

Massachusetts TANF State Plan

PURPOSE

In fulfillment of the state plan requirement of Section 402(a) of the Social Security Act, Massachusetts submits this state plan to renew its status as an eligible state.

This renewal is being submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services through the Director of the Administration for Children and Families, in Washington, DC, in December 2021.

BACKGROUND

Massachusetts operates the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program, a family assistance grant used to provide financial assistance to needy families and to otherwise fulfill the four purposes of TANF. Massachusetts also operates a number of Maintenance of Effort (MOE) programs.

ORGANIZATION

This document is structured according to the organization of the language in the Social Security Act that describes the requirements of TANF state plans. The bold headings are from section 402 of the Social Security Act.

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(a)(1) OUTLINE OF THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(A) GENERAL PROVISIONS

This plan provides an outline of how the State intends to do the following:

- (i) **Conduct a program designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner), that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient.**

Outline of the TAFDC Program's General Provisions

TAFDC is the state's principal TANF program. It is administered through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and operates uniformly throughout the state.

The TAFDC program provides economic assistance, employment and training opportunities, and supportive services for families with dependent children and some expectant parents. The goal of the program is to help families achieve economic mobility through meaningful employment. TAFDC is also provided to children who are being cared for by a relative who is not their natural or adoptive parent.

The state statute governing the TAFDC program can be found in Title XVII, Chapter 118 of the Massachusetts General Laws, located at mass.gov. The regulations can be found in 106 CMR 701 -708 located at Department of Transitional Assistance regulations | Mass.gov. Procedural guidance can be found in DTA's online guide, [Online Guide \(state.ma.us\)](http://Online Guide (state.ma.us)).

Application

Financial eligibility for the program is determined by income limits. Income limits can be found [here](#). Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.000, et seq. Whenever an application is made for a dependent child, the parents of that child who are living in the same household and the siblings of that child living in the same household must also be included in the application. When someone who is not the parent of the dependent child is applying, they can choose to be included in the application or not. When an application is made for a pregnant woman, only the pregnant woman is included in the application. Anyone receiving SSI is never included in the application. Rules about who is included in an application can be found at 106 CMR 704.305. Certain families, who are assessed as work ready, are connected to employment opportunities when applying for benefits through registering an account with MassHire JobQuest. Once a family begins receiving benefits they are introduced to free opportunities for employment, training, and education and supportive services.

Case Management and Employment Services

Each local DTA office has case managers and Full Engagement Workers (FEWs). Case managers carry a caseload and are responsible for eligibility determination, eligibility review, referral services and other case maintenance activities. FEWs are specialists in the employment, education and training opportunities available to families receiving TAFDC. In

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partnership with the case manager, the FEW is responsible for connecting families to opportunities and supportive services. They serve as a resource to case managers, a liaison for employment and training program providers and a point of both contact and support to families. They work on both initial engagement with education and training options and re-engagement for families who have stopped participating in an approved activity. FEWs maintain a presence in the MassHire Career Centers and work with other community partners such as shelters to reach and engage families regardless of their circumstances.

Orientation and Assessment

All families receiving TAFDC are offered the opportunity to participate in an orientation and assessment. Case managers refer families who are either interested in participating or are required to participate to a FEW. The FEW conducts an orientation with families to introduce them to all available resources and provides an assessment that helps parents or caretakers decide on family, education or employment goals on which they are motivated to work. The FEW then connects the parent or caretaker with a program that can help them achieve that goal. The FEW will also facilitate the enrollment process with the program provider and follow up with both the family and the program in the next few weeks to make sure the program is the right fit for the family.

Pathways Plan

Every parent or caretaker who is required to participate in the work program must have a Pathways Plan. The Pathways Plan contains the parent or caretaker's employment goal, the schedule of Employment Service Program activities they must engage in, necessary support services and the requirements they must meet to avoid sanctions.

Supportive Services

Families receiving TAFDC are offered supportive services to help them meet their goals. All families are eligible to receive domestic violence supports. Families who are participating in employment, education and training are eligible to receive fully subsidized child care and a transportation stipend. Relative caregivers are eligible to receive fully subsidized child care. In addition to these supportive services, parents and caregivers participating in the DTA Works Internship program receive mentoring.

Child Care

DTA provides referrals to families that are eligible for a child care subsidy based on their TAFDC program participation and to all relative caregivers. A child care referral is provided to all clients with an approved EDP who need child care to accept or maintain employment or to participate in an employment, education or training program. Case managers are required to inform families about the availability of child care at application and review. FEWs are required to inform families about the availability of child care whenever they are engaging with a family that does not already have subsidized child care. A child care fact sheet, [CCFS-English 2016.pub \(mass.gov\)](#), is provided to all families at least once a year. This fact sheet explains who is eligible for child care, how to get a child care referral, how to

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connect with the local child care agency, the types of child care available, how to find licensed child care and supports available when your TAFDC case closes.

Families who are working or are enrolled in an approved activity receive a referral for 12 months of fully subsidized child care. The referral remains active even if the parent or caregiver loses employment or their activity ends. Families on TAFDC with child care authorizations from DTA receive a subsidy for the full cost of child care and are not charged a parent fee.

A family is eligible for a Transitional Child Care (TCC) referral for up to 24 months after their TAFDC case closes when they are employed for at least 20 hours a week or enrolled in an education or training program. There is no parent fee for TCC for the first 12 months. After month 12, families receiving TCC may be required to pay a parent fee by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), which is based on their income and family size. Upon verification that a family is eligible, DTA provides a written authorization for the TCC referral to EEC. This voucher is evidence of family relationship for all children included in the authorization. Parents must also submit evidence of their income, service need, residence and their relationship to children or dependent grandparents not included in the child care authorization.

