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Secure Jobs Report

March 2020



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
SECURE JOBS REPORT
MARCH 2020

REPORT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to line-item 4400-1020 of the FY2020 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 nine 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 by bringing together employment and housing agencies from across the state to help homeless families increase their level of economic mobility. Five partnerships were funded across the Commonwealth that brought together state agencies, homelessness providers, and workforce development agencies. The demonstration targeted families participating in the HomeBASE Rental Assistance program. By connecting housing and workforce development services, Secure Jobs offered the comprehensive support families needed to obtain employment.

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. Further, 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 Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT).

Through the FY18 budget, administration of the program was transferred to DTA. Working collaboratively with DHCD, the program continues to serve 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 is taking a “two-generation” (2Gen) approach to increasing economic mobility for families and is using this approach in all of 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

With eight providers across the Commonwealth, each Secure Job partnership individualizes their services to the participant/family’s unique strengths and challenges. Each 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

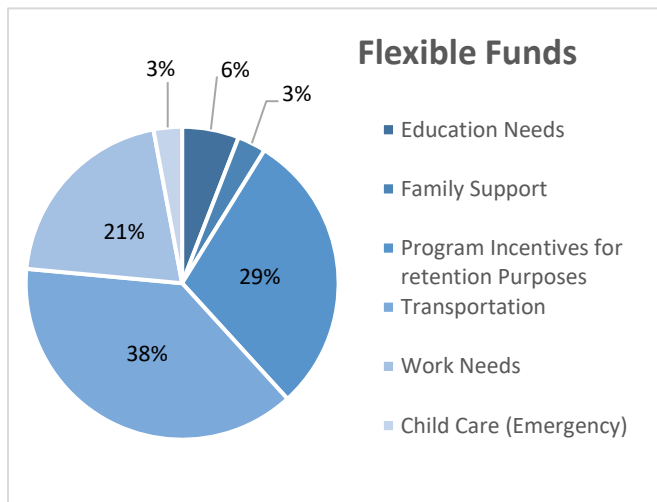
Phase 5 - Employment Retention and Next Steps.

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

Nicole M. was unemployed and living in shelter with her children at the time of enrollment with Father Bills & Mainspring. After her initial assessment, she worked with the Employment specialist on updating her resume and interview coaching. Soon after she was hired per diem as a Food Service Worker with the Brockton Public Schools. Nicole knew that to be successful in the long-term she needed to obtain her HiSet and enrolled in the GED/HiSet program at Massasoit Community College (paid for with flexible funds). She studied and passed the test! She was hired as a permanent employee for the school system and her pay increased to \$13.78 per hour with benefits. Nicole also received a Section 8 voucher and moved into her new apartment in November.

The provision of flexible funds has been and continues to be a hallmark of the Secure Jobs Program. This helps to support clients who have unexpected costs related to entry into employment.



Transportation needs continue to be the top category in which flexible funds are used.

The average amount used per family was \$196 in FY19.

DTA's partnership with DHCD for Secure Jobs affords a truly unique opportunity. In addition to the state funds appropriated for the Secure Jobs Program, DHCD was able to make federal Move to Work (MTW) funds available to DTA to further

support the program.

