

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families

BULLETIN NO.: 16-30

FROM: Sean Brown, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division

DATE: 9/1/16

SUBJECT: Reach Up Procedures
Reach Up Services Procedures

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 9/1/16

INSTRUCTIONS

- Maintain Manual - See instructions below.**
- Proposed Regulation - Retain bulletin and attachments until you receive Manual Maintenance Bulletin: _____**
- Information or Instructions - Retain until _____**

MANUAL REFERENCE(S):

Procedures 2270 and 2370 have been created to provide guidance on Reach Up Temporary Absence cases for both eligibility and case management purposes.

Procedure 2360 has been created to provide guidance around transporting Reach Up participants.

Procedure 2335 ANFC/Reach Up Procedures for the ES is being removed as it is no longer applicable.

The Table of Contents for Reach Up Procedures and Reach Up Services Procedures have been updated to reflect the above changes.

Manual Maintenance

Reach Up Procedures

<u>Remove</u>		<u>Insert</u>	
TOC P.1 – P.5 (B99-11) (P-2200)		TOC P.1 – P.5 (P-2200)	(B16-30)
TOC P.1 & P.2 (B16-28) (P-2335 - P-2375)		TOC P.1 & P.2 (P-2335 - P-2375)	(B16-30)
Nothing		P-2270 Pgs. 1-7	(B16-30)
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P-2335 A1, A2 (B 91-8)		Nothing	
P-2335 A3 (B 93-69)		Nothing	
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P-2335 B2-C1 (B 91-8)		Nothing	
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P-2270

Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases

P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases

A. General Procedures

In certain cases, where a child or parent/caretaker is or will be absent from the home for a period greater than 30 days, but not expected to exceed 180 consecutive days, the household may continue to receive Reach Up assistance.

Temporary absence may be allowed when a child(ren) is placed in the custody of Family Services; to receive care from a hospital, substance abuse treatment facility, or other medical institution (either child or parent); or is incarcerated (child only). Temporary absence based on the parent's voluntary agreement to place the child in someone else's care may also be eligible.

Example: Mom has been experiencing an increase in mental health symptoms and is considering checking into Brattleboro Retreat for a period of time. Mom is supported by her mental health clinician and her primary care provider. Family Services is not involved at this time. Providers write letters of support asking that it is in Mom and child's best interest child be separated from Mom and returned within 180 days. Child can stay temporarily with maternal grandmother, but Mom continues to need financial assistance so she can maintain her apartment. Case may be eligible for Temporary Absence.

1. Reporting Temporary Absence

The household is responsible for reporting an absence, but if reported by Family Services, Economic Services must act on the information.

- a. Family Services can either provide:
 - i. form FS201FC-M indicating if household is receiving Reach Up and if reunification is likely to be within 180 days to Reach Up Supervisor.
 - ii. an email to ESD stating that a child(ren) were removed and are likely to reunified within 180 days.
- b. Reach Up Supervisor or Case Manager reports temporary absence to Eligibility if not already reported.

P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases (Continued)

2. Determining Eligibility

- a. If Family Services sends a 201FC-M that indicates the absence will be more than 180 days contact your local FSD office to ensure this information is accurate. If it is then the case would not be eligible for temporary absence and should be closed.
- b. If child is placed in out of state care but remains in the custody of the State of Vermont, the child is eligible for Temporary Absence. If custody is held outside Vermont, then the child will not be eligible.
- c. If household is on Reach Up and reunification is indicated to be within 180 days, BPS issues a VCR using a Macro asking for a 202TA, a 201WC and a 207 if the parent/caretaker will be absent. See “How to use a Macro”:
<http://intra.dcf.state.vt.us/esd/process-management/Using%20MACROs.pdf/view>

The Macro will state: It has come to our attention that either you, another parent, or your child(ren) are or will be absent from your home. If this absence will be less than 180 days you may be eligible to have your Reach Up benefits continue at the current level during this temporary absence. If you would like to see if you qualify, please complete and return the enclosed Temporary Absence Questionnaire and the release form. If it is the adult who will be temporarily absent from the home, please complete the Protective payment form (form207) as well. If we don't hear from you by the date below, your Reach Up benefits will be reduced or closed.