If a family demonstrates an inability to obtain needed child care assistance will not be reduced or terminated. Lack of available and appropriate state-standard child care is verified by a written, dated and signed statement from an appropriate official of the Department of Early Education and Care, stating that such services are unavailable during the hours of the applicant's or client's employment or training. If there is a breakdown of care not provided through a designated agency, a statement from the child care provider, or, if not available, a written, dated and signed statement from the applicant or client must be submitted.

Appropriate child care is defined as each child-care provider, licensed by EEC, is generally considered an appropriate resource for recipients who need child care. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agency staff will assist TANF recipients in making informed decisions regarding the child-care search by assessing each family's needs and reviewing available child-care options, which include the entire mixed delivery system (center-based, family child care, and license exempt options that are willing to enter into a voucher agreement at the state maximum rate for services). The CCRR makes referrals only to appropriate, licensed child-care providers and discusses licensed-exempt options, such as in-home and relative care. If the recipient refuses all referrals made by the CCRR, the recipient shall be deemed to have been offered appropriate and available child care, unless the recipient can provide a reasonable explanation to EEC why the child care should be considered unavailable to or inappropriate for the particular family.

Reasonable distance is defined as each child-care provider, licensed by EEC, is generally considered an appropriate resource for recipients who need child care. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agency staff will assist TANF recipients in making informed decisions regarding the child-care search by assessing each family's needs and reviewing available child-care options, which include the entire mixed delivery system (center-based,

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family child care, and license exempt options that are willing to enter into a voucher agreement at the state maximum rate for services). The CCRR makes referrals only to appropriate, licensed child-care providers and discusses licensed-exempt options, such as in-home and relative care. If the recipient refuses all referrals made by the CCRR, the recipient shall be deemed to have been offered appropriate and available child care, unless the recipient can provide a reasonable explanation to EEC why the child care should be considered unavailable to or inappropriate for the particular family.

Unsuitability of informal child care is defined as each child-care provider, licensed by EEC, is generally considered an appropriate resource for recipients who need child care. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agency staff will assist TANF recipients in making informed decisions regarding the child care search by assessing each family's needs and reviewing available child care options, which include the entire mixed delivery system (center-based, family child care, and license exempt options that are willing to enter into a voucher agreement at the state maximum rate for services). The CCRR makes referrals only to appropriate, licensed child-care providers and discusses licensed-exempt options, such as in-home and relative care. If the recipient refuses all referrals made by the CCRR, the recipient shall be deemed to have been offered appropriate and available child care, unless the recipient can provide a reasonable explanation to EEC why the child care should be considered unavailable to or inappropriate for the particular family.

Affordable child care arrangements are defined as each child-care provider, licensed by EEC, is generally considered an appropriate resource for recipients who need child care. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agency staff will assist TANF recipients in making informed decisions regarding the child-care search by assessing each family's needs and reviewing available child-care options, which include the entire mixed delivery system (center-based, family child care, and license exempt options that are willing to enter into a voucher agreement at the state maximum rate for services). The CCRR makes referrals only to appropriate, licensed child-care providers and discusses licensed-exempt options, such as in-home and relative care. If the recipient refuses all referrals made by the CCRR, the recipient shall be deemed to have been offered appropriate and available child care, unless the recipient can provide a reasonable explanation to EEC why the child care should be considered unavailable to or inappropriate for the particular family.

Employment Incentives

To support employment and ease the 'cliff effect', a parent or caretaker who is working while receiving TAFDC receives a 100% earned income disregard for the first six months of employment as long as their earned income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). After six months the family receives a \$200 work related expense deduction and a 50% earned income disregard. In a two parent family each parent or caretaker is eligible for the earned income disregards.

Transitional Support Services (TSS)

When a TAFDC case closes due to earnings, an employed parent or caregiver will receive a stipend for four months to support their transition off TAFDC benefits into employment.

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The payments cover work related expenses and transportation costs and decrease over the four months.

Work Related Expense Stipend	Transportation Stipend
Month 1 \$200	Month 1 \$80
Month 2 \$150	Month 2 \$60
Month 3 \$100	Month 3 \$40
Month 4 \$50	Month 4 \$20

Special Requirements for Young Parents

The eligibility rules for parents under 20 can be found at 106 CMR 703.180 - 184. To be eligible for TAFDC as a parent under 20, you must have graduated from high school, received a high school equivalency certificate or be attending school or a certificate program full time. Parents under the age of 20 who do not have a high school degree or the equivalent who are attending school or a high school equivalency program full time also have the option of participating in an employment and training program part time while they work on their high school equivalency certificate. Parents under 20 are not required to attend school full time for three months after the birth of their child. You also must be living with your parents, another adult related to you, another adult related to your child, a foster parent or a legal guardian. The other adult or legal guardian cannot be the child's other parent unless the parents are married or the Commissioner has determined an exception is appropriate because the living arrangement is in the child's best interests. A parent under 20 can also be living in a structured teen living program or on their own under certain conditions specified in 106 CMR 703.184. Parents under the age of 20 are eligible to receive fully subsidized child care.

Parents under 20 who do not meet school attendance requirements without good cause are removed from the grant. If they continue to not meet school attendance requirements, the grant is terminated.

Self-Sufficiency Specialists (SSS)

The mandate to have SSS case managers is found in Mass. Gen. Laws Chapter 18, section 5. The primary focus of the SSS case managers are young parents, ages 23 and younger. SSS case managers carry a reduced caseload in order to provide intensive case management to specialized populations. The target case load for a SSS case manager is 90; each local office has enough SSS case managers to cover their young parent population at that case load ratio. If a SSS has room in their caseload, they may also serve other specialized populations, such as those living in an emergency shelter or a domestic violence shelter.

