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# **Fiscal Year 2017 Report on Standard Budgets of Assistance for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children**

May 2017



**FY17 Report on Standard Budgets of Assistance  
for the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) Program**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. Legal Background**

The Department of Transitional Assistance (the Department) submits this report in accordance with G.L. c. 18, §2(B)(g) and c. 118, §2 and the decision of the Supreme Judicial Court in Coalition for the Homeless v. Secretary of Human Services, 400 Mass. 806 (1987).

Under G.L. c. 18, §2(B)(g), the Department has the duty to formulate and review annually the adequacy of its standard budgets of assistance in the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program. In formulating the annual standards the Department must establish amounts which satisfy the requirement of G.L. c. 118, §2 that the amounts are sufficient to enable TAFDC parents to bring up children properly in their own homes.<sup>1</sup>

The amounts actually paid to TAFDC families are determined by the Legislature each year when, in line item 4403-2000 of the general appropriation act, the Legislature establishes the "standard of need" and the "standard of payment."

In accordance with the decision of the Supreme Judicial Court, the Department, in order to conduct a meaningful review under G.L. c. 18, §2(B)(g), "must issue a written report which shall either provide or permit a comparison in dollars between standard budgets of assistance of each successive year and which shall discuss the adequacy of [TAFDC] grant levels in comparison with the standard budget or budgets of assistance and with changes in the consumer price index."

The Court recognized that the Department may be confronted with a dilemma in dealing with the level of payments authorized by the budget and its duty under c. 118, §2 to provide aid sufficient to enable then-AFDC parents to bring up their children properly in their own homes. The Court required the Department to respond to this dilemma as follows: "If in any year the department concludes that the funds appropriated for AFDC purposes are insufficient to permit it to furnish that level of financial aid which §2 directs it to provide, the department has an obligation to bring its inability to comply with the payment level described in §2 to the attention of the Legislature and to ask that it appropriate an adequate sum or that it provide some other solution to the dilemma."

The Court held that the Department, in determining whether sufficient funds have been appropriated to give financial assistance at the level required by §2, may consider the assistance provided to parents with dependent children not only through AFDC but also through other

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<sup>1</sup> The Supreme Judicial Court's decision concerned the standard budgets of assistance for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Under Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1995, the TAFDC program replaced the AFDC program on November 1, 1995.

financial assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps), fuel assistance, and public or subsidized housing programs.

Finally, the Court held that the Department has an obligation under c. 118, §2 to provide aid sufficient to permit AFDC families to live in a home, and that furnishing accommodations in hotels, motels and emergency shelters does not fulfill the Department's duty under §2. "While the provision of temporary emergency housing for homeless families is a necessary component of any plan to combat homelessness, housing families for extended periods in the conditions of shelters and motels is not an adequate substitute for the permanent, stable home environment contemplated by G.L. c. 118. §2."

The Court noted: "[A]s long as G.L. c. 118, §2, directs the department to provide aid sufficient to enable AFDC families to have homes, and not just necessities, the department must reasonably seek to fulfill its obligation with such funds as are available for the purposes. If funds appropriated for the purpose are insufficient or if there are no such appropriated funds, the Department should advise the Legislature and either seek an appropriation to cover the apparent deficiency or request the Legislature to take some other action that will eliminate the problem." The filing of this report is intended to constitute compliance with the Court's directive.

#### **B. The Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program**

The TAFDC program is a state-administered program that provides benefits to families and children with little or no assets and income. While its predecessor AFDC was 50% federally funded, federal welfare reform, which was signed into law August 22, 1996, replaced federal reimbursement with a federal block grant (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families - TANF). The state can spend the TANF block grant subject to certain limitations. The Commonwealth's state plan to continue operating the TAFDC program under TANF was approved by the federal government on January 28, 1997. The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 reauthorized the TANF block grant in February 2006, and there have been several subsequent extensions. On December 10, 2016, H.R. 2028 – Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017 extended funding for TANF through April 28, 2017.

