

Food Stamp Program Access Review

FS

Field Operation Memo 2006-33

This Field Operations Memo:

- describes USDA's findings from the Food Stamp Program Access Review it conducted in 2005, and
- describes the steps the Department has taken to address these findings.

TAFDC Clothing Allowance

TAFDC

State Letter 1314

Field Operations Memo 2006-34

The Department will pay a nonrecurring clothing allowance for September 2006 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 2006 but who have a start date on or after September 1, 2006.

Revision to the TES-EPR-1

EA

Field Operations Memo 2006-35

The *TES-EPR-1* form has been revised to facilitate a smoother transition to the designated shelter. The form includes additional information that will allow the shelter to better prepare for the family's arrival.

Food Stamp Employment and Training (FS E&T) for Individuals with Mental Illness Who Are Homeless - New Initiative

DTA has contracted with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to help food stamp recipients achieve self-sufficiency through the receipt of comprehensive training and employment services. This new initiative is called the *Homeless Employment Services Partnership* (HESP). HESP serves mentally ill individuals who are DMH customers and are homeless, formerly homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and are receiving food stamp benefits. Currently, the HESP initiative is limited to DMH customers living in the Framingham and Springfield areas served by the Framingham, Springfield Liberty and Springfield State TAOs.

Safe Assistance to Further Economic Empowerment (Project SAFE) New Initiative

Project SAFE is a new initiative supported by DTA's Domestic Violence Unit, Housing and Homeless Services Unit, and Employment Services Program. Project SAFE develops self-confidence and skills necessary for recipients to maintain employment by providing practical skills such as safety planning, self-defense and economic literacy training to those recipients who choose to participate. The new initiative is currently helping TAFDC families residing in the David John Louison Shelter in Brockton, Millennium House in Boston, and House of Hope in Lowell.

FYI

Administrative Fees for SSI/RSDI Representative Payees

A recent Q.C. error identified that, in some circumstances, representative payees, such as group homes, charge an administrative fee for managing recipients' SSI or RSDI benefit checks. This fee, which varies based upon the recipient's benefit amount, should be treated as noncountable income.

These fees have been found among DMR, DMH, CAP, and regular NPA AUs. There is no known way to readily identify representative payee AUs that are required to pay administrative fees. Therefore, it is important to explore this potential when interviewing recipients who reside in group living situations or institutional settings, or any recipient with an authorized representative payee.

If the AU verifies payment of an administrative fee, enter the amount of the fee in the Dependent Care window in BEACON as a monthly dependent care expense. This will ensure that the administrative fee amount is not considered in the benefit calculation.

FYI

Changes to DTA Online

This month you will see the following changes to DTA Online:

Diversity - Events

The option Diversity - Events includes a link to the September Diversity event entitled: *National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15)*.

Resource Inventories – DTA Employment Resources Deskguide

The DTA Employment Resources Deskguide includes a new section entitled *TAFDC Work Experience* and provides a summary of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Non-EOHHS Links

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development is now two separate agencies: Department of Labor and Department of Workforce Development. The link DLWD has been deleted and replaced with the link to the Department of Labor (DOL) and the link to the Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

FYI

Changes to the mass.gov DTA Homepage

This month you will see the following changes to the mass.gov DTA Homepage:

Programs and Services – Food Stamp Benefits

The Food Stamp Benefit information page includes a Nondiscrimination Statement. The statement appears at the bottom of the page.

Research & Statistics – DTA Facts and Figures

The *DTA Facts and Figures* includes caseload information, grant levels, eligibility standards and FY'06 appropriation data for August 2006.

FYI

Changes to Policy Online

This month you will see the following changes to Policy Online:

TAO E-Mails – Special Procedures

The available options listed on the Policy Online main menu selection page includes a new option entitled *E-Mails – Special Procedures*. When selected, links to the e-mails with special procedures sent to TAO staff will be displayed. The e-mail title line contains the year, sequence number and subject (ex., 2006-3: FY07 State Budget Language Regarding EA Presumptive Eligibility).