SSS case managers work with families to develop a solid foundation, including establishing education, training and employment goals, as well as strategies to help with any challenges the family may have as they advance their economic mobility.

SSS case managers maintain a weekly presence at young parent program sites where the families on their caseload receive services. This allows SSS case managers to work

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collaboratively as a team with the program and the young parent to monitor progress, celebrate success and address any concerns or barriers that have come up for the program or the young parent.

Work Requirements and Hours

The rules for the TAFDC Work Program are found at 106 CMR 703.150. Parents and caretakers are allowed a 60 day work search period in which to find a job of 20 hours for those with children under 6 and 30 hours for those with children 6 and older. If a parent or caretaker who does not have an exemption from the work requirement or good cause (as defined below) is not employed for the required number of hours by the end of the 60 day work search period, the parent or caretaker must participate in an education or training activity or work at a community service site. In two parent families, each parent or caretaker must meet the work requirement.

FEWs work with families from the time their case is opened to connect them to employment opportunities and connect them to programs that will help them meet their goals and find employment on a career track. At case approval, FEWs connect with families to let them know about all the resources available to them and explain the expectations of the program. FEWs then complete a series of activities including Orientation, Assessment, goal setting, facilitating referrals and providing supportive services. Once a family is employed or enrolled in a program, FEWs maintain regular contact with the family and the program to monitor progress and address any concerns before they become a barrier to employment or participation.

Work Activities

A parent or caregiver can meet their work program requirements by:

- Working a job for pay
- Working full time in the Full Employment Program (FEP) which provides individuals work experience needed to obtain an unsubsidized job. Participants are paid a subsidized wage in lieu of receiving TAFDC.
- Participating in an approved supported work program
- Participating in community service (hours limited by the federal Fair Labor Standards Acts)
- Participating in a DTA approved activity that is expected to result in employment
- Combining hours of work and an approved activity or community service
- Participating in a substance abuse treatment program while living in a substance abuse shelter
- Participating in an unpaid work study or internship program
- Providing child care to a teen parent's dependent child if both the teen parent and their child are living in their home so that the teen parent can meet their school attendance requirements

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- Participating in an education or training activity including a certificate or degree program from a four-year institute of higher education, community college or certificate program provided the degree does not exceed a bachelor's degree
- Participating in a vocational program for not more than 12 months; or
- Meeting housing search requirements while residing in emergency shelter

A complete list of qualified work activities can be found at 106 CMR 707.130 - 190.

Exemptions

Exemptions from the work program requirement and time limited benefits can be found in statute in Chapter 5, Section 110 (e)(1) of the Acts of 1995 and in regulation at 106 CMR 703.100 (A)(1). The exemption reasons are:

- Disability
- Being essential to the care of a disabled child, spouse or child's other parent living in the home
- 33rd week or later of pregnancy
- Having a child living in the home under age 2, except for a teen parent's dependent child if the teen parent is living in the home
- Being a parent under the age of 20 who is meeting living arrangement and school requirements
- Being a relative caregiver who is not part of the assistance unit
- Age 66 or older
- Age 60 – 66 who is the primary caregiver for the child and retired prior to receiving TAFDC

Good Cause

Parents or caregivers may claim good cause for failure to meet TAFDC work program requirements. These are found in regulation at 106 CMR 701.380 and include:

- Appropriate child care is not available
- Family crisis or emergency situation
- Health condition or illness that prevents participation
- Lack of affordable or reliable transportation
- Participation in housing search in an emergency shelter
- Lack of an available and appropriate community service site

Sanctions for Non-Compliance

When a parent or caregiver is not engaged in work or an activity after 60 days or stops participating in work or an activity without good cause, they are removed from the grant and the grant is reduced to the lower household size until the parent or caregiver connects with the FEW and accepts a program referral. If the parent or caregiver does not participate after accepting a program referral, the grant is terminated for the whole family.

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If a parent or caregiver does stop working or participating in a program, the FEW completes a number of outreach attempts to try and engage the parent or caretaker before the grant is reduced. These attempts may include multiple phone calls, a letter, text messages and an alert on the DTACONNECT application.

TAFDC Pathways to Work

TAFDC Pathways to Work is an integral part of DTA's efforts to move clients to work and provide meaningful career pathways that support economic mobility. Each year, the Legislature allocates funding for employment services for families receiving TAFDC through the Employment Services Program (ESP) line item. The primary goal of TAFDC Pathways to Work is to assist TAFDC clients obtain and maintain employment with career growth potential, resolve barriers to employment and provide families who receive TAFDC with education, training, and employment supports. FEWs assist families receiving TAFDC to achieve these outcomes through referral to and collaborative goal setting with programs appropriate for individual skill level and goals. In addition to employment education and training, learning disability assessments and high school equivalency testing support are also funded through the ESP line item.

Young Parent's Program (YPP)

YPP is designed to serve pregnant and/or parenting teens from the ages of 12-24 who are currently out of school and do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent or who wish to enroll in post-secondary education or training on a pathway to employment. Both the custodial and non-custodial parent of a child receiving TAFDC are eligible to participate in YPP. It is a year-round, full time program that seeks to reduce reliance on public benefits among young parents by supporting outcomes across three domains: education and career, life and personal, and parenting and family.

Services offered through the YPP program include assessment and goal setting, academic support and curriculum, English for Speakers of Other Languages, life and personal skills, enhancing family relationships, community partnerships for any additional services and follow-up services.

