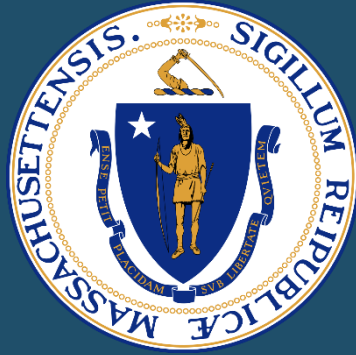


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Secure Jobs Report

May 2023



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
SECURE JOBS REPORT
MAY 2023

REPORT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to line-item 4400-1020 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 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 Department continues to support individuals and families who are served by DHCD programs through this program.

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, job 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

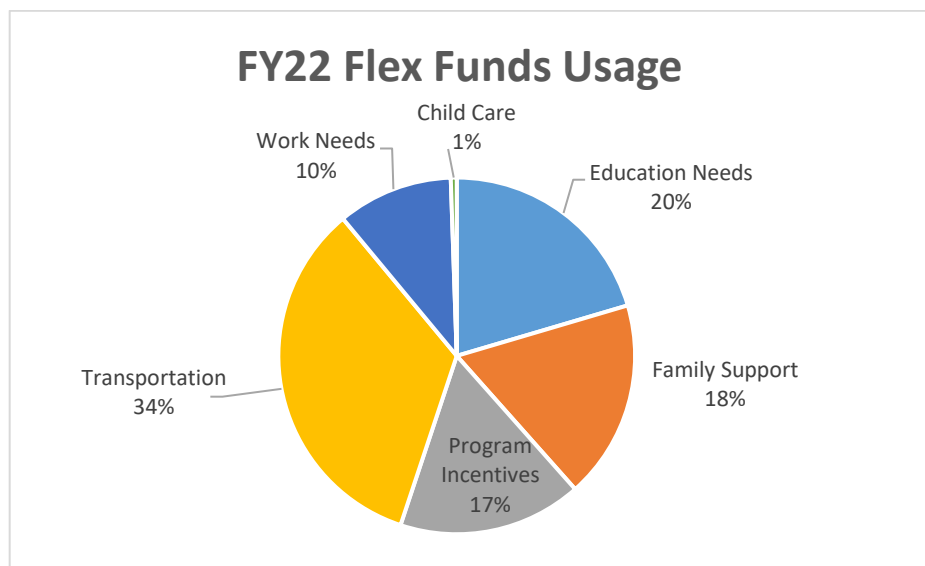
Providers enroll participants into the program phase that best reflects their status. They can adjust the specific phase as the participant moves through the program and progresses through setting and achieving milestones towards their employment goals. The expectation is that providers deliver flexible, 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

Ruben's journey with the Secure Jobs program at Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) began in March of 2022 after relocating from Florida to Boston with his son and being placed in Emergency Assistance shelter. Ruben had extensive culinary experience and worked with the JVS Career Navigator to rebuild his resume and apply for numerous jobs. Throughout this time, JVS was able to use flex funds to support Ruben and his family with food and transportation. Ruben secured a full-time job as a line cook earning \$21 an hour and has been asked to take on a managerial position after only three months. Ruben and his son are in the process of moving into a new apartment, which he is very excited about. His next goal is to obtain his GED.

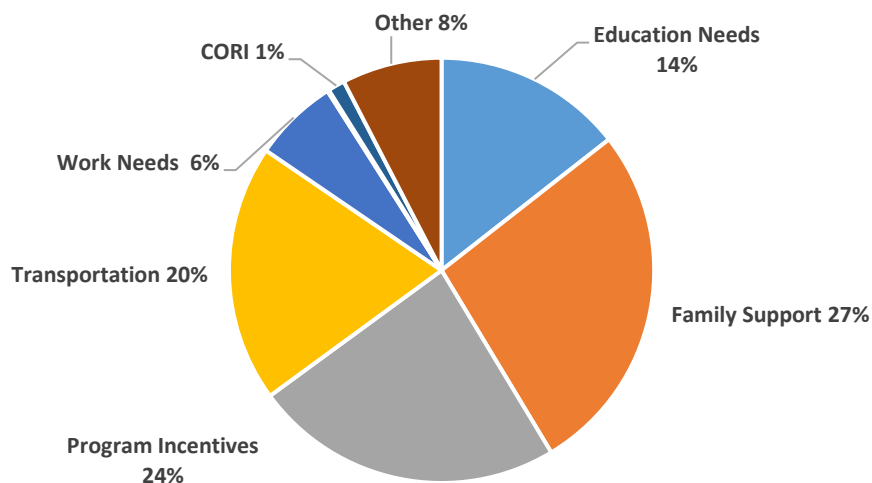
The provision of flexible funds is a hallmark of Secure Jobs. Flexible funds are included in each budget allocation and providers are responsible for determining the usage and issuance with their participants. This helps to support families who have unexpected costs related to entry into employment.

