

Bulletin

November 13, 2007

Minnesota Department of Human Services □ P.O. Box 64941 □ St. Paul, MN 55164-0941

OF INTEREST TO

- County Directors
- Tribal Chairpersons
- Tribal Health and Human Services Directors
- Social Services Supervisors and Staff
- Tribal Social Services Supervisors and Staff
- Other DHS business partners

ACTION/DUE DATE

Please read and implement policy.

EXPIRATION DATE

November 13, 2009

DHS clarifies the distribution, publication, use, and retention of DHS bulletins

TOPIC

General information about the distribution, publication, use, and retention of DHS bulletins.

PURPOSE

Provide clarification to county and tribal health and human services staff and other DHS business partners about the distribution, publication, use, and retention of DHS bulletins.

CONTACT

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SIGNED

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Operations

1. BACKGROUND

General Bulletin Information

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (hereinafter “DHS”) annually issues around 100 commissioner’s bulletins (hereinafter “bulletins”) when DHS divisions have bulletin appropriate information to be shared with counties, tribal health and human service agencies, and other DHS business partners.

Bulletins may be issued to:

- announce new programs and policies, rule, or statutory legislation
- announce policy changes to current programs, rules, or statutory legislation
- communicate fiscal and budgetary information to county and tribal health and human services staff
- request information from counties, tribal health and human services agencies, or business partners

DHS bulletins do not have the force and effect of law. Bulletins cannot create a legal obligation or modify an existing legal obligation that is in federal or state statutes, administrative rules or federal regulations. Bulletins are limited to providing information, instructions, and clarity that may not be present in laws or rules.

Bulletin Numbering

Prior to July 1995

Prior to July 1, 1995, bulletins were issued in three categories: instructional, informational, and request. Bulletins published at that time were numbered by a year-bulletin topic/bulletin letter to designate the bulletin’s sequence for that bulletin topic for that year.

For Example: Instructional Bulletin 93-61B meant that the bulletin was issued in 1993 (93), under the 61st bulletin topic (61 in the bulletin topic list was the Waiver Developmental Disabilities Program), and this bulletin was the 2nd bulletin issued for that bulletin topic since it was designated by the letter “B”.

Currently

In July 1995, DHS began issuing bulletins in a new format with just one numbering system. Bulletins were no longer categorized as instructional, informational, or request. This is the format that is currently used today. The bulletin number is assigned in the upper right hand side of the cover page of the bulletin. Bulletins are numbered by a year-bulletin topic-bulletin number to designate the bulletin's sequence for that bulletin topic for that year.

For Example: 06-53-01 means that this bulletin was issued in 2006 (06), under the 53rd bulletin topic (53 in the bulletin topic list is Mental Health), and this bulletin was the 1st bulletin issued for that bulletin topic.

2. BULLETIN DISTRIBUTION AND PUBLICATION

Prior to 1999, bulletins were photocopied and sent to counties. However, in 1999, DHS began publishing bulletins on the DHS web site in portable document format (PDF). Acrobat Reader 5.1 or 6, or Adobe Reader 7 or newer is required to download and read PDF documents. For more information on how to download an Adobe Reader, how to use the PDF format, and tips for troubleshooting while using PDF, see the DHS PDF page, http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/id_009734. Many employers have installed features in their employees' computers to prevent them from downloading new software since they do not want their employees downloading harmful or questionable software programs. If you do not have permission to install Adobe Reader, contact your computer help desk in your own agency or business.

As of May 2002, paper copies of bulletin were no longer sent to counties. Instead, a "bulletin contact person" (or persons) was identified by each county. The bulletin contact person is informed by e-mail when new bulletins are put on the DHS web site. The bulletin contact person is responsible for downloading and distributing DHS bulletins throughout their own agency or business. If you would like to change your bulletin contact person or if you would like to receive bulletins by e-mail, please contact Dhs.Bulletins@state.mn.us, giving your full name and e-mail address so you may be put on the bulletin e-mail distribution list. If you would like a paper subscription of bulletins, please contact the State Bookstore at 651-297-3000 or 1-800-657-3757 for information on how to obtain a paper subscription of bulletins.

