
From: DPA Policy
Sent: Thursday, June 27, 2002 10:53 AM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: Diversion

**Broadcast to all DPA Staff from the
Policy and Program Development Team**

THINK DIVERSION

As a result of input from the field, Diversion is now a more practical option for job-ready Temporary Assistance applicants. A recent amendment to state law increases the amount of Diversion assistance we can offer families, providing greater flexibility to meet a variety of needs. In addition, while screening all applicants for Diversion remains Division policy, new procedures for client intake developed as part of the Employment Outcome Improvement Project can provide the opportunity for renewed focus on diversion as an alternative to Temporary Assistance. These two changes strengthen Diversion as a tool to help families solve the problems that are keeping them from work, and avoid reliance on the welfare system.

Increase in the Maximum Diversion Payment

Beginning July 1, 2002, Families may receive a Diversion payment equal to what they would receive during their first **three months** of Temporary Assistance benefits. These additional resources increase our capacity to help families address short-term problems and remain self-sufficient.

Lifetime Diversion Limit

Beginning July 1, families are limited to a lifetime maximum of four diversion payments. After a family receives four diversion payments, future applications must be processed for Temporary Assistance.

These policy changes will be included in the next Temporary Assistance manual change.

In addition, we have updated the Diversion Agreement (TA-4) to include this change. The updated form will be distributed to field offices as soon as it is available. Until the new forms arrive, the updated TA-4 is available as an E-form on the DPA web site.

If you have questions please contact any member of the Policy and Program Development Team at 465-3347, or email dpapolicy@health.state.at.us

From: DPA Policy
Sent: Friday, June 21, 2002 2:47 PM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Cc: ALL DPA State Associates
Subject: Changes in Penalty Policy

BROADCAST TO ALL STAFF
From the Policy and Program Development Team

Changes have been made to the Temporary Assistance statute that affect the amount and duration of the penalties for non-compliance with the FSSP, work activity, or child support cooperation requirements.

These changes provide an opportunity to re-engage families in the planning and activities that will help lead them to self-sufficiency. They provide an incentive for following program rules by allowing penalties to be ended as soon as a family comes into compliance, and increasing penalties if individuals remain out of compliance.

These new penalty provisions are scheduled to take effect July 1, 2002. An informational mailing will be sent to Temporary Assistance families in the next few days describing the changes. Attached to this broadcast are a copy of the letter being mailed to families and a summary of the new penalty policy. It is important that you read and familiarize yourself with the new policy so that you can respond to any questions families may have. We will be providing additional implementation guidance during the first week of July.

We are available to help with questions as we work through this new policy implementation. If you have any questions please contact any member of the Policy and Program Development Team at 465-3347 or email dpapolicy@health.state.ak.us

Assistant Regional Managers, please share this information with our service providers.

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. of HEALTH and SOCIAL SERVICES

DIVISION of PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110640

JUNEAU, AK 99811-0640

PHONE: (907) 465-3347 FAX: 465-5154

June 17, 2002

Dear Temporary Assistance Family,

This year, a new Temporary Assistance law was passed that may affect you. The law describes new rules about penalties that reduce benefits. The new rules are scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2002.

Like the current law, the new law requires penalties to be applied when individuals do not develop and follow their Family Self-Sufficiency Plan, participate in work activities or follow child support rules. However, the new law makes two changes. First, the family's Temporary Assistance benefit is reduced by a larger amount the longer that an individual chooses not to take the steps that are required.

- ◆ The monthly benefit amount is reduced by 40% for the first four months,
- ◆ The benefit amount is reduced by 75% for the next four months,
- ◆ The family no longer receives any Temporary Assistance benefits after eight months under penalty.

Second, penalties are no longer in place for a set period. To end a penalty, the individual must show that they are complying with the rules by either developing the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan, following through with the planned activities including work activities, or complying with child support rules. The penalty is lifted as soon as the family begins to follow the rules.

