



Dear Fellow Employees,

For our Department, the start of the summer season signals the return of two events. It begins with the annual DTA Conference in Provincetown and ends with the passage of a State budget. This time of year also marks my anniversary as your Commissioner. Two years ago this month, I introduced myself to you in Commissioner's Corner, and since that time I have been honored to meet with many of you here at Central Office and in local offices across the state. In this month's column, I'll be taking a closer look at these events.



Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still.

Chinese Proverb

As in previous years, this summer's Conference will be informative as well as engaging. Thanks to the hard work of training staff, support personnel and DTA "alumni," Conference 2004 will provide new information and techniques to help you do your job. The course offerings run the gamut from details on how we increase food stamp access to tips on stress management. Since office scheduling and coverage requirements limit the number of employees who may participate at the Conference, it is my hope that those of you who are in attendance will return to your offices energized and ready to share your updated knowledge and skills with your peers.

Also during the month of June, work continues on the budget for fiscal year 2005. As many of you know, the budget "marathon" begins in January when the Governor submits a budget proposal. Next, the House Ways and Means Committee presents its recommendations. After the House Committee's recommendations have been debated, a House version of the budget is proposed. The Senate Ways and Means Committee submits its own recommendations before a Senate version of the budget is also completed. The House and Senate then work together in conference to draft a budget for final legislative approval and submission back to the Governor. The Governor may approve or veto individual line items within the budget, but the legislature has the opportunity to override any of the Governor's vetoes.

As of this writing, the fiscal year 2005 budget is with the Senate. The version most recently passed by the House includes an expansion in the TAFDC work program requirement as well as provisions for an increase in the number of TAFDC recipients who may participate in education and training opportunities. Funds have also been earmarked for the Food Stamp Hotline and other food stamp outreach efforts. To gain a broader perspective on the budget, go to <http://mass.gov> and select the 2005 budget icon.

In concluding this message, I'd like to express my gratitude to all of you. Over the past two years, you have shown flexibility in the face of ongoing changes and mutual support in times of stress. Thank you for the commitment you demonstrate each day.

Sincerely,

John Wagner, Commissioner

Quick Links

Choose Area .....



[Next](#)

### New Forms

09-320-0504-05  
FSPWR-MED (5/2004)  
*Food Stamp Program Work Requirements Medical Report*

The *Food Stamp Program Work Requirements Medical Report* will be used to document the disability of an applicant/recipient or that an applicant/recipient is *unfit for work*. Please see Field Operations Memo 2004-22 for more information on the use of this form.

### Revised Forms

25-105-0504-05  
BEA/CCA (Rev. 5/2004)  
*Child-Care Authorization*

AU Managers complete this revised form when issuing child-care services to a homeless recipient and when an existing system-generated authorization cannot be amended or in the rare instance when the system cannot generate an authorization. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-21 for more information on the use of this form. The Spanish version is on the reverse side of this form.

02-207-0604-05  
TAFDC-5 (Rev. 6/2004)  
*Two-Parent Exempt/Nonexempt Status Notice*

This form now informs each parent in a two-parent AU about their exempt/nonexempt status based on revised exempt/nonexempt reasons. The Spanish version will be available soon.

### Revised Brochure

02-820-0604-05  
02-822-0604-05 (S)  
CC-1-Mail (Rev. 6/2004)  
*Child Care: Getting and Keeping Child Care*

This revised brochure now states that if you work or participate in an activity for less than 20 hours per week, you may be eligible for in-home or relative care. AU Managers must use the revised brochure.

### Obsolete Forms

18-023-1094-05  
18-123-1094-05 (S)  
SAVE-1 (Rev. 10/94)  
*Certification of Alien Status*

18-077-0694-05  
SAVE-2 (6/94)  
*INS Secondary Verification Request*

The above forms are obsolete because the SAVE process is now automated.

09-166-0397-05  
FS-MED (Rev. 3/97)  
*FS Medical Report*

This form is now obsolete. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-22 for more information.

**Q.** I have a recipient who recently received an income tax refund. How do I treat this payment?

**A.** In both cash programs (TAFDC and EAEDC), tax refunds (state and federal) are not counted as income, but instead are treated as countable assets. Refer to 106 CMR 204.120(I) and 106 CMR 321.120(I) for more details.

In the Food Stamp Program, tax refunds are considered a nonrecurring lump sum payment. The payment is noncountable income in accordance with 106 CMR 363.230(I). The tax refund is, however, counted as an asset in the month received. For more details, refer to 106 CMR 363.130(E).

**Q.** My recipient's refund includes an Earned Income Credit (EIC). How is this payment treated?

**A.** For the TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp Programs, the EIC is considered noncountable income. EIC is noncountable as an asset in the month of receipt and in the following month. In the third month, any remaining portion of the EIC payment is considered a countable asset. Refer to 106 CMR 204.120(I) and 106 CMR 321.120(I) for more details. Information on this topic is also in the Food Stamp Manual at 106 CMR 363.140(G).

