

Department of Transitional Assistance



January 2024 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

January 2024 SSA COLA

Every year in January, the Social Security Administration (SSA) implements a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for RSDI and SSI recipients. This COLA can affect TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP benefits. This year, the SSA COLA will increase RSDI and SSI income by 3.2 percent. As a reminder, an increase in income generally decreases DTA benefits. Everyone impacted by this change will receive a notice informing them of their new benefit amount.

Maximizing Tax Credits for Households with Children

At the beginning of each year the Department sends a mailing along with text and email notifications to certain TAFDC and SNAP families to inform them about Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)/ Massachusetts Earned Income Tax (EIC) to ensure they get the most out of their 2023 taxes. The mailing also includes information on accessing subsidized child care. This year DTA has expanded the mailing to include TAFDC families who closed within the last two years as they are now eligible for Transitional Child Care referrals through DTA.

Federal Funding for SNAP Benefits Update

We are working with federal partners to monitor the ongoing federal budget process and how it impacts client benefits. DTA has received confirmation from USDA FNS that regardless of what happens in Congress, that funding for SNAP benefits is confirmed through the end of February.

State-Funded SNAP Supplement for Certain Noncitizens

DTA is developing a new State-Funded SNAP Supplement that will support certain noncitizens who do not currently qualify for federal SNAP benefits. The Department is working to implement the program as soon as possible, and early 2024 is our goal to have all changes necessary in place. The benefit calculation and eligibility determination are complex due to the interplay of citizenship rules and differing state and federal funding sources, all of which requires significant technical systems and policy work to mobilize.

If someone wants to apply for SNAP they should apply regardless of their current immigration status. The best way to apply for SNAP at this time is through DTA Connect web or mobile app. We recommend that partner organizations work with clients who are applying through or with you to submit as complete an application as possible. This includes providing as much USCIS documentation as possible. Once an application is received, they will go through the normal interview process. All applicants who were/are denied for federal benefits on or after 12/4/23 but are eligible for the state-funded SNAP supplement, will be informed of such, and issued payments, after all changes are in place in early 2024.

State Replacement SNAP Plan

An additional \$1M in state funding was allocated to DTA to continue to make replacement funding available for clients who had their benefits stolen but are ineligible to receive a replacement in full using federal funds. Replacement using this new funding has already begun.

This funding will cover benefits stolen between October 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024. For more information on replacement benefits and how to file a claim please visit [our website here](#).

Assistance Line

The DTA Assistance Line continues to experience a high volume of callers. We are asking our partners to promote the self-service options for clients as much as possible for the most expedited service. Using DTA Connect online and the mobile application, a client can submit an application, check their cases status, check their balance, and more. We also encourage clients to work with contracted SNAP outreach partners, which are approved community-based organizations, that are able to help clients apply for and maintain their SNAP benefits. A [list of partners](#) can be found online.

If you hear from DTA clients who are getting dropped from call with DTA when they have a scheduled interview, please encourage them to contact our Ombuds Unit at (617) 348-5354.

Staffing Updates

This month 100 new DTA employees have begun their 3-month training program, and we are hiring for a 200 person April training class as well. While we do not expect these two hiring classes to fix all the ongoing staffing issues, we will continue to grow our staff to better support clients as they conduct business with the department.

We are hiring people to fill several positions at DTA, and we would welcome the support of our partners in sharing these job postings and referring candidates that would make a difference in the lives of clients. **Join us!** The agency's open job opportunities can be found on [MassCareers](#).