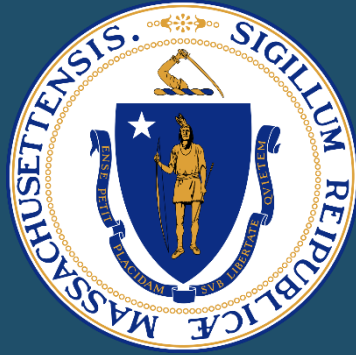


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Employment Services Program Report

March 2021



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM REPORT

MARCH 2021

REPORT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to line item 4401-1000 of the FY2021 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is required to report on the status of its Employment Services Program, including the number of clients served by these programs, the number of clients who transition into employment, the number of clients who remain in employment after 90 days, and the number of clients who remain in employment after 1 year. Because FY2021 has not concluded before the submission of this report, DTA reported on the previous fiscal year's ESP activities.

This year's report also aims to satisfy reporting requirements in line item 4401-1003 in the FY2021 GAA, and similar language included in the COVID-19 supplemental budget (Chapter 124 of the Acts of 2020), which requires the expansion of a two-generational grant program providing services for high-risk young parents.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION

DTA's mission is to assist and empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency. We do this through a comprehensive system of programs and supports, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment supports. DTA serves one out of every eight people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, elders, and people with disabilities.

TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN (TAFDC)

TAFDC is a state and federally-funded program that provides direct cash assistance and employment supports to families with children, and pregnant women, with little or no income or assets. TAFDC is operated under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.

The goal of TAFDC is to support families as they transition from economic crisis to stability. Over the past three years DTA has worked to remove barriers to economic mobility and to help families find their path to success. The Department has pursued a three-pronged approach to disrupt multi-generational poverty and meet labor market demands through multi-year reforms that:

- Simplify and streamline program rules and requirements for working families,
- Better incentivize and support employment and employment related activities, and
- Ease the "cliff effect" during the transition to economic mobility.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Employment Services Program (ESP) is an integral part of DTA's efforts to transition TAFDC clients to work and increase their economic mobility. Each year, the state's annual budget

allocates funding for employment services for TAFDC clients through the ESP. The primary goals of the ESP are to assist TAFDC clients to prepare for and connect with career pathways and resolve barriers for sustained employment. DTA case managers connect TAFDC clients to employment and training programs by referring them to appropriate activities based on their skill level and personal goals.

The ESP is comprised of a number of outcomes driven (pay-for-performance) programs funded through line-item 4401-1000 in the FY20 GAA, which include the:

- Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES)
- Employment Supports Services Program, via the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)
- Secure Jobs Program
- DTA Works Program
- Work Participant Program (WPP)
- Young Parents Program (YPP), and
- Empowering to Employ (ETE).

The theory of change for DTA's employment service programs is that a two-generation approach helps both parents and their children make progress together and provides interventions that can help break the cycle of multi-generational poverty.¹

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Massachusetts economy was the strongest it had been in a generation. Entering FY20, DTA was focused on working with our partners in the workforce system to provide TAFDC clients with the opportunity to participate in the strong labor market by connecting them to employers who had a critical need for skilled labor. In response to the economic impact of the pandemic, DTA's employment service programs pivoted to strategically focus on creating access to virtual programming and remote employment supports that continue to increase the skills and employability of DTA clients as jobs become available.

COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

The Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program provides training, education, and job readiness services to TAFDC families interested in obtaining employment. The primary focus is to assist clients in seeking and securing employment in jobs connected to a career pathway with the supports necessary to stay employed and achieve career growth. In FY19, DTA re-procured this program and implemented a whole family approach to providing these services. This approach is facilitated by assessing and addressing the needs of each family across their life domains of family stability, well-being, financial management, education and training, and employment and career.² FY20 was the first year the newly procured CIES program was operationalized.

¹[Two-Generation Playbook](#), Ascend at the Aspen Institute, September 2016

² The *Economic Stability Roadmap*, including the five domains, are adapted with permission from The Bridge to Self-Sufficiency® by Economic Mobility Pathways, Inc.

Through the CIES program, DTA hopes to affect change for families by:

- Empowering participants to pursue a path to economic mobility through education, training and job readiness,
- Actively engaging participants to develop the skills necessary to achieve economic stability in a fulfilling career path, and
- Providing participants with hope and aspiration to break the cycle of poverty and achieve personal and economic growth as they pursue their goals.

The CIES program provides a comprehensive array of job search, training, and education services focused on successful employment placement, career growth, and retention. Clients may also participate in industry-validated occupational/vocational training. The CIES program recognizes that job readiness involves more than just education and work history but includes addressing issues that can significantly impact an individual's ability to maintain employment such as health, housing stability, and family life. Through workforce development, contextual learning, and breaking down barriers, DTA partners with CIES providers to empower participants to build family stability while obtaining and sustaining employment.

