

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn Polito
Lieutenant Governor



Marylou Sudders
Secretary

Mary Sheehan
Acting Commissioner

Secure Jobs Report

April 2022



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
SECURE JOBS REPORT
APRIL 2022

REPORT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to line-item 4400-1020 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is required to submit the following report on the status of its Secure Jobs Program.

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 mobility, 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.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Secure Jobs was created in 2013 through a partnership between the Fireman Foundation and the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness to address both homelessness and joblessness. Initially targeting families participating in the HomeBASE Rental Assistance Program, Secure Jobs brought together state agencies, homeless providers, and workforce development agencies to support families in increasing their economic mobility by connecting them with housing supports and community-based providers. Secure Jobs providers focus on helping families become employment ready, while addressing any barriers that may interfere with their economic mobility goals. By connecting housing and workforce development services, Secure Jobs offers comprehensive supports that families need to obtain employment through client-centered economic mobility plans tailored to their individual needs.

The initial evaluation of the demonstration program found that Secure Jobs is the right fit for parents who are ready, willing, and able to work, and that individualized service delivery is critical to success. Additionally, providing strong connections to employers allowed participants to obtain employment and strong retention services helped participants stay employed.

Between FY15 and FY17, the Legislature appropriated funding for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to execute contracts with provider agencies to deliver services for individuals and families receiving support from DHCD's Emergency Assistance (EA) program, the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), the HomeBASE program, or the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program.

In the FY18 GAA, administration of the Secure Jobs Program was transferred to DTA. Working collaboratively with DHCD, the program continues to support individuals and families who are served by DHCD programs.

The theory of change for Secure Jobs is that a focus on employment can shorten the length of stay in shelter and expedite the attainment of permanent housing, contributing to upward economic mobility and family stability. Outcomes for Secure Jobs participants are expected to be achieved across the following key domains:

1. Education and Career,
2. Housing and Economic Stability, and
3. Family Stability and Well-Being.

DTA takes a “two-generation” (2-Gen) approach to increasing economic mobility in all its employment programming. This approach recognizes that outcomes for parents and children are intertwined and cannot develop independently of one another. Research has documented the impact of a parent’s education, economic stability, and overall health on a child’s trajectory. Similarly, children’s education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents.

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Secure Jobs serves families receiving assistance from DHCD in the areas of Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Taunton, Hyannis, New Bedford, Framingham, Lawrence, Lowell, Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester. Each provider offers services across several established phases of job planning, readiness and placement:

Phase 1 - Enrollment and Goal Setting

Phase 2 - Job Readiness and Training

Phase 3 - Initial Employment

Phase 4 - Six-month Employment Retention

Phase 5 - Employment Retention and Next Steps

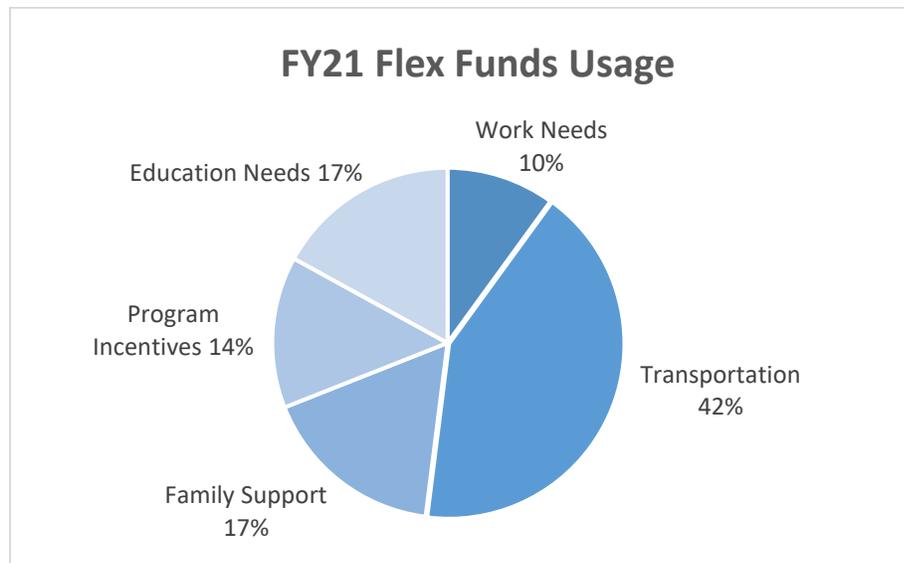
Providers enroll participants into the program phase that best reflects their status. They can adjust the specific phase as the participant moves through the program and progresses through setting and achieving milestones towards their employment goals. The expectation is that providers deliver flexible, individualized support, working in partnership with families on their path towards long-term meaningful employment and economic stability. Participants in phases 3-5 are employed and receiving retention support.

