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Governor

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Lieutenant Governor



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Secretary

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Acting Commissioner

Annual Department of Transitional Assistance Organizational Report

November 2022



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OVERVIEW

Section 10 of Chapter 18 of the Massachusetts General Laws requires the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to submit a report annually that contains a description of the organization of the department and a review of the work of the agency.

AGENCY 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 supports.

PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED

DTA administers four primary assistance programs as well as employment and training programs that receive both state and federal funding, which aim to meet the agency's mission. In addition to administering these programs, DTA provides rigorous oversight and special attention to eligibility standards and compliance for each program. DTA uses advanced analytics and a variety of fraud detection practices to promote programmatic integrity.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

SNAP benefits help families supplement their food budgets to afford nutritious food. Residents of the Commonwealth who participate in SNAP include families with children, older adults, and persons with disabilities. While administered by DTA, SNAP benefits are 100% federally funded and regulated. The Commonwealth is responsible for 50% of the costs to administer the program.

Beyond the core responsibilities in administering the SNAP program, DTA works alongside a variety of partners contributing to the mission of food security in the Commonwealth.

PANDEMIC EBT (P-EBT)

P-EBT is a federal child nutrition program created in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act during the public health emergency to promote increased food security for students and children who miss school or cannot attend child care due to COVID-19. While administered by DTA and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), P-EBT benefits are 100% federally funded and regulated.

TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN (TAFDC)

TAFDC is a state and federally funded program that provides financial assistance and employment programming 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. Participants receive child care and transportation assistance to support their engagement in education, training, or other employment related activities. Certain TAFDC participants are required to perform a work-related activity as a condition of eligibility.

EMERGENCY AID TO THE ELDERLY, DISABLED, AND CHILDREN (EAEDC)

EAEDC is a state funded program, which provides financial assistance to certain adults who are elderly or disabled, as well as children. Those eligible for EAEDC include people over 65 who are waiting for Supplemental Security Income payments to begin, individuals unable to work due to a physical or mental incapacity, and individuals who are participating in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission program.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) AND STATE SUPPLEMENTAL PAYMENTS (SSP)

The SSI program is a federal program that provides cash assistance to older adults, persons with disabilities, and the blind. Massachusetts provides optional state-funded payments designed to supplement these funds. Currently, the University of Massachusetts Medical School administers SSP payments for DTA.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROGRAMS (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 clients to prepare for and connect with career pathways and resolve barriers for sustained employment. DTA case managers connect clients to employment and training programs by referring them to appropriate activities based on their skill level and economic mobility goals. DTA also administers the SNAP Path to Work program, a partnership between federal, state, and local partners that provides the state's SNAP clients with the skills, training, experience, education, and employment supports needed to find and keep good paying jobs.

AGENCY STAFFING

As of October 2022, DTA employs approximately 1,624 employees across the Commonwealth in the areas of programs, policy, and management. DTA staff have a range of responsibilities from benefit eligibility, employment and training assistance, program integrity, legal, finance, policy development, and fair hearings. More than 80% of the department's active employees (1,306 employees), are deployed in one of our 20 local transitional assistance offices across the Commonwealth.

Currently, the Department's SNAP workforce, serving the largest caseload of the agency's primary programs, consists of 630 employees, including 495 caseworkers and 135 supervisors.

The Department's economic assistance workforce includes 278 DTA staff members serving clients who receive TAFDC and EAEDC, including 106 supervisors.

In addition to DTA's case management workforce, our local transitional assistance offices are staffed by 57 employees who serve in managerial roles, provide administrative assistance and interpreter services, or offer intensive, targeted client supports.

The Department is in the process of hiring staff across all programs, including SNAP case workers, TAFDC and EAEDC case workers, Self Sufficiency Specialists and Full Engagement Workers. As part of the agency's diversity, equity, and inclusion work, DTA has been actively recruiting diverse candidates to fill vacancies in both management and front-line roles to ensure the agency reflects

the families and communities the Department serves across Massachusetts. The agency's efforts have included implementing revised hiring practices, launching an agency-wide mentorship program, and supporting the creation of employee-led affinity groups, known as employee resource groups (ERGs), to identify and support professional development and career advancement opportunities for specific employee populations.

ORGANIZATION OF DTA

DTA is organized into 20 local transitional assistance offices and one central office. Transitional assistance offices are responsible for providing direct services to clients and those seeking assistance throughout the Commonwealth. The agency's central office houses the Office of the Commissioner, senior management, policy, quality management, program integrity, operations, legal, finance and other administrative units.

Included in this report is an organizational chart of DTA's central office and a leadership chart of the Department's 20 local transitional assistance offices.

DTA OPERATIONAL UPDATE

DTA continues to leverage technological enhancements in conjunction with federal flexibilities and increased federal pandemic-related supports to maintain a high level of customer service for individuals and families and promote economic stability.

While DTA offices are open across the state for in-person services, the majority of DTA clients are continuing to choose to do business with the Department through its enhanced online and telephonic platforms. The agency continues to expand its digital services. For example, as of June 2022 our client-facing web-portal, DTA Connect, is now available in Haitian Creole and clients can also reschedule their appointments with DTA via DTA Connect. Virtual meetings are now an option for clients who want or need a face-to-face interaction but are not able to come into an office. This is a great option for clients who rely on closed captions or when the meeting includes multiple people. On July 28, the Administration announced that residents can now easily initiate a SNAP application when applying for or renewing their MassHealth benefits online. These updates will improve the customer experience by streamlining the process to apply for SNAP benefits while residents are already submitting information needed to determine their healthcare eligibility.

