

TAFDC Basics

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Greater Boston Legal Services

Goals

- Overview
 - Who is eligible for TAFDC
 - Rules for families on TAFDC
- Goal: Know enough to spot issues, when to refer to legal services

What is TAFDC & who is eligible?

What Is TAFDC?

- **TAFDC** = Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children
- Cash assistance (welfare) program in Massachusetts for low-income families with children and pregnant people
- Administered by the Department of Transitional Assistance (**DTA**)

What are the TAFDC benefits?

- **Cash grant** paid twice a month
- Annual clothing allowance (\$450 in 2023)
- Infant benefit for new babies (\$300)
- Potential for **child care** and transportation benefits (\$80/mo)
- Relocation benefit (up to \$1000)
- Confers MassHealth eligibility

Who is eligible for TAFDC?

Families with dependent children

– Child

- Under the age of 18, and/or
- Age 18 and expected to graduate from high school by age 19

– Parent or other relative caretaker

Pregnant person

– Teens: any time in pregnancy

– Age 20 & up: within 120 days of due date

What are the benefits *after* TAFDC closes?

- **Transitional child care voucher:** if needed for work or education/training any time within 24 mos. *after* TAFDC closes.
- **Transitional Support Services** – if TAFDC closes due to earnings, will get cash stipend for 4 months after case closes
- **TBA SNAP:** TAFDC closes for earnings or other income like Unemployment – SNAP continues for 5 months without counting the new income

Financial eligibility overview

Income

- Unearned income – counts *unless* exception applies (e.g., SSI is non-countable)
- Earned income – deductions/disregards usually apply

No more asset limit!

- Retroactive to 7/1/2021

TAFDC grant amount

TAFDC amount is based on:

- # of people included in grant
- Countable income (earned & unearned)
- Housing situation
 - Public/subsidized housing or private housing (+\$40/month)

TAFDC grant amount

Monthly TAFDC amount* (no other countable income):

# of people	Public housing/ subsidized housing	Private housing (no subsidy)
2	\$648	\$688
3	\$783	\$823
4	\$912	\$952

*TAFDC grants to increase by 10% in April 2024.

Benefit Issuance Dates

Last digit of SSN*	1 st TAFDC Deposit Date / SNAP Deposit Date	2nd TAFDC Deposit Date
0	1	16
1	2	17
2	4	19
3	5	20
4	7	22
5	8	23
6	10	25
7	11	26
8	13	28
9	14	29

**If no SSN, DTA assigns a number in its place called a 99 number or facsimile SSN.*

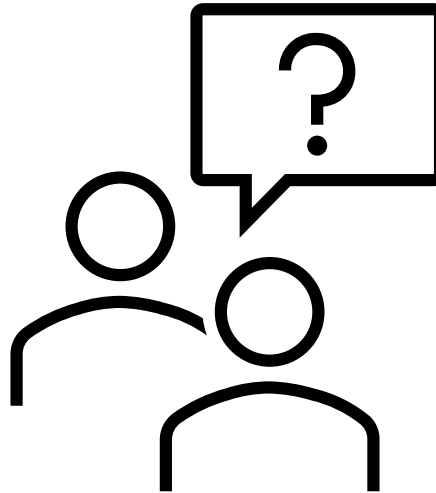
Immigrant eligibility rules

Complex eligibility rules for non-citizens

- Non-citizen parent can apply for eligible child regardless of status
- Separate session on this topic later today
- [TAFDC Advocacy Guide](#)
- Consult an advocate
- Training on Immigrants and Public Benefits – March 27, 2024 (part of [Basic Benefits Training series](#)).

Note: Each DTA program has different immigrant eligibility rules.

Questions?





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TAFDC Rules

Key TAFDC rules

- Time limit & work requirement (Pathways)
- Exemptions
- Child support assignment & cooperation
- Immunization
- Learnfare – school attendance rules
- TAFDC & earnings

Time limit & work requirement – overview

Families on TAFDC are subject to time limit and work requirement rules unless **exemption** applies

Non-exempt

Subject to time limit
& work requirement

Exempt

Not subject to time
limit or work
requirement

Note – can move from exempt to non-exempt, and vice versa



Time limit

- For **non-exempt** families:
 - Limit of 24 months of TAFDC in a 5 year period
 - A new 5 year period starts 5 years after family first got TAFDC → family eligible for another 24 months of TAFDC
- If 24 months have been used and doing work activity, can request extension(s) in 3-month increments.

