

Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor



Kathleen E. Walsh
Secretary

Jeff G. McCue
Commissioner

Employment Services Program Report

June 2025



**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM REPORT
JUNE 2025**

REPORT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to line item 4401-1000 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is required to report on the status of its Employment Services Program (ESP), including the number of clients served by these programs, the number of clients who transition into employment, the number of clients who remain in employment after 90 days, and the number of clients who remain in employment after 1 year. Because FY2025 has not concluded before the submission of this report, DTA reported on the previous fiscal year's ESP activities.

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 self-sufficiency, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment support

TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN (TAFDC)

TAFDC is a state and federally funded program that provides direct cash assistance and employment supports to families with children, and pregnant women, with little or no income. 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 by removing barriers to economic mobility and working with families as they find their 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:

- Simplified and streamlined program rules and requirements for working families,
- Better incentivize and support employment and employment related activities, and
- Help mitigate the "cliff effect" during the transition to economic mobility.

TAFDC PATHWAYS TO WORK OVERVIEW

The primary goal of the TAFDC Pathways to Work program is to assist TAFDC clients in achieving economic mobility by connecting them with career pathways while addressing barriers for sustained employment. DTA Full Engagement Workers connect TAFDC clients to employment and training programs by referring them to appropriate activities based on their skill level and personal goals. The TAFDC Pathways to Work program, funded through the ESP line item, include the following outcomes-driven (pay-for-performance) programs and partnerships:

- Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES)

- Employment Supports Services Program, via the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)
- DTA Works Program
- Young Parents Program (YPP), and
- Empowering to Employ (ETE).

Additional TAFDC Pathways to Work employment programs in this report include the:

- Secure Jobs Program (line item 4400-1020), and
- The Work Participant Program (line item 4400-1979).

More information regarding DTA’s Pathways to Work can be found here: [DTA Pathways to Work | Mass.gov](#).

The theory of change for DTA’s employment service programs is that a two-generation approach helps both parents and their children make progress together and provides interventions that can help break the cycle of multi-generational poverty.¹ Each of DTA’s 21 local offices are staffed with dedicated Full Engagement Workers (FEWs), and Self Sufficiency Specialists (SSSs) who focus on parents under 25 and other clients with increased vulnerability. All eligible families, regardless of work program requirement status, are encouraged to connect with DTA engagement staff to learn more about the Pathways to Work programs and enroll in an activity that aligns with their individual employment goals.

TAFDC Pathways to Work providers focus strategically on increasing access to expanded service delivery models of training and educational programming, and employment supports. DTA-funded providers offer multiple hybrid service delivery models that increase opportunities for DTA clients to upskill or re-skill in preparation for full participation in the workforce.

COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

The Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program provides training, education, and job readiness services to TAFDC families interested in obtaining employment. The primary focus is to assist clients in seeking and securing employment in jobs connected to a career pathway with the support necessary to stay employed and achieve career growth. This program implements a whole family approach to providing these services. This approach is facilitated by assessing and addressing the needs of each family across their life domains of family stability, well-being, financial management, education and training, and employment and career.²

Through the CIES program, DTA hopes to affect change for families by:

- Empowering participants to pursue a path to economic mobility through education, training and job readiness,

¹[Two-Generation Playbook](#), Ascend at the Aspen Institute, September 2016

² The *Economic Stability Roadmap*, including the five domains, are adapted with permission from The Bridge to Self-Sufficiency® by Economic Mobility Pathways, Inc.

- Actively engaging participants to develop the skills necessary to achieve economic stability in a fulfilling career path, and
- Providing participants with hope and aspiration to break the cycle of poverty and achieve personal and economic growth as they pursue their goals.

The CIES program provides a comprehensive array of job search, training, and education services focused on successful employment placement, career growth, and retention. Clients may also participate in industry-validated occupational/vocational training. The CIES program recognizes that job readiness involves more than just education and work history but includes addressing issues that can significantly impact an individual's ability to maintain employment such as health, housing stability, and family life. Through workforce development, contextual learning, and breaking down barriers, DTA partners with CIES providers to empower participants to build family stability while obtaining and sustaining employment.

CIES providers actively engage and partner with participants to set family goals and develop individualized employment plans incorporating four components: Assessment and Goal setting, Job-targeted Education and Skills Training, and Job Retention at 30, 90, and 180 days. Job Retention Services include goal setting, continued skill development, and coordinated case management. CIES outcomes are based on these four components which are all connected directly to employment. To obtain these outcomes, CIES providers support families as they pass through recognized milestones and provide post-employment supports and goal evaluation assessments to clients for up to one year. To ensure they have the resources to provide post-employment supports, outcome payments are made to service providers when clients retain employment and/or experience wage growth.

FY24 continued to see an increase in enrollments to the CIES program as more DTA clients are returning to the workforce. CIES providers continue to be flexible in their models of service delivery to increase access and supports for families transitioning back into employment. The focus on flexible service delivery modes and individual supports better positioned providers to support the immediate, unique needs of participants in the areas of family stability and well-being, while focusing on education and training that supports participants' employment goals. Over the last year, DTA has seen a 29% increase in clients engaging and participating in the program. Participants are experiencing wage growth and obtaining jobs in high demand sectors such as education and medicine. DTA has also continued to make improvements in FY25 in data collection to improve analysis of enrollments and outcomes related to, hourly wage growth, and job retention at 30, 90, and 180 days.