TAFDC stresses work as a means to self-sufficiency. Clients are provided training, child care, job counseling and other supports, and those with earnings have a portion of their income disregarded when calculating benefit amounts. Benefits for work-required clients are subject to a program time limit (24 months out of 60 consecutive months). Teen parents without a high school diploma are required to enroll in school or a GED program, and if unable to live at home, must live in a structured living program provided by the Commonwealth where they can receive the supports they need to become self-sufficient. The TAFDC program also includes a family cap which disallows grant increases for certain additional children born after a family's initial application.

#### **C. Characteristics of TAFDC Families**

In order to evaluate the adequacy of benefits for TAFDC families, it is important to understand the characteristics of these families. Living arrangement, housing type, and geographic location also

play a significant role in determining the needs of families throughout the Commonwealth. In this report, the Standard Budgets of Assistance and available benefits are evaluated on the basis of these characteristics.

### Household Composition

Although the majority of the households receiving TAFDC are single-parent families headed by women, the program also serves other groups including "child-only" cases, in which only children are eligible for assistance; certain pregnant women and pregnant teens for their entire pregnancy; and two-parent families in which both parents are unemployed or under-employed, or one or both are disabled.

Families receiving TAFDC are determined to be "exempt" or "non-exempt" from the program's work requirement, benefit reduction, and time limit. Exempt families include the following:

- disabled parents;
- parents caring for a disabled child or spouse
- parents whose youngest eligible child is less than two or who have any child who is less than three months;
- women in their 33<sup>rd</sup> week of pregnancy and those in their third trimester of pregnancy who have a verified medical condition that prevents them from working;
- teen parents who are attending school full time;
- persons over age sixty-six; and
- caretaker relatives.

TAFDC families not qualifying for an exemption are subject to the 24-out-of-60 month time limit and the work requirement.

Clients can meet the Work Program requirements by doing one or more qualifying activities for a total of 20 hours a week if the youngest child is age 2 to school age and 30 hours a week if the youngest child is mandatory school age or older. Qualified activities include: working in a job for pay; participating in a job search activity; participating in a Department-approved education or training activity; participating in a community service program; and participating in housing search if receiving emergency shelter.

As of October 2016, approximately 75% of the caseload is exempt, and 25% is non-exempt.

### Housing Type and Location

In addition to variations in household composition, TAFDC clients' needs vary as a result of housing type and location. The majority of clients in public or subsidized housing pay a maximum of 30% of their monthly adjusted income for rent while clients in private housing pay market rates. Moreover, clients who live in metropolitan Boston and on Cape Cod are likely to pay higher housing costs than clients in other areas of the state. **Table 1** below shows the FY16 distribution of TAFDC clients by housing type and location.

**Table 1**  
**TAFDC Caseload by Housing Type and Location**

Public/Subsidized Housing, Statewide	43%
Private Housing, Metro Boston and Cape Cod	27%
Private Housing, Outside Metro Boston and Cape Cod	30%

**II. REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE AFDC/TAFDC STANDARD BUDGETS OF ASSISTANCE**

**A. Previous Standards**

This is the thirty-first report on the Standard Budgets of Assistance completed by the Department of Transitional Assistance. The first report, released in August 1986, formulated three Standard Budgets of Assistance for AFDC families in FY87. The standards were based on the components of a typical budget for a family of three including housing, utilities, food, clothing, personal care, transportation, household operation and furnishings, and other goods and services. Of the eight components, housing and utility costs generally represent the most significant strain on families' budgets. To reflect the variation in cost due to housing type and location, the Department constructs three standards to approximate living expenses for families. The Standard Budgets of Assistance for FY87 through FY16 are displayed in **Table 2**.

