



Dear Fellow Employees,

“There’s not a liberal America and a conservative America ... there’s not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there’s the United States of America ”

-Barack Obama at the Democratic National Convention on Tuesday, July 27, 2004-

This month, I’d like to take a look at some of the changes we have made in the Cash Assistance and Full Engagement Program. The name itself is quite a mouthful but names are often important. In this case, our newly minted program name sends an important message: the full engagement of all of our TAFDC families into jobs and training is as significant as the cash assistance we provide. For almost ten years, Massachusetts has remained at the forefront of welfare reform. As most of you know, before the federal government passed a national welfare reform program, we in the Commonwealth had created and passed our own welfare reform initiative (Chapter 5). The initiative underscores the importance of jobs and training over cash benefits alone in promoting a client’s independence and self-sufficiency.



I continue to pay close attention to the Work Program and how we can fine-tune the requirement. To better serve our clients and conform to federal standards, we are increasing the weekly hours of participation required in Work Program activities. Beginning this month, parents are required to meet the Work Program by performing a minimum of 20 hours of participation if their youngest child is between two and school age, 24 hours if their youngest child is between school age and age nine and 30 hours if their youngest child is age nine or older. Also, a change which took effect in July allows parents to meet the Work Program requirement by participating in an education or training activity.

Common sense tells us that this is a move in the right direction. With the appropriate supports, work and work-related opportunities remind our clients that they are capable of success. With the right job, a parent enhances her self-image as well as the image she presents to her children. Job training and education coordinated with the demands of our current labor market are also beneficial. As we all know, the education process may at times be difficult, but the benefits are unlimited. In either case, whether the decision is a job or job training, the outcome will eventually mean more income for our clients.

You play an essential role in making this happen. We need you to:

- fully explain the new hourly Work Program requirement as well as the job training options to clients;
- share the details concerning extended time frames between sanction levels; and
- explore the expanded good cause reasons with families that are unable to meet the Work Program requirement.

I understand that these steps are not always as simple as they appear. In the short run, they may be more difficult to implement. In the long run, these steps will actually make our task easier. Parents and families that understand the rules and cooperate with our requirements can ultimately require less of our time and become more productive.

Thank you for all of your help towards achieving this.

Sincerely,

John Wagner, Commissioner

Revised Forms

02-177-0804-05
02-178-0804-05(S)
FHRN (Rev. 8/2004)

Notice of Fair Hearing Request

The Notice of Fair Hearing Request now lists the address of the Director of Equal Opportunity.


02-195-0904-05
TAFDC-4 (Rev. 9/2004)
Verification of Disability

This revised form complies with the May 2003 Superior Court decision in *Baynes v. Wagner*.

Obsolete Form

13-060-1098-05
TES-20 (10/98)
Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement Beyond 20 Miles


This form is now obsolete. Refer to the e-mail to TAO Directors dated August 11, 2004 for additional information on reporting responsibilities.

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Quality Corner

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There is no "Quality Corner" this month..

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BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been added or revised.

Added:

MA-DTA Card Issuance Application
Warnings, Edits & Messages: Interview Wrap-up
Warnings, Edits & Messages: Signature

Revised:

Application/Reevaluation Print
Assisting Person
Eligibility Explorer Results
Income and Expenses – Q/A Navigator
Interview Wrap-up
Signature
Slot Details
Warnings, Edits & Messages: Assisting Person
Warnings, Edits & Messages: Program

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Changes to the DTA Intranet Site

This month you will see the following changes to the Department's intranet site:

- The first page displays the latest issue of Commissioner Wagner's newsletter. This will be updated monthly.
- The "News" option contains the following two new links:

"Hotel Caseload Reduced to Zero" – displays the memo from Commissioner Wagner dated August 16, 2004; and

"DTA Welcomes Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healy" - displays the agenda and photos taken during Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healy's visit to DTA on August 3, 2004.

The "News" option will continue to be updated with news and information as they become available.

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Fuel Assistance 2004


The Fuel Assistance mailing is taking place in September. TAFDC, EAEDC and FS recipients received a brochure about the Fuel Assistance Program. Information on this brochure included an overview of the program and explained how to apply for fuel assistance. It also included a list of agencies statewide where applications could be filed. The Fuel Assistance brochure also told 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.

TAFDC and EAEDC recipients also received a system-generated notice with verification of their grant amount. Food stamp benefit recipients did not receive verification of their benefit amount.