CIES Enrollments & Outcomes

Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# of Certificates	# 30-day Retention	# 90-day Retention	# 180-day Retention
FY2024	2,681	387	737	510	356
<i>Outcome Performance</i>		47%	88%	69%	98%
FY2025 Q1 & Q2	1,367	178	349	242	174
<i>Outcome Performance</i>		33%	50%	40%	56%

FY2024 CIES Average Hourly Wage	\$19.10 (This is a 3% increase from FY23's average wage of \$18.67)
FY2024 CIES Average Hours Per Week	29

CIES participants were hired by 519 unique employers across the Commonwealth during FY2024 in a wide range of industry sectors. The top three employers of CIES participants were Amazon, Walmart and Dunkin Donuts. CIES clients completed 53 unique trainings, many of which were in the healthcare field. Home Health Aide, Certified Nursing Assistant, and the completion of a high school equivalent were the three most completed trainings for CIES participants.

CIES Success Story

Willow was referred to MyTurn's CIES Program in May 2024. When she began the program, she had numerous barriers that were keeping her from finding full-time employment. Willow needed childcare and stable housing. The stress of not knowing what to do with both her personal and professional lives was overwhelming to her. Willow found herself in an area of MA that she was unfamiliar with and was not sure of how or where to find resources to meet her needs. After several initial meetings between Willow and MY TURN's CIES case manager a clear pathway emerged with solutions and goals that were attainable for Willow.

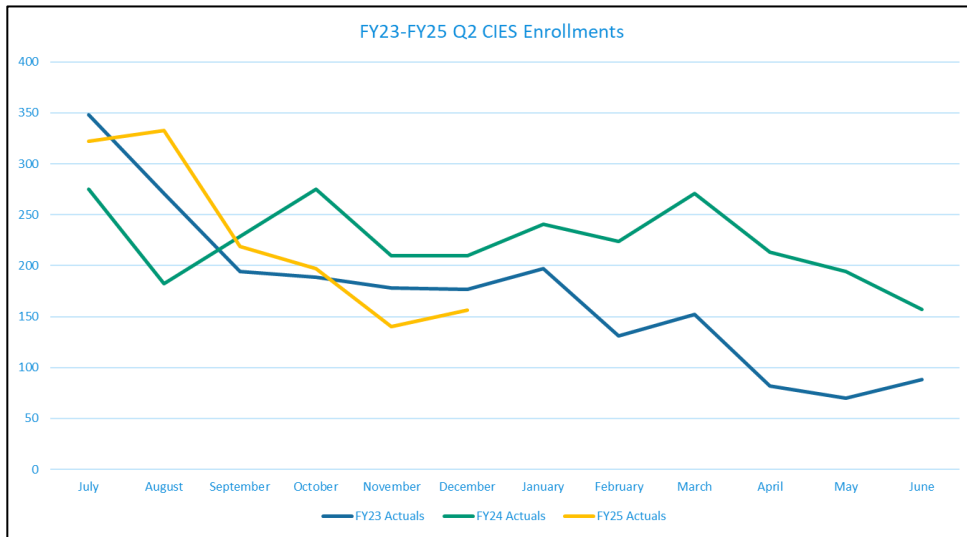
Attending MY TURN on a weekly basis allowed Willow to complete credentials that were needed to build her resume. Willow participated in job readiness workshops to develop confidence with interviewing and financial literacy workshops to better spend and budget her finances. Willow took an active part in her case management, setting goals for both employment and a better living situation.

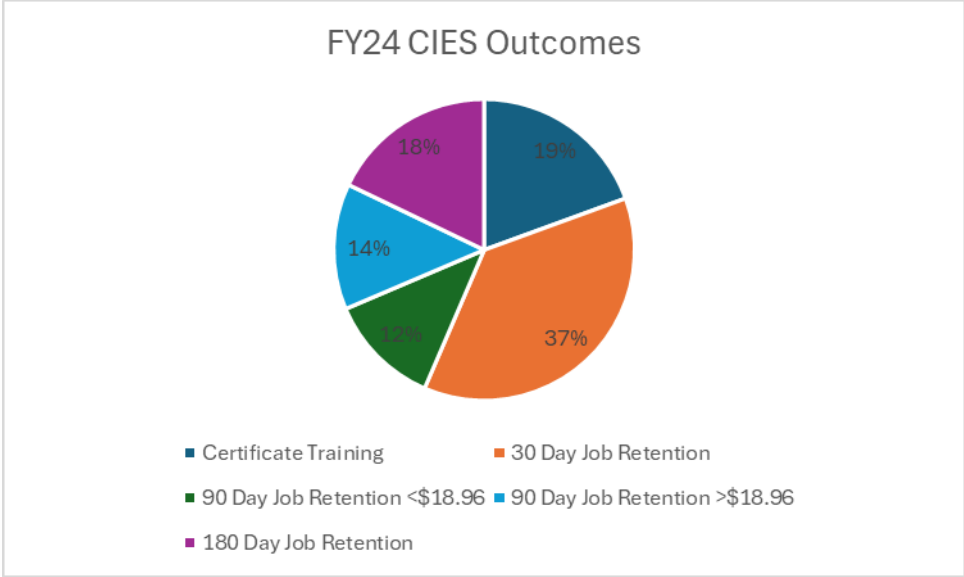
In July 2024, a Career Development Case Manager position opened in MY TURN's Out of School Youth Program. MY TURN's CIES case manager reviewed the job requirements and description with Willow given that she had previous experience in case management from former employment and an Associate Degree of Science in Developmental Disabilities.

In the weeks leading up to her interview, Willow completed mock interviews with her CIES case manager and reviewed Dress for Success tips. Willow had self-doubt, fear of the unknown and anxiety about the interview and returning to the workforce full time while mothering a now 7-month-old little girl. Willow was still trying to find a suitable living situation and was stressed about her current financial state. During these sessions, Willow was reminded of her worth, her accomplishments and the fact that she was qualified for the position. Willow worked with her CIES case manager to apply for RAFT and look for apartments to provide her with a fresh start.