**Table 2  
Standard Budgets of Assistance FY87 – FY16 (Family of Three)**

Year	Public/Subsidized Housing	Private Housing Inside of Metro Boston and Cape Cod	Private Housing Outside of Metro Boston and Cape Cod
FY87	\$7,745	\$11,117	\$10,373
FY88	\$9,430	\$11,705	\$10,920
FY89	\$9,922	\$12,570	\$11,708
FY90	\$10,484	\$13,325	\$12,408
FY91	\$10,953	\$14,054	\$13,074
FY92	\$11,449	\$14,572	\$13,560
FY93	\$11,601	\$14,833	\$13,794
FY94	\$11,956	\$15,168	\$14,110
FY95	\$12,110	\$15,319	\$14,250
FY96	\$12,284	\$15,607	\$14,520
FY97	\$12,540	\$16,094	\$14,964
FY98	\$12,833	\$16,604	\$15,427
FY99	\$13,039	\$16,991	\$15,791
FY00	\$13,264	\$17,468	\$16,231
FY01	\$13,887	\$18,061	\$16,777
FY02	\$14,733	\$18,935	\$17,576
FY03	\$14,269	\$19,487	\$18,050
FY04	\$14,927	\$20,015	\$18,536
FY05	\$15,427	\$20,529	\$19,015
FY06	\$16,160	\$21,135	\$19,570
FY07	\$17,163	\$21,821	\$20,208
FY08	\$17,383	\$22,104	\$20,480
FY09	\$19,521	\$23,825	\$22,053
FY10	\$17,737	\$22,690	\$21,051
FY11	\$18,239	\$22,859	\$21,224
FY12	\$19,291	\$23,702	\$22,022
FY13	\$19,423	\$24,014	\$22,321
FY14	\$19,937	\$24,517	\$22,776
FY15	\$20,167	\$24,994	\$23,197
FY16	\$20,024	\$25,358	\$23,531

## **B. TAFDC Standard Budgets of Assistance**

Setting one standard for the typical TAFDC household is difficult. TAFDC families have a range of needs that vary household to household.

As noted, the single largest expense TAFDC families typically face is housing. While the three standards capture the overall variation in housing costs between subsidized and non-subsidized housing, and between living in metropolitan Boston or Cape Cod and living outside metropolitan Boston and Cape Cod, they do not account for other sources of variation. For example:

- Costs of private housing are different in each Massachusetts community;
- Families who live in the same apartment for a number of years are likely to pay lower rents than families who have moved recently. For example, a family living in the same apartment in Allston for seven years may pay much less than a family moving every two to three years in a neighborhood like Jamaica Plain; and
- Approximately 10% of TAFDC families live with another household or in a shelter at any given time and, therefore, may incur little or no housing expenses.

Similarly, the needs of TAFDC families with respect to the other components of the Standard Budgets may also vary depending on unique family circumstances.

## **C. FY17 TAFDC Standard Budgets of Assistance**

The chart below contains the FY17 Standard Budgets of Assistance. Each component in the Standard Budget has been adjusted for inflation. Adjustments are based on changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) relative to the Boston Area as determined by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In FY17, the standard budget for families in private housing inside and outside of Metropolitan Boston is 2% higher than in FY16.

Since the majority of residents of subsidized housing are required to pay up to 30% of their monthly adjusted income for rent, the subsidized housing standard includes a component for the public housing contribution that equals 30% of the total Standard Budget of Assistance. As a result, this component of the subsidized housing standard was not updated using the Boston CPI. The Standard Budget of Assistance for families in subsidized housing is 1% higher in FY17 than in FY16. **Table 3** on the next page describes the FY17 Standard Budgets of Assistance.

**Table 3**  
**FY17 Standard Budgets of Assistance**  
 (Family of Three)

<b>Budget Component</b>	<b>Public or Subsidized Housing</b>	<b>Private Housing Inside of Metropolitan Boston and Cape Cod</b>	<b>Private Housing Outside of Metropolitan Boston and Cape Cod</b>
Shelter and Utilities	not applicable	\$14,379	\$12,496
Public Housing Contribution	\$6,069	not applicable	not applicable
Excess Utility Costs	\$2,755	not applicable	not applicable
Food	\$8,446	\$8,446	\$8,446
Clothing	\$665	\$665	\$665
Personal Care*	\$206	\$206	\$206
Transportation	\$932	\$932	\$932
Household Operation and Furnishings	\$555	\$555	\$555
Other goods & services	\$603	\$603	\$603
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20,231</b>	<b>\$25,786</b>	<b>\$23,903</b>

\* Note: Because the Boston Area CPI series for Personal Care was discontinued in November 1997, the inflation rate is derived from the change in the US City Average for Personal Care items.

