



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance*

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor


MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary

KARYN POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

AMY KERSHAW
Commissioner

**Online Guide Transmittal 2021-81
October 27, 2021**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  **Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management**

**Re: TAFDC – Full Engagement Worker and Self Sufficiency Specialist
Return to In-Person Services**

Overview

The Department remains committed to assisting all families receiving TAFDC benefits in achieving their economic mobility goals by expanding access to information on available employment and training resources, and opportunities for families to engage with the services provided through DTA's Pathways to Work Programs.

Accessibility to local office Full Engagement Workers (FEWs) and Self-Sufficiency Specialists (SSSs) is key in supporting this effort and increasing opportunities for families to engage. As the Department resumes some in-person services, it is important for families to be able to communicate with staff in the service delivery models that best suit their needs.

DTA is expanding access to Pathways to Work services by continuing to provide the flexibility to conduct engagement and work program activities such as Orientations, goal setting and ongoing program participation telephonically and virtually, while also resuming co-location of FEWs and SSSs in a community-based model to meet the needs of clients who are best supported through in-person services.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of:

- expectations for FEWs and SSSs around work activities and best practices while working in-person as part of a hybrid work schedule starting November 1, 2021.
 - co-location expectations for FEWs and SSSs in collaboration with MassHire Career Centers, TAFDC Pathways to Work providers and other community-based programs.
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Engagement Strategies

All eligible TAFDC clients must be offered and encouraged to engage in opportunities to connect to Pathways to Work employment and training programs and support services at application, reevaluation, and any time they express an interest in doing so. Engagement discussions must include exploration of the client's current goals, available programming offered by area providers, and ways DTA can help support the family by providing referrals to other resources.

Strategies for FEWs and SSSs to connect to families now include virtual, telephonic, and community-based options as the Department expands into new ways of working with families. FEWs and SSSs may interact with families to complete initial engagement activities, TAFDC Pathways to Work Orientations, client outreach and coordinated communication in the way that best meets the client's needs. Returning to in-person services for FEW and SSS activities creates space for meaningful touchpoints where a face-to-face interaction may work best for a particular client, and builds relationships and opportunities in the communities' staff work in.

**In-Person
Scheduling**

The Department is working closely with MassHire Career Centers and Pathways to Work providers to determine each site's capacity to accommodate DTA staff in-person, secure internet availability, interview space, as well as current health and safety protocols. This information will be used by the Employment and Training team to support local TAOs in scheduling in-person time.

Subject to the availability of space and most current service delivery model of the site, all FEWs and SSSs will be expected to spend 2 days in-person at a community site in their area.

FEWs and SSSs will collaborate with providers to find a schedule that works to best support co-case management and client access. FEWs and SSSs must communicate with their supervisor and manager regarding this schedule. Multiple factors may be considered such as how each program is providing services, how many providers the TAO works with and whether clients are on site regularly or only on-site for appointments.

FEWs and SSSs may split their time between providers. For example, the FEW/SSS may spend an entire day at one provider, or a morning at one provider and an afternoon at another. If working from multiple community sites in one workday, reasonable travel time between the community sites is allowed as part of the FEW/SSS work hours. Commute time to and from home not considered part of staff's work hours. Effective November 1, FEWs and SSSs will be able to continue to telework for the rest of their work hours that are not spent at a community site until the next phase of telework.

**Full
Engagement
Worker
Responsibilities**

FEWs play a lead role connecting families to education and career pathways that align with their goals. They are responsible for collaborating with case managers, contract managers and workforce partners to build a local system that supports strong referrals and co-case management.

FEWs shall coordinate with their managers and the providers in their area including MassHire Career Centers and TAFDC Pathways to Work Providers to schedule 2 days weekly at a site within their community to work.

While working in-person, FEWs will provide:

- Pathways to Work outreach and engagement activities to TAFDC families,
- co-case management and collaboration with providers to support successful program enrollment and continued progress for current participants,
- opportunities to schedule in-person appointments for goal setting and coaching conversations,
- group in-person Orientation sessions with interested TAFDC individuals and Pathways to Work providers,
- connection to support services available such as childcare, transportation, Learning Disability Assessments, high school equivalency vouchers and transitional supports to site staff or clients,
- monthly case conferencing with providers to reconcile referrals, support positive outcomes and identify clients who need to be reengaged.

For SNAP-only clients that are connected to a FEW, the FEW must ensure a direct connection to the SNAP E/T Specialist covering that TAO through email with the client's name, APID and contact information and will encourage the client to explore the SNAP Path to Work website.

In addition to the activities above, FEWs will complete all other job expectations through their state-issued equipment while at a community site when not meeting with clients or provider staff during their workday.

**Self Sufficiency
Specialist
Responsibilities**

The SSS will continue to identify and engage families within their caseload for referral and enrollment in employment and training opportunities based on the family's goals. SSSs are to continue to co-case manage regularly, both remotely and on-site with Young Parent Program (YPP), Teen Parent Program (TPP) providers and other community partners that are working with families in their caseload.

SSSs will coordinate with the YPP and TPP providers within each TAO's local area to schedule 2 days weekly at sites within their community to work. While working in-person, SSSs will:

- provide Pathways to Work outreach and engagement activities to TAFDC families, including those young parents in their caseload,
- provide opportunities to schedule in-person appointments for goal setting and coaching conversations,
- provide co-case management and collaboration with providers to support program engagement and progress of young parents to established goals,
- act as a connection to support services available such as childcare, transportation, Learning Disability Assessments, high school equivalency vouchers and transitional supports,
- act as the liaison between YPP providers, TPP providers, participants and case managers, and,
- participate in monthly case conferencing with providers to support positive outcomes and reconcile referrals.

The SSS may also partner with the FEW to co-facilitate targeted Orientation sessions for young parents, either virtually or located onsite at provider locations.

In addition to the activities above, SSSs will complete all other job expectations through their state-issued laptop while at a community site when not meeting with clients or provider staff during their workday.

**Manager
Responsibilities**

Managers are critical in supporting the work of FEWs and SSSs. They will help ensure the coordination of FEWs and SSSs schedule at the community-based sites and attend FEW and SSS meetings to stay up to date with evolving guidance and best practices.

Only young parent applications are to be assigned to the SSS in each TAO. When additional capacity exists, a local office manager may assign additional families whose case specific circumstances would be best supported by the intensive case management offered by the SSS (e.g., those who reside in emergency assistance or domestic violence shelters). FEWs are not to be assigned applications.

Managers will ensure that all staff are familiar with Pathway to Work opportunities for clients and utilize both in person and remote interactions to promote. TAO specific information for TAFDC clients can be found [here](#). SNAP-only clients should be encouraged to explore the SNAP Path to Work website [here](#) and to call the SNAP Path to Work toll free line at (888) 483-0255.

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.Procedural Issues.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
