<u>NOTICE TIPS</u>

Do the printed versions of your notices sometimes look different from the way you typed them? The Notice Sub-system within EIS has some formatting rules that determine how the finished notice will look when printed. The following explanations will help you understand how to make your notices look as professional as you are. The items covered here are as follows:

- [MANDATORY and OPTIONAL ENTRY FIELDS]
- [MULTIPLE CHOICE NOTICES]
- [COLUMN ENTRY]
- [GENERAL NOTICE INFORMATION]

At the end of the document, you will find detailed examples of the following situations:

- [Example of Incorrect Entry in Mandatory and Optional Fields]
- [Example of Misaligned Multiple Choice Notice Text]
- [Example of Ignored Optional Entry Fields in Multiple Choice Notices]
- [Example of Misaligned Column Text]

Just click on a subject above to go directly to the explanation or example.

The information presented tells you how each particular format works, but if you are in a hurry and just **need a quick reminder** of how to make an entry**, look for the ▶ symbol in the left margin.**

Note: We have used several font colors to help organize the information presented. You may find it easier to view this document on your screen rather than in a black and white printed version.

MANDATORY and OPTIONAL FIELDS

MANDATORY ENTRY FIELDS

Some fields within a notice require that an entry be made in the field before the notice can be sent. These *mandatory fields* are marked with percent signs (%%%) as placeholders. If a mandatory entry field is not completed with at least one typed character, you will receive an edit at the top of the screen advising you "NOT ALL REQUIRED COMMENTS HAVE BEEN ENTERED FOR THIS NOTICE". You will not be able to send the notice until you have typed something in the field.

OPTIONAL ENTRY FIELDS

Other fields are programmed to allow entries when appropriate, but the notice can be sent even if nothing has been entered in the field. These *optional fields* display number signs (###) as placeholders.

EIS removes all unused placeholders (i.e., %%% and ### signs) prior to printing. When the system removes the unused placeholders, the hard-coded text in the notice moves to the left. This is done to avoid having spacing gaps in the body of the notice.

> **It is important to correctly enter information in these fields. If entry is not done correctly, unwanted characters may appear in the printed notice.**
>
> **DO NOT USE BACKSPACE or DELETE KEYS in Mandatory or Optional fields.**
>
> **If it is necessary to correct information typed into a field**, use the <u>mouse</u> or the <u>arrow key</u> to move back to the start of the field; then type new text over erroneous information, or re-insert %%% or ### characters over unwanted additional characters in the field.

For an example of what can happen with incorrect entry in mandatory and optional fields, click on this link.

MULTIPLE CHOICE NOTICES

Some notices are formatted to allow the worker to tailor the text to the individual client by selecting some listed items and not others. These multiple-choice notices fall into two categories: numbered lists; and checked items.

The numbered lists direct the client to read information pertinent to their case by permitting the worker to type appropriate item numbers into a mandatory entry field.

Example from notice D213

Your Denali KidCare application received on May 2, 2002 is denied for the reason in number(s) %%%%%%%%% below:

1. Your countable income of ########## is greater than the Denali KidCare limit of ##########.
2. You are not a resident of the State of Alaska.
3. You asked to withdraw your application.

The checked item notices are formatted in two different ways:

- **##** **Stand-alone optional entry characters at beginning of a line**

  Example from notice F502

  ##   1) We restored your food stamps which were stopped on ###################.
  ##   2) We refigured your food stamp amount.

- **(##)** **Parentheses enclosing two optional entry characters at the beginning of a line**

  Example from notice F780

  (##) 1 month because this is the person's first work requirement penalty.
  (##) 3 months because this is the second work requirement penalty.
  (##) 6 months because this is the third or later work requirement penalty.

Most multiple-choice notices have been configured using indented lines for the different items in order to enhance readability.

▶ **To maintain the alignment of text in multiple-choice notices and to make the chosen option stand out more, do the following:**

1 - For the selected option, replace the ## characters with XX.
2 - **For the non-selected options:**
- Use the **SPACE BAR** to remove the ## characters
  OR
- Use the **UNDERLINE (__) key** to remove the ## characters.

▶ **ADDITIONAL NOTE** – Many multiple-choice notices have optional entry fields within the option items. Such notices look best if, instead of ignoring optional fields within non-selected options, you type "N/A" into those fields. This makes the notice look better and it is less confusing.

For an example of misalignment from incorrect entry on multiple-choice notices, click on this link.

For an example of misalignment and garbled information when optional entry fields are ignored, click on this link.

COLUMN ENTRY

Some notices are designed to present information in columns. Incorrect entry can cause the printed notice to be out of alignment, making the printed notice look haphazard and unprofessional.

Column entry uses different rules than other message formats. Specifically, it will be necessary to use the space bar to erase unused mandatory or optional entry characters. It will also be necessary to erase some hard-coded text.