### **III. BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO TAFDC FAMILIES**

As part of the Department's review of the TAFDC Standard Budgets of Assistance, this report examines the types and amounts of assistance available to TAFDC families in FY17. By definition, all TAFDC families are eligible for a TAFDC grant. TAFDC families also benefit from additional TAFDC-related services and cash assistance, including a \$250 annual clothing allowance per child; a \$40 monthly rent allowance for families living in private, unsubsidized housing; and a portion of monthly child support payments if the noncustodial parent is paying a court-enforced order. In addition to benefits provided through the TAFDC program, many TAFDC families are eligible for and receive a number of other benefits, in particular SNAP benefits, fuel assistance, and housing subsidies.

While it is not addressed extensively in the discussion of benefits available to TAFDC families, it is important to emphasize the medical benefits for which these families are eligible. TAFDC families are eligible for MassHealth benefits. According to MassHealth, the average TAFDC



family of three received approximately \$12,747 in MassHealth services in FY16.

**A. TAFDC Benefits**

- TAFDC Grant – A family's TAFDC grant amount is based on the family's size and exempt or non-exempt status. The maximum TAFDC benefit level for an exempt family of three is \$593 per month (\$7,116 annually). The maximum benefit for a non-exempt family is \$578 per month (\$6,936 annually) for a family of three.
- Rent Allowance – A rent allowance is available to TAFDC clients who live in private, unsubsidized housing. The rent allowance is currently \$40 per month or \$480 annually and is received in addition to a family's regular TAFDC grant. Approximately 44% of all TAFDC households received the rent allowance each month in FY16.
- Clothing Allowance – All TAFDC households eligible for assistance in September 2016 were also eligible to receive a clothing allowance of \$250 per child. A typical TAFDC family of three is comprised of a single mother and two children, and therefore received a clothing allowance of \$500 this past year.
- TAFDC Earned Income Disregards – Families with earned income are eligible for a number of work-related deductions from their gross wages, which are used in determining eligibility and in determining the amount of the assistance grant. Approximately 6% of all TAFDC families receive the earned income disregard each month.

Working clients receive a monthly \$200 work-related expense deduction, and are allowed to disregard an additional one-half of their earnings for as long as the family remains eligible for assistance. Income disregards, in conjunction with other available benefits, allow families who are working part-time to raise their income to levels near to or in excess of the Standard Budgets of Assistance and the Federal Poverty Level.

- Child Care Expense Deduction – A recipient who is employed may receive a deduction from income equal to the expenditure for the care of a dependent child or incapacitated individual requiring such care. For an applicant employed full time, the amount allowed as a deduction is the actual cost of care, including transportation to and from dependent care, but cannot exceed \$175 per month per dependent child age 2 or older or \$200 per month per dependent child under 2 years of age. The deduction occurs after the one-half income deduction.
- \$50 Child Support Disregard Payment  
The Department returns the first \$50 of current child support collected by the Department of Revenue on behalf of the TAFDC family to the family without reducing their grant. In FY16, approximately 12% of the TAFDC caseload received a \$50 child support disregard payment in any given month. On an annual basis, a family may receive up to \$600 in child support disregard payments. The actual value of child support disregard payments differs, depending on whether or not a recipient is receiving SNAP benefits. Under federal regulations, clients receiving SNAP benefits have their SNAP benefits reduced when they receive a child support disregard payment. For every \$10 in child support received, a

family will lose about \$3 in SNAP benefits. Thus, for a family receiving SNAP, the annual value of child support disregard payments is about \$420.

