



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Operations Memo 2011-35
July 15, 2011

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: TAFDC – Distance Learning as a Work Program Activity

Purpose of Memo

Distance Learning refers to video- and or computer-based educational activities available on the Internet. The Department has approved 15 Massachusetts Community Colleges as Distance Learning sites to help clients meet their work program requirement (see Attachment A).

This operations memo provides guidelines for implementing Distance Learning as an acceptable ESP activity.

Distance Learning Guidelines for Implementation

Distance Learning will initially be offered at the 15 publicly-funded Community Colleges state-wide to help our clients meet their work program requirement by providing them with more flexible education opportunities. Depending upon the success of this initiative, other schools offering Distance Learning will be added as approved sites at a later date.

No other schools, including proprietary schools, offering Distance Learning are approved sites for this pilot phase of the program. Clients who are currently enrolled in these other schools may complete the semester/course and continue to study in these schools beyond the current semester, but these courses will not meet the work program requirement *after* the completion of the current semester/course.

Distance Learning Guidelines for Implementation (continued)

Clients enrolled in these other schools must come into the TAO to enroll in an activity (including an approved Distance Learning activity) to meet the work program requirement.

The following are additional guidelines for implementing Distance Learning:

- One credit hour will equal one hour of participation. Homework time will be added automatically at the rate of one hour of homework time for one hour of participation.
 - Before the client is referred to an approved activity (including Distance Learning) in Employment Training and Education or Post Secondary Education, the case manager must advise the client that he or she may be responsible to pay the full cost of the activity, if applicable. Clients must be told they do not need to enroll in an activity that incurs a cost and that there may be no-cost alternative programs available to meet their work program requirement. If there are no “no-cost” alternative programs and the client does not want to enroll in an activity that incurs a cost, the client must enroll in another activity to meet the work program requirement.
 - Before the client is referred to an approved Distance Learning site, the case manager must check the client’s Ed/Training Counter to determine how many Ed/Training months remain that can be used to meet the work program requirement
 - Referrals to Distance Learning sites can only be made to schools listed on the Resource page after selecting Employment Training and Education as an activity on BEACON. The courses must be creditable to a certificate, an Associate’s degree or other degree (see 106 CMR 207.140 (D)(3)).
 - Clients must be referred to Distance Learning sites using the *Referral and Response* form.
 - Clients must be accepted and enrolled in the program for it to count towards their work program requirement.
 - Clients verify participation by one of the following methods: log in/log out records as recorded by the school or if those records are not available, self declaration on the *Participation and Attendance* form.
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Distance Learning Guidelines for Implementation (continued)

- For clients who are using Distance Learning to supplement their in-class schedule, the case manager must include the hours of their log in/log out records as recorded by the school (if appropriate) added to the hours listed on the *Participation and Attendance* form before the total hours are entered onto BEACON.
- As long as courses are part of an approved EDP that leads to a degree or employment, these courses are an acceptable work program activity (see 106 CMR 203.400).
- At the end of the semester, clients must provide the case manager with a Grade Report from the institution indicating proof of their grades. If a client does not pass the course, the case manager would need to discuss with the client the possibility of not continuing in Distance Learning, how many months remain on his or her Ed/Training Counter that he or she can use an education or training activity to meet the work program requirement and/or selecting another activity to meet the work program requirement.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

Attachment A

Listing of Community Colleges in Massachusetts (with links to their websites):

- [Berkshire Community College](#), Pittsfield
- [Bristol Community College](#), Fall River
- [Bunker Hill Community College](#), Boston
- [Cape Cod Community College](#), West Barnstable
- [Greenfield Community College](#), Greenfield
- [Holyoke Community College](#), Holyoke
- [Massachusetts Bay Community College](#), Wellesley Hills
- [Massasoit Community College](#), Brockton/Canton
- [Middlesex Community College](#), Bedford/Lowell
- [Mount Wachusett Community College](#), Gardner
- [North Shore Community College](#), Danvers
- [Northern Essex Community College](#), Haverhill
- [Quinsigamond Community College](#), Worcester
- [Roxbury Community College](#), Roxbury
- [Springfield Technical Community College](#), Springfield