▶ **To correctly enter data in columns, use the SPACE BAR to erase unnecessary placeholders (%%%% or #### characters), and also to move to the next column.**

NOTE **-** If there is hard-coded text between the columns, use the space bar anyway, even though it will temporarily erase the hard-coded text. The hard-coded text (referred to as a *Restricted Area*) will be added back when *ENTER* is pressed. Also, use the space bar in areas where no information is to be entered. This makes the columns align instead of indenting.

▶ **TO AVOID ALIGNMENT ERRORS IN NOTICES WITH COLUMNS:**
- Do not use mouse
- Do not use arrow
- Do not use TAB key

THE SPACE BAR IS ONLY METHOD THAT WILL PRESERVE THE FORMAT.

For an example of misalignment and garbled information from incorrect entry on column notices, click on this link.

<u>GENERAL NOTICE INFORMATION</u>

(REPRINTED FROM THE NOTICE ON-LINE HELP SCREEN)
To view this screen in EIS, PF10 from the first position of most entry fields on the NOTI screen.

Helpful Hints for composing notices:

1. Try to be as clear and concise as possible. Use words your audience will understand. Do <u>not</u> use abbreviations or office lingo.

2. In most instances, it is important that you do <u>not</u> remove extra placeholders (%%%%% or ##### characters) in a mandatory or optional entry field. EIS will automatically remove them before the notice is printed. Removing the placeholders will cause other confusing text to appear in the printed notice.

   PLEASE SEE EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE IN 3 & 5 BELOW (multiple-choice and notices with columns).

3. **For multiple-choice notices** (e.g., F711), it is not enough to just complete the information for the item selected. To retain the alignment of text and make the "XX" entry for the chosen item more obvious, use the space bar to remove the ## signs in the entry fields for items <u>not</u> chosen.

4. Many multiple-choice notices have optional entry fields <u>within</u> the option items. These notices look best if, instead of ignoring optional fields within non-selected options, you type "N/A" into those fields. This makes the notice less confusing to read. For additional information, you may wish to view NOTICE TIPS information on the Systems Operations website. Go to http://dpasysops.hss.state.ak.us/production/default.htm , click on the topic "Systems Tips and Documentation, and select NEW NOTICE TIPS.

5. **For notices with columns** (e.g., M715), use the space bar to move from one column to another. This allows the columns to retain their alignment. It is also important to use the space bar to remove any unused placeholders (%%%% or ##### characters) in the columns. If this is not done, other text on those lines will be moved out of alignment when the notice is printed.

6. Before you send notices with columns or special formatting (such as F711), you should review them from NOHS to ensure they are formatted correctly.

7. If you attempt to send an excess income notice and $0.00 displays as the total income, it is because the case also failed for resources. Instead of using the excess income notice, send an excess resource notice and include the excess income information in the free-form section.

8. Some ET's utilize macros for commonly used phrases or sentences in order to save time. If you are not familiar with using macros, you can access information at the Staff Development & Training website http://dpaweb.hss.state.ak.us/training/outlook/EIS.pdf. Please be aware that notices are often revised and updated. A macro created for one version of a notice may not work correctly with a new version of the notice.

9. By paying attention to how your notices read and appear, you can reduce the number of questions from clients.

EXAMPLE of INCORRECT ENTRY IN MANDATORY and OPTIONAL ENTRY FIELDS

The illustration below shows what happens when the Backspace key is used.

LINE FROM "NOTI" SCREEN AS INITIALLY DISPLAYED

%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%% for ATAP and food stamps and give us the items by

---

SAME LINE AFTER SOME CHARACTERS ARE TYPED INTO ENTRY FIELD

SEPTEMB%%%%%%%%%%% for ATAP and food stamps and give us the items by

---

BACKSPACE KEY IS USED TO ERASE UNWANTED CHARACTERS – this results in the entry field being shortened

%%%%%%%%%% for ATAP and food stamps and give us the items by

NEW INFORMATION IS TYPED INTO THE SHORTENED ENTRY FIELD

Nov 11,2002 for ATAP and food stamps and give us the items by

---

PRESSING *ENTER* (to move to another page of the notice or to stay on the same screen) RETURNS A SCREEN THAT DISPLAYS THE FOLLOWING EDIT:

CE744-W RESTRICTD AREAS WERE MODIFD-HAVE BEEN CHNGD BACK TO ORIG CONTENT

IF YOU REMAIN ON THE SAME PAGE OF THE NOTICE, YOU WILL SEE THAT THE LINE OF TEXT HAS BEEN ALTERED AND NOW DISPLAYS IN RED.

NOTE CHANGE OF TEXT IN ENTRY FIELD *(underlining added to show problem area)*

Nov 11,2002 <u>for AT</u> for ATAP and food stamps and give us the items by _____

What happened?

