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# Employment Services Program Report

April 2017



**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM REPORT (LINE-ITEM 4401-1000)**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2017 General Appropriations Act**

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**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE**

The mission of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is to assist and empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency. Located within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, DTA ensures that the emergency and transitional needs of the individuals and families of the Commonwealth are met through a combination of federal- and state-funded programs. Massachusetts has a comprehensive system of programs and supports to provide to individuals and families in need in order to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency.

DTA serves one out of every eight people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, elders, and people with disabilities.

Over the past two years, DTA has focused its efforts on implementing the 2014 Welfare Reform Law and with that placing a renewed emphasis on our employment programs. In June of 2016 DTA formally launched Pathway to Self Sufficiency (PSS). The goal of PSS is positive client engagement and targeted supports that lead to employment, career pathways and long term economic self-sufficiency. DTA is also an essential partner in the state's efforts to implement a broader workforce development strategy through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM**

The Employment Services Program (ESP) is an integral part of the DTA's efforts to move clients to work and self-sufficiency. Each year, the Legislature allocates funding for employment services for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) clients through the ESP line item. The primary goal of ESP is to assist TAFDC clients in finding jobs, resolving barriers to employment and providing a means to gain a pathway to self-sufficiency. Case managers assist TAFDC clients to meet their work program requirements primarily by referring them to appropriate activities for their skill level and goals.

This report is submitted as required by line item 4401-1000 of the Massachusetts Fiscal Year 2017 budget. DTA funds a number of outcome driven (pay-for-performance) programs through this line-item. These include:

- **Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES);**
- **Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI);**
- **DTA Works Program; and**
- **Young Parents Program (YPP).**

Also in FY2016, DTA initiated a pilot program with several Community Colleges. This pilot was not continued in FY2017.

### **Competitive Integrated Employment Services Program**

In FY10, DTA converted much of its funded employment services programs to the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program. Under the CIES procurement, overseen by EOHHS, new proposals for services are solicited from all potential providers.

The CIES program is focused upon achieving positive client outcomes. Service providers are reimbursed as clients pass through a recognized combination of milestones with the goal of successfully obtaining and maintaining employment. The CIES model organizes these milestones into a service continuum marked by outcome benchmarks such as obtaining a job or achieving 90 days of employment as the client moves along the path to permanent employment. Moving forward, providers will be required to track clients for one year after receiving a job.

There are four levels of CIES Models:

- Model I:** Employment Ready (currently not funded)
- Model II:** Employment Training and Education
- Model III:** Employment Supports
- Model IV:** Enhanced Employment Supports (currently not funded)

The CIES program is offered statewide. Currently, DTA is only offering Model II and Model III, which provide the following employment related services:

#### Employment Training and Education (CIES Model II)

Model II is designed to best serve clients with minimal barriers to employment. The range of services may include initial training or certificate programs which are predominantly short-term (average 4-12 weeks in duration) and are targeted for specified sectors of labor markets with growth in their service area. Examples include training for business skills, Certified Nurse's Aides (CNA), child care, clerical employment, computer/data entry clerks, customer service, dental assistants, electronics assembly, food services, home health aides, legal secretaries and medical office skills. These trainings are then followed by a job search component. Clients may then be placed in work sites where they can earn wages. Clients also receive post-employment support services.

#### Employment Supports (CIES Model III)

Model III is designed to best serve clients with moderate barriers to employment. The range of services provided may include initial training and certificate programs which are short-term (average 4-12 weeks in duration) and are targeted for specified sectors of labor markets with growth in their service area. Depending on the vendor, clients may be placed in highly supportive work sites where they can earn wages in addition to receiving a reduced TAFDC grant while transitioning into an unsubsidized job. Clients receive support to apply for, obtain, and maintain employment.

In FY16, \$8,287,078 was appropriated for CIES and DTA was able to fund 1459 Model II slots and 1124 Model III slots.

<b>CIES FY15</b>					
CIES Model	Enrollments	Placements	Performance Rate	90-Day Retention	Retention Rate
Model II	908	480	52.9%	364	75.8%
Model III	843	394	46.7%	269	68.3%
Total	1751	874	50.0%	633	72.4%
<b>CIES FY16</b>					
CIES Model	Enrollments	Placements	Performance Rate	90-Day Retention	Retention Rate
Model II	1459	854	58.5%	733	85.8%
Model III	1124	796	70.8%	703	88.3%
Total	2583	1650	63.9%	1436	87.0%

**Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)**

The Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) offers services to employment authorized noncitizens who are also TAFDC clients. Noncitizen TAFDC clients in need of assistance to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, which hinder them from obtaining and maintaining employment, are served through the ORI model. Services include a comprehensive assessment of client needs, job search skills, and ongoing follow-up services once the client is employed. Services are provided in the client’s primary language as clients work to build English skills and make it possible for DTA to serve recent immigrants that have a wide range of cultural and linguistic barriers to employment. Currently, ORI services are offered in the Boston, Lynn, Worcester and West Springfield areas.