**Q.** I have a food stamp applicant who is homeless but also work program required. When I read the regulations on Universal Semiannual Reporting Requirements (USR), I noticed they require that I put homeless individuals on USR. At the same time, the policy says that individuals required to participate in the food stamp work program are an exception to the USR requirement. Which regulation do I apply in this situation?

**A.** If your applicant meets the work program USR exception mentioned at 106 CMR 366.110 (C), then the applicant should not be put on USR. This way, the applicant's compliance with the work program requirement can be properly monitored.

**Quick Links** [Choose Area .....](#) 

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

In general, Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) has been a major benefit to the error rate. It allows us to see recipients less often without suffering error problems. For it to help, however, the most recent certification must be done correctly. This month we have two AUs where it was not, and errors resulted.

### Food Stamp Attributed Amount

A recipient had been sanctioned for failure to meet the work requirement, and the \$86 Food Stamp attributed amount had been included in her FS calculation. She went to work full-time and reported her wages in a timely manner. The wages were entered onto BEACON, and the AU became subject to USR. Her wages and the \$86 sanction amount were both included in the FS calculation.

The recipient, however, had cured her sanction by working over 20 hours a week for two weeks at the time the AU Manager entered the wages. Since the income was sufficient to close the AU, the AU should have been subject to Transitional Benefits Alternative (TBA) for five months.

### What Can An AU Manager Do?

To do this correctly in BEACON is a two-day process. On day one, the AU Manager should remove the sanction and do a recalculation. On day two, the wages should be entered, and the FS-attributed amount should be removed -- in this case, \$86 with another recalculation. If the result of the two-day process makes the AU ineligible for TAFDC, the case will correctly go on TBA.

### USR Anticipating Wages

At the time of the application, the recipient provided four wage stubs, dated July 30, August 13, August 20, and August 27. For the missing week, August 6, the recipient did not receive any pay. The AU Manager used the most recent four weeks, including a zero week, in the calculation. The QC reviewer asked the employer for verification and discovered that the recipient had been on vacation the week of the zero pay and had received vacation pay the previous week. By calculating in a zero week, the AU had a large overpayment.

### What Can An AU Manager Do?

Under the terms of USR, to avoid an error, the most recent certification must be done correctly. In this case, the income must be anticipated correctly. If the recipient says she didn't work for a week, the AU Manager should question the recipient to determine if this is an ongoing situation or an infrequent incident (such as a vacation) and if the recipient is paid for this time. If, for example, the recipient had to be out of work for medical treatments or for school one week a month and received no pay for this time and it was anticipated that this schedule would continue for the duration of the certification period, then the zero week should be considered in the wage calculation. Remember: you can always increase the issuance if the income decreases and is reported. Please see *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter IV, Section C, page 18 for more information on counting irregular income.

Quick Links [Choose Area ....](#)



[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

**[BEACON Help Revisions](#)****[Offset of Lost Benefits Notice](#)****[Summer Food Programs](#)****BEACON Help Revisions**

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

***Added:***

Warnings, Edits & Messages: Application/Reevaluation Print  
Warnings, Edits & Messages: Interview Wrap-up

***Revised:***

Address  
Application/Reevaluation Print  
AU Composition Results  
Complete an RFA  
Process Application/Reevaluation Print Information  
Standard Utility Allowance

** [Back to Top](#)**

**[Offset of Lost Benefits Notice](#)**

BEACON Release 2.1.9 automates the calculation and notification process when a recipient is owed money as a result of lost benefits, such as a retroactive payment, but also owes money to the Department as a result of an overpayment.

In this situation, the recipient receives a notice saying that the amount owed to the Department will be deducted from the amount of lost benefits owed by the Department. If the amount owed to the recipient is more than the amount owed to the Department then the recipient will be issued the balance.

If the recipient has a question, the notice includes a telephone number for the recipient to call and speak with a Recoupment Specialist.

** [Back to Top](#)**

**[Summer Food Programs](#)****Farmers' Markets**

Farmers' markets in Holyoke and Worcester have been authorized by the USDA Food & Nutrition Service to accept EBT food stamp benefits through the Farmers' Market Pilot Program.

The Holyoke Farmers' Market, sponsored by the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, will be accepting EBT food stamp benefits using scrip as soon as the POS terminal is installed. The market, which opened May 6th, includes up to 20 farmers. On June 3rd, in recognition of National Hunger Awareness Day, the market will hold a press conference to announce the EBT pilot project.

