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Secure Jobs Report

April 2021



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
SECURE JOBS REPORT
APRIL 2021

REPORT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to line-item 4400-1020 of the FY2021 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is required to submit the following report on the status of its Secure Jobs Program.

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. DTA offers a comprehensive system of programs and supports to help individuals and families achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, 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.

PROGRAM HISTORY

Secure Jobs was created in 2013 through a partnership between the Fireman Foundation and the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness to address both homelessness and joblessness. Initially targeting families participating in the HomeBASE Rental Assistance Program, Secure Jobs brought together state agencies, homeless providers, and workforce development agencies to support families in increasing their economic mobility by connecting them with housing supports and community-based providers. Secure Jobs providers focus on helping families become employment ready, while addressing any barriers that may interfere with their economic mobility goals. 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.

The initial evaluation of the Secure Jobs demonstration program found that the program is the right fit for parents who are ready, willing, and able to work, and that individualized service delivery is critical to success. Additionally, providing strong connections to employers allowed participants to obtain employment and strong retention services helped participants stay employed.

Between FY15 and FY17, the Legislature appropriated funding for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to execute contracts with provider agencies to deliver services for individuals and families receiving support from DHCD's Emergency Assistance (EA) program, the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), the HomeBASE program, or the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program.

In the FY18 GAA, administration of the Secure Jobs program was transferred to DTA. Working collaboratively with DHCD, the program continues to support individuals and families that are served by DHCD programs.

The theory of change for Secure Jobs is that a focus on employment can shorten the length of stay in shelter and expedite the attainment of permanent housing, contributing to upward economic mobility and family stability. Outcomes for Secure Jobs participants are expected to be achieved across the following key domains:

1. Education and Career,
2. Housing and Economic Stability, and
3. Family Stability and Well-Being.

DTA takes a “two-generation” (2Gen) approach to increasing economic mobility in all its employment programming. This approach 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.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE PROGRAM

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. DTA and DHCD have worked to align policies to reduce barriers for our shared families that support the best outcomes. Continued policy alignment is supported by the Secure Jobs Program Coordinator who provides both administrative and programmatic support in coordination with DHCD. Due to the work of both agencies to align policies and retain flexibility within the program, Secure Jobs providers were able to respond quickly at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to transition to remote services without requiring contractual changes. This ensued that the eight Secure Jobs providers across the Commonwealth could continue to individualize their services to the participant/family’s unique strengths and challenges. Each provider offers services across several established phases of job planning, readiness and placement as follows:

Phase 1 - Enrollment and Goal Setting

Phase 2 - Job Readiness and Training

Phase 3 - Initial Employment

Phase 4 - Six-month Employment Retention

Phase 5 - Employment Retention and Next Steps

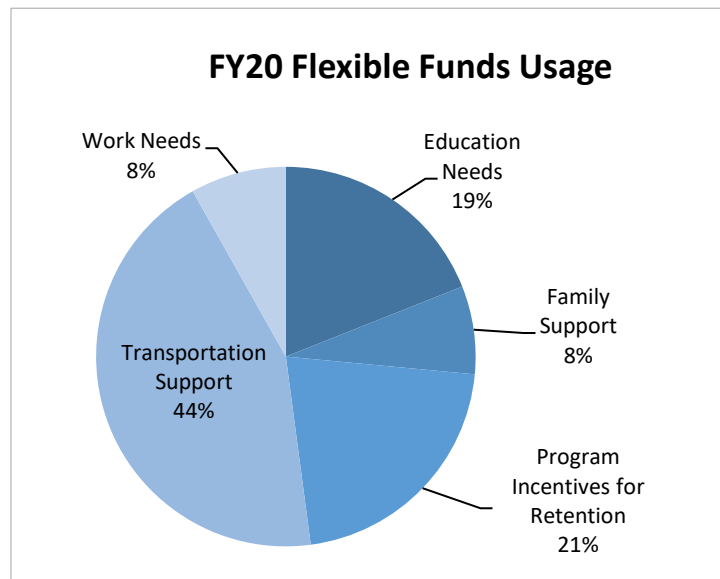
Providers enroll participants in the program phase that best reflects their status. They can adjust the specific phase as the participant moves through the program and their employment and goal setting status changes. The expectation is that providers are working with these clients to set meaningful goals for themselves and their families and are being flexible so that families feel supported in their path towards long-term meaningful employment and economic stability. Participants in phases 3-5 are employed and receiving retention support.

