



March 2021 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

American Rescue Plan Signed into Law

On March 11th, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 was signed into law. The relief bill includes various provisions aimed at responding to the public health crisis and the associated economic impacts. More information and the full text of the bill can be read at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).

You can stay up to date with any impacts provisions of the bill may have on DTA and the families we serve by visiting mass.gov/DTA/COVID-19.

DTAFinder

We [announced](#) a new tool on March 23rd called DTAFinder.com, which was developed to help clients find open [Healthy Incentives Program \(HIP\)](#) farm vendor locations near them and safe shopping options. DTA Finder is an interactive, mobile-friendly map, available in 5 languages, which allows clients to search for HIP vendors based on geography, hours of operation, and pickup and delivery options.

To help clients and partners learn how to use the tool, tutorial videos in English and Spanish with instructions for using the tool on mobile devices and desktop computers are available on the Department's [YouTube channel](#).

Massachusetts Vaccination Schedule Update

On March 17th, Governor Baker [announced](#) vaccine eligibility dates for remaining residents and certain worker groups. People can find more information and pre-register to book an appointment at a mass vaccination site at mass.gov/COVIDVaccine. Appointments will be offered based on eligibility and available appointments nearby. It is expected that more sites will come online as part of the preregistration process in April.

Timeline for remaining groups:

- March 22nd: Residents 60+ and [certain workers](#)
 - This group includes food, agricultural, and food service workers; food pantry workers and volunteers; and grocery and convenience store workers
- April 5th: Residents 55+ and residents with one certain medical condition
- April 19th: General public ages 16 years of age and older

Public Charge Rule Update

On March 9, 2021 the Federal Government [announced](#) it is going back to the long-standing Public Charge Rules in effect from the 1990s through 2019. This means that Medicaid (MassHealth), public housing, and SNAP do not count as part of the Public Charge determination. Learn more about public charge and how it may impact families [here](#).

P-EBT for Children in SNAP Households Age 0-6

DTA has received federal approval to begin issuing P-EBT benefits for children under the age of 6 in families who receive SNAP. An estimated 96,000 eligible children in Massachusetts under age six will receive their first P-EBT benefits for the next round at the end of March. Families will receive \$136.40 a month for the months of October 2020 – February 2021. In accordance with federal guidance, future monthly benefit amounts will be

determined based on DESE K-12 education learning mode trends, and families will be notified of the benefit amount each month. This expansion is expected to bring more than \$100 million in additional federal dollars for Massachusetts families.

More information about the expansion can be found in DTA's [recent press release](#) and at map-ebt.org.

P-EBT 15% Increase

Following an Executive Order signed by President Biden in January, DTA recently received federal approval to increase P-EBT benefit amounts for all families in the Commonwealth by 15%. This increase will take effect in the March 25th P-EBT issuance. More information and updates about the program can be found at map-ebt.org and families can now [check their balance online](#).

Retroactive P-EBT Benefits

On March 12th, almost 24,000 students received retroactive P-EBT benefits for Spring 2020 and September 2020. Spring students received \$399 and September students received either a remote benefit amount of \$136.40 or a hybrid benefit amount of \$68.20, based on the learning mode reported by the school for that month. Families who received retroactive P-EBT benefits will be receiving written notices from the Department.

JVS Pharmacy Tech Update

DTA launched the Pharmacy Technician Program pilot in February through our [DTA Works Internship Program](#), in collaboration with Jewish Vocational Service (JVS), MassHire Career Centers, and our Pittsfield, Fitchburg, and Framingham local offices. Staff from DTA and our partners are actively recruiting for a cohort set to begin training in May. JVS is providing laptops to clients who need them to participate. To date, there are 6 shared clients set to begin the May training and upon completion of the program, participants will be prepared to pass the National Pharmacy Technician Certification Exam (PTCE), allowing them to obtain higher-paying jobs at hospital wages of \$16-\$22.00 an hour. DTA Works and the MassHire Career Centers continue to explore additional internship and apprenticeship tracks.

#MyMACareers Campaign

DTA has recently begun a social media campaign designed to connect DTA clients with [SNAP Path to Work](#) providers. SNAP Path to Work provides Massachusetts SNAP clients with the skills, training, experience, education, and employment supports needed to find and keep good paying jobs. Over the next few weeks, the Department's [Twitter](#) will highlight the different services providers can offer individuals, including job search, training, and job retention services.

New and Resuming SNAP Path to Work Providers

The following community-based organizations are expected to resume or start providing services under the SNAP Path to Work umbrella in the spring of 2021:

- **Strong U Program, Inc.** (Springfield) will offer job search training and assistance.
- **Breaktime (Boston area)** will offer a 30-week transitional employment and job training program for young people (ages 18-24) who are working to transition out of homelessness.
- **Madison Park Development Corporation** (Roxbury) will offer Train 2 Trades, a new construction workforce training program.
- **STRIVE Boston** (Roxbury) will offer job search training and job retention services.