



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2001-9
February 20, 2001

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From: Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Participation in the Employment Services Program

Overview

The Department continues to focus on moving recipients into employment and/or preparing them for employment with skills training and educational opportunities.

While the primary focus is on those recipients currently subject to the Work Program and the 24-month time limit, we must also direct our efforts to work with those recipients ***who are exempt from the 24-month time limit and those who have a time limit but are not work-program-required.***

Purpose of Memo

The purpose of this memo is to inform Transitional Assistance Office Staff that recipients:

- exempt from time-limited benefits who volunteer to participate in an ESP activity are no longer sanctioned for failing to meet the participation requirements; and
- nonexempt and not subject to the Work Program will be mandated to participate in ESP activities at any time within their 24-month period, not just the last 12 months as stated in Field Operations Memo 2000-7B. Other than this change, all instructions in Field Operations Memo 2000-7B remain the same.

Note: Mandating participation in an ESP activity is subject to both ESP component and child care availability.

**For Recipients
Exempt From
Time-Limited
Benefits**

For recipients exempt from time-limited benefits, the AU Manager should at each eligibility review inform the exempt recipient:

- that ESP services are available to help the recipient find and maintain employment; and
- that he or she will not be sanctioned for not meeting program participation requirements or starting but not completing any ESP activity.

Note: BEACON Release 1.0 will automatically sanction a recipient for not meeting an ESP activity. **The AU Manager must enter a "good cause" reason to prevent the sanction.** See page 4 of this memo for further instructions.

**Nonexempt
Recipients
Neither Subject to
the Work Program
Nor Participating
in Any
Component**

For nonexempt recipients neither subject to the Work Program nor participating in any ESP component, the AU Manager must at each quarterly face-to-face contact in the first 15 months of the 24-month time limit and each monthly contact for the remaining nine months:

- stress the ramifications of the 24-month time limit to each recipient;
- inform the recipient of the availability and benefits of participating in an ESP component activity;
- review the recipient's needs, abilities, barriers to employment and interests; and
- mandate participation in an ESP component, depending on component and child care availability. ESP participation can be mandated in the following components: Basic Educational Services, Skills Training or Supported Work. Participation in Basic Job Search, Structured Job Search or Full Employment Program **cannot** be mandated. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2000-7B for more details.

Important: Before mandated participation in a designated ESP component, the recipient must be advised of all ESP options and afforded the opportunity to volunteer to participate in the ESP component of his or her choice. The recipient may volunteer to participate in Basic Job Search, Structured Job Search or the Full Employment Program instead of the component being considered for mandated participation. The recipient's selection of an ESP component is subject to the approval of an EDP.

ESP Activity Referrals

To refer a recipient to an ESP Activity, the AU Manager must access BEACON Release 1.0 to:

- complete/modify an EDP;
- complete an ESP Assessment;
- generate a Referral and Response form to refer the individual to the specific activity; and

Note: On the Referral and Response form include the recipient's exempt/nonexempt status and, if nonexempt, the months remaining on the clock.

- give the original Referral and Response form with the appointment date and time to the recipient.

When the completed referral and response form is returned, the AU Manager must:

- enter the ESP Activity Disposition of the referral on BEACON Release 1.0; and
- authorize child care and/or transportation services, if applicable.

Participation Requirements

BEACON Release 1.0 will issue a monthly participation report for all recipients in any ESP activity. When participation reports are returned, the AU Manager will enter the actual participation hours on BEACON Release 1.0.

Exempt Recipients

Exempt TAFDC recipients must not be sanctioned if they do not meet the ESP activity requirement or change their minds about wanting to participate. AU Managers must check the following BEACON Release 1.0 views to monitor sanction information:

- "*Clients with Pending Sanctions*" View; and
- "*Clients with Sanctions*" View.

If the exempt recipient does not meet the ESP requirement or the participation report is not returned, the AU Manager will:

- enter "Family Crisis or Emergency Situation" as the "good cause" reason for not meeting the requirement to prevent the recipient from being sanctioned; and
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**Participation
Requirements
(continued)**

Note: If the recipient is sanctioned, the AU Manager must remove the sanction from BEACON using "good cause." Entering "good cause" will ensure that the sanction level does not increase.

- contact the recipient to schedule an appointment to discuss the reason(s) for not participating.

If the recipient no longer wants to participate in the ESP activity, the AU Manager must modify the EDP by accessing the ESP Activity Disposition window and terminating the ESP activity.

**Nonexempt
Recipients**

If after enrolling in an ESP component, either as a volunteer or mandated recipient, a nonexempt recipient subsequently fails to meet the participation guidelines, explore good cause and reassess the EDP. If good cause does not exist, BEACON will automatically sanction the individual. The recipient will then be mandated to perform TEMP Community Service. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2000-7B for more information.

Questions

Policy-related questions should be directed by the Hotline designee to the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478. Systems-related questions should be directed to Customer Service at (617) 348-5290.
