



October 2022 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

DTA Benefit Increases

Approximately 550,000 Massachusetts households started to see an increase in their SNAP benefits with their October 2022 issuance. Due to this annual cost of living adjustment, SNAP benefits increased 12%, with Commonwealth households receiving an average monthly increase of \$25-\$30. Also recently, DTA requested and received approval from the federal government to adjust heating costs used to determine SNAP benefit amounts, reflecting the regional rise in the cost of utilities. This change was also reflected in the SNAP benefit amount increases starting in October. Read more in our press release in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). [SNAP outreach flyers are available in 14 languages with the new SNAP amounts.](#)

The Fiscal Year 2023 budget increased TAFDC and EAEDC monthly benefit amounts by 10%. Residents started to see this increase with their October 2022 benefits.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. DTA has a team of Domestic Violence Specialists that cover every DTA Office. Domestic Violence Specialists can help with support, safety planning, and referrals to local resources. They work with all DTA programs and the Emergency Assistance Shelter program at DHCD and can assist residents in navigating DTA benefits, safely choosing child support options, and if needed, they can help find safe housing options. Help share information about DTA's DV services using our [new video in American Sign Language](#). [Find a local DTA office DV specialist.](#)

Massachusetts Disability Employment Awareness Month

Governor Baker has declared October as Massachusetts Disability Employment Awareness Month as part of the Administration's ongoing commitment to improving and expanding inclusive access to economic opportunity across the Commonwealth. Initiatives during the month include a "Count Me In" campaign encouraging state employees to self-identify, and the launch of NextGen Careers – a new program to help young adults ages 18-30 with disabilities to explore the world of work. [Learn more in our press release.](#)

Child Care Pandemic EBT

P-EBT funds for infants and children ages 0-5 were available on September 25th for December 2021 through February 2022 child care days. Families received \$42 a month per eligible child. The amount is based on the average decrease in child care meals provided during these months compared to before the pandemic. Learn more at [Map-EBT.org](#).

Ask MA chatbot, Mass.gov's new virtual assistant

The State's Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) and DTA recently expanded a chatbot pilot to include Mass.gov SNAP web pages. Website visitors are able to ask the chatbot questions and be directed to the right web pages to find information. Analysis of the data over time will be used to inform updates to responses, number of pages where you can find the chatbot and other features to use.

Expanding Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Access

DTA recently procured a new language line vendor, Lionbridge. Through this new vendor, DTA has expanded Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) access from five to all local DTA offices. VRI is an auxiliary aid that provides video remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter services.

Accessibility Information on Local Office Pages

To help improve residents' knowledge of features available at a local office, DTA has updated our [mass.gov local office pages](https://www.mass.gov/local-office-pages) to include accessibility information. This new section includes information on the eight-language client-facing pictorial communication board, access to a [Client Assistant Coordinator](#) (CAC), availability of clear masks, and that VRI technology is available as well as the ability to request an ASL interpreter or CART provider.

Staff Training Starting

DTA's fall 2022 classes started on September 19, 2022, which included 91 newly hired and promoted SNAP and economic assistance staff. The agency is welcoming 42 trainees to the SNAP training and 49 economic assistance trainees to the hybrid training, which will consist of a SNAP overview and EAEDC and TAFDC training.

New SNAP Outreach Partners

This October, DTA welcomed four new SNAP outreach partners: Immigrant Family Services Institute, Inc., Community Action, Inc., City of Haverhill, and Town of Deerfield. DTA has over 100 SNAP outreach partners across the state. Learn more about the program at <https://www.mass.gov/snap-outreach>.

New SNAP Online Retailers

The Administration recently announced the addition of more Massachusetts-based retailers to the Commonwealth's SNAP Online Purchasing Program: Shaw's and Star Market ([English](#), [Spanish](#) press release). For more information on the state's program, visit www.Mass.gov/SNAPOnline.

SNAP Restaurant Meals Program Application Extension

The Baker-Polito Administration opened a Notice of Opportunity (NOO) 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/food trucks. [The application](#) deadline for businesses has been extended from September 30, 2022 to October 31, 2022.