Please contact your case manager if you need help preparing for work, finding a job or keeping one or if you have any questions about the new rules.

Sincerely,

Jim Nordlund
Director of Public Assistance

New and Improved Penalty Policy Created by HB 402 Expected to be Signed into Law and Effective July 1, 2002

During the 2002 legislative session, changes were made to the Temporary Assistance statute that affect the amount and duration of the penalties for non-compliance with the FSSP, work activity, or child support cooperation requirements.

These changes provide an opportunity to re-engage families in the planning and activities that will help lead them to self-sufficiency. They provide an incentive for following program rules by allowing penalties to be ended as soon as a family comes into compliance, and increasing penalties if individuals remain out of compliance.

These new penalty provisions are scheduled to take effect July 1, 2002. This document provides the basic information staff will need to respond to any questions that families may have. We will be providing additional implementation guidance during the first week of July.

New Penalty Policy

As a result of this change in law, a family that is not complying with the FSSP, work activity, or child support cooperation requirements is subject to:

- A 40% grant reduction for the first four months of non-compliance;
- A 75% grant reduction for the next four months of non-compliance; and
- Loss of all assistance if non-compliance continues for more than eight months (full-family sanction).

For families who currently have a penalty in place, July will be month 1 under the new provisions. *Note: EIS will count the number of penalty months and alert the case when a change to a higher percentage reduction is applicable.*

There are additional requirements the Division must meet before imposing a 75% penalty or full-family sanction. Further policy development is under way to develop criteria and procedures for these additional requirements.

Change in Penalty Amounts

Another change is that the reduction in benefits for these penalties is applied to the family, based on the maximum payment amount for that family type and size, and is no longer a set amount for each individual. This affects families in two ways:

- The penalty amount will be different for different sized families. Larger families are subject to a larger penalty amount, while some families will see a decrease in the penalty amount under the new policy.

- The penalty amount will no longer double for two parent families in which both adults are subject to an FSSP, work activity or child support non-cooperation penalty. However, both parents must be in compliance before the family will receive full benefits.

Change in Penalty Length

There are no longer mandatory penalty periods for second and third FSSP and work activity penalties. A family may end an FSSP, work activity or child support non-cooperation penalty at any time by coming into compliance. This especially impacts individuals who are now serving a second or third penalty, and provides an immediate incentive for these individuals to meet the program requirements.

Individuals who incur a subsequent penalty after complying will “start over” and be subject to a 40% grant reduction for months one to four, a 75% grant reduction for months five to eight, and a termination of benefits if non-compliance continues into the ninth month.

EIS Changes

The programming for the new penalty policy will be in production July 1. July applications, and ongoing cases that are processed for August benefits will show the new penalty calculations on the TAPD screen. July benefits that are issued on ongoing cases will be based on the old penalty amounts. We will provide a more detailed implementation memo the first week of July that will provide staff with instructions for processing current penalty cases.

We are continuing to develop the policy and system changes that are needed to fully implement the provisions of the new law. The next major piece of development will be the policy and procedures for the additional steps the Division must take before imposing the 75% or full family sanctions. Field staff input will be an important part of that development.

When these changes are completely in place we will have another tool to use in working with families to help them take the steps they need to take to become independent of Temporary Assistance. We appreciate your help and patience in implementing these changes. If you have any questions please contact any member of the Policy and Program Development Team at 465-3347 or email dpapolicy@health.state.ak.us

Assistant Regional Managers, please share this information with our service providers.

From: DPA Policy
Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2002 4:13 PM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Cc: ALL DPA State Associates; Melinda (E-mail)
Subject: June Child Care Authorizations

**Broadcast to all DPA Child Care Clerks and Case Managers
from Policy and Program Development Team**

This broadcast provides clarification on issuing June child care authorizations, as we approach the May 31st transition from "Registered" to "Approved" child care. Before issuing a June authorization, case managers or child care clerks need to check the weekly provider status update report or contact the Local Administrator to find out if a registered provider has submitted an application to become approved or licensed.

