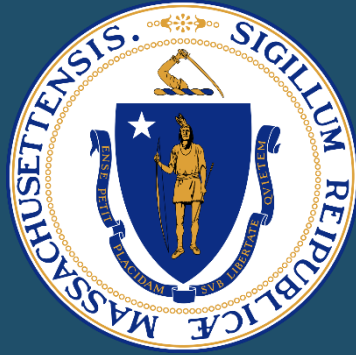


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Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Work Participation Report

October 2020



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN WORK
PARTICIPATION REPORT
OCTOBER 2020

OVERVIEW

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is pleased to submit this report on the status of the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) work program requirements, as required by section 2(B) of Chapter 18 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

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 mobility, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment supports.

DTA serves one out of every nine people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, elders, and people with disabilities.

TAFDC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

TAFDC is a state and federally funded program that provides 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 own best 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.

UPDATE ON TAFDC WORK PROGRAM REQUIREMENT

As of May 2020, 33,813 households comprised of 98,657 recipients received TAFDC. Of this total, 11,865 heads of households were required to participate in a countable work program activity and 21,948 heads of households were exempt from the work program requirement. In accordance with 106 CMR 703.150, countable work program activities include:

- Unsubsidized employment
- Subsidized public/private sector employment
- Work experience
- On-the-job training

- Vocational educational training
- Job skills training directly related to employment
- Unpaid work study or internship program
- Education or training activity, including a certificate or degree program from a four-year degree-granting higher education institute, community college or a certificate program
- Community service or combination of hours in community service and another approved work activity

Exemptions are granted based on 106 CMR 703.100 and include:

- Having a verified disability or medical condition that prevents you from working
- Having a child less than two years of age
- Being in your 33rd week of pregnancy
- Being a teen parent and attending school full time
- Being age 60 or over
- Caring for a disabled household member
- Being a non-parent relative care giver.

Each of the 11,865 heads of households required to participate in an employment-related activity reports one or more significant challenges to employment, such as:

- Lack of employment-related skills and training
- Lack of work experience
- Limited literacy/math skills
- Health Issue
- Homelessness

Families who are required to participate in the work program are only eligible to receive 24 months of TAFDC benefits in a five-year period. In accordance with 106 CMR 703.130, the Department may grant an extension of benefits beyond the 24-month limit when the grantee has cooperated with their employment development plan. Extensions may also be approved when a grantee is participating in a work program activity and needs time to complete the activity. In Fiscal Year 2020, DTA received 176 extension requests, and approved 119 of those requests.

Heads of household who are exempt from the work program requirement and have earnings received TAFDC for an average of just under 2 years. Those who are exempt and do not have earnings receive TAFDC for an average of just under 4 years. Heads of households who are required to participate in the work program receive TAFDC on average for just over 1 year whether or not they have earnings.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TAFDC WORK PROGRAM REQUIREMENT

As part of DTA's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the TAFDC work program requirement was suspended in March 2020 for all households that were not already exempt. The 24-month time limit was also suspended for all TAFDC families as the widespread closures of businesses, schools and child care centers created undue hardships that prevented TAFDC recipients from being able to comply with work program requirements.

Prior to the economic impact of the COVID-19 public health crisis, 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. During COVID-19, DTA has strategically focused our Employment Services Program (ESP) to include access to virtual programs and remote employment supports that continue to increase the skills and employability of DTA clients for when jobs become available.

While the TAFDC work program requirements remain suspended, ESP continues to be integral part of DTA’s efforts to support our TAFDC clients who are currently able to work and increase their economic mobility through virtual work-related activities.

Each year, the Massachusetts Legislature allocates funding for employment services for TAFDC clients through the ESP line item. The primary goals of ESP is to assist TAFDC clients to prepare for and connect with career pathways and resolve barriers to continued employment. Case managers continue to assist TAFDC clients to engage in virtual employment services and remote training and education programs that prepare them for employment through activities appropriate for their skill level and goals.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM OUTCOMES

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 includes:

- Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES)
- Office for Refugees and Immigrants Employment Services Program
- Secure Jobs Program
- DTA Works Program
- Work Participant Program (WPP)
- Young Parents Program (YPP)
- Empowering to Employ (ETE), a partnership with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Table 1 FY20 ESP Program Enrollments & Outcomes			
Program	# Enrollments	# Outcomes	Notes
CIES	2,619	3,019	806 30-day job retentions 511 90-day job retentions at <\$16.25/ hour 138 90-day job retentions at >= \$16.25/hour 351 180-day retentions
ORIE SP	199	156	156 total employments 121 30-day retentions 115 90-day retentions; 35 placements (above \$13.25/hr)
Secure Jobs	739	187	187 total employments

DTA Works	58	20	17 total employments 3 completed internship
WPP	1,455	444	1235 enrollments + 218 carry-ins 332 employment and 112 entered training
YPP	582	499	13 virtual training outcomes 24 HiSETS and 12 bridge to college 44 EFL achievement, 65 occupational training 10 completely 12+ credits
ETE	120	28	

Participants in work-related activities, including paid employment, are eligible to receive child care and transportation supports. As child care programs have begun to reopen in Phase 2 of the State’s economic reopening plan, DTA has worked collaboratively with the Department of Early Education and Care on the guidelines for TAFDC families in need of a referral for care. Any TAFDC family who needs child care for employment or to participate in a work activity program is eligible for a referral from DTA. Due to limited child care provider capacity during the first stages of reopening, DTA families who need child care in order to physically return to work are being prioritized.