- Crib and Layette Payments – A TAFDC special needs payment of up to \$300 is available to purchase a crib and layette for families with a newborn infant. In FY16 there were a total of 1,643 Crib and Layette payments made to TAFDC clients at an average payment of about \$300.
- Relocation Benefits – A relocation benefit of up to \$1,000 may be provided to secure permanent housing for a TAFDC family that has been in a family shelter, a shelter for domestic violence, or a teen structured living program for a period of 60 days or more. The relocation benefit is for expenses directly related to the family’s inability to secure permanent housing and may be used for expenses including advance rent, security deposit, rent arrearage, utility arrearages or deposit, storage, and/or moving expenses. During FY16 there were approximately 1,018 cases that utilized relocation benefits with an average benefit of \$911.

#### **B. Other Benefits Available to TAFDC Families**

In addition to benefits and allowances available through the TAFDC program, a number of other benefits are available to TAFDC families. These benefits, which are provided by or funded through other state agencies and/or the federal government, include:

- Child Care – The Department works closely with the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in order to ensure that the child care needs of the Department’s clients are met. Through EEC, the Commonwealth provides child care to TAFDC clients who are working or participating in an approved activity, such as the Employment Services Program (ESP); transitional child care to former TAFDC clients in their first year of employment; and an additional year of post-transitional child care if the former recipient is employed. After the year of post-transitional services, former TAFDC clients become eligible for income-eligible child care services. In FY16, EEC served approximately 6,000 children a month from 3,999 active TAFDC families. The average cost per slot for these families was \$8,557.
- Public and Subsidized Housing – Both the federal government and the Commonwealth operate public housing and rent subsidy programs. Approximately 43% of all TAFDC clients resided in public or subsidized housing at any given time during FY16. The majority of families living in public or subsidized housing pay a maximum of 30% of their income for rent.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Funded by the federal government and administered by the state, SNAP provides eligible families with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards that can be used to purchase food in the same manner as a debit or bank card. The maximum FY17 SNAP benefit available to a TAFDC non-exempt family of three is \$6,132. The average SNAP benefit for TAFDC clients in FY16 was \$4,212. During FY16, approximately 96% of all TAFDC families participated in SNAP. The fact that some TAFDC households did not participate may be due to a number of factors, including living with another family whose income makes the household ineligible for

SNAP benefits.

- Fuel Assistance – Administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), fuel assistance is available through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which provides fuel payments to low income families. The program represents a joint effort by federal and state government to ensure that adequate heating and energy assistance is available to poor families in the Commonwealth. In FY16, LIHEAP assisted 7,323 TAFDC families. Approximately 80% of these families were electric or natural gas utility customers who received a maximum of \$920 (average benefit of \$635), 14% were oil customers who received a maximum benefit of \$1,505 (average benefit of \$821), and the remaining customers had alternate forms of heating, such as wood and propane.
- Federal Earned Income Tax Credit – The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a tax benefit for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. Workers who qualify for the EITC and file a federal tax return can get back some or all of the federal income tax that was taken out of their pay during the year, plus a refund up to the maximum EITC level. In 2016, a worker with one child and an adjusted gross income less than \$39,296 was eligible for an EITC of up to \$3,373. A worker with two children and an adjusted gross income less than \$44,648 was eligible for an EITC of up to \$5,572. A worker with three or more qualifying children and an adjusted gross income less than \$47,955 was eligible for a maximum credit of up to \$6,269.
- Massachusetts Earned Income Tax Credit – In 2016, the Massachusetts state EITC was increased from 15% to 23% of the federal EITC that an individual receives.
- Emergency Shelter – Administered by DHCD, the Emergency Assistance (EA) program provides emergency shelter for families who have become homeless. In FY16, approximately 5% of TAFDC families received emergency shelter benefits.
- Other Benefits – Families receiving TAFDC are often eligible for a variety of other federal and state programs including: free school breakfasts and lunches to eligible low-income schoolchildren; free transportation to medical appointments through MassHealth, if needed; and food supplements to women and children at risk because of inadequate income and nutritional insufficiencies through the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.

Not all families receive all benefits, but most families will receive a combination of these benefits in addition to TAFDC benefits. **Table 4** indicates the approximate extent to which TAFDC families receive some of these additional benefits.