Providers who have submitted an application for Licensed or Approved status:

- PASS I child care authorizations can be issued for June if a provider who is currently "registered" has submitted an application for approved or licensed status and is awaiting a determination.

Providers who have NOT submitted an application for Licensed or Approved status:

- PASS I child care authorizations can **NOT** be issued for June if a provider who is currently "registered" has not submitted an application for approved or licensed status.

If a June authorization cannot be issued to a provider because they have not submitted an application, the child care clerk or case manager should contact the family. Case managers, along with the child care resource and referral agencies, will need to work with these families to help them find new child care.

Assistant Regional Managers, please share this information with your service providers.

If you have any questions please contact Stacy Goade, Child Care Program Coordinator, at 465-3329 or email her at stacy_goade@health.state.ak.us

-----Original Message-----

From: DPA Policy
Sent: Friday, April 26, 2002 4:17 PM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Cc: 'Melinda Cavanaugh'; ALL DPA State Associates
Subject: Temporary Assistance Policy Change - Retirement & Pension Funds

**Broadcast Message to All DPA Staff and Case Management Service Providers
from the
Policy and Program Development Team**

Over the past year, we have received a number of policy questions about the treatment of retirement (pension) plans as resources, and requests from field staff to revisit our policy. The questions and concerns stem from the fact that these funds are often subject to administrative waiting periods before they can be withdrawn, and yet still considered an "available" resource to meet a family's needs even when receipt of the funds could not be expected for as long as 90 days.

The policy instruction attached below implements new Temporary Assistance policy regarding the treatment of account balances in retirement or pension related funds. This new policy is effective immediately. It will be incorporated into a future Temporary Assistance manual change. In the interim, please keep a copy of the attached document in your manual as a replacement for section 754-7.

If you have any questions regarding this new policy, please call any member of the Policy and Program Development Team at 465-3347 or email dpapolicy@health.state.ak.us

Assistant Regional Managers, please forward this information to service providers in your region.

Special thanks go to Barb Howard and Beth Stohl-Reiland for their diligence in pursuing this policy improvement, and help in developing the new policy.

Alaska Temporary Assistance Program

Policy Change

April 26, 2002

RETIREMENT FUNDS

Retirement funds are annuities or work-related plans for providing income when employment ends. They include such items as pension, disability, or retirement plans administered by an employer or union. They also include funds held in individual retirement accounts (IRA) and plans for self-employed persons, sometimes called Keogh plans.

Retirement funds fall into two general categories:

- Those that are owned and can be accessed by the individual (Retirement Savings Accounts); and
- Those that are established by an employer (Pension Plans).

RETIREMENT SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

The following types of retirement funds are individually owned, and money may be deposited and withdrawn at will. These funds are available, countable resources regardless of an individual's employment status:

- Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs);
- Keogh plans; and
- Simplified Employer Pension Plans (SEPs), which are considered IRAs by banks and the IRS.

PENSION PLANS

Retirement funds (including PERS and SBS) that are established by an employer are exempt while the individual is employed with the employer. These types of funds include:

- 457 plans (plans for state and local governments and other tax-exempt organizations);
- 401(k) plans (generally a cash-or-deferred arrangement and generally limited to profit-making firms);
- Federal Employee Thrift Savings plan;
- Section 403(b) plans (tax-sheltered annuities provided for employees of tax-exempt organizations and state and local educational organizations); and

Alaska Temporary Assistance Program

Policy Change

April 26, 2002

- Section 501(c)(18) plans (retirement plans for union members consisting of employee contributions to certain trusts that were established before June 1959).

Availability of Pension Plan Funds:

If an individual is no longer working for the employer who established the retirement fund, and is not yet eligible for periodic payments from the fund, it is a countable resource if the individual has the option of withdrawing the money as a lump sum.

