



***Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance***

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**Online Guide Transmittal 2022-89
November 4, 2022**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From: Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: Cross Programs: EBT Security Outreach & PIN Removal for Lawrence TAO Clients

Overview

In Online Guide Transmittal 2022-60A – *Cross Programs: EBT Security Outreach & PIN Change for Brockton, Quincy, and Nubian Square Clients*, staff were advised of proactive measures the Department was making to help keep benefits secure from skimming theft schemes.

Following the successful PIN change effort for the Brockton, Quincy, and Nubian TAO catchment areas, the Department is now deploying similar measures for the Lawrence TAO catchment area by issuing additional notifications to remove the PIN if it has not been changed and supporting those cardholders in the steps necessary to apply a new PIN.

Purpose

The purpose of this transmittal is to advise staff of continued expectations to coach clients how to best keep benefits secure and how to support clients to change their PIN. It also outlines the steps being taken specific to Lawrence clients and automatic removal of PINs for those who have not updated their account.

**Client
Communications
& PIN Removal**

On October 5, 2022, clients in the Lawrence catchment area were sent a text message encouraging them to change their PIN to protect themselves against skimming. Clients were sent the following message, translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese (Simplified), and Vietnamese:

Urgent! EBT users in your area are having their benefits stolen because someone took their card and PIN information without them knowing. Change the PIN for your EBT card NOW to protect your benefits or DTA will remove your PIN starting the week of 11/14. You will have to set a new PIN to use your card again. Call 800-997-2555 (the number on the back of your card) to change your PIN. You do not need a new card. Learn more: <https://Mass.gov/ProtectYourEBT>

Targeted outreach to EAEDC and TAFDC clients in the Lawrence catchment areas who have not changed their PIN since October 5th began on October 19th. These clients were mailed a notice telling them that their PIN will be deactivated if they do not change it. This notice is viewable on the Client Communication page on BEACON and on DTA Connect.

On October 26th, PINs were removed from the EBT card of any EAEDC and TAFDC client who still has not changed their PIN. These clients were then sent a notice and a text message that their PIN has been removed. The notice will appear on the Client Communications page in BEACON and will be viewable on DTA Connect. Clients must create a new PIN that they have **never used before** in order to use their cards going forward.

Note: The letter that clients were sent on October 19th erroneously stated that their PIN would be removed on August 24th. Please be aware that this may cause some confusion among clients.

SNAP-only clients who have not updated their PIN since October 5th, were sent another text message November 3rd, advising that their PIN will be removed if they do not change their PIN by November 15th. Clients who haven't set a new PIN will have theirs removed on November 15th and be sent a text advising them of such. A notice will follow for clients who have their PIN removed.

**Specialized
Outreach
& Hours**

Domestic Violence Specialists and Client Assistance Coordinators will work with central office staff to reach out to clients with Heightened Level of Security and those with accommodations requiring specific communication types, respectively. Specialized communication plans that are determined to be safe and to meet the needs of the client will be implemented. Ombudsman unit staff will reach out to clients with temporary numbers assigned in the SSN field to assist them with changing their PIN. The Department is also partnering with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs in outreach to our shared population of older adults.

The Lawrence TAO will be open to clients who need in person assistance to set a new PIN on Saturday November 19th from 9:00am to 1:00pm.

Statewide Staff Expectations

The Department anticipates that this outreach and batch action will result in an increase of calls to assigned case managers, the DTA Assistance Line, and the Senior Assistance Office. Clients may inquire as to whether the communication is legitimate or have questions on how to change their PIN. **All staff must assist clients in setting up a new PIN.**

Messaging from the Department will direct clients to call the number on the back of their card (800-997-2555) to change their PIN. This will be the primary method that clients are expected to use for this process. If a client makes contact by phone or in office about a notice or text they have received about changing their PIN staff must:

- Review BEACON to confirm that it was a legitimate action by the Department;
- Advise the client on how to set up a new PIN; and
- Assist the client if they need help by placing them on hold, calling **800-997-2555** (the number on the back of their card), and merging the calls to walk them through the process.

Staffing at this office may be enhanced to support an increase in foot traffic for clients that seek assistance in person. All front-end staff will help clients with setting their PIN, regardless of catchment area, by having them call the number on the back of the card (800-997-2555) and following the directions or by using the PIN terminal. Staff are reminded that identity must be verified before use of an EBT PIN terminal. While identification does not need to have a photo, staff are reminded that some clients have their photo on file in BEACON and that this may be used to verify identity.

Excluded Populations

Lawrence area clients will be excluded from the notification(s) and/or batch PIN change if they changed their PIN or were issued a new card anytime since October 5th, or if they do not have any benefits issued by EBT.

External Communications

The Department is notifying retailers and community partners of these changes. Communication has included:

- Updates to the mass.gov/protectyourebt webpage
 - Text messages
 - Social media posts
 - A new handout for all clients who walk in
 - A new insert included in all mailings
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Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.Procedural Issues.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