This past year, DTA launched several new and expanded efforts in our local offices to improve accessibility and an inclusive experience. In July 2022, the agency rolled out a client-facing Pictorial Communication Board in all local offices to support clients who are Deaf, hard of hearing, nonverbal or have limited verbal or English proficiency. These boards include images and descriptive words in eight languages to help determine the primary reason for a client's visit. Further, DTA recently procured a new interpreter services vendor, through which we have expanded Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) access to all local DTA offices. VRI is an auxiliary aid that provides video remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter services.

Families receiving SNAP benefits continue to receive additional federal SNAP supplemental payments each month, initially authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, to bring families' benefits up to at least the maximum monthly amount for their household size.

Throughout the 2021-2022 school year and summer, the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program provided additional direct food assistance to the families of more than 500,000 children.

DTA continues to play a key role in the Baker-Polito Administration's work to promote food security and a strong local food system and economy. Over the summer, the Administration announced over 100 new local Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) farm vendors. The majority of new vendors are small-scale farmers who live in, or have close ties to, the communities they serve, while others are agricultural vendors with demonstrated capacity to serve high-need communities. The Administration also opened a Notice of Opportunity to strategically onboard restaurants and food trucks for the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) pilot. Under federal rules, the RMP allows individuals experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities and older adults (aged 60+) to use their SNAP benefits at select, participating restaurants and food trucks. The Department anticipates this program will be available for clients in 2023. Further, DTA continues to participate in a monthly cross-Secretariat workgroup to develop action steps that advance current food security priorities, key issues to be addressed/resolved, cross system solutions and resources needed, and to identify and support cross-system strategies to promote food security and access.

In alignment with the Administration's emphasis on economic recovery, DTA, in partnership with Early Education and Care (EEC), introduced eligibility for parents and caregivers who participate in an approved SNAP Path to Work activity to qualify for child care through DTA. The DTA Works Internship Program continues to expand partnerships in high-demand careers for clients. DTA Works Health Administrative Services Training, a collaboration with Mass General Brigham and Project Hope to provide training, internship, and employment, began its fourth cohort in September 2022. DTA's JVS Pharmacy Tech training has expanded into the Greater Springfield region where MassHire Springfield funds the training using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) dollars, and DTA clients are dually enrolled into DTA Works and MassHire Springfield. Further, DTA Works partnered with Holyoke Community College and Springfield, Chicopee and Greenfield Public Schools to provide Paraeducator training and internship opportunities.

DTA is committed to providing the individuals and families we serve with safe, reliable, and equitable access to all of the Department's critical supports and services. DTA also prioritizes a high level of customer service in local offices and through its remote access points. The pandemic has undoubtedly had lasting effects on the way people do business with the Department. In the months ahead, DTA will continue to assess client need in order to respond flexibly and with tools and services that enable families to do business with the Department at a time and in a manner that works best for them.

DTA ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Acting Commissioner

Mary Sheehan

Agency Chief Information Officer
Anand Selvaraj

Diversity & Equity Manager
Jennifer Barthelemy

Chief of Staff
Kajal
Chattopadhyay

**Chief Operating
Officer**
Mary Sheehan

**Deputy
Commissioner for
Field Operations**
Frantz Monestime

**Deputy
Commissioner for
Policy and
Programs**
Michael Cole

General Counsel
Koren Christensen

**Director of
External Affairs**
Vacant

**Chief Financial
Officer**
Rachel Goldstein

**Associate
Commissioner for
Change
Management**
Sarah Stuart

**Associate
Commissioner of
Food Security &
Nutrition**
Brittany Mangini

**Assistant
Commissioner for
Compliance**
Anne O'Sullivan

**Communications
Director**
Alana Davidson

Human Resources
Hiring in process

**Northern
Regional Director**
Leonard Boyle

**Associate
Commissioner of
Family & Economic
Assistance**
Megan Nicholls

**Director of
Strategy & Project
Management**
Rouise Thomson

Ombuds Director
Sara Craven

**Director of
Operations**
Michael Capone

**Eastern Regional
Director**
Sean Beasley

**Associate
Commissioner of
Employment &
Training Programs**
Erin Quinn

**Deputy Associate
Commissioner of
Quality
Management**
Birabwa Kajubi

**Administrative
Unit Manager**
Mary Skahen

**Internal Controls
Director**
Lily Kuo

**Southern Regional
Director**
Sandra Pellicane

**Analytics
Manager**
Jenkins Macedo

**Research
Manager**
Vacant

Hearings Director
Colin Connor

**Central Regional
Director**
Karyn Gonzalez

**Western Regional
Director**
Melissa
K.Pietraszkiewicz

Telework Director
Maria Deberadinis

TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE LEADERSHIP CHART

Central Region	Eastern Region	Northern Region	Southern Region	Western Region
Fitchburg Center Jennifer Tait	Brockton Sarah Maloney	Chelsea Center Lucia Tramontozzi	Fall River Melissa Zeitz	Greenfield Zoy Soulis
Framingham Brian LaFleche	Nubian Square Kristen Webster	Lawrence Elaine DeVito	Hyannis Wendy Buttrick	Holyoke Joanne Lacour
Southbridge Joyce Clemence	Quincy <i>Hiring in process</i>	Lowell George Castro	New Bedford Nelson Abreu	Pittsfield Deni Evans
Worcester Lori Jacques-Basiner		Malden Martine Cesar	Taunton Erin Donnelly	Springfield Center Linda Krok
		North Shore Sylvia Hosman		