Willow was offered the Career Development Case Manager position with MY TURN and returned to the workforce full time on 7/15/2024. Since then, she has purchased a new car and has made great progress in improving her financial situation. Willow has demonstrated her ability to be self-sufficient, competent, responsible, caring and smart. Participants that she provides career case management for find her to be engaging, funny, helpful and most of all relatable. Willow gives her all to each participant and shows up every day as her best self, no matter what she has going on in her life.

Six months later in January, Willow has completed 180 days of employment with MY TURN’s CIES Program. Willow has also accomplished many personal barriers that she had when she entered the program! Willow’s daughter is in full-time childcare, she has been approved for RAFT and is actively looking for her own apartment. Willow has learned to juggle her “mom” life with her “work” life and has gained meaningful relationships along the way. Most of all, Willow has found a fulfilling career that she enjoys and is working to create a successful future for herself and her family.





EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS SERVICES PROGRAM AT THE MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

The Employment Supports Services Program, administered by the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) offers unique language, cultural, and employment placement skills to TAFDC recipients who are refugees and immigrants, and those whose primary language is not English. Services are provided in the client’s primary language as they work to build their English language skills. Youth participants can enroll in this program after completing a HiSET or DTA’s YPP.

Through ORI services, families can overcome cultural and linguistic barriers which may hinder them from obtaining and retaining employment. ORI’s employment services include comprehensive assessment of a family’s needs, employment readiness, access to vocational skills trainings, financial literacy, job placement, and retention. Currently, ORI provides these services to eligible clients in the Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Framingham, Holyoke, Lowell, Malden, North Shore, Quincy, Worcester, and Springfield DTA catchment areas.

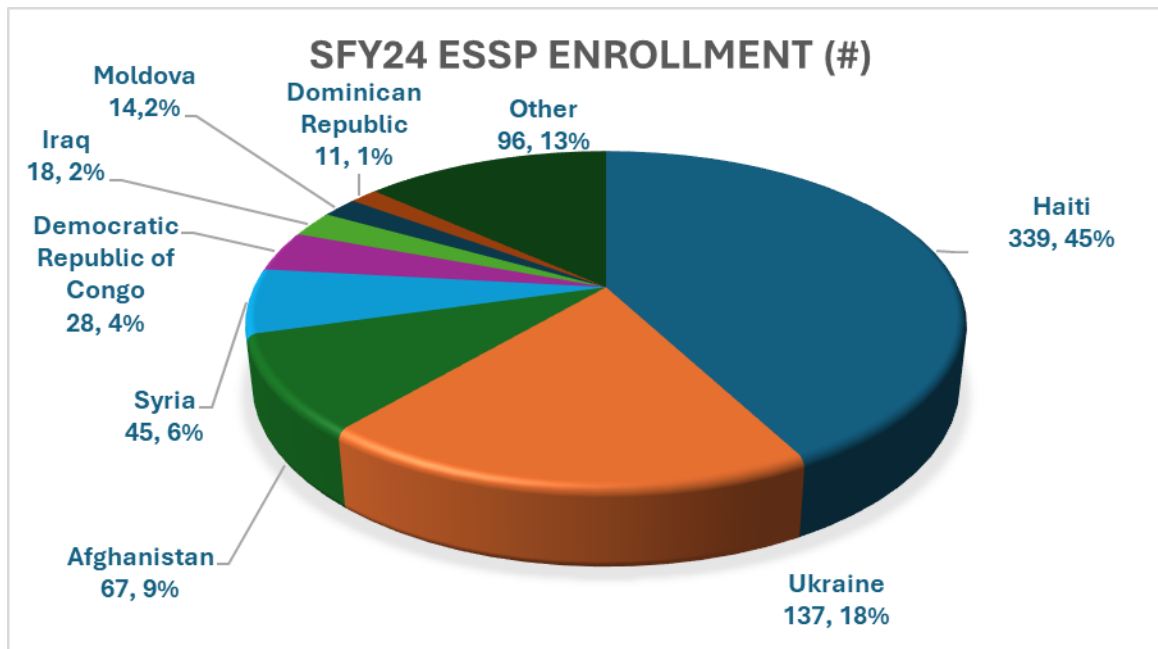
MORI Enrollments & Outcomes					
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Job Placements	# 30-Day Retention	# 90-Day Retention	Quality Salary
FY2021	218	105	81	59	43
FY2022	337	141	104	73	49
FY2023	648	173	208	147	131
FY2024	755	N/A	317	269	228
FY24 Outcome Performance*	124%	N/A	127%	234%	570%

*Percentages greater than 100% reflect a higher outcome than the original target amounts outlined in the ISA.

FY2024 Average Wage	\$18.27 Per Hour
---------------------	------------------

In FY24, ORI was allocated \$3M to enhance ESOL instruction and expand vocational skill training programs, financial literacy, and other pre- and post-employment services. In FY25, ORI was funded at the FY24 rate of \$3M to support the influx of migrant families in the state requiring ESOL and employment supports. Over the past two fiscal years, ORI has continually achieved and exceeded their enrollment goal.

ESSP participants spoke 27 different languages and minor dialects, adding much complexity to the delivery of employment services. During FY24, ESSP providers offered approximately 1,200 hours of translation and interpretation to active clients.



ORI-ESSP Success Story

Vilina’s journey to the United States is a testament to resilience and determination. Hailing from Ukraine, she and her family sought refuge in America from the war, aiming to build a brighter, safer future for themselves, especially their young children.

Before relocating, Vilina had a successful career in sales and marketing in the clothing industry in Ukraine. She trained others in sales, which honed her communication and leadership skills. Adjusting to life in the United States came with its own set of challenges. The language barrier and navigating a new job market were significant hurdle for Vilina, especially since her English

was at a beginner's level. Despite these obstacles, she remained committed to securing a stable future for her family.

