



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street . Boston MA 02111


Argeo Paul Cellucci
Governor

Jane Swift
Lieutenant Governor

William D. O'Leary
Secretary

Claire McIntire
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2000-35
December 19, 2000

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Timely Food Stamp Case Processing for Homeless AUs

Background

Federal regulations *removed* homeless Assistance Units (AUs) from the list of qualifying expedited service AUs (106 CMR 365.810). However, many homeless AUs continue to qualify for Expedited Service in accordance with 106 CMR 365.810, including "\$150 Gross Income Households"; "Destitute (Migrant) Households"; and "Special Expedited Service Households."

For those AUs not qualifying for expedited service and in recognition of the problems faced by homeless families in Massachusetts, the state legislature paid particular attention to this issue in the FY 2001 Massachusetts Budget.

This memo is being issued to recognize the needs of homeless applicant AUs and to remind staff to accelerate the application process whenever possible for homeless AUs not otherwise eligible for expedited service. Although food stamp regulations have not changed, prompt application processing will help to meet the needs of homeless families.

By promptly providing food stamp benefits, available cash can be used or applied to obtain housing or other immediate needs required to lessen the impact of homelessness.

**AU Manager
Responsibilities**

AU Managers must encourage homeless AUs to provide all needed verifications quickly to accelerate the application process. Prompt case processing by AU Managers, once all verifications have been provided, can shorten the time it takes an AU to receive its initial food stamp benefits.

To accomplish this the AU Manager must:

- identify homeless AUs that do not meet current expedited service criteria;
- interview the AU on Day 1 or schedule the application interview as soon as possible;
- explain to the AU that food stamp benefits can be provided sooner, after application, to eligible AUs once all required verifications have been provided;
- obtain all verifications required at initial certification in accordance with 106 CMR 361.600 et seq. These include: gross countable income; assets; identity; noncitizen status; and SSNs. To receive certain deductions, verification must also be obtained for: actual utility expenses; disability; medical expenses; and legal obligation and payment of child support. If verification of these deductions is not provided, do not allow the deduction(s) in the benefit determination. If an AU is homeless, verification of residency is not required if it is not reasonably available per 106 CMR 361.610(H) or unless the AU's residency is questionable. Other verification is not required unless questionable per 106 CMR 361.610(K).

Note: When obtaining verification remember to:

- request additional information only if questionable and document why the information is questionable;
 - provide alternative types of acceptable verification to applicant AUs without requiring any specific type(s) of verification;
 - accept provided verification as long as it adequately confirms statements or elements being verified; and
 - provide help in obtaining verification when requested or needed.
- issue benefits as soon as possible to eligible homeless AUs if all necessary verifications have been received. **Do not delay providing benefits to eligible homeless AUs or unnecessarily delay the application based on a 30-day standard time frame for benefit issuance.**

**Other Assistance
Units**

While the state budget language focused on homeless applicants, staff are reminded that *all* applications should be processed as quickly as possible once the applicant has provided all required verification.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478.
