

Transitions



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

On the very day I am writing this, I am celebrating my fourth anniversary with the Department. It's hard to believe the time has gone so quickly and we have accomplished so much over the past several years. Here's a highlight of just a few of the items that come to mind:

First are the significant reforms made to the Food Stamp Program. Folks changed the way many perceived the Program—from a welfare benefit to one providing important nutritional supports to help families obtain food, reserve resources, and move towards greater self-sufficiency. Applications were streamlined, access was enhanced, and we engaged communities and partners in our efforts to enroll eligible individuals into the Program. Because of your efforts, over 228,000 households are now receiving this important benefit, generating over \$62 million per month in economic activity in our local communities. In fact, since 2002 our caseload has more than doubled in size.

Another accomplishment that comes to mind is ending our reliance on hotels to shelter homeless families. When I first came to DTA, many argued this issue was intractable and unsolvable. We had nearly 600 families in hotels. The state had just been informed of a freeze on the number of federal Section 8 vouchers. And we were anticipating a deficit in the account serving homeless families. Well, you all wrote the end to that story, and it is a story with a very successful ending. Today, homeless families across the Commonwealth are better served by a system tying them to better supports.

A third accomplishment, and one that continues to unfold, is that of our continued progress in welfare reform. Over the past few years, we have moved thousands of adults each year into the workforce. We have expanded the participation requirements on families needing assistance in an effort to engage them in activities that put them on a course to economic independence. We've invested additional resources in supports to low-income families. These are the right investments to make as we continue down this path to serve more adults and move more families into the world of work.

These accomplishments—and many others—have been achieved during very challenging times. I will never forget the many individuals who left DTA, either through early retirement or layoffs, due to the cuts suffered in our administrative account. I'll never forget the staff who donated their personal leave time to save fellow employees' jobs. And although we certainly miss those who left, it has also forced us to reexamine the way we handle our business. Successes in redesigning our business practices (consolidation of SSI cases and implementation of the Food Stamp CAP, for example), enhancements in our mission-critical BEACON system and reorganization of functions in Central Office are also significant accomplishments we all deserve to celebrate.

This past week, I visited with employees in one of our local offices. I left that office invigorated by the ideas, commitment, and hard work shown by this local DTA team as we discussed their approach to serving families and individuals from their surrounding communities. It also reminded me of how lucky I've been over these past four years to be part of such an incredible family of smart, dedicated, committed, and hard-working state employees. There are no better. Thank you for these past four years. Thank you for the privilege of being your Commissioner.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner

From the Hotline

The second question and answer in "From the Hotline" (April 2006) has been removed from the on-line version. The corrected version is below.

- Q.** An individual came into our office today applying for the funeral and burial payment. When I asked if she owned any assets, she verified that she has \$700.00 in a savings account. How do I treat this asset?
- A.** In this case, the assets available from the individual or her husband must be deducted from the maximum allowable cost of the funeral and burial. While the funeral and burial costs may not exceed \$1,500.00, the Department will pay the balance after any available assets have been deducted, up to \$1,100.00. In this case, our Department would pay \$800.00 in a funeral/burial benefit. For more information on treating countable assets when paying funeral and burial expenses, refer to additional examples located in *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, pages IV-D-2 and IV-D-3.

Q. A woman came into our office today to apply for TAFDC and food stamp benefits. She is a naturalized citizen. I realize that if a client is a U.S. citizen by birth, then his or her foreign-born child may also be a U.S. citizen, but could a foreign-born child of a *naturalized* citizen also be a U.S. citizen?

A. Yes, a foreign-born child of a naturalized citizen, including a foreign-born adopted child, may be a U.S. citizen as long as certain requirements are met.

For more information on citizenship requirements in the TAFDC Program, refer to 106 CMR 203.670.

For more information on citizenship requirements in the Food Stamp Program, refer to 106 CMR 362.210.

Q. A noncitizen came into our office today applying for food stamp benefits. He is currently a Legal Permanent Resident, but when he entered the country on February 1, 2003, he was originally paroled for one year. I realize that this applicant is currently an

ineligible noncitizen and that he must reside in the United States as a qualified noncitizen for five years before he can be considered eligible for food stamp benefits. However, my question is: when did this individual's five-year period begin and when does it end?

