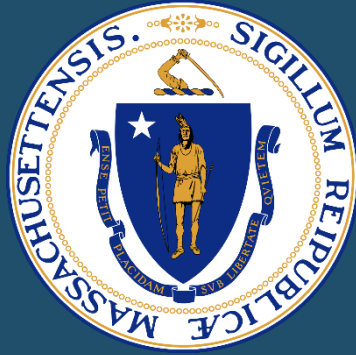


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Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Work Participation Report

September 2022



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN WORK
PARTICIPATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2022

OVERVIEW

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is pleased to submit this report on the status of the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) work program requirements, as required by section 2(B) of Chapter 18 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION

DTA's mission 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. DTA offers a comprehensive system of programs and supports to help individuals and families achieve greater economic mobility, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment supports. DTA serves one out of every seven people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, older adults, and people with disabilities.

TAFDC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

TAFDC is a state and federally funded program that provides cash assistance and employment supports to families with children, and pregnant women, with little or no income or assets. TAFDC is operated under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.

The goal of TAFDC is to support families as they transition from economic crisis to stability. Since FY2016, DTA has been working reform agency policies to remove barriers to economic mobility and to help families find their own best path to success. The Department has pursued a three-pronged approach to disrupt multi-generational poverty and meet labor market demands through multi-year reforms that:

- Simplify and streamline program rules and requirements for working families,
- Better incentivize and support employment and employment related activities, and
- Ease the "cliff effect" during the transition to economic mobility.

UPDATE ON TAFDC WORK PROGRAM REQUIREMENT

As of May 2022, 35,595 households composed of 89,984 recipients received TAFDC. Of this total, 19,071 heads of household met the criteria to be subject to the work program requirement. In accordance with 106 CMR 703.150, activities that are countable for work program requirements include:

- Unsubsidized employment
- Subsidized public/private sector employment
- Work experience
- On-the-job training
- Vocational educational training
- Job skills training directly related to employment

- Unpaid work study or internship program
- Education or training activity, including a certificate or degree program from a four-year degree-granting higher education institute, community college or a certificate program
- Community service or combination of hours in community service and another approved work activity

Exemptions to these requirements, pursuant to 106 CMR 703.100, include:

- Having a verified disability or medical condition that prevents you from working
- Having a child less than two years of age
- Being in at least your 33rd week of pregnancy
- Being a teen parent and attending school full time
- Being age 60 or over
- Caring for a disabled household member
- Being a non-parent relative care giver.

Generally, DTA clients participating in the employment services program report one or more significant challenges to securing and maintaining employment, such as:

- Lack of employment-related skills and training
- Lack of work experience
- Limited literacy/math skills
- Health Issue
- Lack of stable housing or homelessness
- Lack of access to technology
- Lack of reliable, affordable transportation
- Lack of stable, quality child care

Families who are required to participate in the work program are only eligible to receive 24 months of TAFDC benefits in a five-year period. In accordance with 106 CMR 703.130, the Department may grant an extension of benefits beyond the 24-month limit when the grantee is continuing to make progress in meeting their employment development plan. Extensions may also be approved when a grantee is participating in a work program activity and needs time to complete the activity.

In FY22, the average length of stay for a TAFDC head of household was just under 3 years. This is a slight decrease from FY21. At the same time as the average length of stay decreased, the program's caseload increased. The TAFDC caseload averaged 27,767 households in FY21. In FY22, average caseload is 32,083.

Historically, case closures for unearned income, which includes UI benefits, accounted for an average of 5% of all case closures prior to the pandemic. In May 2021, the closings for unearned income accounted for 32% of all case closures in the month. A year later in May 2022, case closings for unearned income were 6% of all case closures. Caseload data also indicates that families who remain on the TAFDC caseload likely face significant barriers to employment and will require substantial support to participate in the state's post-pandemic workforce.

TAFDC PATHWAYS TO WORK

DTA provides employment services for TAFDC clients through the Employment Services Program (ESP). The primary goals of DTA's employment and training programs are to assist TAFDC clients to prepare for and connect with career pathways and resolve barriers for sustained employment. DTA case managers connect TAFDC clients to employment and training programs by referring them to appropriate activities based on their skill level and economic mobility goals.

DTA's employment program options for TAFDC clients include:

- Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES)
- Employment Supports Services Program, via the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)
- Secure Jobs Program
- DTA Works Program
- Work Participant Program (WPP)
- Young Parents Program (YPP), and
- Empowering to Employ (ETE).

DTA also administers the [SNAP Path to Work](#) program, a partnership between federal, state, and local partners administered by DTA that provides the state's SNAP clients with the skills, training, experience, education, and employment supports needed to find and keep good paying jobs.

In FY21, DTA launched a rebrand of its employment services programs now known as the [TAFDC Pathways to Work Program](#). Through the Pathways program, DTA remains focused on identifying and implementing new strategies to increase engagement with families and partners in the workforce system to provide TAFDC clients with more access points to successfully re-enter the workforce. Recognizing that many families continue to face challenges in returning to education, training, or employment in the current economy, TAFDC Pathways to Work providers continue to focus strategically on increasing access to expanded service delivery models of training and educational programming, and employment supports. DTA-funded providers are offering a combination of services delivered in-person, virtually, and through a hybrid model, which has increased opportunities for DTA clients to upskill or re-skill in preparation for returning to the workforce. Enrollments and outcomes continued to steadily increase across all TAFDC Pathways to Work programs in FY22 over FY21. DTA also began reinstating work program requirements in a phased approach during FY22. The Department's phased approach supports TAFDC families through robust engagement in our rebranded TAFDC Pathways to Work Program to assist them to achieve their career path and economic mobility goals.

FY22 Current E&T Program Enrollments & Outcomes			
Program	# Enrollment	# Outcome	Notes
CIES	2,166	1,744	974 Certification Completion 380 30-day job retentions 116 90-day job retentions at <\$16.25/ hour 124 90-day job retentions at >= \$16.25/hour 150 180-day retentions
ORI ESP	412	412	105 total employments 93 virtual outcomes 98 30-day retentions 71 90-day retentions; 48 Quality Placements (above \$13.25/hr)
Secure Jobs	396	237	237 total employments
DTA Works	53	24	13 Employment 1 Completion (36 weeks) 6 Self Exit 4 Site Termination
WPP	1,217	395	880 enrollments + 337 carry-ins 231 employment + 164 entered training
YPP	494	356	86 virtual training outcomes 54 Life & Personal outcome and 33 Parenting & Family Outcome 66 HiSET or GED completions and 9 HS Diploma 58 EFL achievement and 5 ESL achievement 38 occupational training/Certificate Program 7 completely 12+ credits of College
ETE	198	59	17 total employments 42 in training

Participants in work-related activities, including TAFDC Pathways programs and paid employment, are eligible to receive child care and transportation supports. Any TAFDC family who needs child care for employment or to participate in a work activity program is eligible for a referral from DTA.

CONCLUSION

As the Commonwealth continues to evaluate the changes, challenges, and innovations induced by the pandemic to the state's workforce and labor market, particularly as they relate to the experiences of families with low-income, the Department is committed to promoting increased participation in training and employment opportunities for all eligible recipients of DTA benefits. Through partnerships with Pathways to Work providers, sister agencies and the state's workforce system, DTA continues to identify new opportunities for targeted outreach, increased flexibility in service delivery and individualized work supports for families in receipt of TAFDC to promote meaningful engagement in the Pathways to Work Program, to assist them to achieve their career path and economic mobility goals.