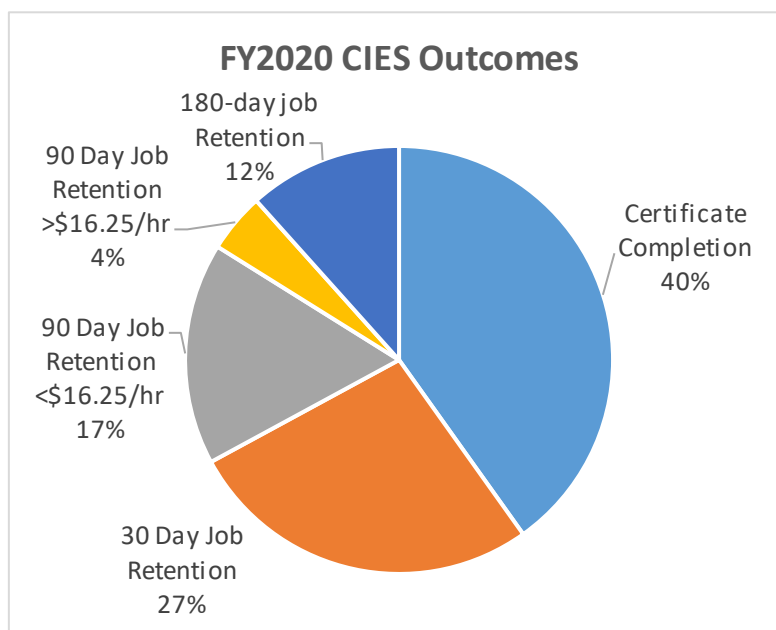
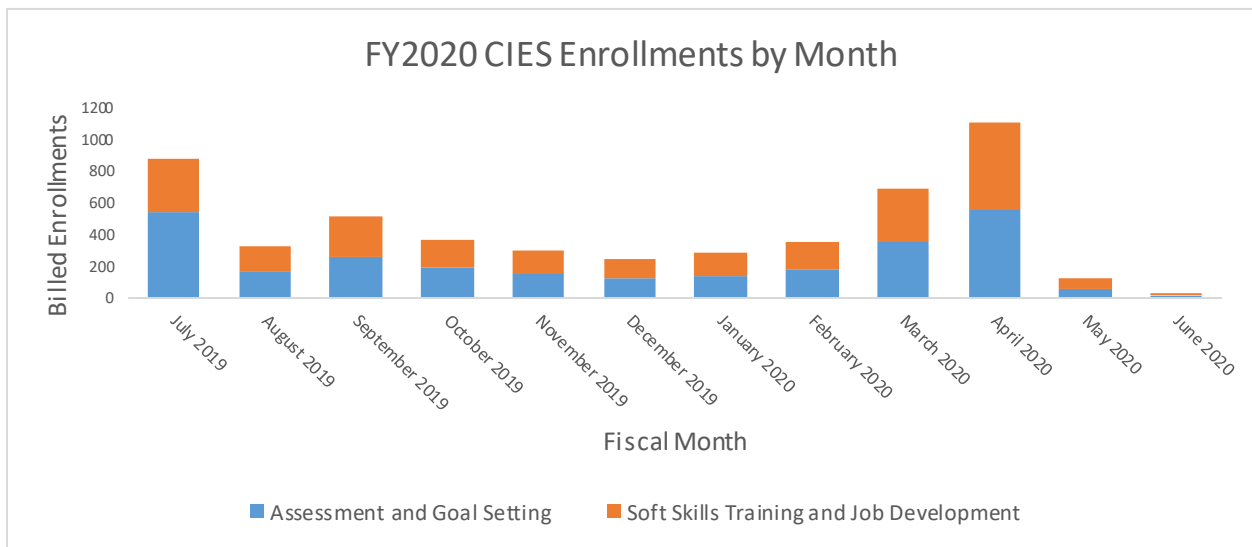
CIES providers actively engage and partner with participants to set family goals and develop individualized employment plans incorporating four components: Assessment and Goal setting, Job-targeted Education and Skills Training, and Job Retention at 30, 90, and 180 days. Job Retention Services include goal setting, continued skill development, and coordinated case management. CIES outcomes are based on these four components which are all connected directly to employment. To obtain these outcomes, CIES providers support families as they pass through recognized milestones. Providers provide post-employment supports to clients for up to one year. To ensure providers have the resources to provide post-employment supports, outcome payments are made to service providers when clients retain employment and/or experience wage growth.

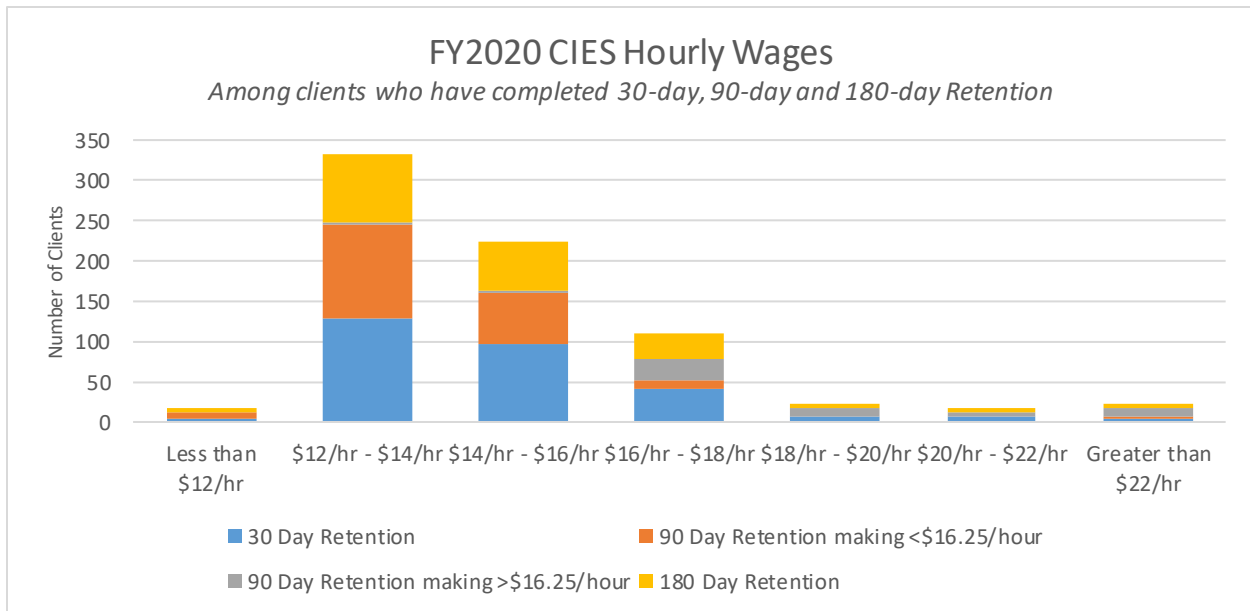
The CIES program had a promising start in FY20 with a steady increase in enrollments and job placements in the first and second quarters. Providers were connecting to more DTA families and participants were obtaining and retaining positions in jobs with living wages and completing industry recognized certifications. In March 2020, new enrollments into the CIES program stalled as a result of the public health emergency and subsequent shutdown of most businesses, schools, child care centers, and after school programs.