Vilina's Employment Counselor from Ascentria Care Alliance played a crucial role in her journey. She was supported in crafting a resume that highlighted her strengths, provided interview coaching, and guided her toward job opportunities that aligned with her skills.

Today, Vilina is proudly working at Zara, a company she values greatly. One of her proudest moments came when she helped a customer find the perfect outfit by listening attentively to their needs. The customer was so satisfied that they left a glowing review, which her manager acknowledged. This recognition not only boosted her confidence but also reaffirmed her belief that she was on the right path.

Vilina's success story is one of hope, perseverance, and support. Despite the initial challenges she faced upon arriving in the United States, she is now thriving in her career and contributing to her team's success. Her story serves as an inspiration to others who may be facing similar challenges, showing that with the right support, determination, and a positive mindset, new opportunities can be found even in the most uncertain of times.

SECURE JOBS PROGRAM (4400-1020)

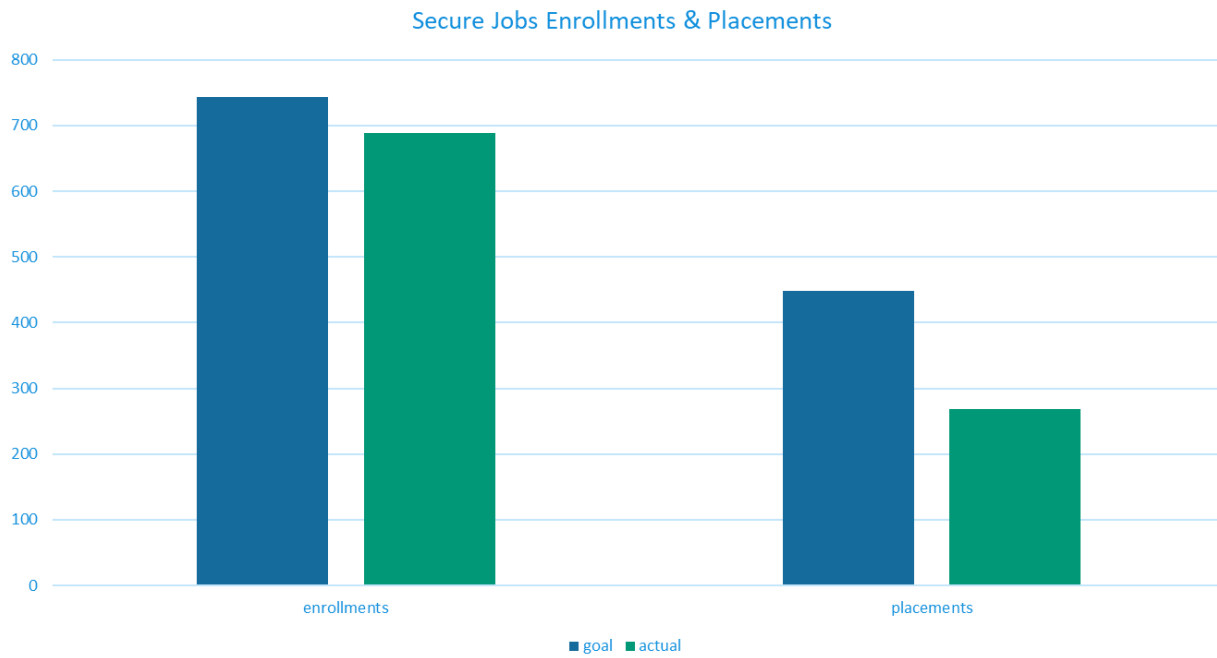
DTA collaborates with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) to administer the Secure Jobs Program, which was created through a partnership between the Fireman Foundation and the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness. Secure Jobs supports families in increasing their economic mobility by connecting them with housing supports and community-based providers. These providers focus on helping families become employment ready, while addressing any barriers that may interfere with their economic mobility goals. The model of the Secure Jobs Program emphasizes employment first to shorten the length of stay in shelter and expedite the attainment of permanent housing, contributing to upward economic mobility and family stability. Secure Jobs focuses on three key domains: Education and Career, Stable Housing and Economic Stability, and Family Stability and Well-Being. Participants have access to flexible funds, which are used to address individual barriers to employment. By connecting housing and workforce development services, Secure Jobs offers comprehensive supports that families need to obtain employment through client-centered economic mobility plans tailored to their individual needs.

