



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


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Operations Memo 2014-38
May 08, 2014

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Lydia Conley, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: Conversion from GED to High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) Testing and Vouchers

Overview

Massachusetts has replaced the existing GED test with the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET). TAFDC clients wishing to obtain a high school equivalency certificate will do so through the HiSET. HiSET will cover the same five test areas (Language Arts Reading, Language Arts Writing, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies). Massachusetts is not honoring scores for the GED where the full battery was not passed by the student.

Effective with the issuance of this memo, the *Employment Services Program General Educational Development Voucher (ESP-29)* must not be issued. This voucher is not recognized for HiSET. The new *HiSET Voucher for Full Battery (ESP-40)* and *HiSET Voucher for Individual Tests (ESP-41)* forms (see Attachments A and B) must be used. TAFDC clients who wish to have the Department pay for the HiSET are not able to register for the test without the voucher. TAFDC clients who register without a DTA-issued voucher number will not be reimbursed.

Purpose of Memo

The purpose of this memo is to:

- inform DTA staff about the Commonwealth's conversion to the HiSET for high school equivalency certificates;
 - provide procedures for TAFDC clients requesting a test voucher; and
 - introduce the new *HiSET Voucher for Full Battery (ESP-40)* and *HiSET Voucher for Individual Tests (ESP-41)* forms.
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HiSET Test Overview

The High School Equivalency Testing Program (previously the GED was utilized) in Massachusetts is overseen by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) High School Equivalency Office. Official test centers operate statewide to serve the needs of those looking to achieve a high school equivalency certificate. A list of sites is available and maintained by DESE and is linked to on the “HiSET/High School Equivalency Test” page under Resource Inventories on DTA Online. The HiSET test is available in both English and Spanish, and depending on the test center, it is offered in a paper- and/or computer-based format .

In Massachusetts, individuals must meet the following requirements to take the HiSET:

- **Age:** be age 18 or older. Individuals age 16 or 17 may take the HiSET if they have an official letter of withdrawal from their last school of attendance.
- **School Enrollment Status:** **NOT** be enrolled in any secondary school program and must not have received a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate.
- **Residency:** be a resident of Massachusetts, living at a Massachusetts address and will be required to sign an eligibility form verifying his or her address.
- **Identification:** present proper identification at the test center for each test session. Outdated or expired identification is **not** accepted. The identification must include their signature, date of birth, a recent recognizable photograph and their name spelled as entered for registration. Approved identification documents include:
 - valid passport;
 - valid driver's license from any state;
 - state-issued ID card;
 - National ID card; or
 - Military ID card.

Important: HiSET does not allow photocopied documents, birth certificates, or Social Security cards to be used as primary proof of identification.

If any of these requirements are not met, the individual will be prohibited from taking the HiSET. Those with questions regarding these or other test taking requirements should be directed to contact HiSET Customer Service which can be found under “HiSET/High School Equivalency Test” page under Resource Inventories on DTA Online.

**HiSET
Vouchers for
TAFDC Clients**

In addition to the HiSET testing criteria above, the Department may issue a payment voucher for a HiSET test for active TAFDC clients with an approved Employment Development Plan, or a former TAFDC client who was enrolled in a Department YPP prior to closing, subject to available funding.

**Case Manager
Responsibilities**

Eligible TAFDC clients requesting a HiSET voucher to pay for a Full Battery HiSET test or an Individual HiSET test must request a *HiSET Voucher for Full Battery* (ESP-40) or a *HiSET Voucher for Individual Tests* (ESP-41) form accordingly from their case manager, Full Engagement Worker or other designated staff.

Important: Clients must be advised of the registration process, identification requirements and how to request a reasonable accommodation, if needed.

The staff person and client must complete and sign Section B of the *HiSET Voucher for Full Battery* (ESP-40) or a *HiSET Voucher for Individual Tests* (ESP-41) form(s). The staff person must scan and email the attachment to the [DTA-DL-HiSET](#) distribution list on the Department's Global Directory in Outlook with the subject header: *HiSET Voucher Request*.

**Central Office
Responsibilities:
Approved
Voucher
Requests**

Designated Central Office staff will review and log the request and complete Section A of the *HiSET Voucher for Full Battery* (ESP-40) or *HiSET Voucher for Individual Tests* (ESP-41) form(s) with the voucher code, when the client is eligible for this service. If approved, Central Office staff will then email a copy of the completed pre-paid voucher(s) and *Notice of Approval, Denial or Termination for Emergency Assistance Or Other Financial Services* (NFL-9) to the requesting staff member and copy the local office manager and the ESP Assistant Director within one business day. The Narrative tab will be updated and the documents attached for future reference. The original voucher and an NFL-9 approving the request will be mailed to the client.

An individual voucher number is needed for each individual retest. For example, if a client needs to retake two individual tests, e.g., Social Studies and Science, a single *HiSET Voucher for Individual Tests* (ESP-41) will be needed with the subjects needed for retesting checked off. The Central Office staff completing the request will assign multiple voucher numbers as needed.

Important: Once a voucher code is assigned to a client **and** the client fails to appear for the test, it cannot be reused or rescheduled. It is important that clients are ready and able to take the test for which they have requested a voucher. If a client fails to attend the test on the date for which they are registered, the pre-paid voucher is void and the Department will not be reimbursed. The testing service allows clients to reschedule without loss of the voucher only if contacted at least three business days prior to the scheduled test.