CIES providers quickly shifted their in-person programming to virtual services that supported the immediate needs of participants in the areas of family stability and well-being, and then focused on remote education and training that tied to participants' employment goals. To support this shift, DTA amended the CIES funding structure to compensate providers for virtual services that keep participants engaged and prepare them to return to work or obtain employment post-pandemic.

CIES providers continue to support participants during the pandemic in progressing towards their goals and reaching milestones in their lives. Clients who can participate are experiencing wage growth and obtaining jobs connected to emerging career pathways in the current economy. DTA also made improvements in FY20 in data collection to improve analysis of enrollments and outcomes related to virtual services, hourly wage growth, and job retention at 30, 90, and 180 days.

FY2020 CIES Enrollments & Outcomes					
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# of Certificates	# 30-day Retention	# 90-day Retention	# 180-day Retention
FY2020	1,998	1,029	794	652	345
<i>Outcome Performance</i>		52%	40%	33%	17%





EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS SERVICES PROGRAM AT THE MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

The Employment Supports Services Program, administered by the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) offers unique language, cultural, and employment placement skills to TAFDC recipients who are refugees, immigrants, or Puerto Rican storm victims, and those whose primary language is not English. Services are provided in the client’s primary language as they work to build their English language skills. Youth participants can enroll in this program after completing a HiSET or DTA’s YPP.

Through ORI services, families can overcome cultural and linguistic barriers which may hinder them from obtaining and retaining employment. ORI’s employment services include comprehensive assessment of a family’s needs, employment readiness, access to vocational skills trainings, financial literacy, job placement, and retention. Currently, ORI provides these services to eligible clients in the Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Framingham, Holyoke, Lowell, Malden, North Shore, Quincy, Worcester, and Springfield DTA catchment areas.

MORI Enrollments & Outcomes					
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Job Placements	# 30-Day Retention	# 90-Day Retention	Quality Salary
FY2019	255	219	208	N/A	N/A
FY2020	129	127	121	115	35

In FY20, ORI was allocated \$1M with an additional \$250,000 adding a cost reimbursement component to enhance ESOL instruction and expand vocational skill training programs, financial

literacy, and other pre and post-employment services. The additional \$250,000 created similar outcome milestones to CIES tracking employment at 90-days.

Consistent with all DTA's employment and training programs, ORI services were delivered remotely following the onset of the public health emergency and subsequent closure of in person services. ORI and DTA worked together to adjust the program funding structure in recognition of these new challenges. Prior to COVID-19, ORI was only compensated for the employment outcomes of clients. Now, ORI providers are compensated for enrollments and outcomes, and flexible spending has been allotted to providers to support unanticipated needs and barriers to employment.

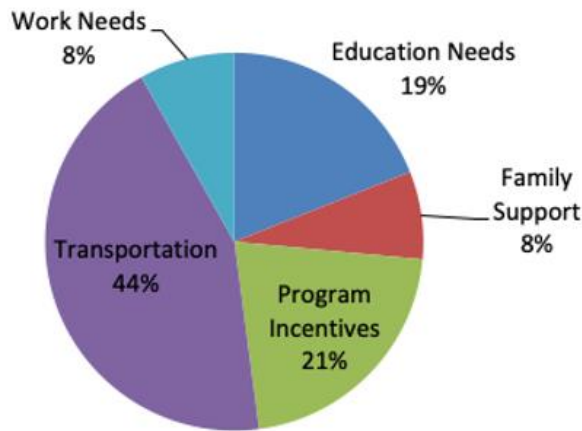
SECURE JOBS PROGRAM

DTA collaborates with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to administer the Secure Jobs Program, which was created through a partnership between the Fireman Foundation and the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness. Secure Jobs supports families in increasing their economic mobility by connecting them with housing supports and community-based providers. These providers focus on helping families become employment ready, while addressing any barriers that may interfere with their economic mobility goals. The model of the Secure Jobs Program emphasizes employment first to shorten the length of stay in shelter and expedite the attainment of permanent housing, contributing to upward economic mobility and family stability. Secure Jobs focuses on three key domains: Education and Career, Stable Housing and Economic Stability, and Family Stability and Well-Being. Participants have access to flexible funds, which are used to address individual barriers to employment. By connecting housing and workforce development services, Secure Jobs offers comprehensive supports that families need to obtain employment through client-centered economic mobility plans tailored to their individual needs.