Secure Jobs at Work Success Story

Amelia came to Massachusetts with two young children after leaving her spouse in Puerto Rico to work. She enrolled in Secure Jobs at Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI) after being referred by the RAFT Program. CTI provided her with community resources and gave her the encouragement and stability needed to become financially stable. With this support, Amelia was able to obtain employment as a Community Coordinator and just had her two year anniversary. She maintained a relationship with CTI throughout her employment which made her eligible for a retention incentive and entry into the Section 8 raffle. Amelia and her family were selected in the raffle and are working through the application process.

The provision of flexible funds has been and continues to be a hallmark of the Secure Jobs Program. Flexible funds are included in the providers budget allocation and the providers are responsible for determining the usage and issuance with their clients. This helps to support clients who have unexpected costs related to entry into employment. At the onset of COVID-19, providers used flexible funds to support families with food, cleaning supplies, laptops, and hotspots to facilitate job search and training efforts.

In the FY21 GAA, Secure Jobs received an additional \$1M in funding, increasing the overall line item funding to \$3M. These additional funds are being used to assist families meet their basic needs as they pursue stable housing and employment through flexible funds. Some providers plan to purchase trainings to support future program participants, while others plan to use the funds to support families moving out of shelter.



Transportation needs continue to be the top category for which flexible funds are used. The average amount used per family for transportation was \$217 in FY20.

DTA’s partnership with DHCD for Secure Jobs affords a truly unique opportunity. In addition to the funds appropriated for the Secure Jobs Program, each fiscal year DHCD allocates federal Move to Work (MTW) funds to support the operation of the program.

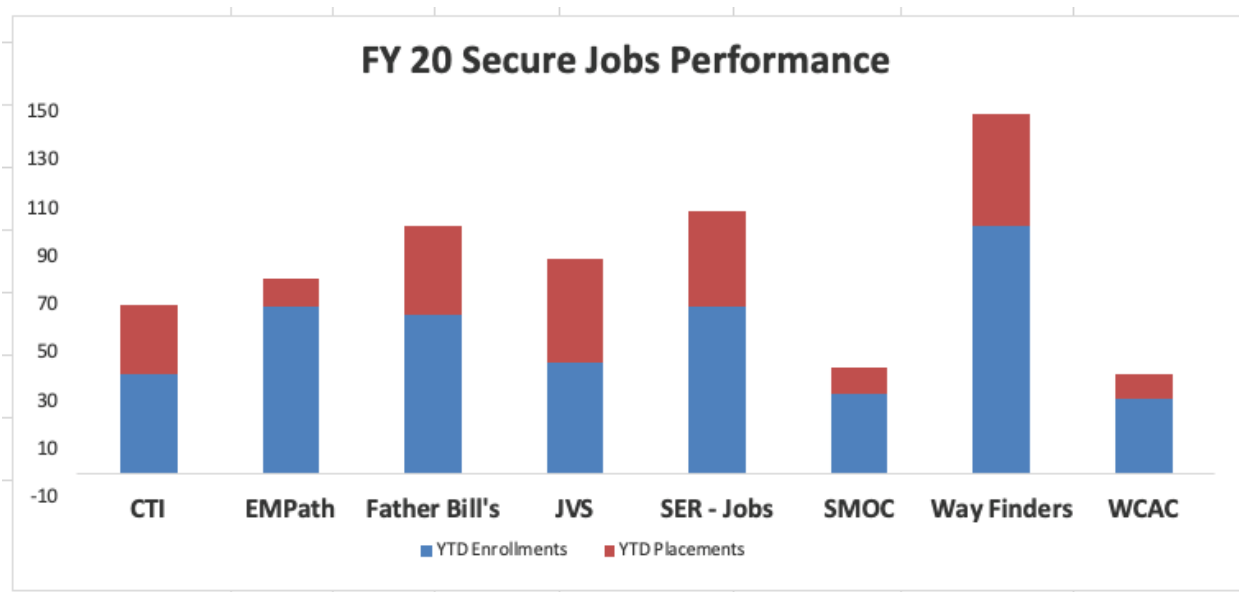
DHCD also agreed to provide 50 Mobile Section 8 Vouchers over a three-year period (FY19-FY21) to Secure Jobs participants who have obtained and maintained employment for six or more months, creating a strong incentive for program participants. As of this report, all vouchers have been released through lottery and 25 recipients have moved into new apartments. The remaining 25 are in the process of securing housing.