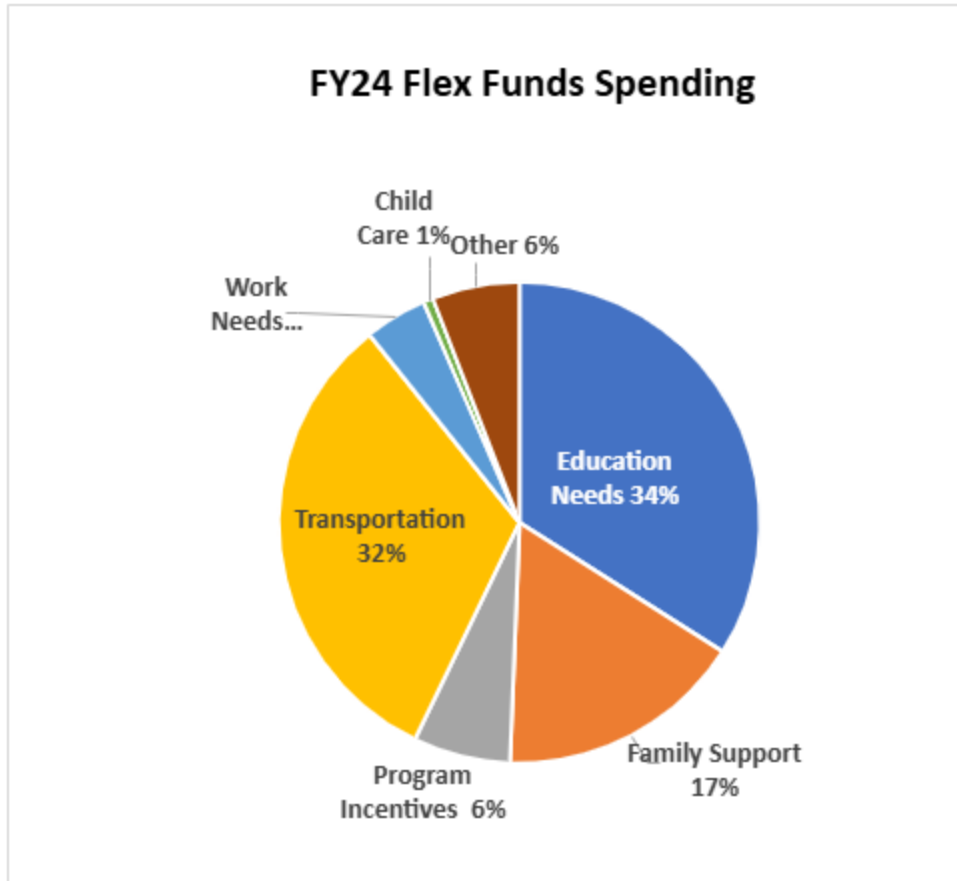
Secure Jobs serves families receiving assistance from EOHLC in the areas of Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Taunton, Hyannis, New Bedford, Framingham, Fitchburg, Lawrence, Lowell, Holyoke, Springfield, Southbridge and Worcester.

Many of the hallmark innovations, including flexibility for participants and alignment between housing and employment services, have been retained as the program continues to grow. Increased funding for the program has allowed for enhanced services to be made available to support increasing employment outcomes and has expanded access to Secure Jobs in new

communities. DTA, in collaboration with EOHL, remains committed in partnership to continue the work in support of economic mobility for homeless children and families.

Secure Jobs Enrollments & Outcomes			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Job Placements	Performance Rate
FY2021	416	268	64%
FY2022	437	257	59%
FY2023	582	255	43%
FY2024	689	268	39%
FY2025 Q1 & Q2	386	160	41%

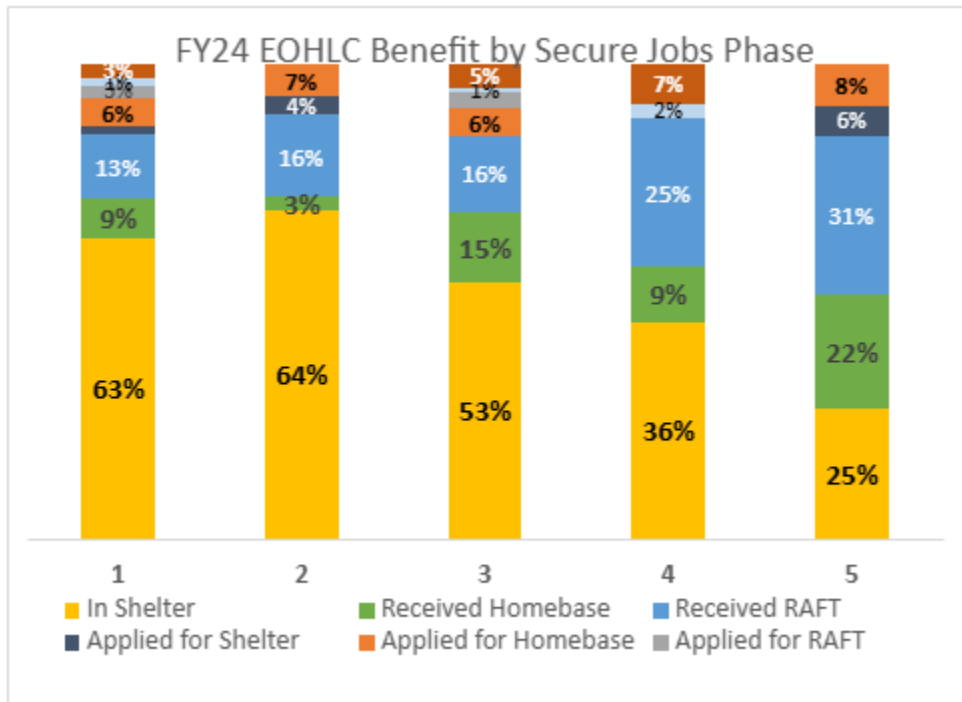




In FY24, there were 689 enrollments in the Secure Jobs program and 268 participants achieved successful employment. The average wage of clients employed in FY24 was \$17.00/hour and they worked an average of 31 hours per week. 64 unique employers hired Secure Jobs participants. Amazon and Walmart employed the highest number of Secure Jobs participants. There were 22 clients who completed 6 different types of training -ESOL and CNA were the two top highest completed. 62% of Secure Jobs participants had some kind of employment history upon enrollment and 7% were employed upon enrollment. A hallmark of the Secure Jobs program is the access to flexible funding to address challenges and barriers to work, training, and housing stability. In FY24, \$1,099,895.00, or 24% of the overall program budget, was spent on client needs using flexible funding. ESOL in house and online programs, transportation assistance, work attire, childcare, and nutritional assistance were the top 5 uses of these barrier busting funds.

In the first two quarters of FY25, 453 participants statewide have been enrolled in the eight different Secure Jobs programs:

- 35% are currently employed with an average wage of \$19.32 per hour, a 7% increase from \$18.08 per hour in FY24.