Secure Jobs serves families receiving assistance from DHCD in the areas of Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Taunton, Hyannis, New Bedford, Framingham, Lawrence, Lowell, Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester. Through Secure Jobs, DTA and DHCD have also aligned policies to reduce barriers for our shared families that support the best outcomes. Improved policy alignment is supported by the Secure Jobs Program Coordinator who provides both administrative and programmatic support in coordination with DHCD. Through this partnership, DTA has been afforded the opportunity to provide 50 Mobile Section 8 Vouchers over three years to Secure Jobs participants who have obtained and maintained employment for six months. To date, all 50 vouchers have been made available to families and 25 families have moved into new apartments. We expect the other 25 families to become fully housed over the next 6 months.

Secure Jobs Enrollments & Outcomes			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Job Placements	Performance Rate
FY2019	572	272	48%
FY2020	458	228	50%

FY20 Secure Jobs Flexible Overall Spending



Average amount used per family in Secure Jobs during FY20 was \$217

DTA WORKS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The DTA Works Internship Program is a work-ready program funded for TAFDC recipients. DTA Works provides TAFDC recipients with the opportunity to acquire or develop skills necessary to re-enter the workforce. Interns are placed at a variety of locations including DTA offices, partner state agencies, and non-profit community-based organizations where they receive on-the-job training and mentorship. Interns also work with their mentor and program coordinators to identify barriers that may be interfering with their economic mobility. Once identified, the intern and coordinator create specific goals to overcome any barriers and support the intern on their path to economic mobility.

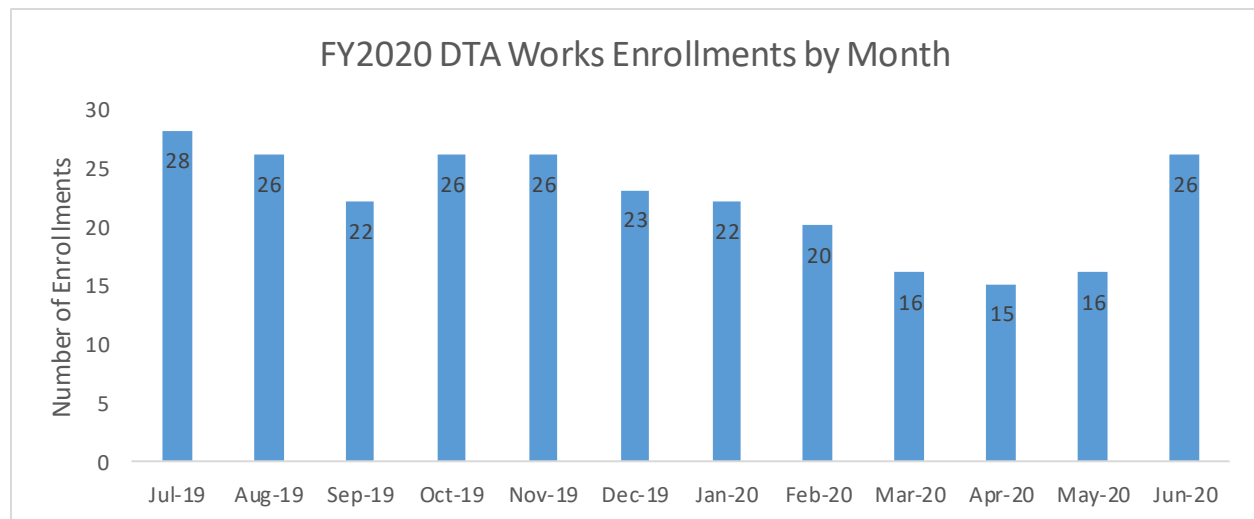
Interns may participate for up to 36 weeks with the option to extend to an additional 12 weeks to support their transition to work. They receive a monthly education and training stipend to support their participation. The monthly stipend is in addition to their TAFDC benefits and does not impact those benefits. In FY20, the weekly stipend payment per intern increase from \$100 per week to \$125 per week. Enrollments in the DTA Works program slowed during the earlier months of the pandemic but began to steadily increase in the last quarter of FY20.

DTA is working on increasing public-private sector partnerships that provide meaningful internship tracks that lead to employment in high demand labor markets such as healthcare. One

example is the DTA Works Health Administration Services Training (HAST), facilitated through a partnership with Mass General Brigham and Project Hope. This program was originally slated to start in March but had to be delayed and redesigned due to COVID-19. Program leadership was able to quickly pivot to stand up virtual training and internships. Access to technology was effectively and efficiently addressed so interns were able to continue critical upskilling and job readiness training from the safety of their homes while supporting their children with remote learning. 90% of the interns who entered HAST completed the program successfully. DTA Works now operates as a hybrid placement opportunity providing the option of in-person or virtual internships based on the needs of participants and their families.

In FY20, DTA Works also introduced a new program component, Budget Buddies, Inc., a non-profit organization focused on empowering women with low-incomes to confidently navigate their financial goals. Budget Buddies provides the coaching to ensure interns are better prepared to manage and plan for financial cliffs as they transition from benefits to the workforce.

