TAFDC – Practical Tips

December 4, 2023

Lisa Bradley, lbradley@gbls.org
Lizbeth Ginsburg, lginsburg@gbls.org

Greater Boston Legal Services
Overview

• Practical info about TAFDC – how to apply, get information, etc.

• Protections for certain populations

• Problem solving & advocacy tips
Practical information: How to apply, submit documents, etc.
DTA Offices

- DTA Offices are open!
- Hybrid work schedule
  - Limited in person staffing
  - Services for clients who go to an office:
    - Get EBT card
    - Use DTA Connect on an iPad kiosk
    - Use scanner to scan documents
    - Hands on help when needed
- Should have needs addressed while in the office
EBT Cards

How to get an EBT card:
• DTA Connect mobile app
• DTACConnect.com
• Call TAFDC worker
• Call Assistance Line at # 877-382-2363 and follow prompts for EBT cards
• In person at DTA offices (anyone who asks for a card should get one)
Application process

• Apply online, by phone or in person
• Phone interview – telephonic signature
• Client must submit:
  – Verifications – DTA sends Verification Checklist (VC1)
  – Signed child support assignment form
• Within 30 days DTA approves or denies
Applying for TAFDC

DTACConnect.com (online or smartphone)
- Can complete application in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, & Haitian Creole
- No need to make an account
- Tell DTA during interview if also want SNAP application

Call local DTA office and leave a message asking for callback to apply

Go to local DTA office
Verifications

Verifications required at application (TAFDC):

• Identity
• Give Social Security Number(s)
• Relationship to children
• Immigration status (unless opting out)
• Citizenship - *only if questionable*
• Income
• Living situation*
• Type of housing* (private/subsidized)
• Immunization (given 60 days to provide)
  * Can be self-declared
Verifications

Verification issues & reminders:

• Over-verification
• DTA should check information available in data sources
• Some flexibility remains since COVID – self-declarations
• Collateral contacts
From: lynda@example.com
Sent: Thursday, November 18, 2023, 7:36 PM
To: welfare-help@gbhs.org
Subject: Lynda & Verifications

Hey, I just got temporary custody of my niece, Ruby, because my sister can't take care of her. I applied for TAFDC but I really don't want DTA going after my sister for child support. My sister is pretty angry and not in a good place. She might get worse if forced to pay child support. How can I stop the state from pursuing child support?

Also, DTA needs proof that I'm not working at the Burger Joint anymore. That job is old. Boss won't write a letter, says he's not allowed. I really need help.

Thx, Lynda
Responding to Lynda

Child Support

- As a relative caretaker, Lynda can claim good cause for not cooperating with child support since it's not in Ruby's best interest. (Must still sign the child support form.)
- She can self-declare good cause (no proof needed)

Proof that job ended

- Active Work Number match: submit a signed DORL1 form for DTA for collateral contact
- No active Work Number match: give a verbal self-declaration that job ended
Check TAFDC Case Info

DTA Connect App & DTACConnect.com online portal
- Set up account with email, Agency ID or EBT card #

Use DTA Connect to:
- See case status
- See notices for last 12 months
- Upload documents
- Update contact info
- Request new EBT card
- See history of benefits
Submitting documents to DTA

- Upload via DTA Connect app or online account (fastest option – goes right into client’s DTA case record)
- In-person at DTA office
- Fax to 617-887-8765
- Mail to:
  DTA Processing Center
  PO Box 4406
  Taunton, MA 02780

Put DTA Agency ID or last 4 of SSN on the top of each page if faxing or mailing documents.
Reporting changes to DTA

• Report changes within 10 days – best to report changes in writing

• What changes matter for TAFDC?
  – New income or change in income
    • Earnings
    • Unemployment, SSI, child support, etc.
  – Someone moves into or out of household
  – Birth of baby
  – Change in address or phone number
Reevaluation

• Every 6-12 months
• May or may not be at same time as SNAP recertification
• Process:
  ❑ Notice of appointment for phone interview
  ❑ Phone interview:
    o Can verify some information verbally
    o Can sign application telephonically
  ❑ DTA sends Verification Checklist for any remaining verifications
  ❑ DTA sends notice approving reevaluation or stopping TAFDC if reevaluation isn’t completed or if review shows no longer eligible
Reevaluation

Reevaluation issues & reminders

• DTA automatically sends TAFDC closing notice if:
  – Case worker doesn't call at appointment time
  – Client misses DTA's call

• To resolve:
  – Contact local office managers and/or Ombuds Unit
  – Contact Legal Services
Protections for specific populations
Questions?
Disability Access & Accommodations

• DTA Client Assistance Coordinators (CACs)
  – CAC contact info

• Common accommodations
  – Help with forms, verifications, understanding notices
  – Reminder calls
  – Sign language interpreter
  – Large print notices

• See DTA’s Disability Access Info
Domestic Violence Protections

- Block online & automated phone services – can request verbally

- Heightened Level of Security (HLS)
  - Request in writing. Can use HLS form (English / Spanish) but not required
  - No phone communication with DTA – must go to DTA office
    - But advocates can communicate by phone if client signs release & adds advocate on HLS form
  - Also blocks online and automated phone services

- **DV Specialist** in each DTA office

---

*If issues with DTA rules because of DV* - contact DV specialist and/or legal services.
Language Access

• **Right to interpreter!**

• DTA notices only available in English & Spanish
• DTACconnect.com in 6 languages
• Some DTA brochures available in additional languages
• DTA texts/emails
  – Case specific in English and Spanish
  – General alerts in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese (Simplified) and Vietnamese.
Problem Solving & Advocacy Tips
TAFDC Advocacy Resources

• Check the TAFDC regulations & DTA’s Online Guide
  – DTA Regulations
  – DTA Online Guide (polices & procedures)

• TAFDC Advocacy Guide
Problem Solving – Advocacy Tips

• Contact Assistant Director or Director of local DTA office (use Assistance Line for automated info only)

• Contact DTA Ombuds Unit: 617-348-5354 or email sara.craven@state.ma.us

• Will need a release giving DTA permission to talk to you (sample English & Spanish)
Appealing a DTA Decision

• How to file appeal
  – Call DTA Division of Hearings at 617-348-5321 & leave message
  – Fax appeal form or written request for hearing to 617-348-5311
  – Will be by phone unless request in-person or on Zoom

• When to appeal
  – Within 90 days of date on notice under appeal
  – For continued benefits while appeal is pending (aid pending), appeal before the date the change takes effect

• Contact Legal Services for possible representation
Resolving Appeals

- Gather DTA Documents
  - Notices, Narratives, Scanned Documents, etc.
  - Get info from DTA Connect, DTA supervisors & management, Ombuds Unit

- Review Rules
  - DTA Regulations
  - DTA Online Guide (polices & procedures)
  - DTA Fair Hearing Regulations

- Help get missing evidence
Resolving Appeals

• Negotiate with DTA Management
  – Assistant Directors, Directors, Central DTA
  – Submit Required Proof
  – Request Prehearing Adjustment 106 CMR 343.350(B)
  – Assert De Novo Rule 106 CMR 343.500(A)

• Right to Postpone Hearing if good cause
Problem solving – advocacy tips

Referring cases to GBLS Welfare Law Unit:

• If client lives in Greater Boston area (check service area)
  • 617-603-1806, or welfare-help@gbls.org
  • We will use interpreter, provide disability accommodations as needed

• Other areas: Find Legal Services in other parts of Massachusetts
Questions?

... and thank you!