DTA WORKS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The DTA Works Internship Program is a work-ready program funded for TAFDC recipients. DTA Works provides TAFDC recipients with the opportunity to acquire or develop skills necessary to re-enter the workforce. Interns are placed at a variety of locations including DTA offices, partner state agencies, and non-profit community-based organizations where they receive on-the-job training and mentorship. Interns work with a mentor and program coordinators to identify barriers that may be interfering with their economic mobility. Once identified, the intern and coordinator create specific goals to overcome any barriers and support the intern on their path to economic mobility.

Interns may participate for up to 36 weeks with the option to extend for an additional 12 weeks to support their transition to work. They receive a monthly education and training stipend to support their participation. The monthly stipend is in addition to their TAFDC benefits and does not impact those benefits.

DTA Works is centered on public-private sector partnerships that provide meaningful internship tracks that lead to employment in high demand labor markets. DTA Works has previously partnered with Mass General Brigham and Project Hope for the Health Administration Services Training (HAST.) which included 6 weeks of health administration training through Project Hope and 3-6 months of internship at Mass General Brigham sites. 4 cohorts of the HAST program were completed by April of 2023. In FY21, DTA Works partnered with Holyoke Community College,

Springfield Public Schools, Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals, and Springfield WORKS to develop a new paraeducator training class and internship track. Interns receive five weeks of job readiness training followed by two weeks of paraeducator specific training, taught by Holyoke Community College and Springfield Public School employees. Upon completion of training, participants enter an internship within the Springfield Public Schools to practice the competencies that were learned during the training. Springfield Public Schools has committed to employing interns who excel. Sites have expanded to the Ware and Orange areas and interns have been hired in all site locations as well as Holyoke, Revere, Greenfield and West Hartford, CT.

DTA began a partnership with Per Scholas in FY24 to provide sustainable career pathways into the IT sector. The track includes a 15-week training and certification support provided by Per Scholas and a 12-week internship through the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security while DTA Works provides wrap-around support to track participants. Since the FY24 launch, six participants have completed the track with two obtaining IT employment opportunities. Two participants are currently in internships, and a new cohort is set to begin in April.

DTA Works continues to remain flexible with its placement opportunities, offering in-person, virtual and hybrid placements. Many interns are placed at MassHire Centers, and interns are regularly placed in all DTA local offices.

In FY20, DTA Works introduced a new program component, Women’s Money Matters (previously known as Budget Buddies, Inc.) a non-profit organization focused on empowering women with low incomes to navigate their financial goals confidently. Women’s Money Matters provides coaching to ensure interns are better prepared to manage and plan for financial cliffs as they transition from benefits to the workforce. Participants report having paid down debt, improving credit scores, accessing less expensive routes to higher education, and starting businesses.

DTA Works Enrollments & Outcomes			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Post-Internship Employment	Performance Rate
FY2021	17	9	53%
FY2022	50	16	32%
FY2023	55	32	58%
FY2024	54	23	43%

YOUNG PARENTS PROGRAM

The Young Parents Program serves young parents, ages 14 through 24, who are receiving TAFDC or are the non-custodial parent of a child receiving TAFDC. YPP is a year-round, full-time program that focuses on education to career pathways as the primary goal for young parents. The theory of change for YPP is that a two-generation approach helps both generations make progress

together and provides interventions that can break the cycle of multi-generation poverty.³ YPP supports positive outcomes across three domains; Education and Career; Life and Personal; Parenting and Family.

Through YPP, DTA seeks to:

- Empower parents to pursue a path to economic mobility through education pathways and job readiness, while establishing support networks that allow parents to successfully access and maintain active benefits,
- Actively engage participants to develop the skills necessary to advocate and care for their children so that ultimately the children in this program are safe, healthy, and thriving and,
- Provide a sense of hope and aspiration to empower families to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty through sustained school and community involvement and engagement with the program.

The 2-Gen approach of YPP recognizes that outcomes for parents and children are intertwined and cannot develop independently of one another. Research has documented the impact of a parent’s education, economic stability, and overall health on a child’s trajectory. Similarly, children’s education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents. By promoting education and supports for children along with tools to improve parents’ economic situations, outcomes for both the parent and child can improve.

Many YPP providers continue to provide a hybrid model of learning, where participants can attend school and training both virtually and in-person. DTA continues to allow flexibility in the funding structure of YPP in milestone achievement in the Life and Personal and Parenting and Family pillars of the Education to Career Pathway Assessment.

This flexibility recognizes providers’ continued support and commitment to our young families, even if the young parent’s current progress is not in the education or career pillar. Barriers such as childcare and transportation have become even more pronounced for young parents, and the flexibility allows providers to financially support and celebrate achievements such as enrollment into and the completion of parenting courses, increased financial literacy capacity, and obtaining driver’s licenses. The accomplishment of these outcomes leads to an increase in sustained economic mobility for young parents and their families.

YPP Program Enrollments & Outcomes			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Outcomes Achieved	Utilization
FY2021	608	374	62%
FY2022	571	594	96%
FY2023	581	594	98%

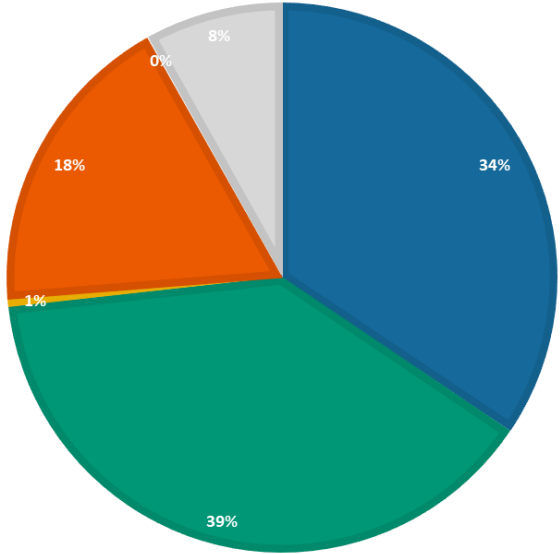
³ “Two-Generation Playbook” Ascend, The Aspen Institute (ascend.aspendinstitute.org)

FY2024	547	621	114%
--------	-----	-----	------

*Percentages higher than 100% represent a higher actual outcome amount than the original outcome goal outlined in contracts.