When the funds in a retirement fund cannot be immediately withdrawn and used to meet the needs of the family, the account balance is considered unavailable if:

1. The individual demonstrates that they have applied and are pursuing having the account balance made available to them; **and**
2. Receipt of the funds cannot be expected in the month for which eligibility is being determined.

If the individual is eligible for periodic payments from a retirement fund, the individual must apply for such payments under development of income requirements. In this situation, the account balance is not a resource, but the periodic payments are counted as income.

If an individual refuses or fails to make a reasonable effort to secure these funds, either as a lump sum or as periodic payments, they are considered available.

DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLANS

Deferred compensation plans are evaluated based on whether the individual can access the funds while still employed with the employer that established the account.

If the individual can access the funds while still employed, the deferred compensation plan is considered available and countable.

For other deferred compensation plans, such as the one offered by the State of Alaska, the individual may not withdraw the funds while still employed. Such plans are treated as pension plans.

VALUE OF RETIREMENT FUNDS

The value of any retirement fund is the account balance minus any expected penalties or fees for withdrawal.

From: DPA Policy
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff; ALL DPA State Associates
Cc:
Subject: Case Review Staffing Call-in Letters
Sent: 4/11/2002 9:39 AM

Broadcast Message to all DPA Staff & Case Management Service Providers

From the 60-Month Project Team

The two call-in letters used to invite recipients to the Temporary Assistance Case Review Staffing meetings are now available in EIS. These letters are similar to those sent with the Case Staffing Procedures in October 2001. You may use either version of these letters.

? The J090, Case Review Meeting Notice, is used to invite recipients to the 36th month Service Review Staffing and the 48th month Time Limit Review Staffing. This notice requires entry of the number of months the family has left on assistance and the month as of which this number is calculated. You may use the PRAW counter or the CLPM counter to get the last month that the counter includes and calculate the number of months left.

Please remember that the PRAW screen shows the number of months issued, while the CLPM screen shows the number of months authorized.

? The J091, 60th Month Time Limit Meeting Notice, is used to invite recipients to the 58th month Extension Review Staffing.

We are still working on a new look for these notices that will be more like a letter. We will keep you posted on developments!

If you have any system related questions, please contact Systems Operations Help Desk at EISHelp@health.state.ak.us

For Policy questions, please contact DPAPolicy@health.state.ak.us

Assistant Regional Managers - please share this information with our service providers.

From: DPA Policy
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Cc: ALL DPA State Associates
Subject: Verification of Income
Sent: 4/2/2002 1:23 PM

Broadcast to All DPA Staff

**From the Policy & Program Development Team, Food Stamp Policy Unit,
and the Division of Medical Assistance**

Recent case reviews found inconsistencies regarding income verification. This broadcast clarifies the income verification requirements for new and change reporting situations for all of our public assistance programs.

Documentary evidence or third party verification is required for all countable income. Do not accept client statement as verification of income unless the claimed income causes ineligibility.

Verification of countable earned or unearned income includes confirming the source, frequency, and amount of income. For earnings, verification should also be obtained for rate of pay and hours of work. Acceptable sources of earned income verification include pay stubs, employment records, a work statement, and contact with the employer. Equally important to verification is documenting all factors on the CANO screen.

The Work Number is also a means for obtaining income information from certain companies, many of which have traditionally been difficult to get detailed data from. *The Work Number* is a service that provides complete employee information from over 600 companies including Wal-Mart, K-Mart, and Fred Meyer. Attached to this broadcast are two documents that provide additional information regarding *The Work Number*.

Documentary evidence or third party verification is also required for claimed household expenses if allowing the expense results in a higher benefit.

For more information, refer to: Administrative Procedures Manual Section 105

Medicaid Manual Sections 5104-10, 5150-7, 5160-9
Temporary Assistance Manual Section 700-4
Adult Public Assistance Manual Section 400-4
Food Stamp Manual Sections 601-6, 604-2F, 604-3F

If you have questions, please write to the Policy & Program Development Team at dpapolicy@health.state.ak.us, the Food Stamp Policy Unit at joan_chase@health.state.ak.us and the DMA Policy Unit at dmapolicy@health.state.ak.us.

