



November 2020 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

DTA Veteran's Day Staff Appreciation Event

In recognition of Veterans' Day, Commissioner Kershaw is joining the Department's Diversity & Inclusion Council to recognize and thank DTA staff from across the state for their military service and continued public service to the residents of the Commonwealth with the agency.

Over the last few years, DTA has been strongly committed, in partnership with the Department of Veterans' Services, to [combatting veteran food insecurity](#). This initiative has included regional trainings, the creation of a SNAP Veteran's Guide, and bringing on local veterans' service officers on as SNAP outreach partners.

Caseload

DTA continues to see high demand for services and call volume on the assistance line remains high. Compared to the steep increase the Department experienced in August, caseloads have somewhat stabilized. The SNAP caseload saw an increase from 521,319 in September to 525,738 in October, while TAFDC saw a decrease from 29,187 cases to 28,650, and EAEDC from 21,229 to 20,522. DTA continues to process a higher-than-average number of SNAP recertifications due to previously extended certification periods coming due.

Extended SNAP Certification Periods and Waived Interim Reports

The Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021, signed on October 1, 2020, allowed states to take advantage of key administrative flexibilities. DTA has already reinstated waived interviews for SNAP applications and recertifications when clients have submitted all [mandatory verifications](#).

DTA will also be extending SNAP certification periods by six months for SNAP-only households who had not previously had their recertification extended earlier in the year and meet other certain criteria, depending on their certification type. DTA has sent a text message to these impacted households and notices will be sent to these households soon.

Additionally, DTA will be waiving interim reports for SNAP-only households whose interim report is due between November 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Clients who no longer need to submit an interim report will be sent a notice soon.

Nubian Square TAO

In December, the Dudley Square TAO will change its name to Nubian Square to align with the City of Boston's official renaming of the square to honor and reflect the community and character of Roxbury. Clients within this TAO's catchment area will be notified next month of the change.

Plymouth TAO Closure

Effective Thursday, December 31, 2020, DTA's Plymouth TAO will be closed. This office historically has had a low caseload and number of in-person visits. Over the past eight months, DTA has built on its strong self-service options to enhance the way clients and applicants can do business with us remotely

and with the office lease expiring, it was decided to close the office. The positions of all current DTA staff in that office will be unaffected by the closure and will all be transferring to a nearby office. The agency also recognizes that in-person meetings may be helpful to best serve some of the families we work with when it is safe to do so. DTA is committed to retaining a physical presence in the area to allow residents of Plymouth and nearby communities to schedule in-person appointments with DTA staff when needed at sister agency locations nearby.

HIP Expansion

Several new HIP vendors are receiving funding in the most recent round of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program to purchase new equipment to process SNAP and HIP benefits. Two of these new HIP vendors receiving funding include **Back Azimuth Farm** in Middleborough and **All Farmers** in West Springfield. **Black Azimuth Farm** is a veteran-owned farm that sells at farmers' markets and donates unsold products to their local food pantry. As a new HIP vendor, they will strive to create new farmers market opportunities at VA hospitals in line with the DTA's veteran outreach initiative. **All Farmers** will bring HIP to West Springfield for the first time. The organization represents a broad network of refugee and immigrant farmers who will be selling to their own community members and are able to service clients in Nepali, Maai Maai, and Kiswahili. [Learn about the status of our new HIP vendors.](#)

New SNAP Outreach Partners

In October, DTA brought on 11 new outreach partners, most of which are local councils on aging. Other new partners include the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Homeless Prevention Council, and Lamour Community Health Institute's SNAP Program.

DTA contracts with more than 90 organizations across the state to help families apply for and maintain their SNAP benefits, such as schools, veteran service officers, health clinics, nonprofits and senior centers. For a list of all partners, visit: [Mass.gov/SNAPOutreachPartners](https://www.mass.gov/SNAPOutreachPartners).

Emergency Allotment Supplemental Benefits

The federal state of emergency was extended by the Federal Health and Human Services agency to January 21, 2021. This enables DTA to continue to issue the emergency allotment supplements that were authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. This provision brings every SNAP household up to the maximum benefit amount for their household size. DTA issued the October emergency allotment supplements on November 3, 2020.

DTA is currently awaiting federal approval to issue the emergency supplements to clients for November, which would be issued in early December.

P-EBT Extension

Through the *Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021*, the federal government has extended Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) through the 2020-2021 school year. The federal government also made changes to expand the program and to how it will be administered. DTA is awaiting specific guidance from USDA related to these changes and will post any updates to the program on [mass.gov/P-EBT](https://www.mass.gov/P-EBT) and [MAP-EBT.org](https://www.map-ebt.org).