Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program Brochure
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About Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) provides cash assistance and employment-related services to families with children and pregnant women, with little or no assets or income.

This brochure along with the Your Right to Know brochure, tells you about your rights and responsibilities, as well as those of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). You must tell your family members about program rules that may apply to them. If you do not understand information we give you, talk to DTA staff. If you don’t follow the rules, you may lose benefits.

Save this brochure because it is referred to in many of the letters you get from DTA. You should also save the Your Right to Know brochure.

Be sure to read all notices carefully. If you do not understand them, ask us for assistance.

If your family receives TAFDC, you may also be eligible to receive MassHealth and SNAP benefits. Your TAFDC application will serve as an application for MassHealth. You may also apply for SNAP benefits at the same time.

Work Program Requirements

The TAFDC Work Program requires adults in the family to work, look for work or take part in education or training programs for a set number of hours each week. Some adults in the family may be excused from these work activities. These adults are exempt. See the TAFDC Work Program: Your Pathway to Self-Sufficiency Brochure for more information.

If you engage in a work related activity, whether you are required to or not, we will provide you with child care and help paying for transportation.

Time-Limited Benefits

Families considered work program required, can only receive TAFDC for a limited time. Work program required families may get TAFDC for a total of 24 months during a five-year period. During these 24 months, you will be expected to work or participate in work-related activities.

If something changes that makes you exempt from the time limit, for example, you become disabled your family can get TAFDC again and does not have to wait until the end of the five-year period. You can apply for an exemption at any time.

When you have used up your 24 months, you and your family will stop getting TAFDC. Your family cannot get TAFDC again until the five-year period is over. Sometimes a family may get TAFDC for more than 24 months if the adult asks for more time and DTA approves the extension request. Extensions may be approved if you need to complete an education or training program or are participating in a work activity. Time-limited benefits apply to each parent when both parents are in the home. If one of the parents has used up his/her 24 months, then the entire family cannot continue to get TAFDC.

How Earnings Affect Your Monthly Grant

You must report that you started work within 10 days of starting work. For the first six months of your employment, we will not count your earnings. After that, your income will be subtracted from the benefit. We encourage you to work, so you have more resources to support your family.

How Other Income Affects Your Monthly Grant

Your unearned income, such as unemployment, will be subtracted from your monthly TAFDC payment. Unearned income counts in full whether you are work program required or not.

Assets

You family may own up to $5000 in assets and be eligible for TAFDC. Assets include, but are not limited to, bank accounts, life insurance and motor vehicles. DTA will tell you what assets are countable and how they are counted. Special rules apply for motor vehicles.
Child Support

Child support is a way for parents who don’t live together to share financial responsibility for their child. While you are on TAFDC, the state of Massachusetts is required to keep a portion of the child support collected. You may keep the remaining portion in addition to your TAFDC.

Your case will be referred to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR). Unless DTA decides you have good cause, you must cooperate with DTA and DOR, including:

- telling DTA and DOR all the information you know about the absent parent;
- establishing paternity (proving who the father is);
- getting support orders from a court for your children; and
- sending to DOR any child and spousal support payments received from the parent after you sign the forms giving your support to DTA.

You cannot get TAFDC for yourself if you do not cooperate with DOR unless DTA agrees that you have a good reason. This is called good cause.

Good cause applies if:

- The child was conceived as a result of incest or sexual assault;
- Legal proceedings for the child’s adoption are pending before a court;
- You are being helped by a public or licensed private social service agency to decide the issue of adoption; or
- Cooperation would result in serious harm or emotional impairment to you or the child.

Child support rules apply to mothers, fathers and caretaker relatives. A mother who does not live with the child can also be ordered to pay child support. Relatives, who are not the parents, such as an aunt receiving TAFDC for her niece, must meet the child support cooperation rules.

Teen Parents

If you are under age 20 and have a child or are pregnant, you may get TAFDC. Special rules apply to you.

To get TAFDC, as a teen parent:

- If you don’t have a high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate, you may have to go to school or be in a full-time program that will lead to a high school equivalency certificate;
- If you are in a high school equivalency certificate program for less than 20 hours a week, you must participate in another training program, work or participate in Volunteer to Succeed: DTA’s Community Service Program;
- If you are under age 18, you usually must live with your parents or another adult relative or guardian. If you can’t live with your parents for a good reason, tell your case manager. A special teen parent case manager from another agency may visit with you and your parents to check your housing situation; and
- It may also be possible to live in a structured setting (a home for teen parents), or live on your own if we decide you can live on your own.

If you are under age 18 and living with your parents who get TAFDC, you can’t get your own TAFDC benefits. The money for you and your child will be in your parents’ TAFDC benefits. If your parents do not get TAFDC, you can get your own TAFDC benefits for you and your child. Part of your parents’ income (Spanish: Parte del ingreso de sus padres) will be used to decide if you can get TAFDC.