A. Since this individual became a qualified noncitizen when he was paroled for a one-year period, his five-year period began on February 1, 2003 and will end on January 31, 2008.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

09-375-0406-05

09-376-0406-05 (S)

FS-USR-2 (Rev. 4/2006)

Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) Income Guidelines Form

The Categorical Eligibility USR AU Gross Monthly Income Standard has been revised to reflect the increase in the Federal Poverty Level Guideline.

02-559-0406-05

02-560-0406-05 (S)

DVWR (Rev. 4/2006)

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

02-569-0406-05

02-561-0406-05(S)

DVW (Rev. 4/2006)

Notice of Approval or Denial of Domestic Violence Waiver from Certain Program Requirements

Language has been removed that is no longer applicable to the domestic violence process from the *DVWR* and *DVW* forms.

Revised Brochures

09-070-0406-05

09-079-0406-05 (S)

FSP-INFO (Rev. 4/2006)

How to Get Food Stamp Benefits

The Income Standard for households with children under 19 or a pregnant woman living alone has been revised to reflect the increased Maximum Gross Monthly Income Standard.



TAFDC, EA and Food Stamp Changes Due to the Increase in the Federal Poverty Guideline

All

State Letter 1311

Field Operations Memo 2006-18

This State Letter transmits changes to regulations due to the increase in the Federal Poverty Guideline. The Federal Poverty Guideline is used to calculate the eligibility standards in the following programs:

- TAFDC: Income from the Parent(s) of a Teen Parent Under Age 18 – retroactive to 1/24/06;
- EA: EA Eligibility Standard – retroactive to 1/24/06; and
- Food Stamps: Gross Monthly Categorical Eligibility Income Standards – effective 4/1/06.

Field Operations Memo 2006-18 provides information about reviewing EA AUs that were denied EA benefits for excess income or were changed to EA Six-Month AUs before the increased EA Standard was used in BEACON (1/24/06 through 3/31/06).

TAFDC - Increasing Work Program Participation: Age Two Through School and “Exempt” to “Nonexempt” AUs

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2006-19

The Department is in the process of making changes to the TAFDC Program to comply with federal reauthorization of the TANF block grant. One of the most significant areas to be addressed is participation in work-related activities. A recent review of TAFDC AUs has found recipients who:

- are Work Program required but are not participating in an activity for the required number of hours; or
- are coded as “Exempt” but whose AU characteristics *appear* to make them “Nonexempt” (i.e, youngest child in AU is now two years old, but AU is coded “Exempt”).

This is the first in a series of Field Operations Memos focusing on increasing Work Program participation by TAFDC applicants and recipients because of anticipated changes to Work Program

participation rates in October with the change in federal welfare reform regulations. There will be additional Field Operations Memos specifically about increasing participation of other Work Program required AUs. This Field Operations Memo informs TAO staff of the need to conduct a desk review.

Processing Denied or Closed Food Stamp AUs

FS

Field Operations Memo 2006-20

This memo transmits new procedures for processing FS applications that are denied on Day 30 for *failure to submit verifications* when the applicant subsequently submits the missing verifications within the next 30-day period. Food stamp applicants denied for failure to submit verifications who provide the outstanding verifications between Day 31 and Day 60 will not be required to complete a new application.

This new process also applies to certain food stamp recipients whose certification period has expired but who complete the recertification within the next 30-day period.

Policy changes related to these new procedures are being

developed. Additionally, the FS denial notice for failure to submit verifications has been modified to include language advising the applicant that a new application is not required if missing verifications are submitted within 30 days of the date of denial.

Random Moment Sampling

All
Field Operations Memo
2006-21

Federal regulations require the Department to determine administrative expenses for federal and state programs. Field Operations Memo 2003-13 transmitted the procedures associated with Random Moment Sampling (RMS). Page 3 of 2003-13 lists the names of the Central Office RMS staff. New names have been added to the list, and some of the names have been removed from the list. Field Operations Memo 2006-21 transmits the changes to the RMS staff listing.