Secure Jobs at Work Success Story

Carla was referred to the Secure Jobs program at Father Bill’s and Mainspring through her shelter case manager. She enrolled and started working on updating her resume, interviewing, and networking skills. She was soon hired by Boston Children’s Hospital at a pay rate of \$17.50 per hour. She also accepted a part-time position at Brockton Neighborhood Health Center to help her save money for Nursing School. Father Bill’s used flexible funds to pay for her TEAS Exam and she enrolled at Quincy Community College this past Fall. She moved out of shelter this past December with the assistance of a Section 8 voucher. She is working and attending school, working towards her goal of becoming a Nurse.

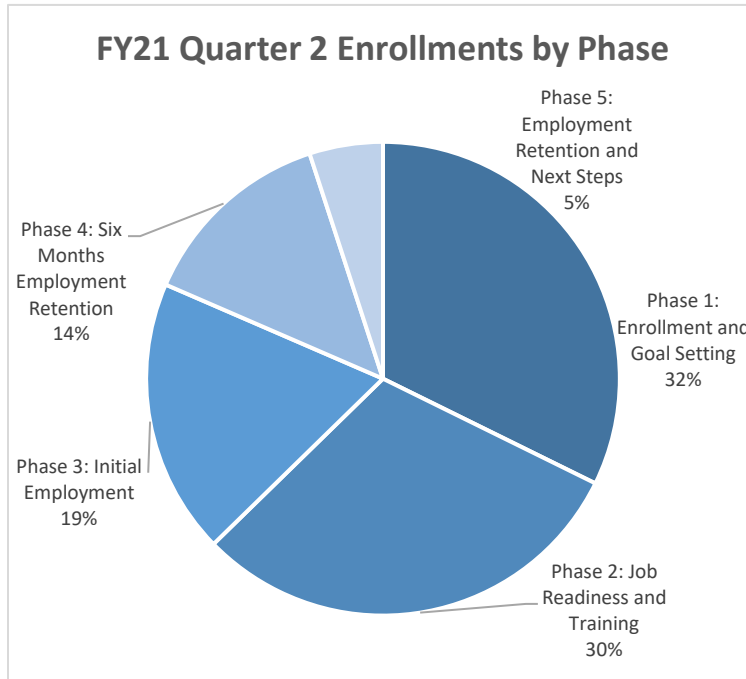
FY2020 SECURE JOBS PARTICIPANTS SERVED AND OUTCOMES

The following information is a summary of data pulled from the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) system, which is a data collection source used by all Secure Jobs providers to track and input client data. Providers track client data upon initial assessment and enrollment. During the year, ongoing monthly case management is used to document client progress in becoming housed and obtaining sustainable employment.