YPP takes a two-generation approach to increasing economic stability for families by creating opportunities for both parents and children. The primary goals of YPP are to empower parents to pursue a path to economic mobility through education pathways and job readiness, actively engage participants to develop the skills necessary to advocate and care for their children and provide a sense of hope and aspiration to empower families to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty.

DTA Works Internship

The goal of the DTA Works internship program is to provide employment supports to parents or caregivers receiving TAFDC through mentorship, training and exposure and to prepare them for successful re-entry into the workforce. The program targets parents or caregivers who are fluent in English, can pass a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI)

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check, have a high school diploma or its equivalent but have little to no work experience, professional networks or current references. The program places parents or caregivers in state agencies or nonprofits where they complete a nine month internship. While they are completing their internship, parents or caregivers receive one on one mentoring and a monthly education and training stipend that does not impact their TAFDC benefits.

Temporary Absence

Massachusetts continues to exercise its option under section 408, paragraph (10)(A), of the Social Security Act to continue payment of TANF financial assistance benefits for a minor child absent from the home for at least 30 but not more than 180 consecutive days.

Time Limits

Families receiving TAFDC are subject to time-limited benefits unless they are exempt from the time limit. Non-exempt parents and caregivers, including each parent in a two parent family, are limited to 24 months of assistance in any continuous 60-month period. The 60-month period begins the first full calendar month a family receives TAFDC benefits. Once 60 months have passed, the family is eligible for a new 60 month period and another 24 months within that 60 month period.

Domestic Violence Services

DTA employs a team of specialists to assist survivors for all DTA programs including TAFDC and for employees. The diverse team consists of 18 specialists and five coordinators, or supervisors, and a Director all with extensive experience in domestic violence services. Every DTA office has at least one specialist and/or coordinator assigned to cover that office.

Domestic Violence Specialists help with support, safety planning and referrals to local resources that can lead to long-term safety and stability including safe housing options. They also help survivors safely navigate DTA benefits. They work side by side with case managers to ensure any safety issues are addressed and help to secure waivers for certain TAFDC program rules such as Pathways to Work, the time limit, school attendance for parents under 20 and cooperation with child support.

In addition, members of the Domestic Violence team serve as trainers and educators for DTA staff. New hire training for case management staff includes a module on what domestic violence is and how it may show up in the course of their work. They are also trained in what options exist for survivors and how the Domestic Violence team can help both staff and clients to safely navigate program rules. The Domestic Violence Specialists and/or Coordinators provide ongoing training to staff upon request or when a need is identified. Once a year, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Director of the Domestic Violence Unit, provides training to local office managers to ensure everyone is up to date on what the Domestic Violence team does, what services and supports they offer and how to contact them.

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Specific instructions for case managers on domestic violence services and how to apply domestic violence waivers can be found in the [Online Guide](#) under the Domestic Violence book as well as in all relevant program pages. These pages include information on maintaining confidentiality and safety by explaining what can and can not be part of the case record. The Domestic Violence team manages their case information in a separate data base to ensure sensitive information is kept confidential. The Online Guide also contains specific instructions on how to transmit domestic violence related decisions and forms to maintain safety for survivors.

To ensure everyone is aware of the Domestic Violence Services offered by DTA, the agency maintains a [website](#), a [brochure](#) in eight languages and provides the ability to reach a Domestic Violence Specialist through the DTA Assistance Line. For afterhours assistance Massachusetts utilizes SAFELINK the statewide hotline for domestic violence and sexual assault and maintains an [interactive map](#) to locate resources.

Other TANF Funded Programs

Income Eligible Child care: Administered by Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), Income Eligible Child care provides subsidized child care for the children of low-income parents not receiving child care through TAFDC who are working, disabled, in an education or job training program, or who otherwise meet the activity requirement. Child care is provided for children under 13 and for older children with special needs. Parents who have a disability can also qualify for the subsidy in certain situations. The program pays a portion of the cost of care and requires payments from parents on a sliding fee scale. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 606 CMR 10.04.

Transitional and Post-Transitional Child Care: Also administered by EEC, parents who have received TAFDC within the 12 months prior to their application for a child care subsidy and who obtain a child care referral from DTA have priority access to a child care subsidy, provided they meet EEC eligibility guidelines. Parents who seek eligibility following the parent's transitional TAFDC authorization will again receive priority access to a child care subsidy for one additional 12-month period provided they meet EEC eligibility guidelines. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 606 CMR 10.04.

DHE Scholarship Reserve: The Scholarship Reserve provides financial assistance to Massachusetts students enrolled in and pursuing a program of higher education in any approved public or independent college, university, school of nursing, or any other approved institution furnishing a program of higher education. The scholarship program covers the cost of tuition for courses as well as the standard cost of living at the institution. These costs include only costs of attending courses and pursuing higher educational attainment, and excludes costs such as room and board. Scholarships are claimed under TANF purposes 3 and 4 because studies have shown that higher educational attainment correlates with a reduced incidence of out of wedlock pregnancy and that educational attainment increases the likelihood that a person will become a supportive member of a two-parent household. Therefore, scholarships that allow young adults in Massachusetts to

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pursue higher education can be reasonably calculated to prevent and reduce out of wedlock pregnancies and to encourage people to form two parent families.