In FY16, two hundred and twenty-five (225) clients were placed through the ORI program. ORI met 100% of their job placement goals. Funding for MORI in FY16 was \$797,000.

**DTA Works**

The DTA Works program is designed to help TAFDC clients in need of work experience and mentorship by providing internship placements throughout DTA’s 23 Transitional Assistance Offices (TAOs) as well as at partner agencies. Under this initiative, clients not only gain professional skills and work experience, but are given “on the job” support to develop the soft skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment. Clients enrolled in the DTA Works program are eligible to participate for up to six months and receive a small stipend. Additionally, clients at the end of their six-month internship are evaluated for skills matching current job openings at DTA and with other state agencies. Clients are required to conduct independent job search during their enrollment in DTA Works. Participating clients are overseen by a program manager who meets with each intern one-on-one on a bi-weekly basis to evaluate the placement and provide job development services. DTA Works was funded at \$110,000 in FY16.

<b>DTA Works</b>			
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b># Enrolled</b>	<b># Obtaining Employment</b>	<b>% Performance</b>
FY2015	62	50	80.7%
FY2016	72	48	66.7%

### **Young Parents Program**

The Young Parents Program (YPP) is an educational outcome-based program administered through community-based public/non-profit organizations statewide. YPP is designed to serve pregnant and/or parenting clients who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Pregnant and parenting young adults, ages 14 through 24, are eligible to enroll in YPP services. They may participate up to age 25. The YPP program not only assists young pregnant and parenting clients in obtaining their high school diploma or equivalency certificate, but also encourages and supports them on the path to higher education while developing parenting and life skills to successfully prepare them for a path to self-sufficiency. YPP is mainly educational attainment focused, rather than employment focused. A number of YPP participants do transition to employment after attaining their high school diploma or equivalent.

Services include assessment, Adult Basic Education, high school/Hi-SET education, life and parenting skills, counseling, prevocational activities, job development, job placement, and follow-up services. YPP's primary goals are to increase the educational attainment level of participants to help them obtain a high school diploma or equivalency and to assist them to take the appropriate next steps to self-sufficiency.

The YPP program was funded at \$3,223,900 in FY16. New rates have been negotiated by the EOHHS Purchase of Service Policy Office under Chapter 257 for FY17 starting on July 1, 2017. This is the first increase since 2003 in YPP rates.

<b>Young Parents Program (YPP)</b>								
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Enrollments</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>HiSET/HS Diploma</b>	<b>% HiSET Outcomes</b>	<b>Added Training</b>	<b>% Added Training</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>% Employed</b>
FY2015	581	477	159	33.3%	99	20.8%	93	19.50%
FY2016	626	471	154	32.3%	94	20.0%	114	24.20%

### **Community College Pilot**

The Community College Pilot was initiated on March 21, 2016 and ran through June 30, 2016. Four (4) community colleges participated: Bristol, Holyoke, Middlesex and Quinsigamond. The primary goal was to provide clients with basic skills, education, occupational skills and support services that DTA clients require to obtain and retain employment in today's competitive economy. These community colleges offered programs for skill training and certificates, as well as Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses. Programs offered included Personal Home Health Aide, Business

Computer Applications, Pharmacy Technician, Nursing Assistant, and ESOL/Jumpstart Program. Funding for this program in FY16 was \$385,460.

For the purposes of this pilot, a “placement” was counted (and paid for) if a participant obtained employment paying at least minimum wage for at least twenty (20) hours per week. The participant must have retained the job for at least thirty (30) days for the Community College to receive the final payment under the performance-based contract. Summer jobs or temporary jobs (anticipated length of less than six months) were not considered a placement for the purpose of this pilot. Because the pilot was started so late in the fiscal year, the placement numbers reported below represent only those that met the definition by the end of the fiscal year (funding period).

