



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Operations Memo 2012-14
April 6, 2012

To: Transitional Assistance Staff

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

Re: TAFDC and SNAP – TAOs as Community Service Sites

Overview

DTA recognizes our role in increasing economic opportunity for the clients we serve to help them become self-sufficient. As a result, DTA offers clients an opportunity that serves a useful community purpose with a goal of improving clients' employability.

The availability of additional resources, through the presence of community service program participants in local offices, will provide valuable customer service assistance and increase access to DTA's programs and services.

Purpose of Memo

This Operations Memo advises staff of:

- expansion of the population eligible for the community service activity;
- the maximum amount of time a client can volunteer in the TAO;
- the suggested duties of clients enrolled in the community service activity;
- the process for referring clients to the community service activity at the TAO; and
- the CORI process for these clients.

Obsolete Memo This Operations Memo obsoletes Field Operations Memo 2010-9.

Client Population Served Effective April 9, 2012, TAOs may begin accepting clients for community service activities under the new guidelines in this memo. The number of placements in each local office will range from one to five and will be determined by the size of the office and the tasks assigned to Community Service participants.

The following is a suggested list of clients best served by the TAO as a community service site.

- TAFDC clients who are mandated to participate in community service due to their failure to meet their Work Program requirement (i.e. those who need to ‘cure a sanction’ to continue receiving benefits). Due to the transitory nature of this group of clients, it is often difficult to find external sites for clients who only need to ‘cure a sanction’. Clients in this category require a placement for a limited amount of time (usually 2-4 weeks).
- TAFDC clients who are participating in an employment-related activity, but whose hours do not meet their Work Program requirement. Some clients may have part-time employment, be participating in self-directed job search, or are participating in a training program that has limited hours. To comply with their Work Program requirement, clients may need to participate in Community Service to make up the difference in hours.
- TAFDC clients who are waiting for their employment-related activity to begin. To comply with their Work Program requirement, clients can participate in Community Service until their training program begins. These clients would be in community service sites for such a brief time that some external sites may be reluctant to train them.
- SNAP clients who wish to volunteer.

The length of each client’s participation in this TAO Community Service activity is limited to a maximum of 12 weeks. The number of hours a client can work each week is subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for the particular program (TAFDC or SNAP). The case manager must determine the maximum number of hours a client can volunteer in the TAO.

Note: FLSA for TAFDC case can be found on the *What if...* page, the TAFDC tab of the *Work Requirements* page and the WP Participation tab of the Summary tab.

If there are current TAO Community Service participants who have already met their 12 weeks maximum, the TAO Director will be notified by Central Office. A transition period of four weeks will be given to the client to complete tasks at the TAO and find another activity to help them meet their work program requirement.

ABAWD Clients: Determining Hours Currently, ABAWD rules are not in effect. However, if SNAP clients wish to volunteer, they may do so. When calculating an ABAWD client's exemption from the work program requirements we use the federal minimum wage times 30 hours.

To calculate an unemployed ABAWD client's community service hours, the monthly SNAP benefit is divided by the state minimum wage. This determines the number of hours the client may participate in community service. BEACON will calculate an underemployed ABAWD client's community service hours automatically.

Client Duties The TAO Director or designee will assign tasks and oversee the Community Service participant(s). The recommended duties of clients enrolled in community service at the TAO include (but are not limited to):

- Acting as Waiting Room Assistants:
 - ✓ Greeting clients as they enter the local office;
 - ✓ Restocking brochures in waiting rooms;
 - ✓ Monitoring client usage of equipment in waiting rooms; and
 - ✓ Conducting customer satisfaction surveys.
- Assisting TAO clerical staff:
 - ✓ Assembling application packets;
 - ✓ Preparing returned mail by date stamping the envelope, opening the envelope and stapling it to the returned documents, then sorting the information by case manager;
 - ✓ Alerting case managers when their appointments arrive;
 - ✓ Keeping all copy and fax machines stocked with paper;
 - ✓ Delivering faxes to appropriate staff;
 - ✓ Collecting mail at various points throughout the day;
 - ✓ Date stamping and sorting all incoming mail; and
 - ✓ Sorting and filing all closed cases.
- Assisting with Community Service Outreach:
 - ✓ Following a script, conducting phone outreach to new and existing community service sites; and
 - ✓ Documenting responses and forwarding them to the appropriate staff person for data entry.
- Assisting with Orientations:
 - ✓ Following a script, making phone calls to clients reminding them to attend;
 - ✓ Assembling packets for the meeting; and
 - ✓ Preparing the room prior to the meeting.

Important: Clients participating in community service at the TAO will not be given systems access.

**Referring Clients
for Community
Service**

Clients may be referred to the TAO community service site by selecting the TAO from the list of community service sites on the Resource Search window. The client will then be interviewed by the TAO Director or designee and if accepted, asked to fill out the CORI paperwork.

**The CORI
Process**

Once the client fills out the CORI paperwork, the following will occur.

- The CORI paperwork will be checked for completeness by the TAO Director or designee. The CORI form and a copy of a photo identification will be forwarded to the Community Service mailbox: DTA.CommunityService@state.ma.us. A Central Office staff person will confirm receipt of the documents and forward them to the DTA Human Resources Administrator at Central Office who will log the information and submit it to CYF Human Resources for processing.
 - The Human Resources Administrator/designee reviews the CORI findings:
 - ✓ If the CORI findings indicate no CORI records or a record outside of the look back period, the DTA Human Resources Administrator/Designee will notify the TAO Director/designee. The TAO Director/designee will contact the client to determine a start date for participation. *Please note that a client may **not** begin volunteering at the TAO until the CORI process has been completed.*
 - ✓ If the CORI findings indicate outstanding warrants and/or convictions/pending crimes within the look back period, an information gathering session is scheduled with the client by a CORI certified representative before a participation decision can be made.
 - Following the receipt of requested documents/additional information or after 10 business days have passed, the CORI certified representative will complete the Hiring Review form to approve or deny the client's participation.
 - DTA's Legal Division will notify the TAO Director/designee of the decision to approve or to deny participation.
 - The client is notified of the decision and can either start participating in the TAO community service site or will need to find another community service site to help him or her meet the work program requirement.
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**The CORI
Process
(continued)**

IMPORTANT: Every client who is accepted to participate in the TAO community service site **must** participate in the Privacy/Confidentiality Trainings either prior to or on the first day of participation. This training consists of a client watching the Privacy/Confidentiality DOR DVD, reviewing the Conflict of Interest training (Parts I and II) and reviewing the Executive Order 504 training. Once completed, the signature pages (demonstrating a client's compliance with these policies) must be kept on file at the TAO where the client will be volunteering. Please contact April Myers at Central Office for copies.

Questions

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