

out brochures to our TAFDC families, certain former TAFDC families and selected food stamp households. The February mailing will encourage those who are employed or have been employed to file their taxes, request their refunds and credits, consider the Advance EITC payment option and take advantage of any available child care services. A supply of the brochures used in this mailing along with an EITC poster will soon be available in all local TAOs.

Against this backdrop, your role in supplying basic and follow-up information is essential. Each TAO will be receiving an e-mailed list of free tax preparation sites. Encourage clients to visit them for professional help in filing their taxes as well as determining tax credit eligibility. While many of our clients may prefer using the nearest tax preparation site, let them know that they may use any site in Massachusetts. In addition, most AARP sites will assist those who are not senior citizens. For your convenience, this listing will also be posted on the DTA intranet.

More information is also available at [www.masscashback.com](http://www.masscashback.com). For more specific tax preparation inquiries, your clients may also contact the Internal Revenue Service directly by dialing 1-800-829-1040 and the Massachusetts Department of Revenue at 1-800-392-6089 or 617-887-MDOR.

The benefits of working are enhanced for our clients when the right supports are in place. Spreading the word on EITC, EIC and CTC will broaden our clients' pathways to opportunity and add a basic service to our portfolio of job supports. Thank you in advance for your diligence and commitment to this campaign.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner

## Quality Corner

This month's Quality Corner is dedicated to the negative error rate.

Quality Control reviews focus not only on benefit over issuances or underissuances, but also on the inappropriate denial or termination of benefits, called negative errors. There are twice as many errors related to denials than to terminations, the majority being NPA FS AUs where the household applied for both cash and food stamps. Federal Fiscal Year 2006 final error rates are not in, but the negative error rate so far appears to be similar to last year's error rate of 3.1%, and the same types of negative errors are being discovered by Quality Control as last year.

### Denials

The two major problem areas resulting in inappropriate denials are *verifications* and *timeliness*.

An example of an inappropriate denial for failure to provide verification occurs when the verification for which the FS AU was denied is an optional verification such as utility expenses or dependent care expenses. In other instances, Quality Control found that the verification for which the AU was denied had actually been provided by the applicant.

Another reason for inappropriate

denials is timeliness. This happens when the application is denied *before* the 30th day for failure to provide verifications or failure to complete the application process. While an application can be denied before the 30th day because of a financial (e.g., over income) or non-financial (e.g., ineligible student) reason, no application should ever be denied before day 30 for failure to provide verifications or failure to complete the application process.

### **What's an AU Manager to Do?**

AU Managers must continue to follow the procedures outlined in Field Operations Memo 2006-38 for processing FS applications. Remember that a combined cash/FS application must be processed with two timeliness standards in mind. Do not confuse cash program time frames with FS Program time frames. AU Managers must give the applicant a BEACON-generated verification checklist and assist the applicant if there is difficulty obtaining a particular verification. AU Managers must be mindful of which verifications are required for food stamps and which are optional. Finally, all verifications received should be promptly entered in BEACON so that an accurate electronic record of the AU is maintained.

## **Closings**

Recently an AU was inappropriately closed because the recipient was using her EBT card out of state.

### **What's an AU Manager to Do?**

When a recipient uses his or her EBT card out of state for an extended period of time, the AU Manager, before taking action on the AU, must follow up to determine if a change in address or change in Massachusetts residency has occurred. The recipient may have a legitimate reason for accessing FS benefits out of state for extended periods of time. In this particular AU, the recipient was seeking employment out of state and caring for an ill relative. However, the recipient maintained Massachusetts residency and was still eligible for FS benefits in this state.

## **From the Hotline**

The questions and answers below concern the Relocation Benefit. More details on this topic can be found in the Transitional Cash Assistance Program regulations at 106 CMR 705.350.

- Q.** If a TAFDC mother requests a Relocation Benefit, is she allowed to use a portion of the benefit to purchase a bed, crib or refrigerator?
- A.** Yes, any of these items could be purchased with the Relocation Benefit, but only when and if the lack of these items prevents the mother from relocating to permanent housing.

For example, a nine-month-old baby may have never received the crib payment available through our Department. (Refer to 106 CMR 705.600.) This piece of furniture/equipment is a safety imperative and fills a fundamental need. Therefore, using the Relocation Benefit for this purpose is appropriate.

- Q.** Does this mean that any piece of furniture can be purchased with the Relocation Benefit?
- A.** No. Certain items of furniture would likely never prevent a family from moving into a permanent location under any circumstances. However, the only specifications in the regulations are related to an assistance unit's inability to secure permanent housing. Since there may be many contingencies