University of Massachusetts (UMASS) Scholarships: UMASS provides needs-based financial assistance to Massachusetts students enrolled in and pursuing a program of higher education at one of the UMASS locations: Boston, Lowell, Worcester, Amherst or Dartmouth. The scholarship program covers the cost of tuition for courses as well as the standard costs associated with attending school. These costs include only costs of attending courses and pursuing higher educational attainment, and excludes costs such as room and board. Scholarships are claimed under TANF purposes 3 and 4 because studies have shown that higher educational attainment correlates with a reduced incidence of out of wedlock pregnancy and that educational attainment increases the likelihood that a person will become a supportive member of a two-parent household. Therefore, scholarships that allow young adults in Massachusetts to pursue higher education can be reasonably calculated to prevent and reduce out of wedlock pregnancies and to encourage people to form two parent families.

Supplemental Nutrition Allowance (SNA): Administered by DTA, this program offers a supplemental nutrition assistance benefit to certain SNAP clients who are not receiving TAFDC. Eligible families who are working and receiving SNAP or whose TAFDC cases close due to earnings and who are currently receiving Non Public Assistance (NPA) SNAP benefits only and have an employment status that meets the work participation requirements as outlined in 106 CMR 705.250 will be provided a supplemental nutritional assistance benefit.

MOE Funded Programs

TAFDC: Administered by DTA, TAFDC is the cash assistance program for families with children and some pregnant women with little to no income. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.000, et seq.

Employment Services Program (ESP): Administered by DTA, ESP is an employment oriented program that supports the goal of ending dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation and work. Regulations regarding TAFDC financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.000, et seq. and 106 CMR 707.000, et seq.

Transportation in the TAFDC Account: Administered by DTA, TAFDC and former TAFDC families who have an approved Pathways Plan and an active activity or employment receive transportation payments to offset the cost of travel to and from the activity or worksite. Regulations regarding TAFDC financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.000, et seq.

ESP Pathways to Self-Sufficiency (PSS): Administered by DTA, PSS is used to assess work program required TAFDC families to help them set goals and develop a plan to meet those goals. Regulations regarding TAFDC financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.000, et seq.

DTA Administrative Expenses: This program covers the administrative activities related to TANF or MOE funded programs performed at DTA or other Massachusetts state

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government departments and entities that receive TANF or MOE funds through contracts with state government departments. Included under this program are the costs of payroll and fringe benefits, contracted employees, travel, office supplies, equipment and office space.

Income Eligible Child care: Administered by EEC, income Eligible Child care provides subsidized child care for the children of low-income parents not receiving child care through TAFDC who are working, disabled, in an education or job training program, or who otherwise meet the activity requirement. Child care is provided for children under 13 and for older children with special needs. This subsidy primarily provides access to affordable child care for income eligible working families. It can also be utilized by parents in a training or education program. Lastly, parents with disabilities can also qualify for the subsidy in certain situations. The program pays a portion of the cost of care and requires payments from parents on a sliding scale based on income. Very low income families and children in foster care or with a relative who is not legally responsible for them are exempt from sliding fee requirements. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 606 CMR 10.04

Emergency Assistance Contract Shelter: Administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), this program provides temporary shelter to financially eligible homeless TAFDC families and assists them in finding permanent housing. The program also includes case management services. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 760 CMR 67.02.

HomeBASE: Administered by EOHLC, HomeBASE is for families who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness and meet basic qualifications for the state's Emergency Assistance shelter program. HomeBASE provides families with flexible funding as an alternative to shelter placement. HomeBASE can provide funds for first and last month's rent and a security deposit, furniture, a monthly stipend to pay rent for up to one year, utilities, travel costs and other expenses that would otherwise prevent a family from accessing a new home. In addition, families receive case management support and additional resources such as education, workforce development and child care. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 760 CMR 65.03

Emergency Assistance Alternative Housing Program: Administered by EOHLC, this program provides temporary shelter to financially eligible homeless families. Families are placed in hotels or motels while seeking other suitable housing. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 760 CMR 67.02.

Emergency Assistance Case Management: Administered by EOHLC, this program provides case management services to financially eligible homeless families within the Emergency Assistance program. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 760 CMR 67.02

Youth at Risk Grants: Administered by the Department of Public Health (DPH), these grants fund after school programs that provide academic remediation, job development and community service skills for disadvantaged youth. The expenditures included in this MOE

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claim only include the portion of the expenditures associated with the TAFDC eligible population. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.010.

Structured Teen Living: Administered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), this program provides a safe living situation for pregnant and parenting mothers under the age of 20. While living in the residential facility mothers must attend high school or a high school equivalent certificate program if they have not already received their diploma or equivalent certificate and participate in classes for basic parenting skills, pregnancy prevention and basic life skills. To be eligible a young mother must be receiving TAFDC. The regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.010.

Family Stabilization Services: Administered by DCF, this program provides services to stabilize intact families to prevent the need for home removal. The service recipients must have been eligible for benefits that require less than 85% of state median income. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 110 CMR 7.031.

Safelink Domestic Violence Hotline: Administered by a third party, Casa Myrna, Safelink is a 24/7 hotline to provide assistance to those experiencing domestic violence. The hotline can provide assistance in a crisis as well as resources for long term stabilization. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 110 CMR 4.00.

Child Protective Services Investigations: DCF is responsible for protecting children and strengthening and supporting families. DCF social workers investigate allegations of abuse or neglect and often provide services to help families care for children in their home. Investigations often lead to a referral of parents to services where they learn new skills to meet their own needs and to build relationships with their children. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 110 CMR 4.00.

DCF Referrals to TANF Assistance: DCF social workers refer families to DTA for public benefits including TAFDC. The expenditures included in this MOE claim only include the portion of expenditure associated with the TAFDC eligible population. Regulations regarding TAFDC financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.010.