In the FY22 GAA, the Legislature allocated \$5M in funding for Secure Jobs. Providers were able to utilize the increases in available 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.



In the first two quarters of FY23, we have seen an increase in the usage of flex funds for family supports, including payment for professional trainings and certifications, moving costs, payment of overdue utility bills and other work and family support expenses. Transportation continues to represent a large percentage of utilization of flexible funds. Many providers use flexible funds to offer incentives to retain or reengage clients who may have already found employment but need additional support to increase their wages.

Year to Date FY23 Flex Funds Spending

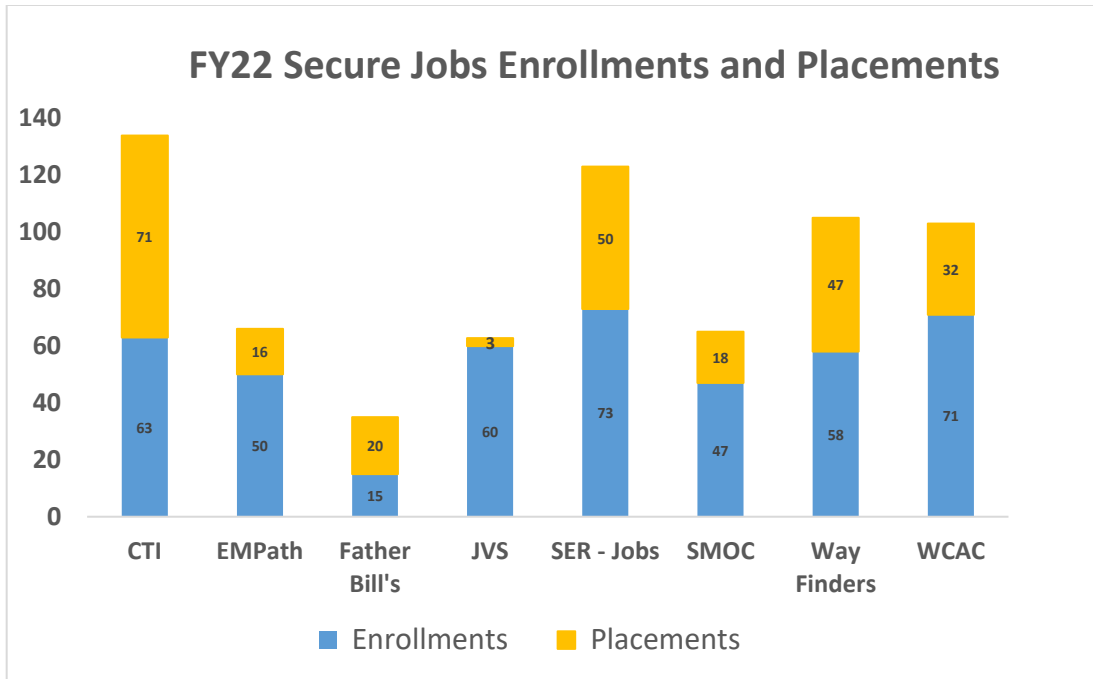


DTA's partnership with DHCD affords a truly unique opportunity for families to advance their economic security. In addition to the funds appropriated for the Secure Jobs Program, each fiscal year DHCD allocates federal Move to Work (MTW) funds to support the operation of the program.

DHCD provided 50 Mobile Section 8 Vouchers over a three-year period (FY19-FY21) to Secure Jobs participants who 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