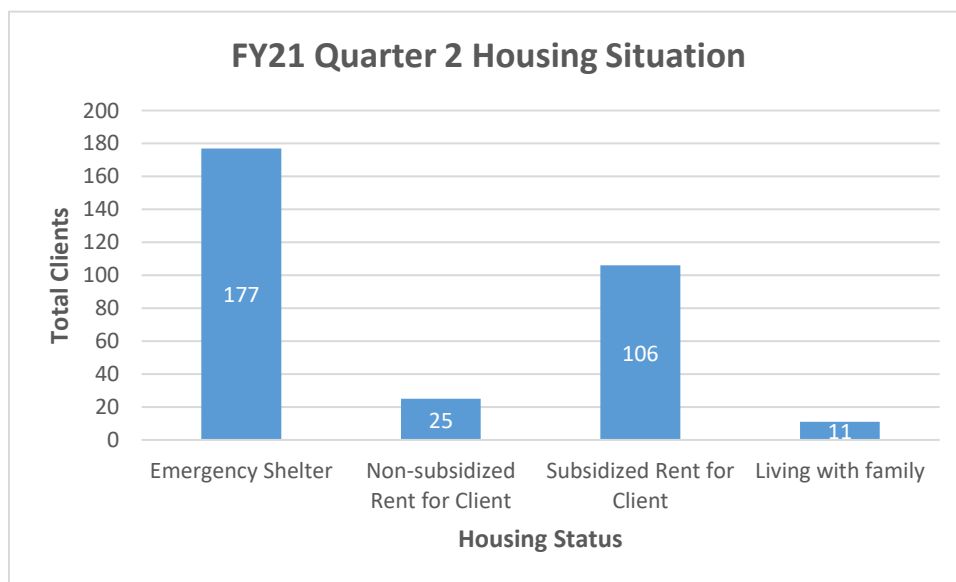


In the first two quarters of FY21, 319 participants statewide have been enrolled in the eight different Secure Jobs programs:

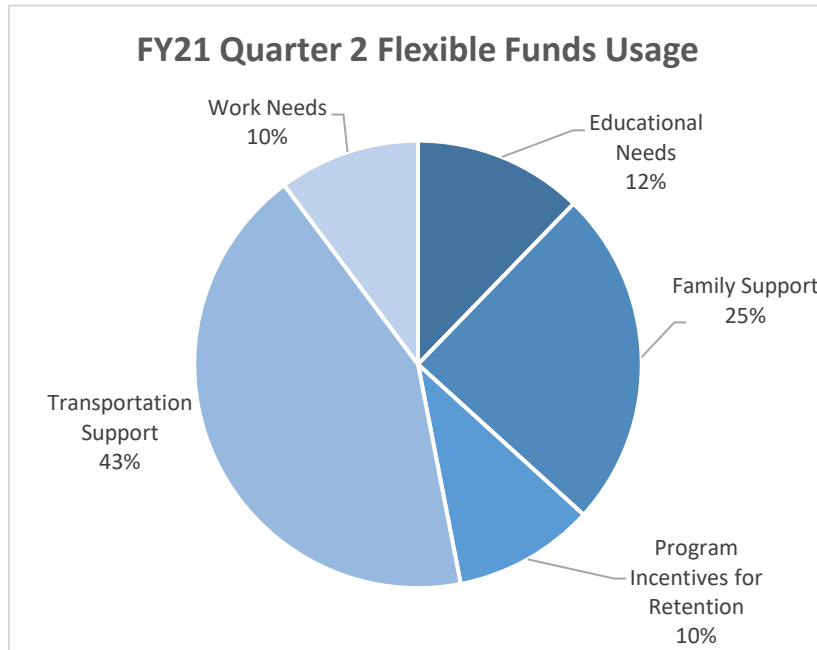
- 38% are currently employed with an average wage of \$15.66 per hour.
- 62% are in the initial goal setting and job seeking stages of the program.



As of December 2020, 55% of Secure Jobs participants were residing in Emergency Assistance Shelter through DHCD. Also, 142 families have been able to secure housing and transition out of shelter since the beginning of the fiscal year.



In the first two quarters of FY21, 49 Secure Jobs participants have utilized flexible funds. While transportation continues to represent the main utilization of flexible funds, there has been increased spending in the family support category to cover expenses likely related to the impact of COVID-19. Some providers use their flexible funds to offer incentives to retain or reengage clients who may have already found employment but could use support in obtaining an increase in their wages.



Secure Jobs at Work Success Story

Sarah was referred to Secure Jobs by Children Services of Roxbury and enrolled in the program in January 2020. She expressed interest in finding a job in the medical field but felt she did not have the credentials to do so. Her coach helped her enroll in the DTA Works Health Care Administrative Support program, which provides a paid stipend, as well as the Bridges to College program at JVS. Throughout both programs, she received educational support, mentoring, and a financial coach. Sarah successfully graduated from Bridges to College in December 2020 and recently started classes at Quincy College with plans to earn a degree in Biotechnology.

CONCLUSION

DTA and DHCD continue to work in partnership with providers to strengthen the services provided by the Secure Jobs program. Many of the original innovations, including flexibility for participants and alignment between housing and employment services, have been retained as the program continues to grow. Through DTA’s procurement of the program, and additional funds provided by DHCD, enhanced services have been made available to support greater employment outcomes and Secure Jobs programming is now available in more communities in

the Commonwealth. DTA, in collaboration with DHCD, looks forward to continuing to work in support of economic mobility for homeless children and families.