TAFDC: Massachusetts’ Cash Assistance Program for Families
Agenda

- Overview of TAFDC Program
- **10 minute break**
- Child Care
- *Lunch break from 11:45-12:30*
- TAFDC – Practical Tips
- Immigrant Eligibility
- Opportunities for Reform

Please ask your questions as they arise, we will monitor the online chat for virtual participants
Sources for Information

Advocacy Guides, www.masslegalservices.org
DTA Regulations, www.mass.gov/dta
Mass. Legal Services, www.masslegalservices.org
Local legal services program
Advocacy community
Opportunities for Reform

TAFDC BASIC BENEFITS TRAINING
DECEMBER 2023
Systemic challenges in TAFDC & related programs

➢ Low monthly benefit levels
➢ Barriers to immigrant eligibility
➢ Child support requirements discourage applicants
➢ Other issues
   ▪ Improper terminations or denials
   ▪ Challenges contacting DTA
Low monthly benefit levels

TAFDC Keeps a Family of 3 Below 50% of the Poverty Line

- Projected 2023 Poverty Level: $2,075
- Half of projected 2023 Poverty Level: $1,037
- TAFDC Grant with Oct. 2022 Increase: $783

Deep Poverty

WWW.LIFTOURKIDSMA.ORG
Campaign to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty

➢ State legislative campaign to increase cash assistance annually until grants reach 50% of federal poverty level

➢ Lead sponsors in state legislature:
  ▪ Representative Marjorie Decker (H. 144)
  ▪ Senator Sal DiDomenico (S. 75)

➢ 160 coalition members across MA

➢ Achieved four consecutive increases to cash assistance in state budget

WWW.LIFTOURKIDSMA.ORG
Recent Victories in Raising TAFDC Grants

Maximum monthly cash assistance for family of 3

- July 2000- Dec 2020: $593
- Jan 2021-June 2021: $652
- July 2021-Sept 2022: $712
- Oct. 2022-March 2024: $783
- April 2024: $861

20 years with no increase!
More work to do – join Lift Our Kids!

➢ High inflation undercuts recent grant increases
➢ Coalition fighting for annual cost of living adjustments so benefits keep up with inflation

For more information, contact:

Deborah Harris, Mass. Law Reform Institute, 617-538-1680 (cell) dharris@mlri.org

Naomi Meyer, Greater Boston Legal Services, 617-603-1621, nmeyer@gbls.org

Follow on social media:

@LiftOurKidsMA
Barriers to immigrant eligibility

➢ Many legally present immigrants who have lived in MA for years - including immigrants with TPS, pending asylum, DACA/Dreamers, Humanitarian Parole, victims of violence - **don’t qualify for critical cash and nutrition benefits**

➢ Why? In 1996, Congress cut core benefits to millions of legally present immigrants across the nation

➢ From 1997 to 2002, the Massachusetts legislature provided state-funded food benefits (SNAP) and cash assistance (TAFDC and EAEDC) to immigrants cut off from federal benefits. Most of those state-funded benefits ended in 2002.
Feeding Our Neighbors Campaign

➢ La Colaborativa & MLRI leading a coalition of over 70 organizations

➢ Introduced new bill in 2023, “An Act establishing basic needs assistance for Massachusetts immigrant residents”
  ➢ S. 76 (Sen. DiDomenico)

➢ Bill would restore basic food benefits and basic cash benefits for low-income, legally present immigrants living in Massachusetts
Feeding Our Neighbors Campaign

For more info, contact:
Pat Baker, Mass. Law Reform Institute, pbaker@mlri.org

Follow on social media:
@FeedingOurNeighborsMA
Child support requirements discourage applicants

**CHILD SUPPORT POLICIES IN TAFDC**

- Applicants must cooperate with child support enforcement
  - exceptions for DV and other situations
- Custodial parents only receive $50 of child support paid (“pass through”)
- Limits choice for families who do not want to pursue formal child support, many choose not to get cash assistance

**AN ACT TO FURTHER FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD SUPPORT, H. 127, S.70**

- Bill proposes to:
  - increase child support pass-through to 100% of support paid
  - Allow parents to claim good cause for not cooperating with child support when it is not “in the best interests of the child” to give parents more choice
- Contact Betsy Gwin, bgwin@mlri.org, for more info
Stay connected with legal aid and advocacy community

- Help us identify problems and trends
- Seek support on administrative appeals
- Get advice on challenging cases
- Engage with coalitions
- Support clients in speaking out
Sources for Information

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