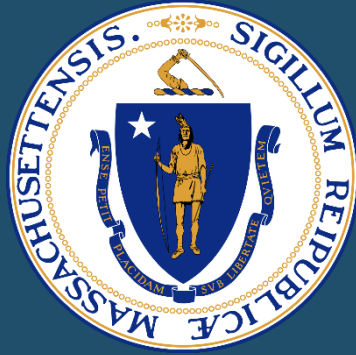


**Maura T. Healey**  
Governor

**Kimberley Driscoll**  
Lieutenant Governor



**Kathleen E. Walsh**  
Secretary

**Mary Sheehan**  
Acting Commissioner

# **Report on Agency Paper Reduction Efforts**

**May 2023**



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

*May 2023*

## **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.”

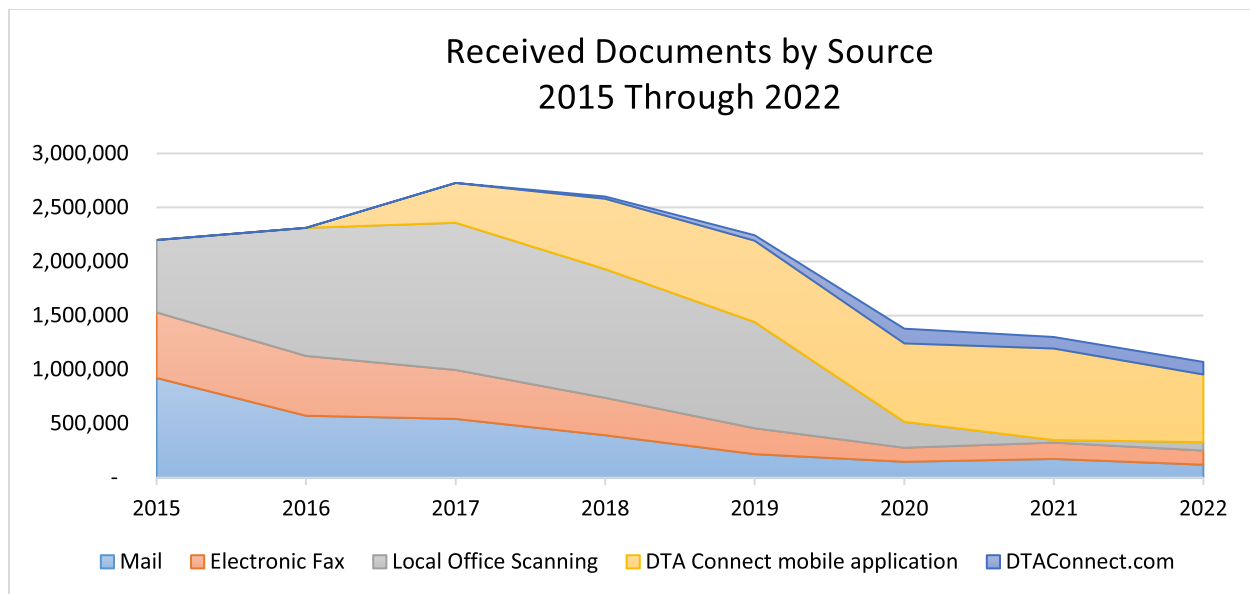
## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION**

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 seven people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, older adults, 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 offices is rerouted to EDMC for digital scanning and indexing. DTA monitors the volume of documents handled by the EDMC each year. The following chart displays the annual volume of documents handled by EDMC by document source from 2015 through 2022, including documents received via the DTA Connect platform.



**Chart 1. Received Documents by Source**

*Note: the DTA Connect mobile application was launched in 2017. The DTA Connect web application was launched in 2018.*

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 that is mailed or faxed has decreased significantly. In 2015, paper-based documents accounted for about 70% of the documents received by EDMC. In 2022, paper-based documents accounted for just 31% of the documents received. Conversely, paperless documentation has become much more prevalent as the agency has continued to strengthen its access-on-demand service model. Almost 70% of the documents processed by the EDMC were sent via paperless sources in 2022, with nearly 58% of documents being submitted via the DTA Connect mobile application.

### **CURRENT PAPER REDUCTION**

DTA continues to focus on modernizing its operations and investing in further technology upgrades to its DTA Connect platform. Through this work, DTA has significantly expanded access for the vast majority of families and individuals receiving services, allowing for virtually all business with the agency to be done without having to visit a local office. In 2022, there were more than 52,500 new users on the DTA Connect mobile application.

The Department rolled out key technology upgrades to streamline clients experience and further improve benefit processing, including:

- Adding virtual meeting options for clients with disabilities or medical conditions as an accommodation if they are unable to connect with DTA in person or telephonically,
- Expanding DTA Connect to Haitian Creole, in addition to English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Portuguese, and Simplified Chinese, and

- Adding new features and security improvements to the DTA Connect mobile app, including the ability for clients to apply for SNAP and cash benefits, and complete SNAP recertifications and interim report forms.

The agency continued to use proactive case-related text messaging and emails, expanding available languages from two to six. DTA also continued to work with community partners and sister agencies to connect DTA clients with critical federal and state resources that helped support the health and economic stability of whole families. In calendar year 2022, the agency sent more than 15 million text messages and 243,000 emails to clients about case-related information or updates from the agency's partners. Throughout 2022, DTA's text message outreach campaigns included sharing information about COVID-19 vaccine availability and safety in partnership with the Department of Public Health (DPH); Summer Eats available meal sites in partnership with Project Bread; and the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit.

For clients who wish to visit our offices, DTA has launched several new efforts to improve accessibility and provide an equitable and inclusive experience. All reception areas at our local offices now have Pictorial Communication Boards to support clients who are Deaf, hard of hearing, nonverbal or have limited verbal or English proficiency. These boards include images and descriptive words in eight languages so that clients can successfully communicate the reason for their visit. Further, DTA recently procured a new interpreter services vendor through which the agency has expanded Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) auxiliary aid access to all local DTA offices.

## **RESULTS OF PAPER REDUCTION EFFORTS**

DTA continues to make significant progress towards modernizing its business practices and reducing the Department's reliance on paper documentation. The agency is committed to exploring and pursuing innovative ways to build on its access-on demand model and leveraging new technologies that offer clients more convenient, accessible ways to submit documents to the Department from their home computers or mobile devices. As the agency looks towards the future, it will maintain many of the innovations and enhancements that have been implemented in recent years that improve the agency's service delivery, improve convenience for applicants and clients, and also continue reducing the Department's use of paper-based documentation.