Secure Jobs at Work Success Story

Ginette was referred to CTI's Secure Jobs Program from RAFT. She moved to Massachusetts from Puerto Rico right after Hurricane Maria with her young daughter. With the help of her case manager, she decided to pursue a career in the field of Phlebotomy. Secure Jobs was able to enroll Ginette in a 6-month certified Phlebotomy Program through Ed2go, an online education provider that partners with over 2,000 academic institutions to provide accessible and affordable continuing education. With the additional Secure Jobs funding, CTI was able to partner with Ed2go to pay for Ginette's certification. Ginette completed the course within 4 months and then passed her National Phlebotomy AECA exam. She managed to achieve all this success while working full-time as a cafeteria aide at Lawrence Public Schools and being the sole caregiver to her disabled child. She is now working with her case manager to create a strong resume and look for the perfect opportunity in the Phlebotomy field.

The provision of flexible funds has been and continues to be a hallmark of Secure Jobs. Flexible funds are included in each budget allocation and providers are responsible for determining the usage and issuance with their participants. This helps to support families who have unexpected costs related to entry into employment.

In the FY21 GAA, the Legislature allocated an additional \$2M in funding for Secure Jobs, increasing the overall line item funding to \$5M. Due to the provision for flexible funds, Secure Jobs providers were able to continue providing services remotely, immediately from the onset of the public health emergency and without requiring contractual changes. Providers were also able to utilize the increases in available flexible funding to meet the unique needs of participants. Providers purchased laptops and hotspots to facilitate job search and training efforts, and paid for professional certifications to increase earnings potential. They have also assisted with the purchase of vehicles for families who are employed and need reliable transportation, assisted families with moving costs, and paid overdue utility bills.



Transportation needs continued to be the top category for which flexible funds were used in FY21. The average amount used per family for transportation was \$467 in FY21. The request for flexible funds to be used on family supports increased in FY21 to an average of \$465 per family from \$217 per family in FY20. These funds were used to pay for utilities, food cards and completion of CORI for employment.

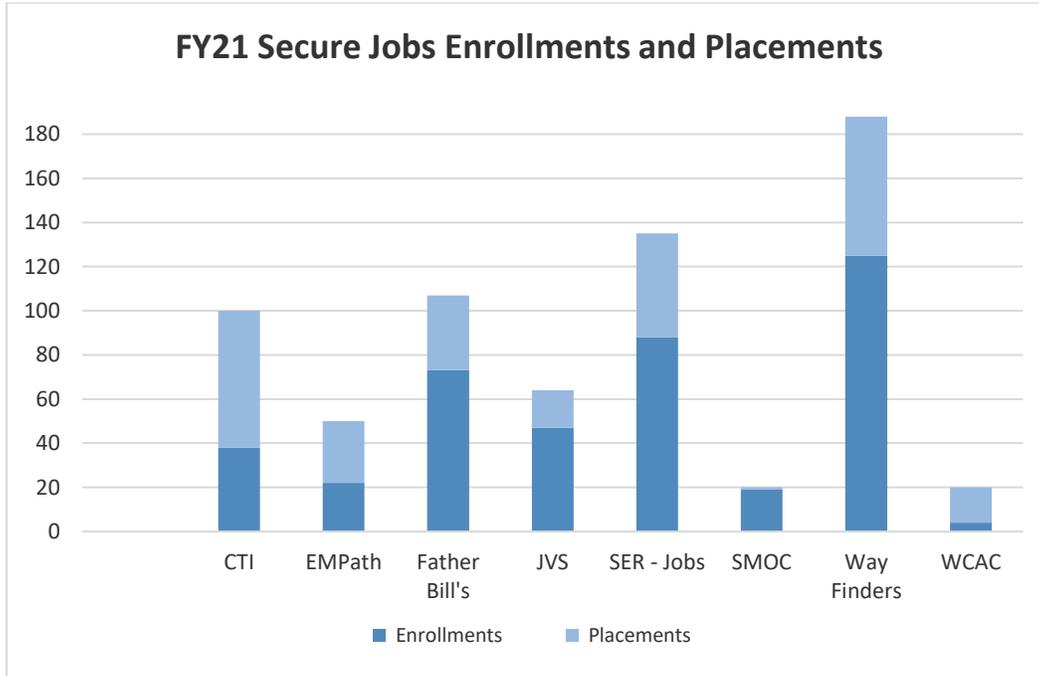
DTA's partnership with DHCD affords a truly unique opportunity. In addition to the funds appropriated for the Secure Jobs Program, each fiscal year DHCD allocates federal Move to Work (MTW) funds to support the operation of the program.

