



# Transitions

A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

## this month in...

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Dear Fellow Employees,

Early in August I wrote to you in anticipation of implementing BEACON 2.0. At that time, we were weeks away from implementation and I wanted to take the opportunity to thank each one of you for your efforts in building BEACON. On August 14, BEACON moved into production and DTA moved to being a department operating with a state-of-the-art eligibility system. It was a day that I, along with a number of you, had anticipated for some time.

I believe that the BEACON implementation has been very successful. That is not to say that it has been without issues. A system of this magnitude is never implemented without issues. The important thing is to acknowledge the issues and deal with them. At central office, staff in all units have been working hard to answer your questions and correct problems. We are not where we would like to be in terms of quick answers to all questions, but we are getting there. Also, some issues do not present simple solutions. Rather, they require analysis and modifications to BEACON.

I think it is outstanding that on August 27 an updated increment of BEACON was released. That new increment contained a number of modifications that were the direct result of issues called into the Customer Service Center. It also resolved some technical issues and provided some edits to ensure more accurate collection of information. In addition to the new increment, since August 14 a number of MIS Customer Service Bulletins and issues of *BEACON Today* have been sent. These two vehicles provide needed information on known issues, quick procedural information on areas on which there have been questions and guidance on "quirky" situations. Most important to me, these efforts demonstrate that staff at all levels recognize

## BEACON Release 2.0 Conversion Activities

### All Field Operations Memo 2001-32 B

This Field Operations Memo provided TAO Staff with the following procedures for the conversion period (August 10 through August 13, 2001):

- taking applications/reapplications;
- issuing Immediate Needs/EA Shelter Invoices;
- issuing Day 7 expedited food stamp benefits and Day 30 initial food stamp benefits;
- responding to requests to reinstate AUs closed within the past 30 days;
- responding to requests for case maintenance (e.g., child care authorizations, ESP referrals); and
- issuing temporary and replacement MassHealth cards.

## SSI Recipients and BEACON

### SSI *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 010* *EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON Update 001*

- SSI recipients do not need to be entered onto BEACON to issue SSI Special Benefits or Funeral and Burial payments.
- SSPS was modified to validate the entry of SSPS benefits for SSI recipients against SSI information available as part of the SDX update process.



## BEACON Release 2.0 Post-Conversion Activities

### All Field Operations Memo 2001-32 C

This Field Operations Memo informed TAO Staff about procedures to follow when BEACON Release 2.0 is in production. It also provided a prioritized list of initial activities pended during the conversion period. These activities must have been completed by the AU Manager once BEACON Release 2.0 is in production.

## FYI

### *A User's Guide Online*

Chapters 1 - 12 and the index for *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* are now available in Policy Online. Other chapters will be put online in the near future. This will help AU managers to quickly access the information they need for both program procedures and the procedures for entering information on BEACON.

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* is no longer a draft. As pages are reissued, the draft watermark will be removed.

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## Completing SSPS Invoices for Hotels/Motels and Adjusting SSPS Invoices

### EA

#### *EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON Update 002*

The following changes were made to the *EA User's Guide*:

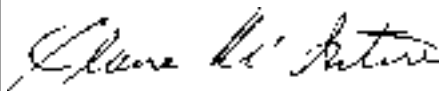
- Procedures for completing the SSPS invoice for hotel/motel placement and sending it to Community Service Network either at the end of the stay in the hotel/motel or on the last day of the month, whichever comes first. Only Central Office can adjust or void an invoice issued to CSN; and
- Procedures for adjusting an SSPS invoice after it is issued to the vendor but before payment is made. The information is changed on the SSPS Shelter Invoice screens. These procedures do not apply to SSPS invoices for hotels/motels.

the importance of listening to problems and figuring out quick solutions. As I said earlier, I do not think our response is perfect. But I am committed to continuing to improve the flow of information and to refine our response system to get you the answers you need as quickly as possible. I know that the staff involved in this effort share my commitment.