**HiSET
Vouchers for
TAFDC Clients
(Continued)**

If a client is not eligible for a payment voucher for a HiSET test, Central Office staff will complete and email a copy of the NFL-9 denying the request to the requesting staff and copy the local office manager and the ESP Assistant Director within one business day. The Narrative tab will be updated and the documents attached for future reference. The original NFL-9 will be mailed to the client.

**Central Office
Responsibilities:
Denied
Vouchers**

Clients who miss a scheduled test date and did not rescheduled within the three business days time frame and who request a subsequent voucher will be required to demonstrate and provide verification of the circumstance that prevented them from attending the scheduled test(s). The case manager must attach the verification along with the client's statement, signed under the penalty of perjury, as to the reason for missing the original test date. This information must be included in the email to the DTA-DL-HiSET distribution list when requesting an additional pre-paid voucher.

Central Office reviewers will review the request and determine if the client had good cause for failing to attend the original test date or reschedule within the allowable timeframe. If it is determined there is good cause, the request will be approved and Central Office will issue the voucher according to the procedures outlined above. If the request is denied, Central Office staff will complete an NFL-9 form sending a copy to the case manager with a copy to the local office manager and the ESP Assistant Director within one business day. The original NFL-9 will be mailed to the client.

**HiSET
Vouchers:**

**Client Accounts
and Test
Registration**

In order to schedule and take HiSET test(s), individuals must create a HiSET account and set up a profile with HiSET. Clients may do so at the HiSET website, prior to registration for a particular test or set of tests, to expedite the registration process. Clients without computer access, or with limited English or computer proficiency, may set up a profile when registering over the phone.

For clients enrolled in YPP, the YPP provider will assist the client in setting up a profile needed for the test.

Important: Clients who wish to use a DTA-issued voucher may set up a HiSET account and profile online or by phone. The HiSET website does not currently accept DTA voucher codes. Even if the client has a HiSET account and profile, clients intending to use a DTA-issued voucher must schedule a test only by phone. If a client attempts to register online, they will be required to use a debit card, credit card, PayPal or eCheck. TAFDC clients who register without a DTA-issued voucher number will not be reimbursed. In the future, the ETS website will accept DTA-issued voucher codes so that clients may secure a testing location, date and time online.

**HiSET
Vouchers:**
Client Accounts
and Test
Registration
(Continued)

A job aid on registering for the HiSET will be available in the near future.
Note: Some vouchers will require two codes to register for a test. Clients should be advised that they will need to provide HiSET with **all** voucher codes listed on the *ESP-40* or *ESP-41* form in order to successfully register. In the future, it is anticipated that only one voucher code per test will be needed.

**HiSET
Accommodation
Requests**

Clients with diagnosed disabilities or impairments may request a reasonable accommodation for the HiSET. HiSET requires that the request be made at the time of registration and that the HiSET Testing Accommodation Request Form be submitted along with appropriate verification of the accommodation need. Frequently granted accommodations include extended test time, larger print, separate test room or scribe/keyboard aide. Clients wishing to request an accommodation should contact HiSET Disability Services that can be found on the “HiSET/High School Equivalency Test” page under Resource Inventories under DTA Online.

**Policy
References**

TAFDC - 106 CMR 207.000 et seq.

Questions

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



Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Employment Services Program

HiSET Voucher for Full Battery

SECTION A (DTA-CENTRAL OFFICE USE ONLY)

HiSET Voucher # _____

SECTION B (TO BE COMPLETED BY TAFDC CLIENT)

Date: _____ APID: _____

Client Name: _____

(last)

(first)

(middle)

Mailing Address: _____

By signing below, I understand that:

- this voucher can only be used for initial full battery HiSET test. It cannot to be used to purchase instructional services or preparation materials.
- this voucher is for my use only and may not be altered, sold or transferred.
- if this voucher is improperly used that the DTA may recoup the cost of the test, and/or pursue this action as an Intentional Program Violation.
- once I have registered for the HiSET with this voucher, it cannot be reused or rescheduled. If I fail to attend the test on the date for which I registered, DTA may not approve payment for another HiSET voucher request.
- If I have a disability or health related need, that I may request a reasonable accommodation from HiSET. I understand that this request must be made at the time of registration.

I authorize DTA to receive a copy of my HiSET results. I understand that these results will not affect my benefits.

Client Signature

Date

Department Representative Signature

Date



Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
Employment Services Program
HiSET Voucher for Individual Tests

SECTION A (DTA-CENTRAL OFFICE USE ONLY)

HiSET Voucher #(s) _____

SECTION B (TO BE COMPLETED BY TAFDC CLIENT)

Request Date: _____ APID: _____

Client Name: _____
(last) (first) (middle)

Mailing Address: _____

Check subject(s) to be tested:

- Language Arts/Writing Skills
- Language Arts/Reading
- Social Studies
- Science
- Mathematics

By signing below, I understand that:

- this voucher can only be used for an individual HiSET test. It cannot to be used to purchase instructional services or preparation materials.
- this voucher is for my use only and may not be altered, sold or transferred.
- if this voucher is improperly used that the DTA may recoup the cost of the test, and/or pursue this action as an Intentional Program Violation.
- once I have registered for the HiSET with this voucher, it cannot be reused or rescheduled. If I fail to attend the test on the date for which I registered, DTA may not approve payment for another HiSET voucher request.
- If I have a disability or health related need, that I may request a reasonable accommodation from HiSET. I understand that this request must be made at the time of registration.

I authorize DTA to receive a copy of my HiSET results. I understand that these results will not affect my benefits.

Client Signature

Date

Department Representative Signature

Date