State Earned Income Tax Credit (SEITC): Administered by the Department of Revenue, SEITC is a refundable tax credit that is equal to 30 percent of the federal earned income tax credit claimed by the filer in the same tax year. This applies to those who meet the TAFDC eligible requirements of 106 CMR 704.010.

Youth Works Youth Employment Program: Administered by the Executive Office of Workforce and Labor Development (EOLWD), Youth Works is a year-round employment program geared toward at-risk low-income youth. The program has made increasing efforts to serve dropouts and older youth to focus on serving the disconnected youth of the state. The expenditures included in this MOE claim only include the portion of expenditures associated with the TAFDC eligible population. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.010.

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Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Summer Jobs: Administered by DCR, summer employment for youth is aimed at serving underprivileged populations especially in economic development areas. The expenditures included in this MOE claim only include the portion of expenditures associated with the TAFDC eligible population. Regulations regarding financial eligibility can be found at 106 CMR 704.010.

(a)(1)(A)(ii) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance to engage in work (as defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months (whether or not consecutive), whichever is earlier.

Parents or caregivers receiving TAFDC are assessed for their ability to work or engage in an employment, education or training program once their TAFDC case is approved. Parents or caregivers who have received assistance for 60 days must work 20 hours per week if the youngest child in the assistant unit is between the ages of 2 and 6 or 30 hours per week if the youngest child in the assistant unit is six or older. Exceptions to this are parents or caregivers who are exempt, caring for a foster child in the home who is under age 2, caring for a foster child in the home whose needs exceed a standard level of care as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families or who have good cause. TAFDC work program rules are found in regulation at 106 CMR 703.150.

When a parent or caregiver is not engaged in work or an approved activity after 60 days or stops participating in work or an approved activity without good cause, they are removed from the grant and the grant is reduced to the lower household size until the parent or caregiver connects with the FEW and accepts a program referral. If the parent or caregiver continues not to participate the grant is terminated.

DTA continuously evaluates a family's readiness to participate in the work program at application, recertification and every time a case manager engages with a parent or caregiver. FEWs engage with parents or caregivers and collaborate with employment service programs to identify and address challenges that may impact a parent or caregiver's ability to participate to prevent sanction, and to re-engage parents or caregivers as soon as possible when a sanction is in place.

(a)(1)(A)(iii) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance under the program engage in work in accordance with section 407.

In accordance with the Massachusetts Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan, DTA works with the Department of Career Services (DCS) and the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and other WIOA partner agencies to create dedicated partnerships that ensure parents and caregivers receiving TAFDC, who are often the individuals with the highest challenges to employment, are well served not just by DTA, but by all of the appropriate parts of the workforce development system.

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The state's workforce development activities for parents and caretakers receiving TAFDC include the resources available through Pathways to Work. The WIOA Steering Committee, policy makers and leadership at DTA regularly discuss the need to increase the available resources for education and training programs focused on career pathways that can help move the skill set of individuals receiving assistance into the range of employment that provides family-supporting wages. Successful strategies typically require multi-year education and training that leads to a credential along with family support (public assistance, child care, transportation), coaching at the education and training provider, on-the-job experience (subsidized or internships) and intensive job placement (unsubsidized) support upon completion (potentially through the MassHire Career Centers).

Before a TAFDC case is approved, a case manager helps parents or caretakers who may be 'work ready' register with the MassHire system through JobQuest. Registering with JobQuest allows someone to create a job match profile that matches their skills and experience against current job openings. A resume can also be attached and profiles can be made visible to hiring employers. This is a critical first step for parents and caregivers to be positioned for hire. Once a TAFDC case is approved, the family is referred to the FEW who completes a welcoming phone call, an orientation and an assessment to help the family identify goals they want to work on. The FEW then helps to connect the family to a program that can help them meet their identified goal. A referral for fully subsidized child care is provided so that the parent or caretaker can participate in their chosen program. Young parents without a high school degree and not work ready participate in the Young Parents Program to achieve their high school equivalency degree.

DTA is also engaged in a partnership with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) to increase options for parents and caregivers who have a disability but want to engage in work. DTA has found that these partnerships are critical resources for families receiving TAFDC to not only gain additional skills but to receive the supports necessary to move from public assistance to employment.

FEWs maintain relationships with all of the ESP providers in their area. When a parent or caretaker stops participating in a program, the FEW and the program work collaboratively to re-engage the parent or caretaker in the activity quickly, before there is any reduction to the family's grant.

Massachusetts also encourages work through the earned income disregards described above under employment incentives. These disregards allow families to maintain access to benefits when they begin working so they can access all of the supports needed to maintain employment. The disregards also allow families to build assets and gain job experience so that they are better positioned to stay off public benefits once their TAFDC case closes. While Massachusetts allows families to participate in activities that are appropriate for them and will help them meet their goals, Massachusetts only reports the activities and hours in the WPR as allowed under the Social Security Act and described in the Work Verification Plan.

(a)(1)(A)(iv) Take such reasonable steps as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving

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assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

It is DTA's policy and practice that all client data and information be kept strictly confidential and protected in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66A: Fair Information Practices and Chapter 93H: Security Breaches. Chapter 64 of the Acts of 2017 established the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS); EOTSS' mission is ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of Commonwealth of Massachusetts IT data, applications and infrastructure. DTA communicates and enforces all security guidelines, standards and policies among all of its employees and contractors.

(a)(1)(A)(v) Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies, and establish numerical goals for reducing the illegitimacy ratio of the State (as defined in section 403(a)(2)(C)(iii)) for calendar years 1996 through 2005.

