



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Policy	
DTA-Related Child Care Financial Assistance Program	Field Operations – All Family Access Administrators
Effective Date: October 1, 2023	

DTA-Related Child Care Program

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) works in partnership with the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to meet the child care needs of children and their families who are receiving economic assistance (TAFDC) and/or food assistance (SNAP) and are engaging in work, education, training programs, or who have another qualified service need.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM - ELIGIBILITY AND REFERRAL

Eligibility for DTA-Related Child Care is determined by DTA regulations and policies. DTA will issue child care referrals to the following families with active or recently closed DTA cases who are:

- Receiving TAFDC and seeking an activity or exploring TAFDC Pathways to Work activities;
- Receiving TAFDC where a parent is working or in an approved TAFDC Pathways to Work activity;
- Receiving SNAP where a parent is in an approved SNAP Path to Work activity;
- A relative caregiver receiving TAFDC for a child in their care and working; and/or
- A former TAFDC parent whose case closed within the past 24 months and is working or participating in education or training (through DTA transitional referral).

DTA families receive immediate access through a referral and are not required to be placed on EEC’s centralized waitlist. Referrals issued by DTA will be valid for 90 days from the date of issue. If a family is unable to secure child care during this 90 day period, DTA can send an updated referral for an additional 90 days. Referrals will be sent to the CCRR by DTA staff, including Full Engagement Workers, SNAP E&T Specialists, or case managers. Family Access Administrators will then make the initial outreach to DTA-referred families within 3 to complete the child care financial assistance process.

The referral itself is sufficient documentation for the family listed on the referral to be eligible for DTA-Related Child Care and the only other necessary documentation is proof of identity, if not previously provided. Family Access Administrators will verify the identity of the parent(s)

listed on the child care referral. While a photo I.D. is preferred, if one is not readily available, any document that reasonably verifies identity is acceptable. Income and asset limits do not apply to families receiving DTA-Related Child Care.

DTA referrals have an initial eligibility period of not less than 12 months, unless the family is referred with a seeking an activity referral type. Families seeking an activity will receive an initial authorization period of 12 weeks. A 12-week provisional authorization may be issued for a TAFDC parent who is exploring Pathways to Work programs or seeking work.

DTA families will be authorized for full time child care unless otherwise noted by the referral. The DTA referral determines the service need and no other documentation is required.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM – YOUNG PARENTS

DTA may issue a DTA-Related Child Care referral to a family with a Young Parent who is ineligible for TAFDC due to the income of their parent. The Young Parent will receive immediate access to child care financial assistance and will not be placed on the waitlist. The DTA referral is sufficient documentation for the family to be eligible for DTA-Related Child Care without additional documentation to meet income, service need, residence, and household requirements. Young Parents with a DTA referral will not be assessed a parent fee. For more information about how child care financial assistance serves Young Parents and their families, please see Income Eligible policies.

Family Access Administrators are available to inform and counsel Young Parents on their Child Care Financial Assistance Program choices, services provided, and participation requirements.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM – TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

DTA families who receive TAFDC and/or SNAP and participate in a Pathways to Work Program, or a TAFDC parent who is working, will be eligible to receive transportation funding through EEC when available. Family Access Administrators will work with DTA families to assist them to determine how to best meet their family's needs for transportation, in accordance with the Income Eligible-Transportation policies.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM - PARENT FEES.

DTA families who receive TAFDC and/or SNAP and participate in a Pathways to Work Program, or a TAFDC parent who is working, will not be charged any parent fees. This fee exemption shall continue until the end of the DTA-Related Child Care authorization.

DTA families with a transitional DTA referral will not be charged a parent fee in the initial 12-month transitional authorization period. A parent fee will be assessed during the second 12-month transitional authorization period using the Income Eligible Parent Fee Schedule. For additional information about parent fees, please see Income Eligible Program policies.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM - CHANGE REPORTING

Family Access Administrators will work together with DTA staff to ensure families are informed about how and when to report certain changes that occur during a DTA-Related Child Care authorization. These changes must be reported to the DTA staff within 30 days of the change. DTA staff will notify the Family Access Administrator as soon as a change is reported by a family. DTA will not be required to continue reporting changes to the Family Access Administrator after the closure of a family's DTA case. Changes that occur during the DTA-Related Transitional Authorization must be reported directly by the family to the Family Access Administrators.

Changes that must be reported include:

- Household income resulting in the family's income exceeding 85% SMI;
- Family contact information;
- Child custody arrangements;
- Household composition for more than 30 total days in a 12-month authorization;
- State residency; and
- A change or discontinuation of a parent's work, training, or education participation that is expected to last for more than 12 weeks.

If a change is reported that requires the issuance of a new DTA-Related Child Care referral, such as a new child being born or a change in a child's custody arrangement, the Family Access Administrator will notify the appropriate DTA staff. A child's placement will not be disrupted while a new referral is being issued unless a change is requested by the family.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM – ATTENDANCE

Once authorized, families will work with their selected provider to enroll their child and establish a schedule that meets their child and family needs, and that is in alignment with their authorization (i.e., full or part-time care). Providers will receive payment based on the family's enrollment.

