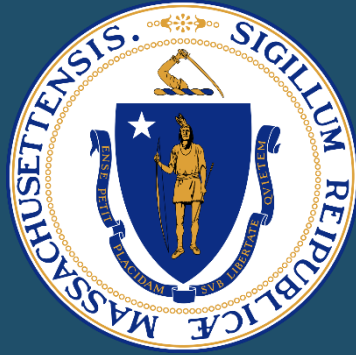


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**Karyn Polito**  
Lieutenant Governor



**Marylou Sudders**  
Secretary

**Jeff McCue**  
Commissioner

# Report on Agency Paper Reduction Efforts

**March 2019**



# **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE REPORT ON AGENCY PAPER REDUCTION EFFORTS**

*MARCH 2019*

## **OVERVIEW**

Section 32 of Chapter 158 of the Acts of 2014 required the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to “develop, implement and maintain a plan to reduce the use of paper records and documentation and to eliminate the sole reliance on such paper records for its operations.”

## **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 eight people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, elders, and people with disabilities.

## **ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT CENTER**

In 2014, DTA partnered with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and MassHealth to implement an Electronic Document Management Center (EDMC). Located in Taunton, EDMC serves as the backbone of DTA’s paper reduction efforts. In conjunction with DTA’s business process redesign, EDMC was established with a focus on streamlining client case processing by DTA caseworkers throughout the Commonwealth.

Today, EDMC plays a vital role in the day to day operations of the agency. All physical mail sent to local transitional offices is rerouted to EDMC for digital scanning and indexing. DTA monitors the volume of documents handled by the EDMC each year. The following table displays annual volume of documents handled by EDMC by document source.

<b>EDMC Document Source</b>	<b>2015 volume</b>		<b>2016 volume</b>		<b>2017 volume</b>		<b>2018 volume</b>	
<i>Mail</i>	920,589	<b>42%</b>	572,786	<b>25%</b>	541,775	<b>20%</b>	392,258	<b>15%</b>
<i>Electronic Fax</i>	607,960	<b>28%</b>	552,997	<b>24%</b>	452,561	<b>17%</b>	346,419	<b>13%</b>
<i>Multi-functional device scan from DTA local office</i>	670,300	<b>30%</b>	1,186,082	<b>51%</b>	1,363,839	<b>50%</b>	1,190,791	<b>46%</b>
<i>DTA Connect mobile application</i>	0	<b>0%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>	369,004	<b>14%</b>	651,109	<b>25%</b>
<i>DTA Connect web-based application*</i>	0	<b>0%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>	0	<b>0%</b>	21,412	<b>1%</b>
<b>TOTAL**</b>	<b>2,198,849</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,311,865</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,727,179</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,601,989</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*An enhanced DTA Connect web-based application was launched publicly in April 2018*

*\*\* Each document averages 7 pages*

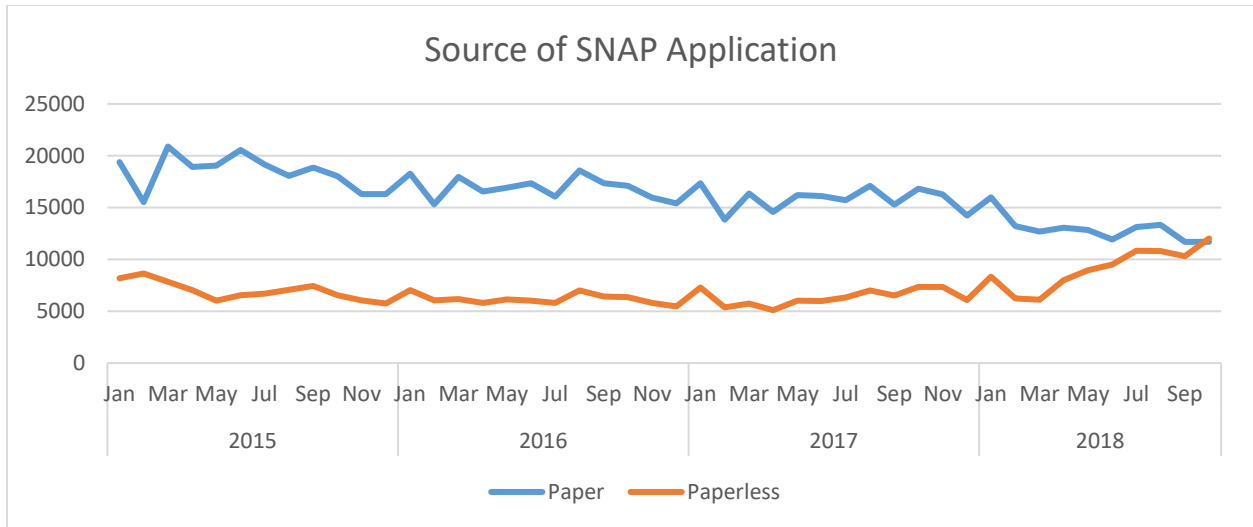
Since 2015, there has been a significant shift in the type of documentation that is handled by the EDMC each year. The amount of paper-based documentation, like mailed and faxed documents, have decreased by nearly half since 2015. Conversely, the number of paperless documents, including scanned documents and documents submitted digitally, has almost tripled. Today, more than 70% of the documents processed by the EDMC are received via paperless sources.

### **ADVANCES IN ELECTRONIC CASE MANAGEMENT**

In 2017, the DTA Connect mobile application functionality was expanded to allow clients to submit documents to the EDMC. As a result, more than 369,000 documents were received by EDMC via mobile application document submissions, which accounted for 14% of the total number of documents processed in 2017. By the end of 2018, the number of mobile application document submissions almost doubled to 651,109 or 25% of the total number of documents received by EDMC in that time.

In April 2018, DTA launched an enhanced web-based version of DTA Connect. This online portal provides all the same functionality as the mobile application, while also providing an interactive online application for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The

Due at least in some part to these enhancements, DTA is seeing a recognizable shift in the way that SNAP clients are engaging with the Department. The following chart displays the number of paper-based and paperless SNAP applications received monthly by the department since 2015. There is a notable change in early 2018, coinciding with the release of the enhanced DTA Connect web-based portal, where paperless application submissions begin to trend upwards. By September 2018, paperless SNAP applications exceeded the number of paper applications for the first time in the Department's history.



As of July 1, 2018, DTA received approval from the Federal government to also accept Interim Report and Recertification documents for SNAP cases via the online portal as well. DTA is working to implement this functionality in mid-2019 and anticipates further reductions in the amount of paper documents submitted to the Department annually.

### **HISTORICAL CASE RECORDS**

In October 2018, DTA completed an effort to back-scan permanent documents related to active SNAP and economic assistance cases as the agency continues to move towards a system of all-electronic case files. After receiving the necessary approval from Massachusetts’ Records Conservation Board, DTA was able to scan and eliminate more than 6,500 boxes of paper files and removed over 900 filing cabinets from local Transitional Assistance offices. With each box of paper weighing roughly 50 pounds, this process removed about 340,000 pounds of paper records from local offices, allowing space previously reserved for storing case files to be repurposed to better suit the needs of staff and clients.

### **RESULTS OF PAPER REDUCTION EFFORTS**

Since 2014, DTA has made significant progress towards modernizing its business practices and reducing the Department’s reliance on paper documentation. In addition to eliminating a substantial amount of physical paper records in its 22 local Transitional Assistance offices, DTA’s technological enhancements have further reduced incoming paper documentation by offering clients more convenient, accessible ways to submit documents to the department from their home computers or mobile devices. As DTA continues to modernize its business processes in the years to come, its reliance on paper documentation will predictably continue to decrease.