Massachusetts historically has had one of the lowest teen birth rates in the country. In 1996, there were 5,758 births in Massachusetts to women between the ages of 15 through 19, representing 28.5 per 1,000 females in that age range. In 2021 the birth rate for women between the ages of 15 and 19 was 5.7 births per 1,000 women. This represents the second lowest teen birth rate in the country for 2021.

In order to reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock births, DTA works with the state Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH coordinates family planning and teen pregnancy prevention efforts throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, DPH works with local schools (K-12) to develop sex and health education curricula that incorporate pregnancy prevention efforts.

The Massachusetts Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative, administered by DPH, aims to increase life opportunities and enhance family stability among young families. Participating families receive services tailored to their individual needs, including health and social service assessments, case management, counseling, health education, referrals and infant/child services. Outcomes for this program include an increase in continuous contraceptive use, a decrease in unintended pregnancies and a reduction in reliance on public assistance.

(a)(1)(A)(vi) Conduct a program designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded to include men.

The Governor's Council to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence (the Council) is an interdisciplinary council of approximately 30 members representing advocates, health care, the Attorney General's Office, law enforcement, the courts and higher education as well as various state agencies. The Council works to enact best practices to combat issues

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of sexual assault and domestic violence in order to keep Massachusetts residents safe. The Council is committed to improving prevention efforts, enhancing support for those impacted by sexual assault and domestic violence, and to holding those who perpetrate sexual assault and domestic violence accountable. The full mission and scope of the Council can be found in Executive Order 563. DTA is represented on the Council by Crystal Jackson, Director of the DTA's Domestic Violence Unit.

Some initiatives of the Council that may prevent statutory rape are the Domestic Violence Toolkit and RESPECTfully. The Domestic Violence Toolkit provides local law enforcement with the tools to support survivors of domestic violence and to identify risk and re-assault factors. It has been implemented in municipal police departments in over 65 cities and towns. RESPECTfully is a public awareness and prevention campaign to increase awareness about what constitutes a healthy relationship. The target audience for RESPECTfully is youth between the ages of 12 and 18 and those who serve or care for youth ages 12 through 18. Through Jane Doe, Inc., the Massachusetts White Ribbon Day Campaign promotes and encourages men and boys to be allies in the prevention of sexual and relationship violence.

In addition, the Department's Domestic Violence Unit is represented on the State's Roundtables on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, which operate through the state's District Attorneys and on local High-Risk Assessment Teams, which are comprised of public and domestic violence service providers, law enforcement, district attorneys' staff, probation staff, batterers' intervention programs and other stakeholders to better identify and respond to domestic violence cases that pose the highest risk of lethality.

DTA's Domestic Violence Specialists serve anyone who identifies as a survivor of domestic violence and/or sexual assault (including statutory rape), by developing safety plans and referring them to services in the community, including advocacy, counseling, shelter and Legal Aid, as appropriate. The Domestic Violence Specialists also assist survivors with DTA benefits and housing options, if homeless.

(a)(1)(A)(vii) Outline how the state intends to implement policies and procedures as necessary to prevent access to assistance provided under any electronic fund transaction in an automated teller machine or point-of-sale device located in a place described in section 408(a)(12), including a plan to ensure that recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance.

The Commonwealth has enacted a state law to prohibit the use of cash assistance, including TAFDC, in electronic benefit transfer (EBT) transactions at liquor stores, casinos, gambling casinos or gaming establishments, and retail establishment which provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment, as well as other establishments not identified in Section 408(a)(12). Retailers face fines from \$500 for a first offense, \$500 to \$2500 for a second offense and not less than \$2500 for a third offense. See M.G.L. c. 18, § J. In addition, the Commonwealth has prohibited the use of cash assistance held on EBT cards to purchase alcoholic beverages, lottery tickets, gambling, adult oriented material or performances

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and other items and services. See M.G.L. c. 18, § I. Parents or caregivers who violate the purchasing provisions must pay the Commonwealth back for the prohibited purchase. For a second offense, the parent or caregiver is disqualified from benefits for two months and must pay the Commonwealth back for the prohibited purchase. For a third offense, the parent or caregiver is disqualified from benefits permanently and must pay the Commonwealth back for the prohibited purchase.

Posters are displayed in all local offices informing families of the prohibited establishments and purchasing restrictions. The application for TAFDC benefits includes a penalty warning informing families of prohibited items and services as well as the penalties for violations. At application and redetermination, all families applying for or receiving TAFDC are provided a brochure that includes information on prohibited establishments, prohibited purchases and penalties. Retailers are notified about the law and its penalties. Local law enforcement agencies are notified about retailers who are found to have violated such law. In addition, the Department offers posters and training for retailers on the restrictions.

In an ongoing effort, the Department continues to work with its EBT vendor on blocking the use of EBT cards in prohibited establishments. The Department and its vendor are jointly researching potential prohibited establishments. The Commonwealth provides its EBT vendor with a final list of prohibited establishments monthly; the EBT vendor blocks the designated establishments' Point of Service (POS) device and ATMs on site.

(a)(1)(A)(viii) Ensure that recipients of assistance provided under the State program funded under this part have access to using or withdrawing assistance with minimal fee or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on application fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available.

The Commonwealth remains committed to ensuring that families have adequate access to their cash assistance. While most families access their benefits via EBT card, they have the option to receive TAFDC through direct deposit to checking or savings accounts or direct vendor payments for rent, utilities, etc. DTA affords all clients the right to designate an authorized payee to act on their behalf in accessing TAFDC when the parent or caregiver is unable to do so. All families receiving TAFDC who receive their benefits on an EBT card receive a brochure that advises clients about surcharge-free cash transactions and how to identify surcharge-free ATMs and POS devices. In addition, the brochure advises families that they are entitled to three free ATM withdrawals in a calendar month, but that additional withdrawals are \$0.75 per transaction. This brochure, along with the EBT card itself, provides clients with a toll-free customer service line that is available 24-hours a day, 7-days a week regarding any questions they have about accessing their benefits.

