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Healthy Incentives Program Report

March 2020



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
HEALTHY INCENTIVES PROGRAM REPORT
MARCH 2020

OVERVIEW

Line Item 4400-1004 of the FY20 GAA (Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2019) requires the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to submit a report containing a description and usage data of the Healthy Incentives 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. To do this, DTA offers a comprehensive system of programs and supports, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment services and supports.

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

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) is an additional tool in DTA's efforts to promote food security. The program provides incentives for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) clients to purchase fresh, local fruits and vegetables at participating agriculture retailers, including farmers' markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and community supported agriculture (CSA) farm share programs. Administered by DTA in collaboration with the Department of Agricultural Resources, HIP has garnered the support of a broad, diverse coalition of statewide community partners, including SNAP clients, the farming community, and public health organizations.

HIP was originally created through an award from the federal Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program, which was expected to sustain the program for three years. Participation in the program was higher than expected and the grant ran out in April 2018. Since then, the program has been funded through a line-item in the state budget.

HIP was funded at \$6.5M in the FY20 final budget and has been continually operating since the start of the fiscal year, with vendor and client participation dropping considerably after November. DTA has announced an operational pause, effective end of day February 23, 2020, in order to ensure funds are available for a May 15, 2020 restart of the program in time for the peak growing season.

Between May and November 2019, an average of 5% of the SNAP caseload (approximately 19,000 households per month) used HIP to buy fresh fruits and vegetables from local producers.

The program provides a dollar-for-dollar match, up to a maximum monthly amount, for each SNAP dollar spent on eligible fruits and vegetables. HIP incentives are calculated and instantly applied to the SNAP recipient's EBT card at the time of purchase and then can be used to purchase any SNAP-eligible food. The maximum HIP incentive that can be earned each month is based on household size (table 1).

Number of Household Members	HIP Monthly Cap
1 -2 people	\$40
3-5 people	\$60
6+ people	\$80

HIP UTILIZATION DATA

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS UTILIZING HIP

	Dates	Number of Households
Overall	April 1, 2017 to February 1, 2020	72,372
FY20	July 1, 2019 to February 1, 2020	42,486

NUMBER OF HIP TRANSACTIONS

	Dates	Number of Transactions
Overall	April 1, 2017 to February 1, 2020	978,217
FY20	July 1, 2019 to February 1, 2020	330,333

NUMBER OF VENDORS PROCESSING HIP TRANSACTIONS

	Dates	Number of Vendors
Overall	April 1, 2017 to February 1, 2020	259
FY20	July 1, 2019 to February 1, 2020	217

BREAKDOWN OF NUMBER OF HIP CLIENTS AND VENDORS, BY LOCATION

County	Count of HIP vendors	Count of HIP Households	Count of HIP Clients (Total household members)
BARNSTABLE	4	246	392
BERKSHIRE	15	883	1,551
BRISTOL	21	2,071	3,677
DUKES	2	71	94
ESSEX	12	6,873	12,633
FRANKLIN	25	1,063	1,875

HAMPDEN	15	6,904	13,199
HAMPSHIRE	23	1,217	1,896
MIDDLESEX	28	5,251	8,755
NORFOLK	7	2,397	4,005
PLYMOUTH	9	1,113	2,064
SUFFOLK	14	9,356	16,483
WORCESTER	36	4,970	9,025
Grand Total	211	42,415	75,649

*Data is from July 1, 2019 to February 9, 2020.

Some vendors (6), Households (71) and clients (84) had no associated counties and were removed from total.