“How far in life you go depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.”
George Washington Carver

TAFDC – Learning Disability Screening and Assessment

TAFDC
State Letter 1312

This State Letter transmitted the following changes to the Learning Disability Screening and Assessment process:

- revised regulations clarifying when the learning disability screening should be done; and revised regulations clarifying the follow-up role the Department plays for the recipient once the assessment has been completed.

This material was effective March 15, 2006.

Learning Disability

TAFDC
A User’s Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 69

Chapter XVI, Section J: Learning Disability Screening

This update adds the name and phone number of the DES contact person to be called to explain the final assessment and answer any follow-up questions the applicant/recipient may have if he or she does not have a learning disability.

Letters Function

TAFDC
A User’s Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 70

This User’s Guide update transmits the following changes:

Chapter XVIII, Section B: Letter Requests:

This section has been revised to document the addition of retroactive payment information, including gaps in payments, and to document the “key” that was added to the verification cover letter. The “key” was added to help agencies such as utility companies interpret the report when recipients apply for retroactive utility discounts.

Index: The Index has been updated to include revisions to Chapter XVIII, Section B.

Appendix A: Appendix A has been updated to include the current list of forms used outside of BEACON.

FYI

BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been updated. This list reflects updates made to both the primary and secondary windows.

AU Mandatory Responsible Warnings, Edits & Messages

Contribution Purpose

- Fields & Buttons
- Complete the Contribution Purpose Window (“How To”)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Disability

- Fields & Buttons
- Physical/Mental Disability Tab
- Report Results Tab
- Review Tracking Tab
- SSI Tracking Tab
- Case Maintenance (Pop-up)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

DOR Income Match

- Fields & Buttons
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Employment Status Earnings Tab

- Change a Particular Gross Income Amount for Employment Status (“How To”)

ESP AUs Requiring an Appointment (View)

Family Cap

- Fields & Buttons
- Approve or Deny a Family Cap Exception/Waiver Request (“How To”)
- Enter a Family Cap Exception/Waiver Request or Declination (“How To”)

Interview Wrap-up Warnings, Edits & Messages

- Post-Split Process (Pop-up)

Learning Disability

- Complete AU Manager Responsibilities After DES Assessment Results Returned (“How To”)

- Complete the Learning Disability Screening (“How To”)
- Disposition of a New “Yes” Learning Disability Screening Record (“How To”)

Letter Request

- BEACON Financial History
- Combined BEACON and Pre-BEACON Financial History
- Letter Request - Financial History
- Letter Request - Globe Santa
- Letter Request - Holiday Gift Verification
- Letter Request - Income Verification
- Letter Request - Termination Verification
- Pre-BEACON Financial History
- Request a Globe Santa Letter (“How To”)
- Request a Holiday Gift Verification Letter (“How To”)
- Request a Termination Verification Letter (“How To”)
- Request an Income Verification Letter (“How To”)
- Request BEACON Financial History Centrally (“How To”)
- Request BEACON Financial History Locally (“How To”)

- Request Combined BEACON and Pre-BEACON Financial History Centrally (“How To”)
- Request Pre-BEACON Financial History Centrally (“How To”)

Lump Sum Expenses

- Fields & Buttons
- Process Lump Sum Information (“How To”)
- Enter Lump Sum Information if Expenses Exist (“How To”)
- Enter Lump Sum Information if Reimbursements Exist (“How To”)
- Indicate a Lump Sum Did Not Exist After Performing EBC Calculation (“How To”)
- Indicate a Lump Sum Did Not Exist as of the Original Start Date (“How To”)
- Indicate a Lump Sum No Longer Exists as of a New Start Date (“How To”)
- Recalculate a Lump Sum as of a New Start Date (“How To”)
- Update a Lump Sum Record as of a New Start Date (“How To”)
- Update a Lump Sum Record as of the Original Start Date (“How To”)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Lump Sum Reimbursements Warnings, Edits & Messages

Lump Sum Warnings, Edits & Messages

Match History Tab

- Fields & Buttons
- Browse/Update Match History Information (“How To”)
- External Agency Matches (View)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Monitor Participation

