



February 2021 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

Governor's FY22 Budget Proposal

Governor Baker's Fiscal year 2022 budget proposal for the Commonwealth was released on Wednesday, January 27, 2021. The \$45.6 billion budget funds DTA, in total, at \$728.6 million for FY22. The Governor's filing letter, budget message, and detailed account information, including DTA funding, can be found [here](#).

New Employment Services Website

DTA has updated and streamlined our Mass.gov website content to better connect SNAP-only and TAFDC clients with our employment and training programs, child care and transportation supports, and virtual MassHire job fairs. Check it out at [Mass.gov/dta-pathways-to-work](https://www.mass.gov/dta-pathways-to-work).

Homeless Liaison Role

Last week, the Department designated a Homeless Liaison in each of its 21 TAOs. This role was created as a part of DTA's response to COVID-19 and in recognition of the unique challenges that families and individuals who are experiencing housing insecurity may face during this time. Like SNAP Community Liaisons, each of the Homeless Liaisons will be focused on working with partners at local shelters, housing programs, and community-based organizations to serve shared clients and applicants who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability in order to expand points of access to the Department for individuals and families. The Department is in the process of creating a contact sheet for the TAO's Homeless Liaisons that will be available for use by stakeholders and community partners.

SNAP 15% Increase

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, increased federal maximum and minimum SNAP benefit amounts by 15% from January 2021 through June 2021. This increase is estimated to bring over \$30 million per month of additional funds into our state and local economies. See our [news article](#) on this increase.

Starting February 2, 2021, current SNAP recipients will receive a supplement equal to a 15% increase of their SNAP benefits for the prior month's regular SNAP amount. Those who already get the SNAP emergency allotments the first week of each month will see the 15% increase payments included with that payment. Those currently not eligible for the emergency allotments will get this as a standalone payment.

Food Insecurity Executive Order Signed on 1/22/21

As part of an Executive Order aimed at providing economic relief to families, the Biden Administration included three important food insecurity-related provisions, which urge the USDA to:

- Increase P-EBT benefits by up to 15%,
- Consider issuing new guidance to increase the reach of monthly emergency SNAP allotments,
- Revisit the Thrifty Food Plan, which serves as the basis for determining SNAP benefit amounts.

DTA is awaiting additional guidance from the USDA and will work quickly to implement programmatic changes that will strengthen supports to families across the Commonwealth.

P-EBT Online Balance Tool

A new tool was released on DTAConnect.com/PEBT to allow families to check the balance of a P-EBT card. To use the tool, parents can visit the “P-EBT Case and Balance Information” page on www.DTAConnect.com/PEBT and enter the number on the front of their child’s P-EBT card. The tool will display the associated case number and balance.

Updated Conduent P-EBT Phone Tree

Conduent is the EBT vendor DTA contracts with. They recently updated their EBT hotline (number on the back of EBT and P-EBT cards - 800-997-2555) to add a separate line for P-EBT families and expand the P-EBT message to 8 languages. Previously, this was part of the same line as SNAP and now there is a specific option for P-EBT PIN information. We hope this makes it easier for households to PIN (activate) their P-EBT card and check their balance.

New SNAP Outreach Partners

Welcome DTA’s 16 new SNAP outreach partners and two returning partners! 12 of our new partners are Councils on Aging in Bedford, Boston, Ipswich, Lakeville, Natick, Needham, North Adams, Norwood, Orange, Pembroke, Salem, Webster and Westford. Brighter Futures Ed Corp, in Athol, provides training and opportunities to members of the community who are trying to gain entry or re-entry into the workforce. Pernet Family Health Service, in Worcester, is a multi-service, small, non-profit works primarily with disadvantaged families, providing them with a range of health and social services.

Welcome back U-ACCESS at UMass Boston that helps students meet their basic needs so they can achieve academic success. Also, Making Opportunity Count in Fitchburg is a community action agency that provides for 30 communities in North Central Massachusetts and is responsible for delivering a variety of services such as child care, education, workforce development, nutrition, health, community and housing support.

For a full list of SNAP Outreach Partners, visit Mass.gov/SNAPoutreachpartners.

DTA/DESE Received Manuel Carballo Governor’s Award for Excellence in Public Service

In January, more than 80 staff from DTA and DESE were awarded a Manuel Carballo Governor’s Award for Excellence in Public Service from Governor Baker during the Commonwealth’s 36th annual Performance Recognition Program (PRP) Award Ceremony. The cross-agency team was recognized for their collaborative approach to operationalizing the brand-new federal program P-EBT to quickly support the families of more than a half million children who were no longer receiving school meals. The Manuel Carballo Governor’s Award for Excellence in Public Service Award is given annually to 10 employees, or groups of employees, who exemplify the highest standards of public service. See the [full list of awardees](#).