DHCD has provided 50 Mobile Section 8 Vouchers over a three-year period (FY19-FY21) to Secure Jobs participants who have obtained and maintained employment for six or more months, creating a strong incentive for program participants. As of this report, all vouchers have been released through a lottery and 39 recipients have moved into new apartments. The remaining 11 are in the process of securing housing.

Secure Jobs at Work Success Story

Jonel relocated to Massachusetts with her three-year-old daughter from Bridgeport, Connecticut, where, despite working two jobs, she was unable to afford her rent. She lost everything right before the start of the pandemic and moved into shelter where she enrolled in Secure Jobs at Way Finders. Upon enrollment, she identified a goal of obtaining a driver's license. Her case manager at Way Finders enrolled her in a driver's ed. course and she successfully obtained her driver's license. Way Finders was then able to use flexible funds to assist Jonel in purchasing a used car. Having reliable transportation was a huge barrier to economic mobility for Jonel, and with this barrier addressed, she was able to obtain two part-time jobs. She continues to work with Way Finders to increase her economic mobility.

FY2021 SECURE JOBS PARTICIPANTS SERVED AND OUTCOMES

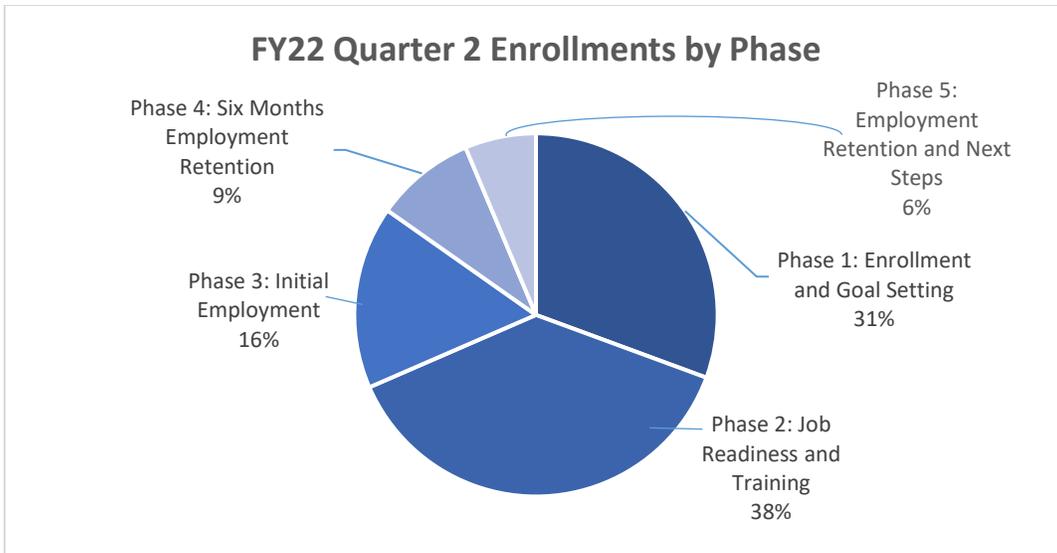


In FY21, there were 416 enrollments in the Secure Jobs Program and 268 participants that achieved successful employment.¹