DTA Works Enrollments & Outcomes			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Post-Internship Employment	Performance Rate
FY2019	73	49	67%
FY2020	48	24	50%



YOUNG PARENTS PROGRAM

The Young Parents Program serves young parents, ages 14 through 24, who are receiving TAFDC or are the non-custodial parent of a child receiving TAFDC. YPP is a year-round, full-time program that focuses on education to career pathways as the primary goal for young parents. The theory of change for YPP is that a two-generation approach helps both generations make progress

together and provides interventions that can break the cycle of multi-generation poverty.³ YPP supports positive outcomes across three domains; Education and Career; Life and Personal; Parenting and Family.

Through YPP, DTA seeks to:

- Empower parents to pursue a path to economic mobility through education pathways and job readiness, while establishing support networks that allow parents to successfully access and maintain active benefits,
- Actively engage participants to develop the skills necessary to advocate and care for their children so that ultimately the children in this program are safe, healthy, and thriving and,
- Provide a sense of hope and aspiration to empower families to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty through sustained school and community involvement and engagement with the program.

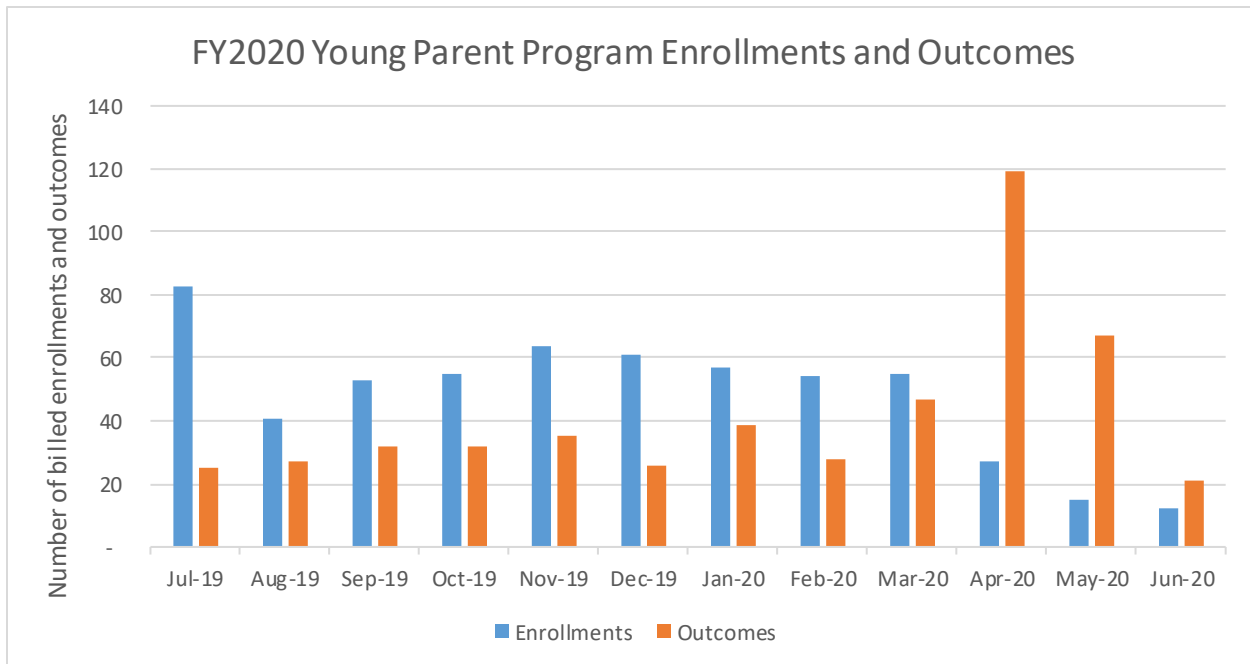
The 2-Gen approach of YPP recognizes that outcomes for parents and children are intertwined and cannot develop independently of one another. Research has documented the impact of a parent’s education, economic stability and overall health on a child’s trajectory. Similarly, children’s education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents. By promoting education and supports for children along with tools to improve parents’ economic situations, outcomes for both the parent and child can improve.

At the onset of COVID-19, the immediate needs of DTA’s young parent participants were supported by YPP providers. Families were provided with care packages that included food and cleaning supplies, and program services were immediately moved to virtual formats so that service delivery was uninterrupted. Some providers were able to allow clients to continue their HiSet testing by adjusting their physical spaces to the necessary requirements for remote testing.

In order to support the shift to distance learning and remote service delivery, DTA allowed for flexibility in the funding structure of YPP. Providers are now able to request compensation for virtual outcomes, and milestone achievement in the Life and Personal and Parenting and Family pillars of the Education to Career Pathway Assessment. Prior to COVID-19, providers could only request compensation in the Education to Career pillar. This new flexibility recognizes providers’ continued support and commitment to our young families, even if the young parent’s current progress is not in the education or career pillar.

YPP Program Enrollments & Outcomes			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Outcomes Achieved	Utilization
FY2019	562	323	57%
FY2020	577	498	86%

³ “Two-Generation Playbook “Ascend, The Aspen Institute (ascend.aspendinstitute.org)