**Table 4**  
**Estimated Percentage of TAFDC Families Receiving Additional Benefits**  
**FY16**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Typical FY16 Value</b>	<b>Estimated Percentage of Families Receiving Benefit</b>
TAFDC Basic Grant <i>(non-exempt family of three)</i>	\$6,936	100%
TAFDC Rent Allowance	\$480	44%
TAFDC Clothing Allowance <i>(assumes 2 children)</i>	\$500	100% of eligible families
TAFDC Earned Income Disregard*	\$4,260	6%
TAFDC Child Support Disregard	\$420	12%
SNAP Benefits	\$4,212	96%
Fuel Assistance**	\$678	14%
Crib-Layette Payments	\$300	3%
Child Care <i>(family with 2 children)</i>	\$12,837	13%
*Percentage based on number of cases with earnings in October 2016		
**Based on [average?] LIHEAP benefits paid to customers with heating oil; gas/electric utilities; and other forms of heating assistance (such as kerosene, wood, propane, etc.)		

#### **IV. ASSESSING THE ADEQUACY OF BENEFITS**

This section reviews the results of efforts to improve benefits available to TAFDC families, and provides a comparison of TAFDC and SNAP benefits with the Standard Budgets of Assistance and the Federal Poverty Level.

##### **A. TAFDC Benefits and Inflation: FY89 - FY17**

Benefits available to AFDC/TAFDC families have not increased significantly since the late-eighties.

While TAFDC benefits (grant, rent allowance, and clothing allowance) for families living in unsubsidized housing were increased by a cumulative total of 41% between FY85 and FY89, since FY89 grants have been increased just once, in FY01, by only 10%. There has been no increase in the rent allowance, while the clothing allowance has been increased by \$100 per child. Thus benefit levels have not kept pace with inflation. As noted in **Table 5**, FY17 TAFDC grants for non-exempt families exceed the grants available in FY89 by 10%, while inflation for the same period is approximately 112%.

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of FY89 AFDC and FY17 TAFDC Benefits**  
**For a Non-Exempt Family of Three**

	<u>FY89</u>	<u>FY17</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Grant	\$6,300	\$6,936	+10%
Rent Allowance	\$480	\$480	0%
Clothing Allowance	\$300	\$500	+67%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,080</b>	<b>\$7,916</b>	<b>+12%</b>
<b>Inflation FY89 vs. FY17*</b>			<b>112%</b>

\* Inflation figure obtained by comparing July 1988 and July 2017 Consumer Price Indices

**B. Benefits Compared to the Standard Budgets of Assistance**

In the following comparisons of the Standard Budgets of Assistance with the benefits available to TAFDC families, only TAFDC benefits and SNAP benefits have been included. Although TAFDC families may be eligible for and receive a variety of other benefits, the majority of TAFDC families will receive cash assistance and SNAP.

As shown in **Table 6**, FY17 TAFDC benefits plus SNAP benefits are 54% - 60% of the FY17 Standard Budgets of Assistance.

**Table 6**  
**Comparison between FY17 TAFDC Benefits and FY17 Standard Budgets of Assistance**  
**(Non-exempt family of three)**

<b>Living Arrangement</b>	<b>Benefit Component</b>	<b>FY17 Benefit</b>	<b>FY17 Standard</b>	<b>Benefits as % of Standard</b>
Public Housing	Grant	\$6,936	\$20,231	<b>60%</b>
	Clothing Allowance	\$500		
	SNAP benefits	\$4,608		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,044</b>		
Private Housing Inside of Metropolitan Boston	Grant	\$6,936	\$25,786	<b>54%</b>
	Clothing Allowance	\$500		
	SNAP benefits	\$6,132		
	Rent Allowance	\$480		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,048</b>		
Private Housing Outside of Metropolitan Boston	Grant	\$6,936	\$23,903	<b>59%</b>
	Clothing Allowance	\$500		
	SNAP benefits	\$6,132		
	Rent Allowance	\$480		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,048</b>		

When a family has earned income, the total combined income and benefits as a percentage of the standard budgets will increase significantly. As **Table 7** indicates, part-time employment of 20 hours per week at the minimum wage raises family income to levels much closer to the Standards. And as mentioned earlier, the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits are also available to working people with low income.