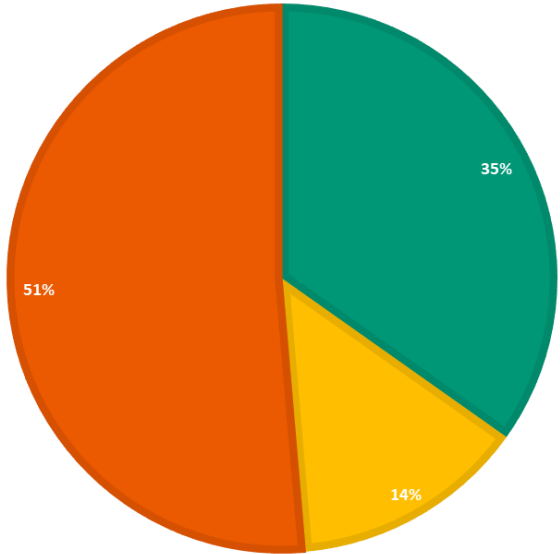
YPP ENROLLMENT TYPES

■ Carryover Unpaid ■ New Enrollment Paid ■ New Enrollment Unpaid ■ Reenrollment Paid ■ Renrollment Unpaid ■ Blank

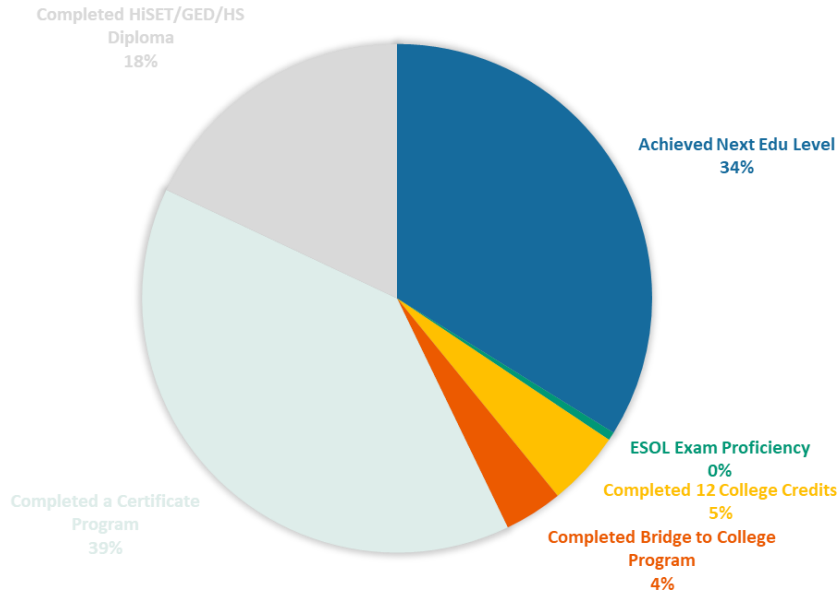


YPP OUTCOME TYPES

■ Outcome Type ■ Life & Personal ■ Parenting & Family ■ Education & Training



YPP EDUCATION & TRAINING OUTCOMES



YPP Success Story

Jeremy is a 21-year-old from Worcester, Massachusetts. He and his partner, Jasantea, have a 5-month-old son named Jordani. Jeremy was referred to Training Resources of America, Inc. (TRA) by the local Department of Transitional Assistance office, and he enrolled in their Young Parent Program (YPP) in November of 2024.

He quickly developed an interest in the YouthBuild Worcester program and became co-enrolled in December 2024. Like YPP, the YouthBuild Worcester program focuses on HiSET preparation but also features carpentry training and pre-apprentice certification.

Jeremy has been very diligent in accomplishing all of his YPP and YouthBuild Worcester tasks. He completed his OSHA-10 certificate and began a rotating schedule of classroom and worksite activities. He took part in a community service project at CENTRO, a community center in Worcester that serves the Latino population. There, Jeremy helped to repair some steps and a wheelchair ramp, along with constructing a safety railing for the entrance to CENTRO's food pantry.

He has been tirelessly working toward completing his HiSET certification, having passed three of the five required exams to achieve his high school equivalency. He also participated in and won first place in a debate club at TRA.

Jeremy is very well-liked by his classmates and staff from both the Young Parents Program and YouthBuild Worcester. He is a remarkable young man who has his sights set on greatness.

THE WORK PARTICIPANT PROGRAM

DTA is an essential partner in Massachusetts' implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA seeks to integrate the State's workforce systems to better serve employers and jobseekers. Signed into law in 2014, WIOA reauthorized the nation's employment, training, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs for the first time in 16 years. WIOA's emphasis is on targeting low-income adults and youth with limited training and skills as well as individuals with disabilities to help them overcome barriers to economic success.

Since the passage of WIOA, DTA has worked closely with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) to implement a new, more integrated system of workforce development for DTA clients and other priority populations with significant barriers to work. The aim of this collaboration is to:

- Develop meaningful pathways to work and economic mobility for low-income, disabled and chronically un/underemployed individuals/families, and
- Ensure that DTA clients and families with significant barriers can access the workforce system with the support needed to attain and sustain employment.