Social Services

How to Use The Work Number® --- 800 Number

Before calling please have the following information:

- 1) Your Fax Number
- 2) Employer Code (After entering your fax number, press 2 to receive a fax with an employer code list.)
- 3) Employee Social Security Number



Obtain verification by calling 1-800-660-3399.

Enter your fax number at the prompt:

Press: (1) Confirm your fax number.

Enter: Employer Code

Enter: Employee Social Security Number

Enter: Your phone number and extension
for the "attention to" section of
the fax.

(#) End call

Verification will be faxed to you within 5 business days.

Customer Service: 1-800-996-7566

Social Services

How to Use The Work Number® --- Internet

Before visiting the Web please have the following information:

- 1) Your Fax Number
- 2) Employer Code (available on www.theworknumber.com)
- 3) Employee Social Security Number



Go to www.theworknumber.com

Click: Social Services Agencies (lower right hand corner)

Enter: Your Fax Number (upper right)

Select: Employer Code (select from the drop-down menu)

Enter: Employee Social Security Number

Enter: To whose attention the verification should be faxed

Verification will be faxed to you within 5 business days.

First Time Users: The Work Number requires 128 bit encryption to ensure security. You may need to upgrade your browser. Please follow the online instructions provided.

Customer Service: 1-800-996-7566

For 800 Number Instructions - See Other Side

THE WORK NUMBER®

The following information was provided by the employer to The Work Number to act as their official agent for issuing employment verifications. Information not provided by the employer is left blank. Any inconsistency between the most recent start date and the total time with the company is due to prior work period. For any questions about the service, call **1-800-9-WORK-NO (800-996-7566)**.

The following information is provided in response to your request for an employment verification on: 5/15/01

Information was current as of: 5/10/01
Employer: Enterprise USA
Employee: RANDY W DOE
Social Security Number: 111-00-3341
Address: 1545 ORANGEDALE LANE
SOUTH HAMPTON , NY 63211
Employment Status: Active
Most Recent Start Date: 2/01/99
Total Time with Employer: 2 years 3 months
Current Position: CUSTOMER RELATIONS
Rate of Pay: \$7.10 hourly

Average Hours per Pay Period: 80

	<u>Current YTD</u>	<u>Last Year</u>	<u>Two Years Past</u>
Total Pay:	4100.20	14769.77	13756.45

<u>Pay Period Date</u>	<u>Pay Date</u>	<u>Hours Worked</u>	<u>Gross Earnings</u>
05/04/2001	05/10/2001	74.00	525.40
04/20/2001	04/26/2001	74.00	525.40
04/06/2001	04/12/2001	20.50	145.50
03/23/2001	03/29/2001	80.00	568.00
03/09/2001	03/15/2001	80.00	568.00
01/26/2001	02/01/2001	80.00	568.00
01/12/2001	01/18/2001	80.00	568.00
12/29/2000	01/04/2001	80.00	568.00
12/15/2000	12/21/2000	60.00	426.00
12/01/2000	12/07/2000	80.00	568.00
11/17/2000	11/23/2000	80.00	568.00
11/03/2000	11/09/2000	80.00	568.00

MEDICAL COVERAGE: Y Enterprise Medical
DENTAL COVERAGE: Y Enterprise Dental
Reference Number for this verification: 10639911

* Gross Earnings include Gross Base Wages, Bonuses, Commissions, Overtime, Reported Tips and any other form of reported compensation.

The Work Number database is always growing.
To receive a free up-to-date list of companies on The Work Number,
call our Client Service Center at 1-800-996-7566.
Or visit our web site at www.theworknumber.com

Faxed to: Janet Caseworker

Sample Social Services