

WHAT WOULD A TAFDC GRANT INCREASE MEAN FOR FAMILIES IN MASSACHUSETTS?

THE CHALLENGE

TAFDC Benefit Levels are Too Low to Stabilize Families

Low-income Massachusetts families with young children receiving cash assistance through Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) often face what can seem like a never-ending cycle of financial hardships, making it hard to stay afloat. Basic necessities, such as stable housing, heat, lights and enough nutritious food, can become competing demands that are endlessly traded off against one another.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Multiple Hardships Put Young Children's Health at Risk

Often children in the family, especially the youngest, suffer most because their health is vulnerable to even the briefest experience of hardship. Research by Children's HealthWatch shows that very young children in families that experience multiple hardships — not enough nutritious food, inadequate or inconsistent access to utility service, and unstable housing — are at increased risk of negative health effects, such as developmental delays, which can have life-long consequences.ⁱ



Photo: Ashley O.

THE EVIDENCE FOR A TAFDC GRANT INCREASE

Modest Increases in Benefit Levels Have a Positive Impact on Young Children's Health

In 2009, participants in the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) received increased assistance when, in order to stimulate the economy, SNAP benefits were raised across the board by a minimum of 13.6 percent in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).ⁱⁱ

Children's HealthWatch research demonstrated that improved SNAP benefit levels resulting from the ARRA boost had a positive impact on young children's health. Our research showed that in the two years after the increase, children in families receiving SNAP were significantly more likely to be classified as "well" than young children whose families were eligible but did not receive SNAP.ⁱⁱⁱ

WHAT A TAFDC GRANT INCREASE COULD DO FOR A REAL FAMILY

A TAFDC Grant Increase Could Help Families Stay Housed and Provide for Their Children



Photo: Whitney H.

Kelly is disabled and receives SSI, and her partner Kevin and the children receive TAFDC. They live in a market-rent apartment in Mattapan and rely on the kindness of the landlord not to evict them when they're behind in rent. An additional \$80 per month would help them consistently pay their rent in full and not live with the constant worry of getting evicted. The money could also help pay for public transportation so they could take their 4-year-old to her Head Start program even if it's too cold or rainy to walk there.^{iv}

For additional information or to visit one of our research sites or clinics, please contact:

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Visit our website: www.childrenshealthwatch.org

ⁱ Healthy Families in Hard Times: Solutions to Multiple Family Hardships. (2010). Children's HealthWatch. http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/multiplehardships_report_jun10.pdf.

ⁱⁱ The actual percentage increase for each household varied and often turned out to be higher than 13.6 percent due to the calculation laid out in the ARRA legislation. The USDA used the maximum benefit as a base and calculated a 13.6 percent benefit increase for each household size. They then kept the dollar amount of this increase constant and applied that amount to all benefit levels of the same household size.

ⁱⁱⁱ Boost to SNAP Benefits Protected Young Children's Health. (2011). Children's HealthWatch.

http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/SNAPincrease_brief_October2011.pdf.

^{iv} TAFDC participant names have been changed for privacy. Information provided by: [Greater Boston Legal Services](#)