Some counties have reported not receiving DHS bulletins via e-mail. One possibility for not receiving DHS bulletins could be the spam blocking software that some government agencies and businesses use. Because DHS bulletins are sent using the Dhs.Bulletins@state.mn.us e-mail address, some spam blocking software recognizes this e-mail address as spam and automatically blocks it. If you think that spam blocking software is affecting your receipt of DHS bulletins, contact your computer help desk in your own agency or business.

3. DHS POLICY TO REISSUE BULLETINS THAT ARE MORE THAN TWO YEARS OLD AND BULLETIN EXPIRATION DATES

Prior to March 2006

Before March 2006, some bulletins that were designated as “current” often contained outdated information. Some bulletins were a mix of current and out-dated policy statements and the distinction was not evident from the bulletin itself. Also, the contact information in those bulletins may have been obsolete for a variety of reasons. Statutory references and forms contained in older bulletins also may have been outdated.

Currently

To remedy these problems, DHS implemented a new policy in March 2006 that made DHS bulletins automatically obsolete after two years from the bulletin’s issuance date. If the bulletin still contains current information, DHS employees will reissue the bulletin or incorporate the bulletin information into a DHS manual. As a result of this new policy, many old policies that were previously contained in DHS bulletins can now be found in DHS manuals. (See DHS Manuals web page: http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/id_000103) Additionally, the DHS bulletin template was altered to include an expiration date on the front cover. The expiration date is generally 2 years from the date the bulletin is issued.

4. CURRENT AND OBSOLETE DHS BULLETINS

All DHS bulletins are now issued with an expiration date. The policies and procedures contained in a bulletin are automatically obsolete when a bulletin reaches its expiration date. County, tribal health and human services staff, and other DHS business partners should refer to the expiration date to find out if a bulletin is obsolete.

All DHS bulletins that are more than two years old are now obsolete and should not be relied on by county staff, tribal health and human services staff, and other DHS business partners.

5. QUESTIONS ABOUT DHS BULLETINS

Questions about the policies and information in DHS bulletins should be directed to the contact person listed on the cover page of the specific bulletin that a person may have questions about.

Questions about the distribution of DHS bulletins should be directed to the legal editor in the Appeals and Regulations Division listed on the cover page of this bulletin.

6. BULLETIN RETENTION

Retention of DHS Bulletins by DHS

According to DHS' General Records Retention Schedule, DHS bulletins are preserved in electronic form, posted on the DHS web site for public use, and available for as long as the bulletins are effective. DHS' Appeals and Regulations Division then retains the obsolete bulletins for 3 years. Obsolete bulletins are then transferred to the State Archives for selection and disposition.

Retention of DHS Bulletins by Counties, Tribal Health and Human Services Agencies, and Other DHS Business Partners

Counties, tribal health and human services staff, and other DHS business partners may retain obsolete DHS bulletins according to their own retention schedules or destroy obsolete DHS bulletins. *However, counties, tribal health and human services staff, and other DHS business partners should be aware that obsolete DHS bulletins should not be relied upon by their staff.*

7. RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

DHS Bulletins: http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/id_000305

DHS PDF page: http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/id_009734

E-docs (most up-to-date DHS forms): http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/id_000100

DHS Programs and Contacts (contains phone numbers for DHS program divisions):
http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/id_000253

DHS Manuals: http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/id_000103

Minnesota Bookstore: <http://www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/bookstore.asp>

Minnesota State Legislature web site: <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/statutes.asp>

United States Code: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/browse.html>

Code of Federal Regulations: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>

Special Needs

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by contacting us at 651-431-3600 or toll free at (800) 657-3510. TDD users can call the Minnesota Relay at 711 or (800) 627-3529. For the Speech-to-Speech Relay, call (877) 627-3848.