The Greater Worcester Farmers' Market, scheduled to open June 14th, will be operating at two sites in Worcester and one in Sturbridge on rotating weekdays. This is the first market in Massachusetts to utilize a wireless POS terminal to transact EBT food stamps. The market manager has scheduled press conferences in Worcester and Sturbridge for June 1st to announce the EBT pilot project.

For a second season, the New Bedford Farmer's Market will be accepting EBT food stamp benefits using scrip. The market, located at Clasky Park, will be opening July 10th.

It is anticipated that two additional farmers' markets, in Dorchester and Springfield, will be authorized to participate in the Farmers' Market Pilot Program this season.

### **Mailings for the Summer Food Service Program**

During July, the Department will mail a notice to all active TAFDC, EAEDC and NPA food stamp recipients who have a dependent child and live in a community participating in the Summer Food Service Program (approximately 50 communities statewide). The purpose of this mailing is to offer children age 18 and under food at no cost served at a designated community site during the summer. The letter will list the sites available in the area covered by the recipient's zip code. Recipients will be encouraged to call Project Bread's toll-free number (1-800-645-8333) if they have questions, or to visit the website at [www.meals4kids.org](http://www.meals4kids.org) for information.

Related to this mailing, in late May, the Department sent a notice on Project Bread's behalf as part of their pilot project to reach recipients in rural Franklin County where access to the Summer Food Service Program is sometimes difficult. The notice describes the Summer Meals Home-Delivery Program that provides lunches for children, and asks interested recipients to call Project Bread's toll-free line to complete a brief survey about interest in the program. This notice was printed for all active TAFDC and NPA food stamp recipients who have a dependent child and live in one of the following six zip codes in Franklin County : 01331, 01346, 01349, 01364, 01368 and 01376. Please refer interested recipients from this area to Project Bread's toll-free telephone number listed above for more information.

 [Back to Top](#)

**Quick Links** [Choose Area .....](#) 

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

## [ESP Educational Component and Child-Care Services for Nonrecipient Minor Parent Under Age 18](#)

### [Food Stamp Work Requirements Medical Report](#)

### [Homeless Child-Care Services for EA Recipients](#)

### [Work Program Requirement Changes](#)

## ESP Educational Component and Child-Care Services for Nonrecipient Minor Parent Under Age 18

### TAFDC

#### [State Letter 1279](#)

A nonrecipient minor parent under age 18 is eligible to participate in an ESP educational component and receive child-care services for a dependent child(ren) when the minor parent meets the following conditions:

- the minor parent and the child(ren) live with the parents of the minor parent;
- the minor parent is attending high school or a GED program on a full-time basis;
- the minor parent meets the TAFDC noncitizen criteria; and
- the gross income of the parents of the minor parent does not exceed 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline.

[▲ Back to Top](#)

## Food Stamp Work Requirements Medical Report

### FS

#### [Field Operations Memo 2004-22](#)

The previous Food Stamp Medical Report (FS-MED) did not adequately address the issue of an applicant/recipient being *unfit for work*. The new form, the Food Stamp Work Requirements Medical Report (FSPWR-MED) will be used to document the disability of an applicant/recipient or that an applicant/recipient is *unfit for work*. This memo transmits the FSPWR-MED and provides instructions for using the form. The former Food Stamp Medical Report (FS-MED) is now obsolete.

[▲ Back to Top](#)

## Homeless Child-Care Services for EA Recipients

### EA

#### [Field Operations Memo 2004-21](#)

This memo discusses child-care services that are available through the CCR&R to EA homeless families when they:

- participate in employment or education or training activities;
- participate in required housing-search activities, counseling sessions, meetings with social workers, parenting workshops or training sessions; or
- perform assigned activities within the shelter.

The family will receive:

- full-time child-care at a child-care center for 30 or more hours of activity per week;
- part-time child-care at a child-care center for at least 20 hours but less than 30 hours of activity per week.

A co-payment, based on the family's income, will be charged for the child-care services.

[▲ Back to Top](#)

## Work Program Requirement Changes

### TAFDC

#### [A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 53](#)

This update transmits the following changes to Chapter XI, Section A: Work Requirements/AU Exemptions:

- exempt/nonexempt reasons have been updated on the AU Exemption tab;
- the under-two-years-of-age exemption information has been updated; and
- incorporates language from Field Operations Memos 2004-6 and 2004-16.

In conjunction with these changes, the *Two-Parent Exempt/Nonexempt Status Notice* (TAFDC-5) has been revised.

[▲ Back to Top](#)

Quick Links [Choose Area .....](#) 

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

## New Initiatives

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

The following memos were added to the Policy Online New Initiatives option.

[MBHP Assessments and EA Hotel/Motel Families](#)

[Card Issuance System \(CIS\) – New Initiative](#)

Quick Links [Choose Area .....](#) 

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)