- d. The 201WC should indicate the facility(ies) listed on the 202TA (if applicable) as well as the temporary caretaker(s) of the child(ren) and the protective payee (may be one and the same) if the parent/caretaker will be absent.
- e. If any of the verification is not returned the grant shall be closed or reduced (if other children remain in the household). If household is denied for not providing verification inform local FSD office.
- f. BPS submits all requested verification to their local management team to make the determination if the grant remains or needs to be closed.

P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases (Continued)

B. Temporary Absence of Child(ren)

ESD will use a teaming approach to monitor those cases where the temporary absence is due to custody or placement of the child by Family Services. The Family Services social worker assigned to the family, the parent/caretaker's Reach Up case manager, and Eligibility will work together to assist the family. In cases of a child only Reach Up grant, case management will not be set up and communication will remain between Family Services and the District Management Team.

1. Granting Temporary Absence

- a. BPS enters a left date on the MEMB panel in ACCESS with a code of 6 "allowable for RU." Left date will be the first day that the child is consecutively absent.
- b. BPS removes the child(ren) for 3SVT and the full Reach Up grant that the household is receiving must be counted for 3SVT and FUEL.
- c. BPS enters a UNEA panel countable for 3SVT and Fuel just for the portion of the Reach Up grant that isn't being counted (see example below), and write "RU Temp Absence" in the "description" field.

Example: Reach Up grant is \$640. The 3SVT budget is only counting \$426.70 (because of the person being removed for RUFA). A UNEA panel needs to be created for \$213.30 (\$640-426.70).

- d. BPS enters a WARN on case indicating the temporary absence of a child(ren), and enters a CATN as well.
- e. BPS sets up a future TO DO that indicates when the maximum of 180 days will be reached.
- f. BPS will inform RUCM
 1. Indications or reports that the child will be absent for more than 180 days.
 2. Any change to the parent/caretaker's plan for the child to return home at the end of the absence.
 3. Indications or reports that it is no longer the parent/caretaker's intent to maintain a home for the child during the absence.

P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases (Continued)

4. Changes in the parent/caretaker's living situation.
5. Information regarding the child's incarceration, medical care, or DCF custody status.
6. Changes affecting the parent/caretaker's eligibility for Reach Up.

2. Ending Temporary Absence

- a. If child(ren) is returned to household within 180 days the BPS will:
 1. remove the left date and code 6 on the MEMB panel
 2. add the child(ren) back to 3SVT household effective the date of return
 3. remove the UNEA panel for "RU Temp Absence"
 4. remove the temporary absence WARN
 5. enter CATN indicating child(ren)'s name and date of return
 6. Contact COPS if a 666 number was used to "trick" the system and they will correct ACCESS to say that yes indeed this child is the same.
- b. If Family Services reports to BPS at any point that reunification is no longer the case goal and instead Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is being pursued, the BPS reports this to the case manager and Reach Up Supervisor who will send an email to AHS.DCFESDCOReachUp@vermont.gov for review. If the decision is to close, Supervisor will inform the BPS and the Reach Up grant must close or be reduced.

C. Temporary Absence of Parent/Caretaker

1. Granting Temporary Absence

- a. In two parent households, BPS enters a left date on the parent's MEMB panel in ACCESS with a code of 6 "allowable for RU". Left date will be the first day that the parent is consecutively absent. See B (1) c above and follow instructions to count full RUFA grant amount in 3SVT and SF budgets.
- b. For single parent household BPS enters a left date on the parent's MEMB panel in ACCESS with a code 6 "allowable for RU" and approves closure of 3SVT and SF benefits, unless parent is maintaining eligibility on their own. If parent is remaining active on 3SVT or SF, BPS must enter a left date on the child (ren)'s MEMB panel with a code 6.

P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases (Continued)