<b>FY16 Community College Pilot (3-20-16 through 6-30-16)</b>			
<b>Community College</b>	<b>Enrollments</b>	<b>Training Completions</b>	<b>30-Day Placements</b>
<b>Bristol Community College</b>	33	12	0
<b>Holyoke Community College</b>	23	13	2
<b>Middlesex Community College</b>	14	0	0
<b>Quinsigamond Community College</b>	78	26	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>3</b>

**Additional Employment-Focused Supports & Services**

An essential part of DTA’s employment efforts are its ***Full Engagement Workers (FEW)*** in each TAO who assist clients in workforce training, obtaining and maintaining employment, and other issues that present barriers to employment. The FEWs conduct client orientations twice a week to provide an overview of the transitional nature of TAFDC benefits and ensure clients are aware of available local work-related opportunities and the supports available to them through DTA. FEWs also work to develop non-DTA funded work-related resources in their areas.

Eligible TAFDC clients who are participating in most work-related activities have access to the following supports as needed: ***ESP child care referrals, transportation benefits*** of up to \$80 per month, ***learning disability screening and assessments, Hi-SET vouchers*** and information about the benefits of employment and eligibility for tax credits via the ***Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)*** and ***Earned Income Credit (EIC)***.

Eligible former TAFDC clients who have transitioned to employment receive the following supports for a limited time as needed: ***Transitional Child Care referrals*** and information about the benefits of employment and eligibility for tax credits via EITC and EIC. Most also receive Transitional Benefit Alternative (SNAP) benefits.

Effective November of 2016, DTA implemented ***Transitional Support Services (TSS)*** to support the retention of employment and prevent the need to return to TAFDC for clients whose case closed due to earnings. TSS falls into two categories, Work Related Expense Stipends and Transportation Stipends. TSS stipends begin when a case is closed for 30 days. TSS stipends are

available for a period of four months, in amounts that decrease over the TSS period. Through the end of February, 1,004 unique clients have received since TSS payments since the program began.

These small but meaningful supports help to mitigate the “cliff effect” many clients face when transitioning off of TAFDC and reinforce the benefits of work.

### **Aligning DTA Efforts with Broader Workforce System Development**

Signed into law on July 22, 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) seeks to integrate states’ workforce systems to better serve employers and jobseekers.

WIOA reauthorized the nation’s employment, training, adult education and vocational rehabilitation programs for the first time in 16 years, though substantially different from its predecessor, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), in its emphasis on targeting low-income adults and youth with limited training and skills, as well as individuals with disabilities.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts spent a year developing a WIOA state plan that aims to better serve jobseekers. By adopting a career pathway model that coordinates services and treats jobseekers as shared customers among all 15 state agencies, the Massachusetts state plan commits to supporting workforce development with an emphasis on those most in need. Implementation of the WIOA State Plan provides a critical opportunity for DTA and other human service programs to support low-income youth and adults, people with disabilities, veterans, those struggling with mental illness or substance use disorders, families and individuals experiencing homelessness and others to access workforce development resources, overcome barriers to employment and move towards economic self-sufficiency.

In support of implementation of the WIOA state plan, the Governor has proposed the ***Learn to Earn Initiative (LTE)***. LTE is a coordinated, comprehensive approach to providing unemployed and underemployed individuals with the support and skills they need to obtain and sustain employment in industries where employers have the greatest needs.

While many public benefits recipients work, these are often part-time and/or low-wage jobs without career pathways and without the possibility for wage growth and advancement. Individuals who are working and receive public benefits (TAFDC, SNAP, child care, housing, MassHealth, etc.) can face significant consequences on their household resources if they accept a raise or promotion, agree to work more hours or seek a higher paying job.

LTE is a partnership formed by the governor among EOHHS and several of its agencies (DTA, MRC, MCB, Elder Affairs, etc.) with the Executive Offices of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Education (EOE) and Housing and Economic Development (HED). This initiative will serve populations with historically higher than average rates of unemployment, with a focus on reducing employment barriers for individuals and families in public housing, as well as those receiving TANF and SNAP.

The Governor’s House 1 budget recommendation includes \$4 million for Learn to Earn, including:

- \$3M of new funding to create pilot program that will provide credentials and employment for unemployed and underemployed individuals in occupations in high-demand fields through partnerships between public agencies, businesses, community-based organizations, and career pathways; and
- \$1M of flexible funding to address barriers to employment commonly encountered by the underemployed and unemployed, including benefit loss due to work, transportation and child care expenses.

Implementation of the WIOA State Plan and the LTE Initiative provide a critical opportunity for DTA to leverage the investments in our Employment Support Program to address barriers to employment for our clients and help them move toward self-sufficiency. With the current unemployment rate at 3.4%, we have a unique opportunity to engage clients in employment supports that lead to meaningful career pathways and longer term economic stability for them and their families.

**Note on Report**

The Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) General Appropriate Act requires DTA to file this report reporting on the Employment Services Program (ESP). Because FY17 has not concluded before the submission of this report, DTA reported on the previous fiscal year's ESP success.