Through this partnership, both TAFDC and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) clients can access additional employment supports through the network of MassHire Career Centers with EOLWD. Located throughout Massachusetts, each MassHire Career Center offers services to DTA clients through the Work Participant Program (WPP). Through WPP, clients receive access to individualized career counseling and guidance, workshops, job fairs, employer recruitment, and access to free resources to assist with their job search and applications.

In FY24, DTA continued to work in partnership with the network of MassHire Centers to conduct strategic outreach to shared clients to promote new enrollment and align employment service delivery. These efforts have resulted in 935 new enrollments into WPP in FY24, with 291 achieving successful employment outcomes with 151 unique employers and 122 participants entering 88 different workforce trainings. The FY24 average wage for WPP placements was \$19.39 and the average hours per week was 33.

EMPOWERING TO EMPLOY

Empowering to Employ is a partnership between DTA and MassAbility (formerly the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission) that maximizes employment opportunities for workforce engagement for TAFDC families and clients with disabilities. This initiative was launched on July 1, 2018, with a shared commitment to establish an integrated employment model for individuals with disabilities receiving TAFDC leading to sustained employment, economic independence, and family stability.

DTA and MassAbility use a jointly funded model of client engagement and intensive co-case management to provide individualized and meaningful services with the goal to:

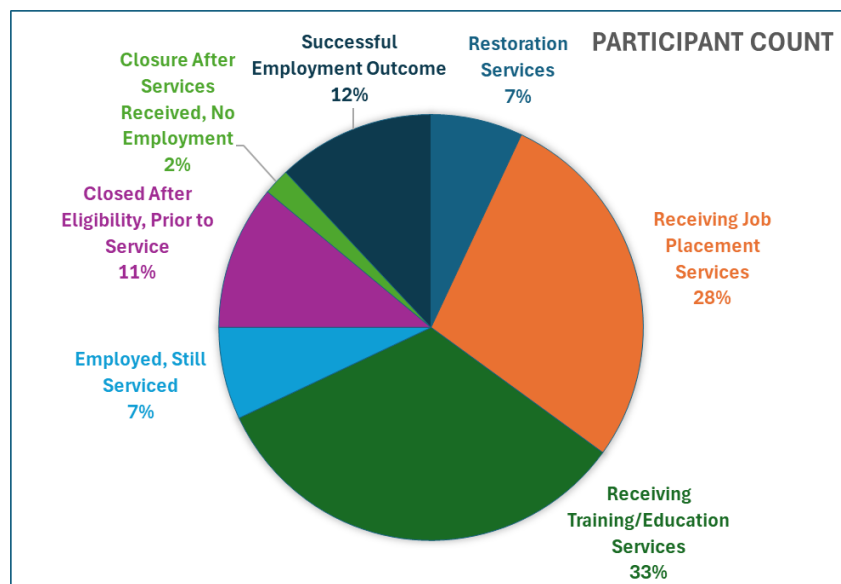
- Shift the paradigm from *exemption* due to a disability to individualized vocational *supports* needed for employment,
- Work in partnership with local teams to identify “best practices” for improved employment-related outcomes for clients with disabilities and their families,
- Engage and sustain TAFDC clients in meaningful employment-related activities that lead to jobs in high demand industries,
- Develop and “test” an intensive co-case management model to promote, engage, and support clients on their path to economic stability.

Although DTA clients have always had access to MassAbility services, this initiative streamlines the enrollment process and allows DTA to take a targeted approach to connecting potential participants. Both agencies have been committed to learning each other’s services, developing strategies to blend agency strengths, and creating a process to meet the needs of individuals and families, with the goal of connecting participants to the workforce.

In FY21, the ISA provided funding for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Job Placement Specialists in five designated DTA office locations: Quincy, Lawrence, Brockton, North Shore (located in Salem), and Fitchburg. Through the MassAbility technology initiative, jobseekers are provided with the technology necessary to fully participate in Empowering to Employ.

Since FY22, new opportunities to increase referrals to the program have been explored, such as using DTA disability determination data, and expanding the referral networks to include a broader range of stakeholders.

During FY24, the Empowering to Employ Program received 234 new referrals, and ended the year with 141 active clients in the program. Further, 57 clients in the ETE program were placed, and 51 achieved successful outcomes which equates to an 89% employment/success rate for those clients who exited the program in FY2024.



EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED SUPPORTS

Eligible TAFDC clients participating in approved work-related activities, inclusive of Pathways to Work programs, continue to have access to childcare referrals, transportation benefits of \$80 per month, learning disability screening and assessments, 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 also receive 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 (TBA) SNAP benefits, which provides additional nutritional support as participants transition to work.

DTA provides Transitional Support Services (TSS) to support employment retention and prevent the need to return to TAFDC for clients whose case closed due to earnings. TSS includes Work Related Expense and Transportation stipends which begin when a case has been closed for 30 days. TSS stipends are available for a period of four months, in amounts that decrease over the TSS period. The Work-Related Expense stipend is \$200 in the first month, decreasing by \$50 over the next three months, ending in a \$50 stipend in the fourth month. The Transportation stipend is \$80 in the first month, decreasing by \$20 over the next three months, ending in a \$20 stipend in month four. These small, but meaningful, supports help to mitigate the “cliff effect” many clients face when transitioning off TAFDC and assist families in achieving their economic and career goals.

CONCLUSION

As the Commonwealth continues to evaluate the changes, challenges, and innovations in the state’s current workforce and labor market, DTA is committed to increasing access and opportunity to participate in training and employment opportunities for the 1 in 6 Massachusetts residents receiving assistance. Through partnership 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.