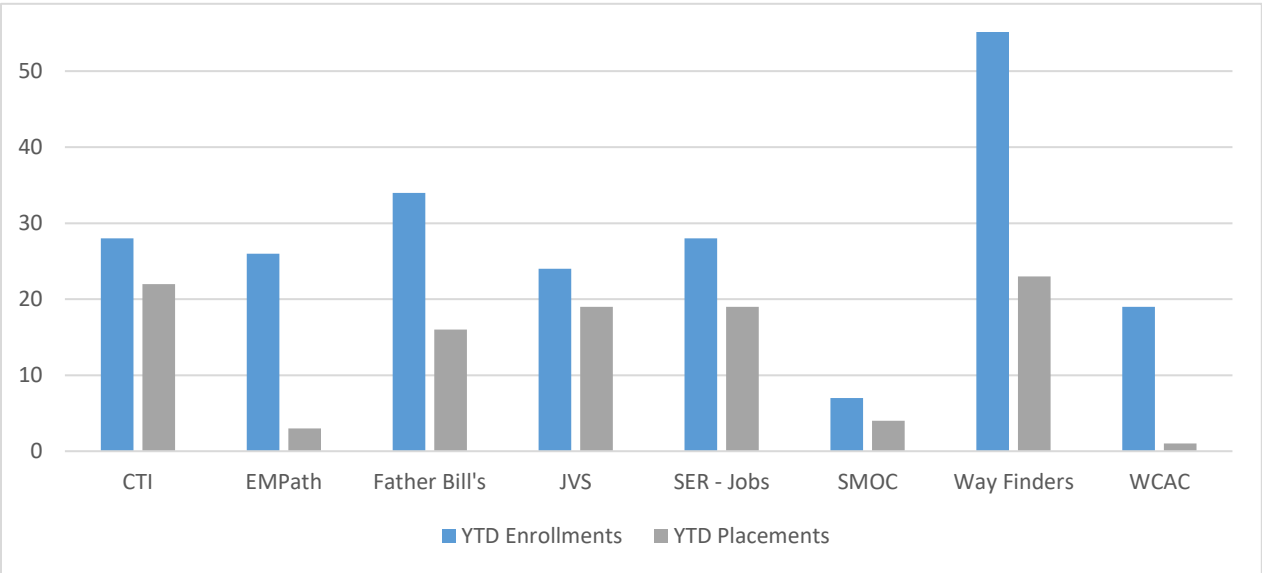
DHCD also committed to providing fifty Mobile Section 8 Vouchers over a three-year period (FY19-FY21) to Secure Jobs participants who have obtained and maintained employment for six or more months, creating a strong incentive for program participants. Participants who have achieved their employment goals enter a housing lottery performed by DHCD. Twenty housing vouchers were issued in FY19, and fifteen vouchers will be issued in FY20 and FY21, respectively.

Secure Jobs at Work Success Story

M. Bishop was referred to the Secure Jobs program at SER Jobs for Progress in July of 2019 through a homeless shelter located on Cape Cod. He is a 32-year-old male who grew up in and out of foster care as a child and found himself in trouble with the law on more than one occasion. At the age of 22 he was charged with a felony and incarcerated for eight months. Within one month of his release, he obtained sole guardianship of his daughter and from that day forward, M. was committed to providing a good life for himself and his daughter. Although M. was able to maintain a spotless record with the law, he still felt stuck in a cycle of homelessness and poverty, without any hope of ever moving ahead. Obtaining a Massachusetts I.D. had been a major barrier for him because a lien had been placed on his record (associated with the charges that led to his incarceration) and M. had never been able to pay it. With the help of the team at SER jobs, M. was able to obtain an ID by negotiating a payment arrangement using \$50 in flexible funds to make the initial payment. Although he is still in shelter, M. is currently employed full-time as a Personal Care Assistant and making strides to provide a better life for himself and his daughter.

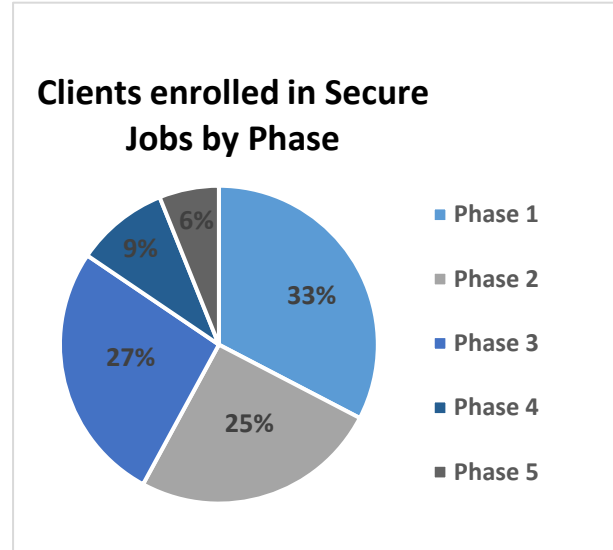
FY2020 SECURE JOBS PARTICIPANTS SERVED AND OUTCOMES

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.



As of December 2019, there were 646 participants statewide in the eight different Secure Jobs programs:

- 42% are currently employed with an average wage of \$12.93 per hour.
- 58% are in the initial goal setting and job seeking stages of the program.



As of December 2019, 59% of Secure Jobs participants were residing in Emergency Assistance Shelter through DHCD. Also, 164 families have been able to secure housing and transition out of shelter since the beginning of the fiscal year.

CONCLUSION

The Secure Jobs program was successfully transferred from DHCD to DTA during FY18. The agencies continue to work collaboratively to grow and strengthen the program. Many of the original innovations, including flexibility for participants and alignment between housing and employment services, have been retained. 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 new areas of the state. DTA, in collaboration with DHCD, looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature in support of economic mobility for homeless children and families.