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DTA has also created an EBT cash withdrawal information sheet that is given to families applying for or receiving TAFDC in all local offices. This information sheet identifies Massachusetts banks that provide EBT cash withdrawals without surcharges. DTA continues to pursue the expansion of its current surcharge-free options and the availability of low- and no-cost banking options.

In addition, the Commonwealth has partnered with a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, funded through a large banking institution's nonprofit foundation, to offer financial literacy and credit counseling workshops. These workshops are available to families at no cost, statewide, to assist in their development of short and long-term financial planning. The workshop curriculum encompasses how families reduce or eliminate fees associated with using their EBT cards or otherwise utilize their TAFDC benefits through direct deposit or direct vendor payments for rent, utilities, etc. While families are instructed on how to better budget their TAFDC funds, they are also reminded of the prohibited items, services and establishments, identified under State law and the associated penalties.

(a)(1)(B) SPECIAL PROVISIONS

- (i) The document shall indicate whether the state intends to treat families moving from another State differently from other families under the program, and if so how the State intends to treat such families under the program.**

Families moving into Massachusetts from other states receive the same benefits from the TAFDC program as current residents.

- (a)(1)(B)(ii) The document shall indicate whether the state intends to provide assistance under the program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States, and if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.**

Massachusetts provides assistance to U.S. citizens, nationals and certain qualified aliens pursuant to federal law. Provided they meet other TAFDC program eligibility criteria, Massachusetts provides TAFDC assistance to qualified immigrants who entered the United States prior to August 22, 1996; qualified immigrants who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 who have been in a qualified immigration status for five years; and qualified immigrants who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 who are exempt from the five year bar. Those who are exempt from the five year bar include asylees, refugees, parolees, certain battered non-citizens, victims of severe forms of trafficking, those whose deportation is being withheld, Amerasians, Cuban and Haitian entrants, veterans, certain veterans and members of the military on active duty and their spouses and unmarried dependent children. The regulations regarding eligibility of immigrants can be found at 106 CMR 703.430.

- (a)(1)(B)(iii) The document shall set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how the State will provide opportunities for**

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recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process.

Massachusetts will continue to operate the TAFDC program based on objective criteria for determination of eligibility and delivery of benefits according to program rules and procedures. All DTA activities are conducted in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the Massachusetts Constitution. DTA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, creed, ancestry or Veteran's status in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in its programs or activities.

Massachusetts will continue its current fair hearings process under 106 CMR 343.00 which provides an opportunity for a hearing before a hearings officer appointed by the Division of Hearings (DOH). The DOH is wholly separate and independent from all other offices and divisions of DTA and from all other personnel of DTA. An applicant/recipient has a right to a fair hearing as set forth in the Department's regulations at 106 CMR 343.000.

(a)(1)(B)(v) Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, unless the chief executive officer of the State opts out of this provision by notifying the Secretary, a State shall, consistent with the exception provided in section 407(e)(2), require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving such assistance for 2 months is not exempt from work requirements and is not engaged in work, as determined under section 407(c), to participate in community service employment, with minimum hours per week and tasks to be determined by the State.

Massachusetts will continue to operate the program under current policy and rules, as indicated in this state plan renewal. If a parent or caretaker is not exempt from the work program requirement as defined by the State, and has received assistance for sixty days, and is not working or substituting work hours with education or training, they are required to participate in community service for the maximum number of hours allowed under the Fair Labor Standards Act, for the hours per week that ensures compliance with 106 CMR 703.150.

(a)(1)(B)(v) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment (I) providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 1397j of this title); or (II) in other occupations related to elder care determined appropriate by the state for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and, if, so shall include an overview of such assistance.

Massachusetts does not intend to exercise the above options at this time.

TANF CERTIFICATIONS

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States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must provide a certification by the chief executive officer of that State, that during the fiscal year, the State will:	
1.	Operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D. (section 402(a)(2) of the Social Security Act);
	Yes, administered by DOR
2.	Operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and that the State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under title XIX. (section 402(a)(3) of the Social Security Act);
	Yes, administered by DCF
3.	Specify which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the fiscal year, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations (section 402(a)(4) of the Social Security Act)- (A) have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; and (B) have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services;
	Yes, administered by DTA
4.	Provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government. (section 402(a)(5) of the Social Security Act);
	Yes, administered by DTA
5.	Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage. (section 402(a)(6) of the Social Security Act);
	Yes, administered by DTA
6.	(optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act).- (a) screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals; (i) refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and (ii) waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, and family cap provisions, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize

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	such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.
	Yes, administered by DTA. Options available to current and potential beneficiaries can be found at 106 CMR 703.110. Case workers and all other agency personnel are provided with training regarding relevant state standards and procedures.
7.	Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure that applicants and potential applicants for TANF are notified of assistance made available by the state to victims of sexual harassment and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
	Yes, administered by DTA
8.	Ensure that case workers and other agency personnel responsible for administering the TANF program are trained in: the nature and dynamics of sexual harassment and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking; state standards and procedures relating to the prevention of, and assistance for, individuals who are victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; and methods of ascertaining and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information and documentation related to applicants for assistance and their children who have provided notice about their experiences of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
	Yes, administered by DTA