Work requirement

- Non-exempt → must participate in a **work activity** for required hours each week
- Can be sanctioned for not participating
 - Sanctions lower or stop TAFDC
- Entitled to child care referral if needed to meet work requirement
- **Pathways to Work**

Pathways Planning Period

- Pathways Planning Period – first 60 days after coming under work requirement
- Register with MassHire [JobQuest](#)
- Find program/activity
- Child care, transportation benefits
 - DTA can give short-term child care referral if needed to find an activity.

Work requirement - activities

- Education or training
- Paid work, employment programs
- Job search
- Vocational rehabilitation programs
- Community service
- Housing search by those in shelter

Work requirement - other

- Can do more than one activity
- In 2-parent family, both parents are subject to work requirement
- DTA Full Engagement Workers (FEWs)

Work requirement - participation

- Must confirm participation *each month* by the 10th of the month for the prior month.
 - Can use participation form that DTA mails out
 - Phone call or other contact with DTA
 - FEW may verify directly with program

Work requirement - sanctions

If parent is subject to and not meeting the work requirement, DTA will impose sanctions:

- 1st level – reduce grant by parent's portion (\$100)
- 2nd level – stop assistance to **entire family**

Note: DTA supervisor review is required before sanction is imposed.

Work requirement – good cause

DTA should not impose a sanction if parent has **good cause**, including:

- No available and appropriate child care
- No affordable and reliable transportation
- No available and appropriate activity
- Family crisis, illness or disability

Work requirement – undoing sanctions

Restoring benefits after a sanction:

- DTA will remove sanction if:
 - Client completes Pathways to Work Plan or resumes activity; or
 - Good cause or exemption
- **Explore barriers!**

Exemptions

Exemptions from the time limit and work requirement:

- Parent is disabled (SSI/SSDI or DTA standard)
- Caring for disabled family member
- Child under age 2

Exemptions (continued)

- Pregnant & within 120 days of due date
- Relative (non-parent) not on grant
- Seniors aged 60 or older
- Teen parent meeting teen parent rules
- Immigrants without work authorization – family is exempt from time limit but not work requirement

Exemptions (continued)

- How to get exemption
 - Some are automatic
 - Some require process to show eligibility
- 2-parent families – both parents must be exempt for family to be exempt
- **Exempt recipients can ‘volunteer’** for activity and most can get related benefits (child care, transportation)

Case example – Email from Sharon

From: visitingnurse@healthcenter.org

Sent: Tuesday, November 7, 2023, 5:36 PM

To: Bradley, Lisa <lbradley@gbls.org>

Subject: Myra – TAFDC problem

Hi Lisa,

I'm working with a family in shelter and I'm hoping you can help me understand what's happening with their TAFDC. Myra has 2 kids – ages 7 and 9. She has gotten notices from DTA saying that she has to talk with them about something called Pathways, and she has to do 20 hours/week of an activity starting in a month or she could lose TAFDC. The problem is, she is really struggling with her anxiety and she also has a bad back, so she's not sure she can handle anything new right now. Please advise - this is really stressing Myra out!

Thanks,

Sharon

Responding to Sharon

– explore barriers

Family is in shelter – can meet work program requirement with housing search

- Give DTA proof of shelter placement
- Will still get notices about Pathways but cannot be sanctioned
- Still under time limit

Responding to Sharon

– explore barriers

Myra has health issues – can claim a disability exemption

- Once approved, exempt from work requirement and time limit
- Can still do an activity if/when she's ready (education/training, work)

Child support assignment

- Parent/caregiver must **assign** to the state (DOR) the right to seek child support &/or medical insurance from non-custodial parent(s)
 - Child getting TAFDC: child support & medical support
 - Child not getting TAFDC: medical support only
- If refuse to assign, assistance to *entire family* is denied or terminated
- DTA will mail a child support form – parent/caregiver **must** sign and submit form. Cannot do a telephonic signature.

Child support cooperation

- Parent/caregiver must agree to **cooperate** with DOR efforts to collect child support *unless* good cause
 - Give information about other parent
 - Genetic testing
 - Talk to DOR, go to court
- If parent doesn't cooperate and no good cause, TAFDC will be reduced

Child support cooperation – Good Cause

- **Good cause** for not cooperating
 - Physical or emotional harm to parent or child
 - Rape or incest
 - **Relative caretaker** can claim good cause if pursuing child support is not in the child's best interest (no proof needed)
- Alternative to claiming good cause – work with DOR to pursue child support safely

Verification of Good Cause

- **Examples:** restraining order, police or medical record, statement from social worker
- **If no 3rd party proof:** DTA will accept a statement from the parent (can be done by phone).
- TAFDC application should be approved while waiting for proof of good cause (if required).