This particular mandatory entry field is 19 spaces in length (19 percent signs are shown). The system expects that the field will continue to contain 19 characters or spaces until unused spaces are removed by EIS prior to printing. When the Backspace or the Delete key is used to remove unwanted characters from a mandatory or optional field, some of the characters from the hard-coded text of the notice are moved left into spaces reserved for the entry field. When the *ENTER* key is pressed, it appears to the system that a "RESTRICTED AREA [has been] MODIFIED" (i.e., some of the hard-coded text has been removed). The system captures any text found in the 19 spaces of the (mandatory or optional) entry field, and replaces the hard-coded text in its original location on the page. This means that any hard-coded text that moved into the entry field when the Backspace or the Delete key was used will be kept in the entry field printed in the notice – thus producing garbled information.

How can you avoid this?

<u>Do not</u> use the Backspace key. Instead, retype correct information on top of the incorrect entry.
<u>Do not</u> use the Delete key to remove the extra %%% or ### characters in a field. The system will remove them when appropriate. Manually removing them will pull unwanted characters into the field.

If you have accidentally used the Backspace or Delete keys and are unsure about the original length of the entry field, you can hit *ENTER* and the screen will display the line as it will appear in the printed notice. This allows you to see any characters or spaces that need to be over-typed with %%% or ### characters to maintain the original length of the entry field.

EXAMPLE OF MISALIGNED MULTIPLE-CHOICE NOTICE TEXT

(NOTICE USED: F950   DISQUALIFICATION NOTICE – WAIVER SIGNED)

NOTICE AS IT FIRST APPEARS ON THE NOTI SCREEN

You are disqualified from getting food stamps because you recently signed a Disqualification Hearing Waiver Agreement.

%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%% is the first month of your disqualification. You are disqualified for the amount of time checked below:

6 months because this is your first violation.
12 months because this is your second violation.
permanently because this is your third violation.

We took the action checked below
is the date your food stamp case closes because you are the only member in your household and you are disqualified from getting food stamps.

is the date your household's food stamps will go down because you are disqualified. Your food needs are not included in this allotment. The rest of the household will get ########## in food stamps. This amount may change depending on changes in income, expenses and the number of household members.

NOTICE AS <u>COMPLETED</u> ON THE NOTI SCREEN

You are disqualified from getting food stamps because you recently signed a Disqualification Hearing Waiver Agreement.

November 2002%% is the first month of your disqualification. You are disqualified for the amount of time checked below:

6 months because this is your first violation.
XX 12 months because this is your second violation.
permanently because this is your third violation.

We took the action checked below:
XX October 31, 2002## is the date your food stamp case closes because you are the only member in your household and you are disqualified from getting food stamps.

is the date your household's food stamps will go down because you are disqualified. Your food needs are not included in this allotment. The rest of the household will get ########## in food stamps. This amount may change depending on changes in income, expenses and the number of household members.

EXPLANATION OF ALIGNMENT ERRORS

" ##" field is unchanged for <u>non-selected items</u>:

EIS removes any unused placeholders prior to printing. When the selection field (##) for a non-selected item is left unchanged, the text will be moved two spaces to the left in the printed notice, thus bringing the text of the unselected items out of alignment with the selected option.

Use SPACE BAR or UNDERLINE KEY for non-selected items in order to retain alignment.

Optional entry fields are left blank in <u>non-selected items</u>:

If an optional entry field within a non-selected item is left blank, the placeholders (####) will be removed by the system prior to printing. The result is that the printed notice will have gaps in the text, thus making the notice confusing.

Type "N/A" ("not applicable") in unused optional fields in order to enhance understanding.

NOTICE AS IT WILL LOOK WHEN PRINTED
(Text that has become misaligned is shown in different color)

You are disqualified from getting food stamps because you recently signed a Disqualification Hearing Waiver Agreement.

November 2002 is the first month of your disqualification. You are disqualified for the amount of time checked below:

 6 months because this is your first violation.
 XX 12 months because this is your second violation.
 permanently because this is your third violation.

We took the action checked below:
XX October 31, 2002 is the date your food stamp case closes because you are the only member in your household and you are disqualified from getting food stamps.

   is the date your household's food stamps will go down because you are disqualified. Your food needs are not included in this allotment. The rest of the household will get in food stamps. This amount may change depending on changes in income, expenses and the number of household members.

EXAMPLE OF IGNORED OPTIONAL ENTRY FIELDS IN MULTIPLE-CHOICE NOTICES

Many multiple-choice notices have optional entry fields <u>within</u> the option items. Such notices look best if, <u>instead of ignoring optional fields within non-selected options, you type "N/A" into those fields</u>. This makes the notice look better and it is less confusing as shown in the example below.