THE WORK PARTICIPANT PROGRAM

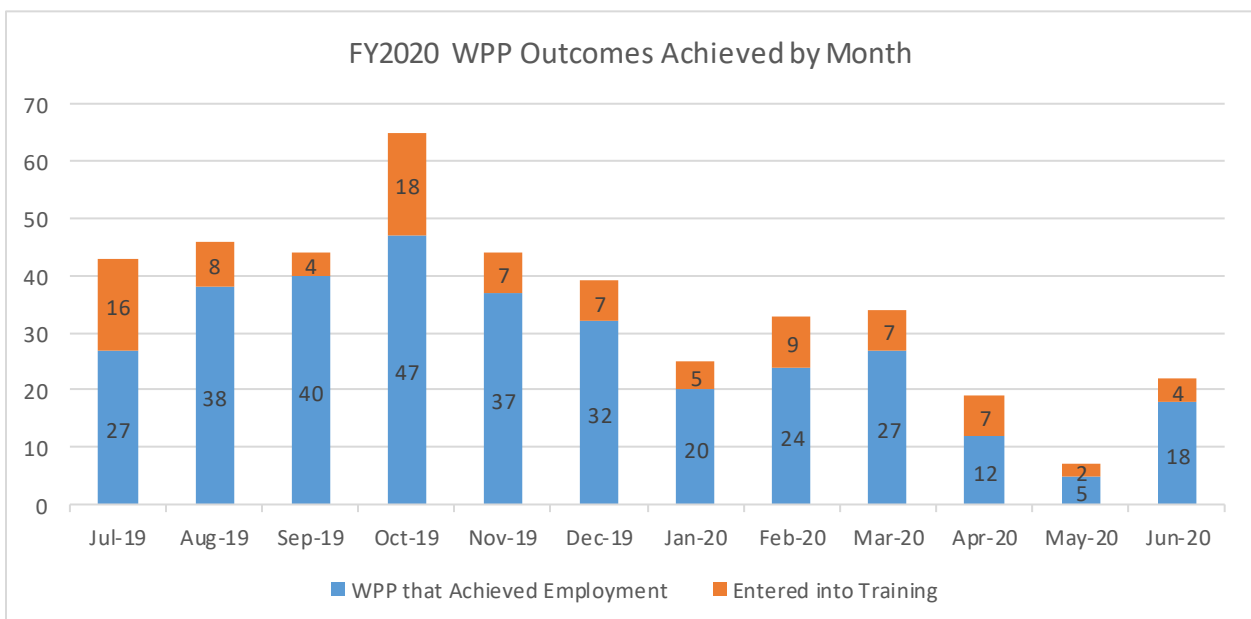
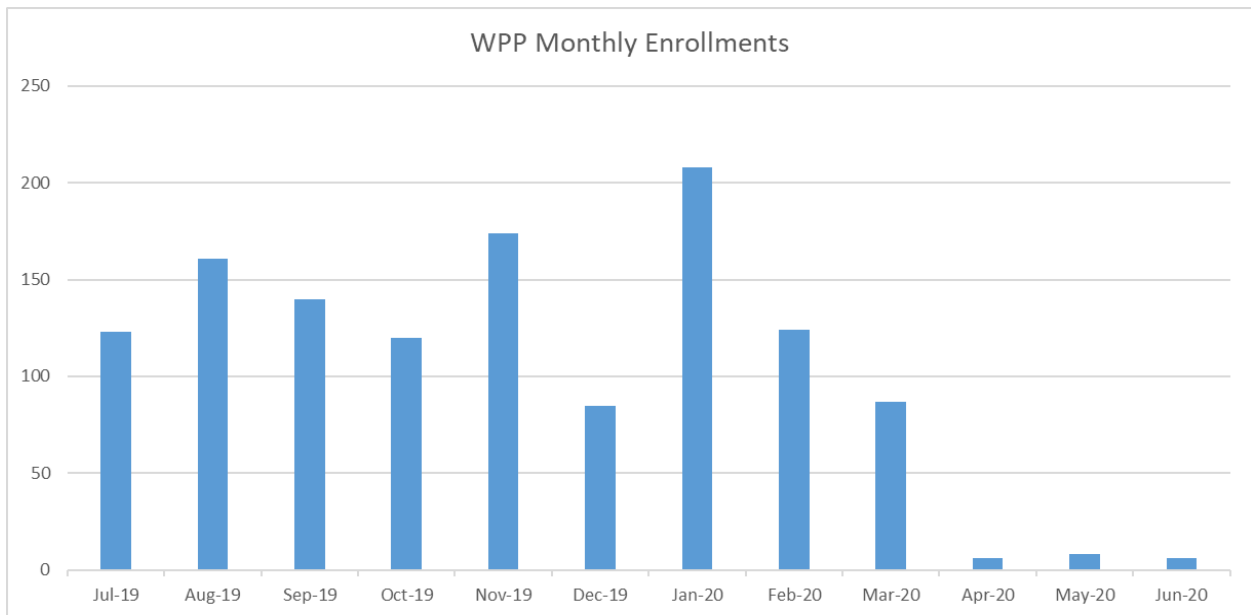
DTA is an essential partner in Massachusetts’ implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA seeks to integrate states’ workforce systems to better serve employers and jobseekers. Signed into law in 2014, WIOA reauthorized the nation’s employment, training, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs for the first time in 16 years. WIOA’s emphasis is on targeting low-income adults and youth with limited training and skills as well as individuals with disabilities to help them overcome barriers to economic success.

Since the passage of WIOA, DTA has worked closely with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) to implement a new, more integrated system of workforce development for DTA clients and other priority populations with significant barriers to work. The aim of this collaboration is to:

- Develop meaningful pathways to work and economic mobility for low-income, disabled and chronically un/underemployed individuals/families, and
- Ensure that DTA clients and families with significant barriers can access the workforce system with the support needed to attain and sustain employment.

Through this partnership, both TAFDC and SNAP clients can access additional employment supports through the network of MassHire Career Centers. Located throughout Massachusetts, each MassHire Career Center offers services to DTA clients through the Work Participant Program (WPP). Through WPP, clients receive access to individualized career counseling and guidance, workshops, job fairs, employer recruitment, and access to free resources to assist with their job search and applications.