- c. BPS sets up protective payments for housing (if housing is included in the grant). Housing includes rent, mortgage, property taxes, insurance, allowable maintenance and repair.
- d. BPS sets up the protective payee who will receive any remainder of the Reach Up grant. Parent should not retain access to benefits. When selecting EBT Alternate Payee Status select 1C "Cash Only First Alternate" See SOP 2104 Entering an Alternate Payee in ACCESS/Processing a 139AP form:
<http://intra.dcf.state.vt.us/esd/programs/all-programs/sops/s-2104-entering-an-alternate-payee-in-access-processing-a-139ap-form/view>
and follow directions with information from forms 202TA and the 207.
- e. BPS can inform protective payee that they may apply for 3SVT and SF for themselves and the child(ren) if income eligible. They should not gain access to the Absent Parent/Caretaker's 3SVT or SF benefit. If protective payee is also caring for children outside of the child (ren)'s typical house they may also be eligible for a caretaker grant. See 2270 D.
- f. BPS enters a WARN on case indicating the temporary absence of a parent/caregiver, and enters a CATN as well.
- g. BPS sets up a future TO DO that indicates when the maximum of 180 days will be reached.
- h. BPS will inform RUCM
 1. any change in the parent/caretaker's plan to return home,
 2. reports that it is no longer the parent/caretaker's intent to maintain a home and be responsible for the child,
 3. a change in the designated responsible adult and alternate payee,
 4. information regarding the parent/caretaker's inpatient or outpatient care from a hospital, substance abuse treatment facility or other medical institution and/or
 5. changes affecting the parent/caretaker's eligibility for Reach Up.

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P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases (Continued)

2. Ending Temporary Absence

See above Procedure B2 (a) and (b) as applicable. If a protective payee was assigned follow the directions for “Removing or Making Changes to an Existing Alternate Payee” in the SOP referenced in 2270 C (1) d above.

D. Setting Up Caretaker Grant for Child (if applicable)

In cases where the parent will be absent from the household, and the children are being cared for by a caretaker outside of their parents’ home, the caretaker may be able to apply for a caretaker grant.

1. BPS will set up a caretaker case for the designated responsible adult (use real SSN if they are not already or have never received Reach Up for themselves).
2. BPS give the child(ren) 666#s and keep all other information as is. BPS indicates “no” when ACCESS asks if this child is really the other child in temporary absence household.
3. Create WARN and enter CATN that this child(ren) is really open in another household.
4. BPS will contact COPS if a 666 number was used to merge cases upon closure of the caretaker grant so cases can be merged.

E. Continuation of Temporary Absence Eligibility

1. Case closes for Eligibility related non-coop:
 - a. If verification comes in before the closure date, case would be reopened with no changes to Temp Absence eligibility.
 - b. If verification comes in after the closure date, the client must reapply:
 1. If the children will return to the household within 30 days case can be approved,
 2. If the children will not return to the household within 30 days, BPS or Case Manager should connect with FSD (if child is in custody) to determine if the goal is still reunification and if it will happen within the 180 days previously set.
2. If reopened case is about to be sanctioned—make sure to allow 10 days for household to receive notice of reduced sanction amount (sanction may need to be put in place for following month depending when case is reopened).

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P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases (Continued)

F. Temporary Absence Where Parent(s) Receives SSI and all Children are Absent from Household

Please refer to P-2210 C23 p.2.

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P-2360

P-2360 Transporting Reach Up Clients

A. Use of Personal Vehicles to Transport Clients

- a. Case Managers are not required to transport participants, and are encouraged to utilize other forms of transportation including Ready to Go, transportation authorizations, and mileage reimbursement as appropriate.
- b. Case Managers who choose to transport participants in their personal vehicle must have appropriate insurance of at least 100/300 for liability. Transporting clients is restricted to conducting State business and when the transport of the individual is related to business activities of the Department, i.e. pursuing a goal on the individual's Family Development Plan.

B. Use of Fleet Vehicles to Transport Clients

- a. Case Managers who choose not to transport participants in their personal vehicles are allowed to request the use of a Fleet Vehicle by using the Fleet Management Services Reservation Request: http://bgs.vermont.gov/business_services/fleet/forms/reservations.
- b. Vehicles owned by the State used to conduct official State business would allow for the transport of clients related to those business activities, again pursuing a goal on the individual's Family Development Plan.

C. Transporting Clients' Children

Children may be transported in a case manager's personal vehicle or fleet vehicle, pursuant to the above guidelines, if the child is in a child safety restraint system that meets the following criteria of 23 V.S.A. §1258(a):

1. all children under the age of one, and all children weighing less than 20 pounds, regardless of age, shall be restrained in a rear-facing position, properly secured in a federally approved child passenger restraining system, which shall not be installed in front of an active air bag;
2. a child weighing more than 20 pounds, and who is one year of age or older and under the age of eight years, shall be restrained in a child passenger restraining system; and
3. a child eight through 17 years of age shall be restrained in a safety belt system or a child passenger restraining system.