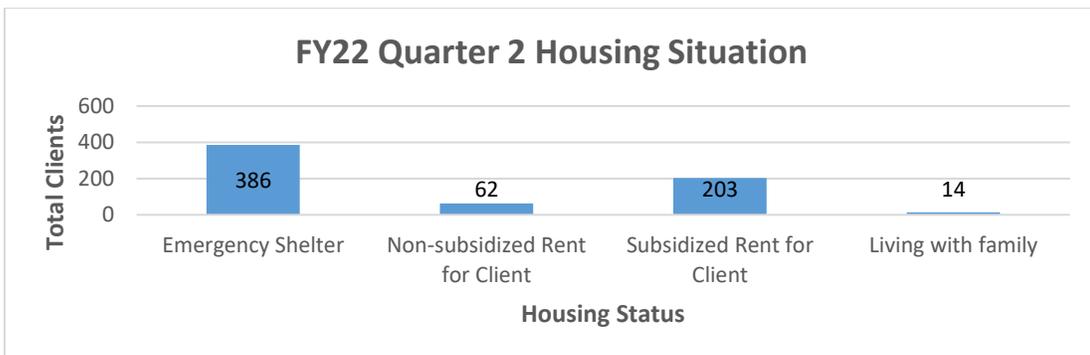
In the first two quarters of FY22, 663 participants statewide have been enrolled in the eight different Secure Jobs programs:

- 36% are currently employed with an average wage of \$16.44 per hour, compared to \$15.66 per hour in FY21.
- 69% are in the initial goal setting and job seeking stages of the program, compared to 62% in FY21.

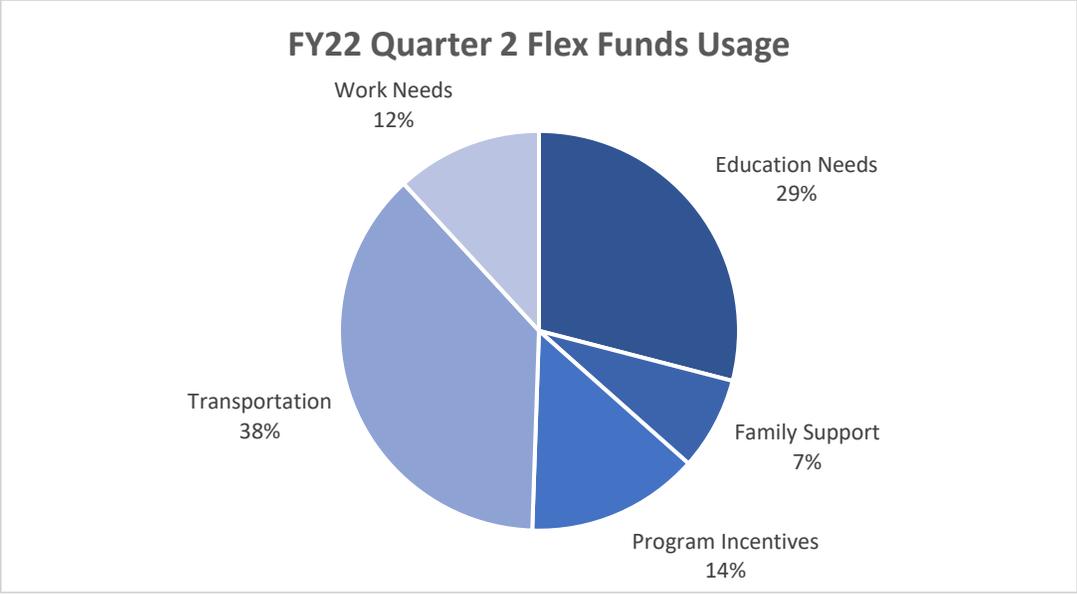
¹ During FY21, SMOC experienced some organization changes that resulted in low enrollments.



As of December 2022, 58% of Secure Jobs participants were residing in Emergency Assistance Shelter through DHCD. Since the beginning of the fiscal year, 279 families have been able to secure housing and transition out of shelter.



In the first two quarters of FY22, 93 Secure Jobs participants have utilized flexible funds. Since FY21, there has been a decrease in the family support category and an increase in educational needs. This increase can be attributed to training costs, including for technical support. Transportation continues to represent the main utilization of flexible funds. Some providers use their flexible funds to offer incentives to retain or reengage clients who may have already found employment but could use support in obtaining an increase in their wages.



CONCLUSION

DTA and DHCD continue to work in partnership with providers to strengthen the services provided by the Secure Jobs Program. Many of the hallmark innovations, including flexibility for participants and alignment between housing and employment services, have been retained as the program continues to grow. Increased funding for the program has allowed for enhanced services to be made available to support increasing employment outcomes and Secure Jobs programming is now available in more communities in the Commonwealth. DTA, in collaboration with DHCD, remains committed to continuing this work in support of economic mobility for homeless children and families.