



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
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FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number: 09-17

Effective Date: Immediately

Issuance Date: October 16, 2008

**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISOR AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

FROM: KEVIN M. MCGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**RE: REVIEWS OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES WITH
CHILDREN (EAFC)**

**PROGRAM AFFECTED: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES WITH
CHILDREN**

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF PROGRAMS

Summary:

Several years ago, the Legislative Auditors identified problems with the Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFC) program. As a result of their findings, FIA agreed to a review a monthly sample of approved EAFC cases. This is an ongoing review.

The reviews of approved EAFC cases indicate that staff are not always following correct policy and procedures for issuing EAFC benefits to customers. Local departments that have not already done so should review their EAFC plans to ensure that they are current and adhere to policy.

EAFC Policy:

There is a set amount of funds allocated to each local department by DHR to meet emergencies to families with children. Each local department must develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the specific requirements and resources within that particular jurisdiction. The EAFC section of the TCA Manual covers all of the specific federal and state requirements for emergency assistance.

The following is an overview of those requirements:

- ✓ An EAFC benefit is granted to avoid the destitution of an individual under the age of 21 living with a relative.

- The relative can be related by blood, birth, marriage, or adoption
- Relationship is verified only if questionable
- ✓ The application must include an individual younger than 21 years of age.
 - An unborn meets this requirement for a pregnant woman
 - A married couple with no children can be eligible, as long as one of them is under 21
- ✓ The household cannot have resources of its own to meet the emergency.
- ✓ The emergency cannot be the result of quitting a job without good cause.
- ✓ Local department plans must designate the types of covered emergencies.
- ✓ Local departments may pay an EAFC in addition to TCA or a Welfare Avoidance Grant (WAG).
- ✓ There is no requirement for an applicant to file for or cooperate with child support to receive an EAFC.
- ✓ There is no requirement for length of residency for EAFC eligibility.
- ✓ Case records must contain sufficient information to substantiate the local department's action in approving or denying an EAFC application.
- ✓ Screen, process and issue all EAFC benefits through CARES. Finalize EAFC applications the same day received, if required information is available. Procedures must be in place for issuing benefits when CARES is down.
- ✓ The EAFC or the combination of customer resources and EAFC, must satisfy the current situation and prevent the immediate eviction, putout, utility turn-off or other situation allowed under the local plan.
- ✓ Customers do not need to verify how they will meet their needs in the future in order to be eligible for the current EAFC.
- ✓ Local departments must send EAFC applicants a notice advising them of the approval or denial of the EAFC application. Customers have the right to appeal any decision made by the local department.

Action Required:

Although local flexibility exists in developing EAFC policy, local departments must follow Federal and State requirements. Local departments should review their EAFC SOPs and update them, if necessary, and ensure that all staff understand and follow correct policy and procedures.

Reminders:

1. Welfare Avoidance Grants (WAGs) and EAFCs are not interchangeable. Do not refer a customer for a WAG because the E AFC amount will not cover the emergency need. An E AFC can be approved to help pay an emergency need for a family that has received a WAG.
2. An assessment must be completed for everyone living in the home. This assessment includes a review of prior narration on CARES. The assessment questions also provide the information for the case narration and include:
 - Was an E AFC paid to the family in the past 12 months? Is the family eligible now?
 - Why is the customer applying for an E AFC?
 - What caused the situation that required the customer to apply for an E AFC?
 - Who is in the household?
 - What is the amount of income for each member of the household and what is its source?
 - Do adults living in the home have a job?
 - Did an adult in the household quit a job without good cause?
 - How did the family manage in the past?
 - Does the household receive contributions? Are relatives/friends paying any expenses for which an E AFC is being requested?
 - Does the family have resources to meet the need?
 - Is the need an allowed item in the local department's E AFC Plan?
 - Was a WAG issued in prior months to cover the present emergency situation for which the household is requesting an E AFC?
3. The **Rights and Responsibilities** form must be signed by the customer and case manager under penalty of perjury.
4. Much of the narration comes from the assessment and the narrative on CARES for the E AFC must clearly state the following:
 - The emergency that the E AFC is intended to cover.
 - Terms of technical and financial eligibility that must be met.
 - Whether an adult in the household quit a job without good cause.
 - Verification of income, assets, resources and contributions.
 - The total amount of the E AFC and an itemized list of what is to be paid including the amount of each item (when the E AFC covers multiple items such as eviction and utilities).
 - The customer and/or community commitment amount, if the E AFC grant allowed is not enough to meet the household's emergency.
 - The date the customer is eligible to apply for another E AFC.

- That a Rights and Responsibilities form was completed.
 - How the EAFC was paid (check to vendor and/or check to customer).
 - Who approved the EAFC.
 - Why the household is not eligible for the EAFC.
5. Apply TCA rules for counting or excluding the income of individuals in the household.

Inquiries:

Please direct EAFC policy questions to Marilyn Lorenzo, TCA Program Manager, at 410-767-7333 or mlorenzo@dhr.state.md.us or to Gretchen Simpson, TCA Lead Program Analyst, at 410-767-7937 or gsimpson@dhr.state.md.us.

cc: DHR Executive Staff
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