An absence is defined as any day that a child is authorized to attend an early education and care program but is not in attendance. When a child will be absent from care, the family must let the provider know.

A DTA family's financial assistance should not be terminated without contacting the DTA Case Manager or Full Engagement Worker and receiving approval from EEC.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM – APPROVED BREAK IN CARE

Families may request an Approved Break in Care to suspend their financial assistance for up to 90 days.

Family Access Administrators must offer a family an Approved Break in Care if their child will not attend care due to an event of more than two weeks in length, including but not limited to:

- An extended illness or medical procedure;
- A visit to a non-custodial parent; and
- An extended vacation.

Parent(s) have the right to opt out of an Approved Break in Care.

Providers are not required to hold a child's space at the program during an Approved Break in Care. If a space is no longer available at the family's provider of choice, a Family Access Administrator will support the family to transfer to a new provider of their choosing.

Families returning from an Approved Break in Care during their current 12-month authorization do not need to reauthorize prior to returning to care and will not need a new referral from DTA, unless the 12-month authorization expired during the Approved Break in Care.

If a family does not return from an Approved Break in Care within the established time period, the family's 12-month authorization ends and the family's child care financial assistance will be terminated.

- If the family returns at any time with a DTA referral, the family will be enrolled following the DTA related child care policy
- If the family returns and no longer has eligibility through DTA-related or DTA Transitional Child Care, then the family will be subject to Income Eligible guidelines and will be placed on the waitlist

If a child has been absent from care, and the provider has not been able to communicate with the family for more than 30 consecutive days during a 12-month authorization, or more than 20 days during a 12-week provisional authorization, and the family has not requested and received an Approved Break in Care, the family's child care financial assistance may be terminated.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM - REAUTHORIZATION AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

DTA may re-authorize a family for an additional 12-months if the family continues to receive TAFDC. This DTA-related referral may be completed up to 60 days prior to the end date of the expiring authorization. Families do not need to complete a reauthorization in person. Virtual and telephonic options must be made available. A child's placement will not be disrupted while a new referral is being issued unless a change is requested by the family.

DTA families who receive SNAP and participate in a Path to Work program may be reauthorized through the Income Eligible Child Care Program and do not need to be placed on the waitlist, provided the family continues to meet the program's eligibility requirements.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE PROGRAM – TRANSITIONAL CHILD CARE

DTA families are eligible for access to Transitional Child Care for up to 24 months following the closure of the DTA case. DTA may authorize a family for the initial 12-month transitional period

following the TAFDC case closure. The DTA referral is sufficient documentation for the family to meet income, service need, and residence during the initial 12-month period and the family should not be assessed a parent fee. Families who seek access following the initial 12-month period will receive priority access to child care financial assistance for one additional 12-month period through continuity of care. The Family Access Administrator will assess the family according to the income eligible guidelines and the parent may be required to pay a fee.

A family is eligible to receive DTA-Related transitional child care even if the family has not received a referral during the open case. DTA families who are within the 24-month period after their case closure are eligible for Transitional Child Care and should not be placed on the waitlist.

During the Transitional Child Care period, if a Family Access Administrator becomes aware of a DTA case reopening for a family, they must inform the family of their possible eligibility for DTA-Related Child Care and direct the family to contact their DTA case manager or Full Engagement worker to discuss their eligibility and referral if the family is interested: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-children-families/locations>.

Families wishing to continue their child care financial assistance at the end of the family's DTA-related Transitional Child Care will be eligible for continuity of care through the Income Eligible Child Care Program, provided the family continues to meet the program's eligibility requirements. Family Access Administrators will work with said families to determine their eligibility for Income Eligible Child Care.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE – DENIAL, TERMINATION, REQUEST FOR REVIEW

Families who wish to appeal the denial or termination of their DTA-Related Child Care referral have the right to do so through the DTA Fair Hearing Process, in accordance with DTA regulations and policies.

Families who wish to appeal the denial or termination of their Income Eligible Child Care Financial Assistance, including families experiencing homelessness and young parents, have the right to request an EEC review, in accordance with the Income Eligible Denial, Termination, and Request for Review policies.

DTA-RELATED CHILD CARE – COMMUNICATIONS

DTA will work collaboratively and in partnership with Family Access Administrators to ensure access to timely and dignified services. DTA will provide the name and contact information of the appropriate CCRR to coordinate the child's enrollment. After receiving the referral from DTA, the Family Access Administrator will make the initial outreach to the family to obtain a voucher. The CCRR will help the parents navigate resources and identify a child care provider of their choice, if needed.

Families will be notified of the end of their authorization period in writing and within 60 days of the family's eligibility period. Family Access Administrators will notify families at least twice that their eligibility period is ending. At least one of these notifications must be in writing and be provided no fewer than 60 days prior to the end of a family's eligibility period.

Family Access Administrators will send all notifications to families through at least two forms of communication, including phone, text, email, and/or US mail.