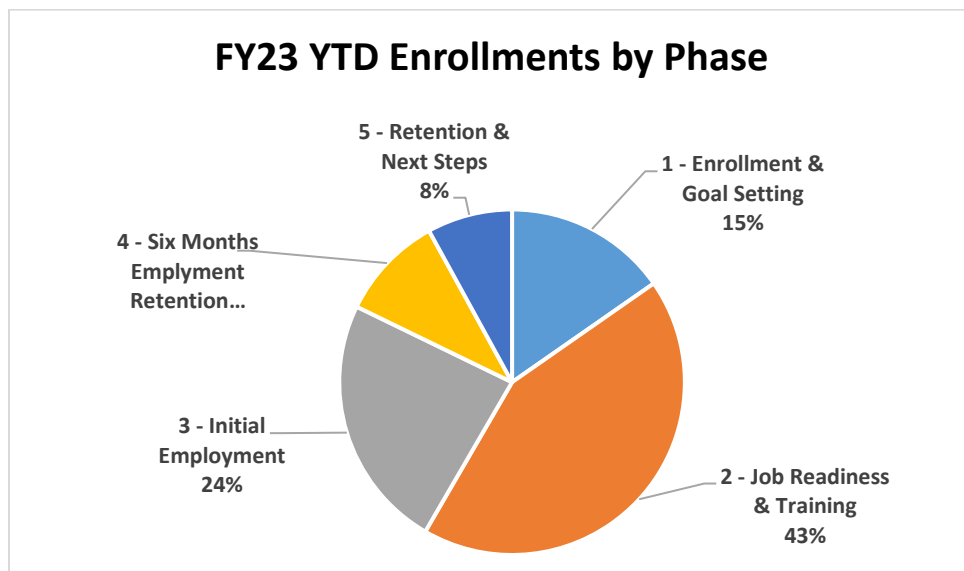
Diana was referred to Secure Jobs at SER-Jobs for Progress from RAFT. She and her family had been doing well until her husband suffered a serious back injury and was no longer able to work. Being bilingual, Diana had a strong desire to utilize her ability to speak both English and Portuguese to help those in need in her community. With the help of her Secure Jobs Case worker, Diana enrolled in Language Connections, where she pursued certifications in Immigration Law and Medical interpreting. Diana is now gainfully employed as a PCA/HHA. Her certifications allow her to help those in her care understand and voice their medical concerns. Diana and her family were granted a section 8 voucher due to her husband's work injury and have been able to start over in their new home. Diana is extremely grateful for all the support she received through Secure Jobs.



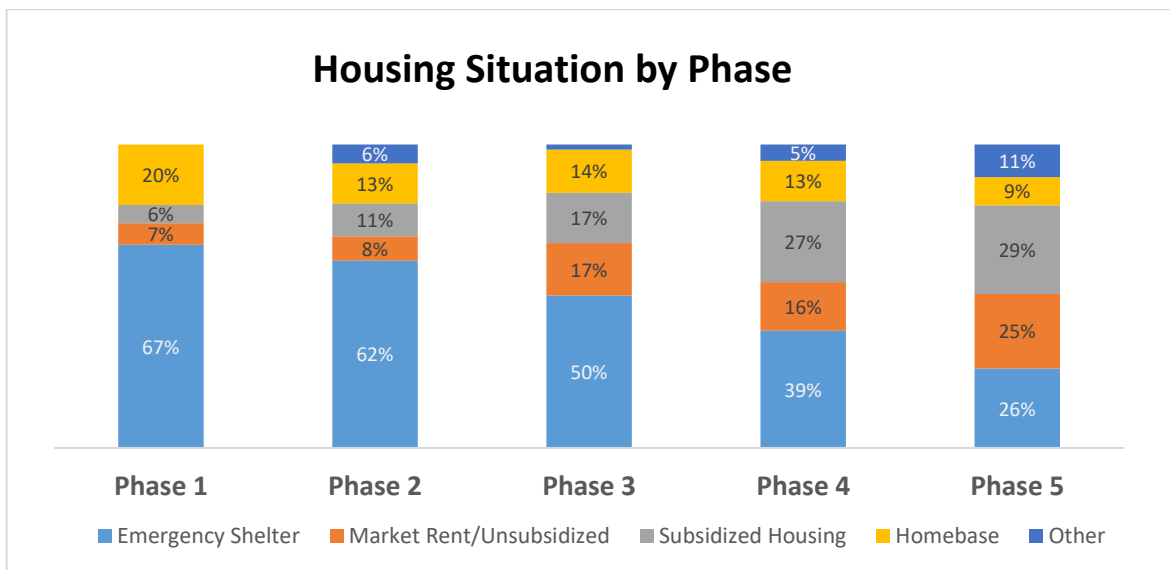
In FY22, there were 437 enrollments in the Secure Jobs program and 257 participants who achieved successful employment.

In the first two quarters of FY23, 279 participants statewide have been enrolled in the eight different Secure Jobs programs:

- 24% are currently employed with an average wage of \$17.08 per hour, an increase from \$16.44 per hour in FY22.
- 58% are in the initial goal setting and job seeking stages of the program, compared to 69% in FY22.



As of January 2023, 67% of Secure Jobs participants were residing in Emergency Assistance Shelter through DHCD. Although the path through each phase is not necessarily linear, the percentage of families residing in shelter decreased to 26% in Phase 5.



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.