



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

### Overview:

The Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program which helps individuals and families buy healthier food that provides many nutritional benefits. Food stamps can give extra money for food so that budget dollars can be stretched. Food Stamps allow low-income families to have accessibility to a variety of supportive programs; including child nutrition programs which are vital for children's health. These programs provide nutritional assistance to individuals and families with a limited budget, as well as utility discounts and fuel assistance.

### Application Process:

There are several ways to apply for food stamps:

- ❖ Download a FSP application and information needed from the DTA website ([www.mass.gov/dta](http://www.mass.gov/dta)). After filling out, the application can be mailed, faxed or dropped off at the DTA office that serves the clients' city or town.
- ❖ Going to the local DTA office to apply in person (a complete list of DTA's local offices can be accessed at the DTA website).
- ❖ Call 1-866-950-FOOD and ask that a FSP application be mailed to the applicant's home. The FS worker can also give the basic information about the food stamp program and/or provide screening over the phone.
- ❖ Using the Virtual Gateway On-line Application at a provider site or from the clients' home if they live in the Fall River area (The public on-line application is tentatively scheduled to be available statewide in October 2007.)
- ❖ One adult household member or authorized representative must sign the application for food stamp benefits under penalty of perjury.
- ❖ Complete as much of the application as you can. Name, address and signature are necessary on the application to be accepted. The application will be accepted (and if approved, benefits will start) on the same day it is received, even if there is no interview on that day.
- ❖ When the application is received, the Department will contact the applicant to setup an interview to go over the application. There is a list of verifications the applicant will need to provide to complete the application process.

### Interview:

- ❖ An interview is required before certifying the household to get food stamp benefits. The interview can be conducted in-person or over the phone.
- ❖ An eligibility worker will explain the program rules and help the household complete any parts of the application that have not yet been completed.
- ❖ After the interview, the Department will send the household a notice. If the household does not qualify for food stamp benefits, the notice will explain why. If the household does qualify, the notice will explain how much the food stamp benefit will be.

### Verifications:

- ❖ Be sure and let the clients know that they will need to provide the Department with the required verifications in order to complete the application.
- ❖ The applicants will have 30 days from the application start date to give the Department the proofs that are needed. The applicants may also ask the caseworker for help in getting needed proofs.
- ❖ The applicants must also contact their caseworker if they are having difficulty obtaining required proofs.
- ❖ The applicants can fax, mail or bring these proofs to their caseworker.

### Using EBT Card:

When the case is approved, the household will receive food stamp benefits through the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system. EBT will allow the client to use food stamp benefits to pay for food at terminals in stores just like a using a debit card. EBT ensures that food stamp benefits are available on time. Once the benefits have been approved the benefits will be transferred into the clients account electronically each month.

### Agencies who wish to assist clients applying for food stamps can contact:

**Lauren Arms Ledwith, FS Outreach Director @ 617-348-5452 or Karen Driscoll, FS Outreach Specialist @ 617-348-5257 for additional information or assistance.**