TAFDC Child Support Form

ASSIGNMENT SUPPORT

Assignment of Support Rights for TAFDC and MassHealth

By signing below, I am assigning (giving) the rights to support for myself and my dependents getting TAFDC to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This means the Commonwealth will keep any support payments that the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) collects. If any child support is paid directly to me, I will tell DTA.

Signature of Mary Smith

Date

COOPERATION

Cooperation with Child Support *or* Good Cause Not to Cooperate (Please choose and sign only one)

- I agree to cooperate** with efforts to get child support and medical support from Robert Smith. This may include establishing paternity.

Mary Smith sign here to cooperate

Date

- I do not agree to cooperate, and I am claiming good cause.** My reason for not cooperating with efforts to get child support and medical support for John Smith, Jane Smith is:

- Cooperating would place me or my child at risk of physical or emotional harm (including domestic violence).
- My child was conceived as a result of having sex against my will.
- There is an adoption proceeding for my child pending in court.
- I am working with a public or licensed private social agency to decide the issue of adoption.
- I care for a child who is not my biological or adopted child and cooperating is not in the best interest of this child.

What happens next? DTA will review your good cause claim. We will tell you if we need you to give proof to approve good cause.

Mary Smith sign here to claim good cause

Date

- Check here if you would like to talk with a DTA Domestic Violence Specialist.** You can call 999-999-9999 to connect with a Domestic Violence Specialist or if you check this box a Domestic Violence Specialist will contact you.

Child Support – Haitian new arrivals

New rule (Oct 2023) for Haitian families in which parents are temporarily separated

No requirement to cooperate with child support if:

- Recently arrived in the U.S.
- One parent is not living with the child(ren) and other parent due to homelessness/circumstances of migration
- Plan to reunify when possible

Case example - Email from Maria

From: maria@example.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 7, 2023, 5:36 PM
To: Bradley, Lisa <lbradley@gbls.org>
Subject: Maria- please help

Hi, I have 2 teenagers, David and Jayden. I have no income. My unemployment claim is taking forever and I'm falling behind in rent. I get SNAP but it's not enough to feed my boys who are eating constantly.

My friend said to apply for TAFDC. Problem is I heard DTA will go after my children's father for child support. I'm scared. He was abusive but I don't have any proof of that – I was always too scared to go to court or call the police.

Can I get TAFDC without DTA going after child support? I'm overwhelmed working with so many agencies right now.



Responding to Maria

- ❑ Maria can apply for TAFDC & ask for **good cause** not to cooperate with child support enforcement.
- ❑ If Maria doesn't have proof from a third party (no restraining order, court document, police record, etc.), she can give a statement.
- ❑ She will still have to sign a paper to assign her right to child support to DTA, but DTA won't take any action.

Immunization

- Proof of immunization is required for all dependent children applying for or getting TAFDC unless there is good cause
- Can claim **good cause** for religious or health reasons



Learnfare – school attendance

- School-aged children under age 16 must attend school:
 - Unexcused absences may lead to a sanction
- Rule does not apply to a family in which the parent is disabled
- DTA sends notices about unexcused absences before any sanction – important to respond.



TAFDC Earned Income Disregard

100% earned income disregard for 6 months

- TAFDC **is not reduced** due to earnings
- Applies if total household income is under 200% of the federal poverty level

TAFDC Earned Income Disregard

- To decide if still eligible after 100% disregard ends, DTA deducts \$200 and subtracts 50% of what's left.
- May be eligible for 6-month 100% disregard again with different job.

Note: Clients must still report changes in earnings to DTA!

Case example - Email from William

From: william@example.com
Sent: Sunday, November 5, 2023, 6:36 PM
To: Ginsburg, Lizbeth <lginsburg@gbls.org>
Subject: William & TAFDC

Attny Ginsburg, My neighbor said to contact you. I am a single dad of two little girls, ages 3 and 4. My delivery job ended and I used up my unemployment. I heard I should apply for TAFDC but I don't know. I hope to work again soon. Unfortunately, the girls' babysitter moved and I don't have anyone else to watch them. I'm stuck.

Should I apply for TAFDC?

What if I get a new job soon, does that matter?

-William

Responding to William

- ❑ Apply for TAFDC? Yes, apply and get TAFDC for household of three.
- ❑ If he gets a new job:
 - ✓ Eligible for a child care voucher (no wait list)
 - ✓ \$80/mo transportation benefit
 - ✓ DTA doesn't count earnings for 6 mos., as long as total income is < 200% federal poverty level
 - ✓ After 6 mos., TAFDC closes due to earnings. William gets transitional benefits (cash stipend, special SNAP rules for 5 mos. & eligible for Transitional Child Care for up to 24 months)

Questions?