An informational insert titled "Food Stamp Benefit Availability Dates" went to food stamp benefit recipients (both NPA and PA households). This insert informs the AU that food stamp benefits will be available on the same day each month and identifies the date that benefits will be available based on the last digit of their Social Security Number. Information regarding the availability of cash benefits was also included for those recipients who receive cash benefits as well as 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.***

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- Regulations and procedures were revised in response to a May 2003 Superior Court decision in *Baynes v. Wagner*. The case concerned the exemption in TAFDC for caretakers of disabled children.
- The revised regulation and procedures require caretakers to verify that the care of the disabled child prevents them from seeking, obtaining or maintaining full-time employment and codifies what our current practice has been since the Court's decision.
- Field Operations Memo 2003-23 is obsolete.

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Cape and the Islands Business Redesign

All

[Field Operations Memo 2004-30](#)

This memo provides information regarding the business redesign changes for the Falmouth TAO and the Hyannis TAO.

The Hyannis TAO assumed responsibility for providing services to food stamp only AUs previously serviced by the Falmouth TAO.

An informational notice was sent to AUs impacted by these changes. This memo included a sample of the notice as an attachment.

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Enhancements to the Automated Process on the Disability Window

TAFDC, EAEDC

[Field Operations Memo 2004-33](#)

The automated process on the Disability Window is being enhanced with the August mailings of EAEDC Medical Reports and TAFDC/EAEDC Disability Supplements from BEACON. This memo tells TAO staff about:

- two new reports on Actuate to help AU Managers track the AUs sent an EAEDC Medical Report and/or TAFDC/EAEDC Disability Supplement;

- functionality that is obsolete on BEACON and FMCS as a result of the enhancements; and
- the selection for the mailing of TAFDC Disability Supplements and EAEDC Medical Reports and EAEDC Disability Supplements will be done through BEACON.

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EOHHS Virtual Gateway Food Stamp Application

TAFDC

[Field Operations Memo 2004-32](#)

As part of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services reorganization, the *Virtual Gateway* Food Stamp Application is another way to apply for food stamp benefits. Like the Project Bread Web

Application, the Virtual Gateway FS Application was designed to be “user friendly.” The questions asked include both the BEACON RFA and BEACON Q&A navigators. This memo gives procedures for receiving, incorporating and processing a food stamp application received from the Virtual Gateway.

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Miscellaneous Program Changes

ALL

[A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 054](#)

This update transmits the following changes:

Chapter II, Section E: AR Referral Search List:

- Rejected Referrals returned to their originators for updating were not being revised and resubmitted for continued investigation and processing because this view was not part of the Daily Priority Actions.
- Rejected Referrals has been relocated under the Daily Priority Actions View in TAO Office Explorer.

Chapter IV, Section D: Funerals and Burials:

- Guidelines have been added for paying funeral and burial payments, specifically in instances of cremation.

Chapter IX, AU Composition Results:

- A correction was made to define the limited reasons for which an AU Manager may close a FS AU during the TBA period.

Chapter XI, Section A: Work Requirements/AU Exemptions:

- Procedures have been revised in accordance with the May 2003 Superior Court decision in *Baynes v. Wagner* which requires caretakers to verify that the care of the disabled child prevents them from seeking, obtaining or maintaining full time employment.

Chapter XVI, Section C: Benefit Issuance Mechanism:

- The Department replaced the stand-alone Image Identification System (IIS) with a new Card Issuance System (CIS) that is integrated into BEACON. Applicants and recipients are no longer issued a Facial Image Identification Card. They will use the Bay State Access card which does not have a photo.

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RAFT Program

ALL

[Field Operations Memo 2004-36](#)

Through contracts with the regional nonprofit housing agencies, DHCD is administering the *Residential Assistance for Families in Transition* (RAFT) program. RAFT benefits will provide short-term, limited financial assistance to:

- Homeless families that lack a permanent primary residence, and
- Families at risk of becoming homeless because they cannot afford housing costs without financial assistance.

The maximum RAFT benefit is \$3,000 per family per year. Benefits may be used for:

- security deposits, first and/or last month's rent;
- moving expenses;
- utility, rent or mortgage arrearages;
- monthly rental stipend;
- other housing-related expenses necessary for the family to move from shelter, such as the cost of furniture, refrigerator, household equipment; and/or
- transportation-related expenses for employment.

TAFDC Clothing Allowance

TAFDC

[State Letter 1283](#)

[Field Operations Memo 2004-31](#)

The Department will pay a nonrecurring clothing allowance for September 2004 for TAFDC recipients. The clothing allowance is \$150 per recipient under the age of 19. The clothing allowance is prorated for recipients eligible in September 2004 but who have a start date after September 1, 2004. Payments were available September 1 for SSN 0-4 and September 2 for SSN 5-9 for direct deposit or EBT.

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Currently there are no New Initiative Memos.

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