In FY20, DTA invested \$1M in career services for our clients through WPP. Since the execution of the preliminary ISA in FY17, this partnership has resulted in progress. The percent of the MassHire customer base who are also TANF and SNAP clients has doubled from 6% to more than 12%. When the pandemic forced most MassHire Centers to close to in person services and begin the shift to virtual delivery in March 2020, the enrollment numbers as well as the employment outcomes from the WPP program significantly declined. In FY21, DTA is working in collaboration with the network of MassHire Centers to conduct strategic outreach to shared clients to promote new enrollment and align employment service delivery. These efforts have resulted in 187 new enrollments into WPP between July and December.



EMPOWERING TO EMPLOY

Empowering to Employ is a partnership between DTA and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) that maximizes employment opportunities for workforce engagement for TAFDC families and clients with disabilities. This initiative was launched on July 1, 2018, with a shared commitment to establish an integrated employment model for individuals with disabilities receiving TAFDC leading to sustained employment, economic independence, and family stability.

DTA and MRC use a jointly-funded model of client engagement and intensive co-case management to provide individualized and meaningful services with the goal to:

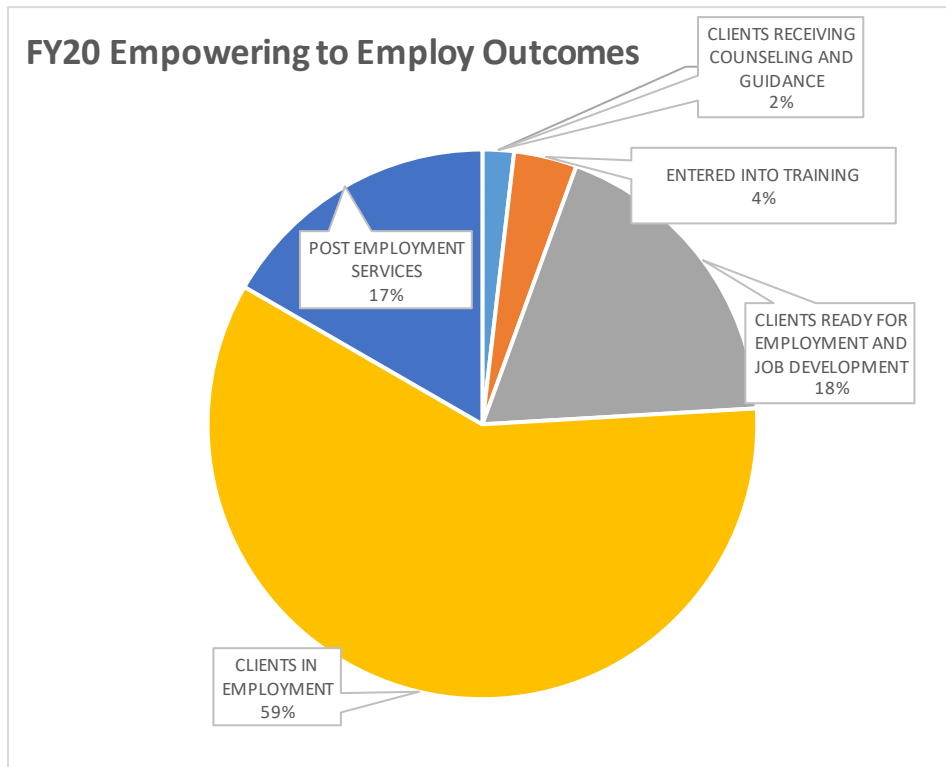
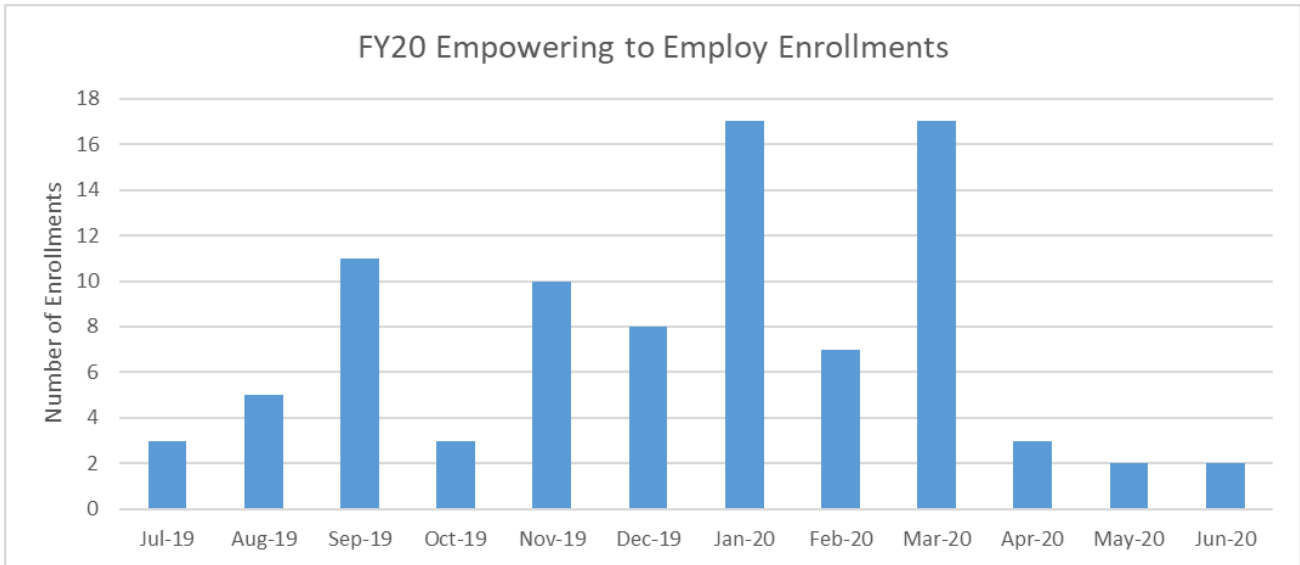
- Shift the paradigm from *exemption* due to a disability to individualized vocational *supports* needed for employment,
- Work in partnership with local teams to identify “best practices” for improved employment-related outcomes for clients with disabilities and their families,
- Engage and sustain TAFDC clients in meaningful employment-related activities that lead to jobs in high demand industries,
- Develop and “test” an intensive co-case management model to promote, engage, and support clients on their path to economic stability.

