very important in handling Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) AUs that the AU Manager take the time to closely review the pay stubs and enter them correctly, since in most instances changes in the recipient's income will not be an error for Quality Control purposes.

## Averaging Income Monthly

In a recent USR AU, the recipient supplied four weeks' pay stubs at the time of the recertification. The AU Manager totaled the four amounts and entered this figure onto BEACON as a monthly amount. This caused an overissuance in the AU. Rather than using actual wages, the amounts need to be averaged: total the four weeks wages, divide by 4 and multiply by 4.333. BEACON automatically does this when wages are entered on a weekly basis and budgeting is done prospectively. In this instance, the AU Manager not only created more work for himself (by computing the monthly amount and entering it onto BEACON, although BEACON will do this correctly if the AU Manager enters the weekly wage), but also caused an error in the process.

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[BEACON Help Revisions](#)

**BEACON Help Revisions**

The following is a list of Help windows that have been added or revised.


**Added:**

Warnings, Edits & Messages: AU Composition Results

**Revised:**

- Absence
- AR Recovery Subject Folder
- AR Referral Main
- AR Obligation Folder
- AU Composition Results
- AU Inquiry
- Benefit History Tab
- Client List
- Disability
- Eligibility Explorer
- Eligibility Explorer Results Tab
- Schedule an Appointment

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## [Citizenship Outreach Project for EAEDC Applicants and Recipients](#)

### [EAEDC and TAFDC- Disability Window Issues](#)

### [TAFDC - Work Program Sanction Change](#)

## Citizenship Outreach Project for EAEDC Applicants and Recipients

### EAEDC

#### [Field Operations Memo 2004-25](#)

The Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) has brought together a network of community-based providers to participate in a *Citizenship Outreach Project*. This project will screen EAEDC applicants and recipients for citizenship eligibility, assist EAEDC applicants and recipients with the naturalization process (including application and disability waivers) and/or make appropriate referrals. A statewide listing of community-based providers is included in the memo.

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## EAEDC and TAFDC- Disability Window Issues

### EAEDC and TAFDC

#### [Field Operations Memo 2004-23](#)

This Field Operations Memo addresses three issues called in to the System's Help Desk regarding the automated disability process.

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## TAFDC - Work Program Sanction Change

### TAFDC

#### [Field Operations Memo 2004-24](#)

In order to give work-program-required applicants and recipients more time to arrange for a community service site, child care and/or transportation, the Department is extending the time frames between sanction levels from 10 days to 20 days. This change was **effective June 14**. This Field Operations Memo informs TAO staff about the new time frames.

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# New Initiatives

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Currently, there are no New Initiatives memos.

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