



# **Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program**



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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 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.

## **MassHire JobQuest at Application**

DTA staff will help all TAFDC applicants 18 and older register with MassHire JobQuest, the online tool connecting individuals to the Massachusetts Career Center network.

You can register online and learn more by visiting the [MassHire JobQuest](#) website.

## **TAFDC Pathways to Work**

When you receive TAFDC benefits, you are also eligible for a variety of education, training and employment programs. These programs can help you prepare for and connect with career pathways. DTA will work with you to pick the best program while providing child care, transportation payments and other supports to help you reach your goals.

Learn more by visiting [TAFDC Pathways to Work](#) on the DTA website or contacting a Full Engagement Worker.

## **Work Program Rules**

The TAFDC Work Program requires adults in the family to work, look for work or take part in education or training programs.

You may be excused from these activities if you:

- are age 60 or older
- have a child under 2 years old
- have a physical or mental health problem that keeps you from working
- care for a child or other family member with health problems
- are pregnant.

You can still participate if you choose to. Talk to a Full Engagement Worker about your goals.

## **TAFDC Time Limit & Extensions**

Some families can only get TAFDC for a total of 24 months in a 5-year period. Months you must meet the TAFDC Work Rules count toward this limit. Time limited benefits apply to each parent when both parents are in the home. Your case manager and DTA notices will tell you if the time limit applies to you.

If you still need TAFDC when you reach the time limit, you can [ask for an extension](#). Once you have used 22 months of benefits, your case manager will make an appointment to discuss an extension. If you ask for an extension, you will get TAFDC until a decision is made. There is no limit to the number of extensions you can ask for. If we approve your extension, DTA will continue to support your progress and help you transition off benefits. If we deny your extension, you have a right to appeal.

## **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

Child support is a way for parents who don't live together to share financial responsibility for their child. While you are on TAFDC, you may keep the first \$50 of child support collected, and the state of Massachusetts is required to keep the rest. 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*. DTA can refer you to speak to a Domestic Violence Specialist about this.

Good cause applies if:

- The child was conceived as a result of having sex against your will;
- There is an adoption proceeding for the child pending in court;
- You are working with a public or licensed private social agency to decide the issue of adoption;
- Cooperation would put you or the child at risk of physical or emotional harm; or
- You are caring for a child who is not your biological or adopted child and cooperating is not in the best interest of the child.

A mother who does not live with the child can also be ordered to pay child support.

## Young Parents

If you are under age 20 and have a child or are pregnant, you may get TAFDC. Parents under 20 may apply at any point in their pregnancy. Special rules apply to you.

To get TAFDC, as a parent under 20:

- If you have not completed high school or a high school equivalency certificate, you may have to go to school or be in a full-time program that will lead to your certificate;
- If you are in a high school equivalency certificate program for less than 20 hours a week, you must participate in another education or training program; DTA can help you find a program that works for you.
- If you are under age 18, you 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 part of 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 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, or another activity. If you do not want to get TAFDC, or you don't qualify, you may still be able to get SNAP or MassHealth for you and your child.

## Domestic Violence

DTA wants you to live violence free. The Domestic Violence (DV) Unit helps you achieve this goal. The DV unit can help address safety concerns. The DV Unit bridges DTA to other DV service providers. The DV Unit also helps address barriers to program participation. 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. There are DV Unit brochures in multiple languages with contact information if you want to talk to a Domestic Violence Specialist

## **School Attendance Requirements**

Unless you are disabled, DTA must verify the school attendance of your children under age 16.

## **Immunizations**

You must show 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;
- vacation services; or
- 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;
- tattoo parlors; or
- 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:

Get your balance by looking at your last receipt or by calling 1-800-997-2555.

Look for the Quest® or NYCE mark on the door or window of the store.

Swipe your card at the check-out counter.

Enter your secret PIN on the number pad, then press Enter.

Tell the clerk how much money to enter or enter the amount yourself.

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**.
3. Press **Withdrawal**.
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 three 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 banks and ATM locations where you see the Quest® or NYCE mark. You can also avoid fees if you have your TAFDC benefits directly deposited into a checking or savings account. There is no fee for point-of-sale transactions.

### Need help because of disability?

Tell us if you need help to understand or do something, we ask because of a health problem or disability. This could be mental, physical, sensory, learning, intellectual, cognitive or developmental.

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