Although DTA clients have always had access to MRC services, this initiative streamlines the enrollment process and allows DTA to take a targeted approach to connecting potential participants. Both agencies have been committed to learning each other’s services, developing strategies to blend agency strengths and creating a process to meet the needs of individuals and families, with the goal of connecting participants to the workforce.

In FY20, the ISA provided funding for MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Job Placement Specialists in five designated DTA office locations: Quincy, Lawrence, Brockton, North Shore (located in Salem), and Fitchburg.

Services continue to be provided remotely in response to COVID-19. MRC was able to use their technology initiative to provide job-seekers with the technology necessary in today’s new remote environment to increase participation in Empowering to Employ. Local MRC/DTA teams continue to work together to strategize new opportunities for recruitment and the Lawrence ETE team was recognized by both MRC and DTA during Performance Recognition Events held by both agencies.

The pandemic has slowed the number of new applicants to the Empowering to Employ program, as illustrated in the graph below. In March of 2020, all DTA local offices transitioned to virtual services. In the first quarter of FY20, the Empowering to Employ Program had 95 active clients in the program; 54 clients in the ETE program achieved successful outcomes which equates to 59% of program participants entering successful employment.



ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED SUPPORTS & SERVICES DURING COVID-19

Recognizing that many families are not able to participate in employment and training programming due to the ongoing public health emergency DTA is not currently imposing penalties for non-participation. However, DTA’s Full Engagement Workers (FEWs) continue to conduct outreach to TAFDC clients to assess their economic goals and connect those who are able to participate to employment and training programs. Through distance learning, virtual training and

workforce services, participants are able to upskill/reskill in response to the changing economy associated with COVID-19 and prepare for the new and emerging job market post-pandemic.

Eligible TAFDC clients choosing to participate in most work-related activities, or any of the ESP programs listed above, continue to have access to the following supports as needed: childcare referrals, transportation benefits of \$80 per month, learning disability screening and assessments, Hi-SET vouchers for both in person and remote testing options, and information about the benefits of employment and eligibility for tax credits via the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Earned Income Credit (EIC).

Eligible former TAFDC clients who have transitioned to employment receive the following supports: Transitional Child Care referrals and information about the benefits of employment and eligibility for tax credits via EITC and EIC. Most also receive Transitional Benefit Alternative (TBA) SNAP benefits, which provides additional nutritional supports as former clients transition to work.

DTA provides Transitional Support Services (TSS) to support employment retention and prevent the need to return to TAFDC for clients whose case closed due to earnings. TSS includes Work Related Expense and Transportation stipends which begin when a case has been closed for 30 days. TSS stipends are available for a period of four months, in amounts that decrease over the TSS period. The Work-Related Expense stipend is \$200 in the first month, decreasing by \$50 over the next three months, ending in a \$50 stipend in the fourth month. The Transportation stipend is \$80 in the first month, decreasing by \$20 over the next three months, ending in a \$20 stipend in month four.

These small, but meaningful, supports help to mitigate the “cliff effect” many clients face when transitioning off TAFDC and allow clients to experience the benefits of work, a critical support during and post-pandemic.

2-Gen Economic Mobility Programs for High Risk Youth

The 2-Gen approach recognizes that outcomes for parents and children are intertwined and cannot develop independently of one another. A 2-Gen approach is of the utmost importance both during our response to the public health emergency and as we plan for employment supports post- pandemic, as it is necessary to address not only the current economic disparities, but how those disparities will continue to affect future generations.

In the FY21 GAA, \$2.5M was allocated to DTA to administer a 2-Gen grant program that supports economic mobility among high-risk young parents. In support of this allocation, DTA is entering into an ISA with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to support the Massachusetts Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative (MPPTI). MPPTI provides multidisciplinary, team-based case management for young parents in 10 communities in Massachusetts, with a goal of increasing life opportunities and enhancing family stability among expectant adolescents and young families in priority populations and communities. DPH has operated MPPTI for over 10 years, and DTA began their support of the program through a budget transfer in the middle of FY21. As a result

of this new funding, DPH will procure 3-8 new providers in high priority areas to meet the programs goals. At this time, outcomes associated with the expanded funding are unavailable as the process for procuring new partners is currently underway.

DTA looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with our providers and partners to reform policies that get in the way of families achieving their goals; expand and diversify employment services programming options for TAFDC clients through new initiatives and partnerships; and exploring new approaches to engaging families.