While these efforts have been underway at central office, those of you across the state have been dealing day to day with the many impacts of a new way of doing business. Despite all our planning and all the practice we had during the pilot phase, I know these initial weeks have been stressful. But I also know that you are figuring it out. That staff are completing applications. That ESP referrals are being made. That the "comfort level" with using the system is rising. I have met with the Management Liaison group (a group of local office managers with whom I meet every other month to discuss issues of importance to local offices) and they have given me a real-life update on how the implementation is going. And while they did not say there were no problems, overall they confirmed my belief that we have a successful implementation.

We have reached a tremendous milestone in the history of this Department. Thank you for helping us to get here.

Sincerely,



Claire McIntire  
Commissioner

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**THE  
GOAL  
OF  
TAFDC!**



## **Procedural Changes Regarding EA Verification Timeframes, Undocumented Noncitizens, Assignment of Rights Form, Learnfare and Prospective Income**

All

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 009*

This update contains:

- Changes to Chapter III-D: Clarification on providing EA benefits within the benefit timeframes or as soon as possible after the verifications are received, whichever is sooner;
- Changes to Chapter XIII-E: Entering information on Undocumented Noncitizens or American Indians born in Canada or Mexico and procedures for continuing through the Eligibility Explorer workflow when proof of the INS designation has not been provided;
- Changes to Chapter XIII-G: Completing a T-A34/36 when adding a member to the AU;
- Change to Chapter XIII-K: The Resource Search window defaults to Learnfare when navigating from the Education window for a child subject to the Learnfare requirement;
- Change to Chapter XIII-L: Correcting page reference;
- Change to Chapter XIV-B and XIV-D: Calculating income prospectively, in-kind income deduction for a TAFDC or EAEDC AU in temporary emergency shelter; and
- Change to Chapter XIX-D: Correcting page reference.

## **Teen Parents**

TAFDC

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 012*

The Teen Parent Referral process to DSS has been revised. Teen Parent Specialists will continue to complete the paper DSS referral process, in addition to the BEACON Teen Parent Referral windows.

September 2001

## **Food Stamp Categorical Eligibility and Expedited Food Stamp Issuance**

All

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 011*

This update issues:

- procedures for Expedited Food Stamp Issuance and Categorical Eligibility for Food Stamps; and
- changes to the Closing/Denial Chart located in Chapter IX.

## **Clothing Allowance, September 2001**

TAFDC

State Letter 1208

Field Operations Memo 2001-33

- A clothing allowance of \$150.00 per TAFDC recipient under the age of 19 will be paid in September 2001.
- A notice informing recipients of their clothing allowance will be sent. No actions need to be taken by AU Managers to have payments issued.

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## **FYI**

### **Third Party Liability (TPL) Reference Guide**

The Third Party Liability (TPL) Reference Guide has been revised and is now available online. (See Online Guides.) The paper version (DTA/TPL-08/96) is obsolete.

This guide provides information about potential sources of payment for health insurance and/or medical services. AU Managers must be sure to explore the availability of any third party payers as the Division of Medical Assistance is the payer of last resort.

### **Systems User's Guide Update 150**

#### TAFDC, EAEDC, EA Volume 3: *SSPS User's Guide* Chapter II: Data Entry & Retrieval

The SSPS Invoice Inquiry screen has been modified to accommodate the display of the following elements:

- a household size indicator;
- a shelter entry indicator;
- a TAFDC account indicator;
- a citizen code indicator; and
- a vendor number check digit indicator.

## **FYI**

### **Fuel Assistance Program - Recipient Mailing**

During August, a Fuel Assistance Program brochure was mailed to TAFDC, EAEDC and FS recipients. Information on this brochure includes an overview of the program and explains how to apply for fuel assistance. It also includes a list of agencies statewide where applications can be filed.

TAFDC and EAEDC recipients received a name and address card with verification of their grant amount. Food stamp benefit recipients received information about the Fuel Assistance Program but did not receive verification of their benefit amount. The program overview card notifies food stamp benefit recipients that if: 1) they receive food stamps; and 2) they receive fuel assistance; and 3) their heat is included in their rent, they may be entitled to more food stamp benefits.