**Table 7**  
**Comparison of FY17 TAFDC Benefits Plus Earnings and Standard Budgets of Assistance**  
 (for a Non-Exempt Family of Three with Earnings)

<b>Living Arrangement</b>	<b>FY17 Benefits &amp; Earnings</b>	<b>FY17 Standards</b>	<b>Benefits &amp; Earnings as % of Standard</b>
Public and Subsidized Housing	\$22,783	\$20,231	<b>113%</b>
Private Housing Inside of Boston and Cape Cod	\$24,979	\$25,786	<b>97%</b>
Private Housing Outside of Boston and Cape Cod	\$24,979	\$23,903	<b>105%</b>

Notes:

- Earnings based on working 20 hours per week at minimum wage: \$10/hr. July – December, 2016 and \$11/hr. January – June 2017.
- Benefits include: TAFDC Grant, SNAP, Rent Allowance, Clothing Allowance, the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Massachusetts State Earned Income Tax Credit.

**C. Benefits Compared to the Federal Poverty Guideline: FY85-FY17**

The Federal Poverty Guideline is another commonly used measure of the adequacy of benefits. In FY17, benefits—including available federal SNAP benefits—for a non-exempt TAFDC family of three with no earnings, living in private, unsubsidized housing, are 70% of the 2016 Federal Poverty Guidelines. However, as noted in **Table 8**, non-exempt families with part-time earnings and with similar housing, who utilize the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits, have income above the Federal Poverty Guideline. It should be further noted that the Federal Poverty Level only varies by family size, and therefore does not take into account the regional differences in cost of living. Massachusetts has one of the highest costs of living in the country.

<b>Table 8</b>			
<b>Comparison of Benefits for TAFDC Clients and the Federal Poverty Level from</b>			
<b>FY85 vs. FY17</b>			
(Family of Three in Private Housing)			
	<b>FY85</b>	<b>Non-Exempt FY17</b>	<b>Non-Exempt with Earnings FY17</b>
TAFDC Grant	\$4,752	\$6,936	\$2,676
Earnings*	not applicable	not applicable	\$10,920
Federal Earned Income Tax Credit**	not applicable	not applicable	\$4,370
State Earned Income Tax Credit	not applicable	not applicable	\$1,005
Clothing Allowance	\$250	\$500	\$500
Rent Allowance	\$0	\$480	\$480
SNAP benefits	\$1,884	\$6,132	\$5,028
<b>TOTAL Benefits and Earnings</b>	<b>\$6,886</b>	<b>\$14,048</b>	<b>\$24,979</b>
Federal Poverty Guideline***	\$8,460	\$20,160	\$20,160
<b>TOTAL as a Percentage of Federal Poverty Guideline</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>124%</b>
* Earnings based on working 20 hours per week at minimum wage: \$10/hr. July – December, 2016 and \$11/hr. January – June 2017			
** Federal Earned Income Tax Credit assumes a family comprised of a single parent with two children			
*** Based on 2016 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines			

## V. CONCLUSION

In FY01, the TAFDC payment and need standards were increased by 10%. Because there have been no subsequent increases, the Department of Transitional Assistance continues to face a dilemma in fulfilling its obligations under G.L. c. 18, § 2(B) (g) and c. 118, § 2 within existing appropriations. To provide TAFDC benefits to non-exempt families at the levels of the Standard Budgets of Assistance, TAFDC payment and need standards would have to be increased by 118% - 169% depending on living arrangement.

However, TAFDC families can significantly improve their position relative to the Standard Budgets if they have earnings. To that end, the Department places a strong emphasis on assisting families in building the skills needed to secure and maintain employment in order to obtain economic self-sufficiency. In June of 2016, the Department created Pathways to Self-Sufficiency (PSS). The goal of PSS is positive client engagement and targeted supports that lead to employment, career pathways and long term economic self-sufficiency. PSS has at its core that TAFDC is a transitional benefit and emphasizes the importance of working to secure economic self-sufficiency, the supports available and the benefits of not needing public assistance.