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P-2370 Case Management Procedures for Temporary Absence

A. General Procedures

In certain cases where a child or parent/caretaker is or will be absent from the home for a period greater than 30 days, but not expected to exceed 180 consecutive days, the household may continue to receive Reach Up assistance.

Temporary absence may be allowed when a child(ren) is placed in the custody of Family Services; to receive care from a hospital, substance abuse treatment facility, or other medical institution (either child or parent); or is incarcerated (child only). Temporary absence based on the parent's voluntary agreement to place the child in someone else's care may also be eligible.

Example: Mom has been experiencing an increase in mental health symptoms and is considering checking into Brattleboro Retreat for a period of time. Mom is supported by her mental health clinician and her primary care provider. Family Services is not involved at this time. Providers write letters of support asking that it is in Mom and child's best interest child be separated from Mom and returned within 180 days. Child can stay temporarily with maternal grandmother, but Mom continues to need financial assistance so she can maintain her apartment. Case may be eligible for Temporary Absence.

1. Reporting Temporary Absence

The household is responsible for reporting an absence, but if reported by Family Service, Economic Services must act on the information.

- a. Family Services can either provide:
 - i. form FS201FC-M indicating if household is receiving Reach Up and if reunification is likely to be within 180 days to Reach Up Supervisor.
 - ii. An email to ESD stating that a child(ren) were removed and are likely to reunified within 180 days.
- b. Case manager reports temporary absence to Eligibility if not already reported.

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P-2370 Case Management Procedures for Temporary Absence (Continued)

2. Determining Eligibility

- a. Eligibility will follow procedures to gather verification of absence. If case manager receives any verification it will be shared with Eligibility.
- b. If Family Services reports at any point that reunification is no longer the case goal and instead Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is being pursued, the case manager reports this to the Reach Up Supervisor who will send an email to AHS.DCFESDCOReachUp@vermont.gov for review. If the decision is to close, the case manager will inform Eligibility and the Reach Up grant must close or be reduced.
- c. Each District will keep a list of all Temporary Absence decisions and submit a copy to Reach Up Central Office on a quarterly basis.

3. General Case Management Responsibilities:

- a. Case manager continues to administer the services component of the Reach Up Program.
- b. Family Development Plan requirements that were applicable prior to the absence still apply. The requirements for receiving Reach Up during a temporary absence should not be included in the Family Development plan or tied to compliance.

B. Temporary Absence of Child(ren)

ESD will use a teaming approach to monitor those cases where the temporary absence is due to custody or placement of the child by Family Services. The Family Services social worker assigned to the family, the parent/caretaker's Reach Up case manager, and Eligibility will work together to assist the family. In cases of a child only Reach Up grant, case management will not be set up and communication will remain between Family Services and the District Management Team.

1. Case Management Responsibilities

- a. Whenever possible case manager will obtain a release from the parent/caretaker in situations where the child's absence is due to incarceration or medical care, and contact the institution as necessary.

P-2370 Case Management Procedures for Temporary Absence (Continued)

- b. Case manager will have contact two times or more per month with the parent/caretaker and the Family Services social worker. This will include a monthly team meeting, as well as phone and email contact.
- c. Case manager will specifically inquire
 - 1. Does the parent/caretaker still plan on having the child return home?
 - 2. What is the parent/caretaker's living situation? (Is she maintaining a home for the child's return? Up-to-date on rent? Looking for housing if "homeless"? ...etc.)
- d. Case manager will share pertinent information received from Eligibility or an institution with the Family Services social worker.
- e. Case manager will report any changes to Eligibility that might affect continuing eligibility for the Reach Up grant.

C. Temporary Absence of Parent/Caretaker

1. Case Management Responsibilities

- a. Whenever possible case manager will obtain a release from the parent/caretaker and contact the hospital, substance abuse treatment facility or other medical institution, as necessary.
- b. Case manager will code absent parent/caretaker as medically deferred from the WR.
- c. Case manager will have a minimum of contact two times per month with the absent parent/caretaker, if the facility and situation permits, in part to monitor the parent/caretaker's continuing ability to return within 180 days. This requirement can be waived in situations where it has been verified with the hospital, substance abuse treatment facility or other medical institution, that contact is not allowed, would be unreasonably difficult to arrange, or would be detrimental to the parent/caretaker's treatment plan.
- d. See B (1) c, d and e above.