During Fuel Assistance season (November through April) AU Managers are reminded to ask recipients at every contact if they receive Fuel Assistance. If they receive Fuel Assistance and food stamp benefits, make sure they are given the heating Standard Utility Allowance *even if they are not paying heat.*

### **Emergency Assistance - Court Order**

#### Field Operations Memo 2001-31 EA

This memo informs staff of a court-ordered change to the EA appeal timeframes.

- The Department must use the 90-day appeal time limits that apply to other programs for EA terminations;
- The Department has been ordered to vacate the current regulations that give EA recipients 10 days from the date of the termination notice to appeal; and
- To meet the requirements of the court order, the NFL-9 and NFL-ST have been revised. Discard earlier versions of these notices to avoid noncompliance with the court order.

# From the Forms File

## New Form

This form replaces the current *Application for Food Stamp Benefits* (FSP-1). AU Managers can use the FSBA-1 to collect information and then enter that information onto BEACON. All the required information must be captured at the time the paper application is completed so BEACON can be updated properly without the client being present.

25-160-0801-05  
*FSBA-1 (8/2001)*  
*Food Stamp Benefits Application*

## New Brochure

The following brochure was developed by OCCS and DTA. It explains how to get and keep child care, provides information for the recipient to review with the CCR&R and provides a list of the CCR&Rs. An earlier version was mailed to all active TAFDC recipients and TAFDC recipients who were closed within the past 12 months. See the FYI in the August *Transitions*.

02-820-0801-05  
*CC-1-Mail (8/2001)*  
*Getting and Keeping Child Care*

## Revised Forms

The following form used only by the SSI Regional Offices has been revised to mirror the flow of BEACON windows.

09-150-0801-05  
*SSI-FSP-1 (Rev. 8/2001)*  
*SSI Food Stamp Benefits Reapplication*

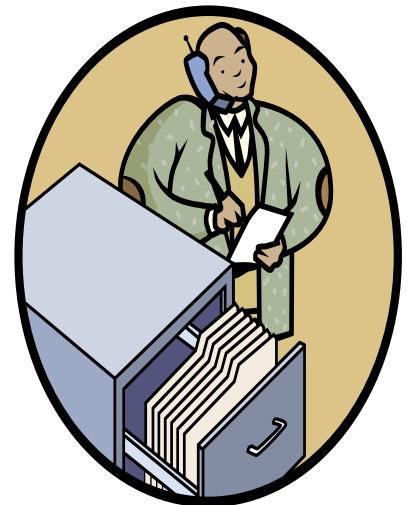
This food stamp recertification mailed quarterly to households with earnings has been revised to mirror the flow of BEACON windows.

09-181-0801-05  
09-182-0801-05 (S)  
*FSP-RCF (Rev. 8/2001)*  
*Food Stamp Benefits Recertification for Households with Earnings*  
September 2001

The following two forms have been revised due to a court-ordered change to the Emergency Assistance appeal timeframes. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2001-31 for more information.

02-035-0801-05  
02-157-0801-05 (S)  
*NFL-9 (Rev. 8/2001)*  
*Notice of Approval, Denial or Termination for Emergency Assistance or Other Financial Services*

13-039-0801-05  
*NFL-ST (Rev. 8/2001)*  
*Notice of Termination of Temporary Emergency Shelter*



## FYI

### User Guides No Longer in Use

With BEACON Release 2.0 in production TAO staff should be referring to *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* and the *EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON* for procedures. This means that the existing guides are obsolete and should no longer be referenced for current procedures.

The following guides are obsolete:

- *The TAFDC Procedural Guide*
- *EAEDC: A Reference Guide*
- *The Food Stamp Procedural Guide*
- *Emergency Assistance Reference Guide*
- *Electronic Benefit Transfer \**
- *Disability Determination Guide*
- *The AFDC Case Management Reference Guide*

\* EBT is also being removed from Policy Online.

The procedures found in these guides have been incorporated into the new guides referenced above.

## BEACON *Has Arrived!*