- Fields & Buttons
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Other Income Status

- Fields & Buttons
- Other Income Status Income Tab
- Other Income Status Source Tab
- Add Countable Income from a Terminated Source (“How To”)
- Add Pending or Ongoing Income Information (“How To”)
- Change a Particular Gross Income Amount for Other Income Status (“How To”)
- Complete Prospective Income Information for Other Income Status (“How To”)
- Complete the Other Income Status Income Tab (“How To”)
- Complete the Other Income Status Source Tab (“How To”)
- Deny or Close RSDI (“How To”)
- Indicate In-Kind Income (“How To”)
- Earned Income (Pop-up)
- Income Type is RSDI (Pop-up)
- In-Kind Income/In-Kind (Pop-up)
- Other Income (Pop-up)
- RSDI Claim Number Hard Code Edits (Pop-up)
- Unearned Income (Pop-up)
- Workflow (Pop-up)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Print Match Detail Notice

- Fields & Buttons

Prospective Income

- Fields & Buttons
- Warnings, Edits & Messages



Reevaluation Warnings, Edits & Messages

Related Benefit

- Fields & Buttons
- Add a New Related Benefit (“How To”)
- Cancel an Incorrectly Entered Benefit (“How To”)
- Remove Requires Reedit (“How To”)
- Update an Existing Benefit (“How To”)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Reminder

- Fields & Buttons
- Make and Save Reminders About People and Appointments That You Have Scheduled (“How To”)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Glossary Terms

- ACOSTA/Excess of Grant
- ADA
- AP/RAP
- AP/SSI Form
- ATM
- BENDEX
- DEFRA
- EBT
- EDUC-1
- E&S
- E/T
- IAR
- Member List
- MIS
- POS
- PRO
- SDX
- Security Level
- SVES
- Title Bar
- URPA
- USCIS



FYI

Changes to DTA Online

This month you will see the following changes to DTA Online:

Administration and Finance

A link to the Expenditure Request Form has been added to the list of available options under the Administration and Finance title. When selected, the form can be completed online or saved and completed at a later time.

Field Operations

The following tables have been updated to reflect the Former Davis Square changes:

Field Operations Organization Chart/Phone Numbers/Faxes

Field Operations Region Listing

TAO Liaison Listing

Latest News/Photo Gallery

The following links have been added to the list of available options:

Memo From Commissioner Wagner: FY 07 House Ways and Means Budget Recommendation;

Press Release: Somerville DTA Office Temporarily Relocating to Revere; and

Commissioner Wagner's Legislative Briefing Presentation: Welfare Reform Overview.

Resource Inventories

The Employment Services Program (ESP) – Vocational Rehabilitation Providers listing has been updated with changes to the following TAOs: Former Davis Square, Framingham and Lawrence.

FYI

Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Home Page

This month you will see the following changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage.

Key Resources – DTA Office Locations

The name of the Davis Square TAO has changed to Former Davis Square.

News and Updates

The following links have been added to the list of available options:

- *Somerville DTA Office Temporarily Relocating to Revere; and*
- *Statewide Homeless Operations Research Environment (SHORE)-Volume 1, Issue 2.*

Research and Statistics

A new link entitled *DTA Facts and Figures* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the link will display caseload information, grant levels and eligibility standards, and FY06 appropriations information.

FYI

Changes to Policy Online

This month you will see the following changes to Policy Online:

Online Guides: DTA Online Navigation Guide

The DTA Online Navigation Guide has been updated to reflect the changes made to DTA Online. Please refer to *FYI – Changes to DTA Online* for a summary of this month's changes.

Related Systems Information:

BB Options – Financial History Report Codes

Reference Documentation – Service Area Listing – City/Town; Service Area Listing – TAO; TAO Information Listing

The Davis Square TAO has temporarily relocated to the Revere TAO. The name of the office has change from Davis Square to Former Davis Square. The tables accessed from the Related Systems Information have been updated to reflect this change.

Transitions

Beginning with the May issue of *Transitions*, references to procedural documents (i.e. Field Operations Memos, User Guide Updates) issued in prior months will now link to the actual document.