When the notice is requested from the NORE screen, it will appear on the NOTI screen in this format.	Please read the information in the box checked below to find out what you need to do next. (###) You need to schedule an interview. Contact this office by ##################### to schedule your interview. (###) We have scheduled an interview appointment for you on Date #################### Time ################### Place ## If you are unable to keep this appointment because of work or some other reason, please contact us by ############## to reschedule your interview appointment. If you do not attend an interview, your application will be denied on the 30th day from the date you gave us your application.
In this example, the option shown was not selected when the notice was sent. The space bar was not used to over-type the placeholders within the parentheses. Also, "N/A" was not entered in the optional entry field. The printed notice is out of alignment and the wording is confusing.	Please read the information in the box checked below to find out what you need to do next. () You need to schedule an interview. Contact this office by to schedule your interview. (XXX) We have scheduled an interview appointment for you on Date MARCH 3, 2003 Time 10:30 AM Place 400 GAMBELL ROOM 201 If you are unable to keep this appointment because of work or some other reason, please contact us by 3/2/03 to reschedule your interview appointment. If you do not attend an interview, your application will be denied on the 30th day from the date you gave us your application
To retain alignment and have the notice read clearly, <u>use the space bar to remove the placeholders</u> within the parentheses, and <u>type "N/A" in the optional entry field</u>. The printed notice will then look like this:	Please read the information in the box checked below to find out what you need to do next. (XXX) You need to schedule an interview. Contact this office by N/A to schedule your interview. (XXX) We have scheduled an interview appointment for you on Date MARCH 3, 2003 Time 10:30 AM Place 400 GAMBELL ROOM 201 If you are unable to keep this appointment because of work or some other reason, please contact us by 3/2/03 to reschedule your interview appointment. If you do not attend an interview, your application will be denied on the 30th day from the date you gave us your application.

EXAMPLE OF MISALIGNED COLUMN TEXT

NOTICE AS IT FIRST APPEARS ON THE NOTI SCREEN

```
I am writing to you because our rules require that we contact you when
your declared income is less than your known expenses. This is your
situation according to the information you have given us:

EXPENSES:                              INCOME:

%%%%%%%%%%  Housing                    %%%%%%%%%%  Aid Payments
%%%%%%%%%%  Utilities                  %%%%%%%%%%  Net Earnings
%%%%%%%%%%  Other                      %%%%%%%%%%  Other

%%%%%%%%%%  TOTAL EXPENSES             %%%%%%%%%%  TOTAL INCOME

Please provide proof of how your excess expenses were paid and explain
how you plan to pay them in the future.

%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%% is the date this information must be turned in to
this office.
```

NOTICE AS <u>COMPLETED</u> ON THE NOTI SCREEN

```
I am writing to you because our rules require that we contact you when
your declared income is less than your known expenses. This is your
situation according to the information you have given us:

EXPENSES:                              INCOME:

$850.00  Housing                    $0%%%%%%%%  Aid Payments
$187.00%%%%  Utilities               $850.00%%%%  Net Earnings
$556.00%%%%  Other                   $0%%%%%%%%  Other

$ 1,643.00%  TOTAL EXPENSES           $850.00%%%%  TOTAL INCOME

Please provide proof of how your excess expenses were paid and explain
how you plan to pay them in the future.

11/01/02 is the date this information must be turned in to
this office.
```

EXPLANATION OF ALIGNMENT ERRORS

In this example, the notice prints badly because of the following entry errors:

- *The mouse and the arrow keys were used to move the cursor to the second column. This caused the second column text to move out of alignment. REMEDY: ALWAYS MOVE THE CURSOR WITH THE SPACE BAR.*

- *The four extra placeholders were deleted after the $850.00 was entered when typing this line, thus moving the hard-coded letters over to the left.*

- *The extra placeholders (%%%)were not typed over with the space bar after the dollar amount was entered. EIS deleted those characters before printing, thus collapsing the field and moving the hard-coded type the left, resulting in further mis-alignment.*

- *The Delete and Backspace keys were used during entry of the date on this line. **The "ghost charact created by this kind of entry error are highlighted in red.***

NOTICE AS IT WILL LOOK WHEN PRINTED

N003 – EXPENSES EXCEED INCOME

I am writing to you because our rules require that we contact you when your declared income is less than your known expenses. This is your situation according to the information you have given us:

EXPENSES: INCOME:

$850.00 Ho Housing   Ai Aid Payments
$187.00   Utilities $850.00 Net Earnings
$556.00 Other $0 Other

$ 1,643.00 TOTAL EXPENSES $850.00 TOTAL INCOME

Please provide proof of how your excess expenses were paid and explain how you plan to pay them in the future.

11/25/02 is the da is the date this information must be turned in to this office.