We provide you with child care and help paying for transportation if you need it to attend school, a high school equivalency certificate program, or a work activity. If you do not want to get TAFDC, or you don’t qualify, you may still be able to get SNAP, MassHealth for you and your child.
**Domestic Violence Waiver**

If you are a domestic violence survivor, you may request a waiver from certain program requirements, such as the Work Program requirement, time-limited benefits or teen parent school attendance requirements. DTA can assist you in applying. The Domestic Violence Specialist is available to help you. There are DV Unit brochures in multiple languages with contact information if you want to talk to a Domestic Violence Specialist that covers your TAO.

**Learnfare**

Unless you are disabled, you must allow DTA to verify the school attendance of your children under age 16. This is called Learnfare. If both parents are in the home, both parents must be disabled to be excused from the Learnfare rule. To learn more about exceptions to the Learnfare rule, talk to your case manager.

**Immunizations**

You must prove that each of your children has had all necessary immunizations. If you do not do this and do not meet one of the immunization exceptions, you cannot get TAFDC for yourself. To learn more about exceptions to the immunization rule, talk to your case manager.

**Intentional Program Violations**

An Intentional Program Violation (IPV) is knowingly giving false or misleading statements or misrepresenting, hiding or withholding facts, either spoken or in writing, to get TAFDC.

If you are found to have committed an IPV, you cannot get TAFDC for yourself for:

- 6 months for the first violation;
- 12 months for the second violation; and
- forever for the third violation.

You may also be subject to criminal penalties.

**Court Convictions for Fraud**

If you are convicted of TAFDC fraud for an amount of $1,000 or more, you cannot get TAFDC for yourself. If you are convicted in a federal or state court of making a false statement about where you live to get aid at the same time in two or more states, you cannot get TAFDC for 10 years.

**Ineligibility for Felony Convictions and/or Violations of Probation or Parole, or Outstanding Default Warrants**

You cannot get TAFDC for yourself if you:

- are fleeing to avoid prosecution, or confinement after a conviction for a felony, or in the State of New Jersey, of a high misdemeanor;
- are in violation of a condition of probation or parole imposed after September 26, 1996;
- are convicted under federal or state law of a felony involving possession, use or distribution of a controlled substance and have been released from prison less than a year before applying for TAFDC. Talk to your case manager about exceptions to this rule; or
- have an outstanding default warrant issued by any Massachusetts court.

**What You Can't Buy with Cash Benefits on Your EBT Card**
It is illegal for you to use cash benefits to pay for the following purchases or services with your Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card:

- alcoholic beverages;
- court-ordered fees, fines, bail or bail bonds;
- firearms and ammunition;
- gambling;
- jewelry;
- televisions, stereos, video games, or consoles at rent-to-own stores;
- lottery tickets;
- adult-oriented materials or performances;
- tattoos or body piercings;
- tobacco products, or
- vacation services
- recreational marijuana.

Where You Can't Shop with Your Cash Benefits on Your EBT Card

It is illegal to use your cash benefits at:

- adult-oriented bookstores, paraphernalia stores, or performance establishments;
- firearms dealers;
- casinos, gambling casinos or gaming establishments;
- cruise ships;
- jewelry stores;
- liquor stores;
- manicure shops or aesthetic shops;
- cash transmittal agencies to foreign countries, or
- tattoo parlors
- recreational marijuana stores.

Penalties for violating this law include:

First Offense
You must pay DTA back the amount of the items or services.

Second Offense
You must pay DTA back the amount of the items or services AND you will lose your cash assistance for two months.

Third Offense
You must pay DTA back the amount of the items or services AND you will lose cash assistance permanently.

How to Access Your Cash Benefits at the Store:

1. Get your balance by looking at your last receipt by calling 1-800-997-2555.
2. Look for the Quest® mark on the door or window of the store.
3. Swipe your card at the check-out counter.
4. Enter your secret PIN on the number pad, then press Enter.
5. Tell the clerk how much money to enter or enter the amount yourself.
6. Check to make sure the amount on the receipt is the same as the cash benefits you used for your purchase.

How to Use Your Cash Benefits at an ATM Machine:
1. Always follow directions on the ATM screen.
2. Enter your secret PIN.
4. Press Checking.
5. Enter the dollar amount you want.
6. Take your cash from the machine.
7. Wait for your card and receipt.
   a. Check the receipt to make sure it is the same as the amount you received.
   b. Keep the receipt so you will know how much you have left in your account.

Remember:
If you make more than two ATM withdrawals in a month, your account will be charged 75 cents for each additional ATM withdrawal. You may also be subject to additional ATM fees by the bank or processor. You can avoid these fees by making your withdrawals at certain banks and ATM locations where surcharges are not charged. There is no fee for point of sale transactions.

Need help because of disability?
If you have trouble doing something we asked you to do because of a physical or mental health problem:
   • Talk to your case manager or call a Client Assistance Coordinator for help. Call 1-877-382-2363 and ask to speak to a Client Assistance Coordinator.

We may be able to give you extra help, or adjust a rule. This is called an accommodation. Talk to a Client Assistance Coordinator.