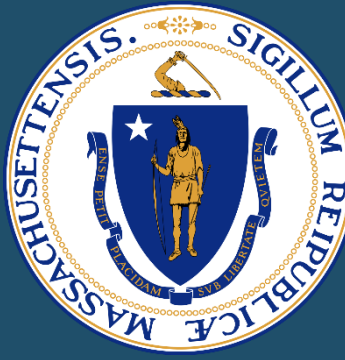


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Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Consolidated Report

January 2025



Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN
CONSOLIDATED REPORT
January 2025**

OVERVIEW

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) submits this report on the status of the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program, as required by section 2(B) of Chapter 18 and section 3C(d) of Chapter 118 of the Massachusetts General Laws. This report covers program updates through calendar year 2024.

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 support

TAFDC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

TAFDC is a state and federally funded program that provides cash assistance and employment supports to families with children and certain pregnant women with little or no income. TAFDC is operated under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.

In recent years, DTA has emphasized removing barriers to economic mobility, helping families find paths to success. Through policy innovations, the Department has continued to reduce barriers, enhance the Department's employment support programming, and explore new approaches to meaningfully engage with families who receive TAFDC benefits.

CASELOAD & BENEFITS INFORMATION

The TAFDC caseload has risen by just under 4% throughout calendar year 2024. See **Table 1** for current program payment and eligibility levels.

TABLE I TAFDC PAYMENT & ELIGIBILITY LEVELS		
Household size	Public or subsidized housing	Private housing
1	\$513	\$553
2	\$648	\$688
3	\$783	\$823
4	\$912	\$952
5	\$1,045	\$1,085
6	\$1,183	\$1,223
7	\$1,316	\$1,356
8	\$1,448	\$1,488
9	\$1,580	\$1,620
10	\$1,714	\$1,754
Each additional household member	+\$139	+\$139

Figure 1 below depicts the TAFDC caseload over time. As of October 2024, the TAFDC caseload was 44,764 households, 40% over the program’s pre-pandemic caseload.

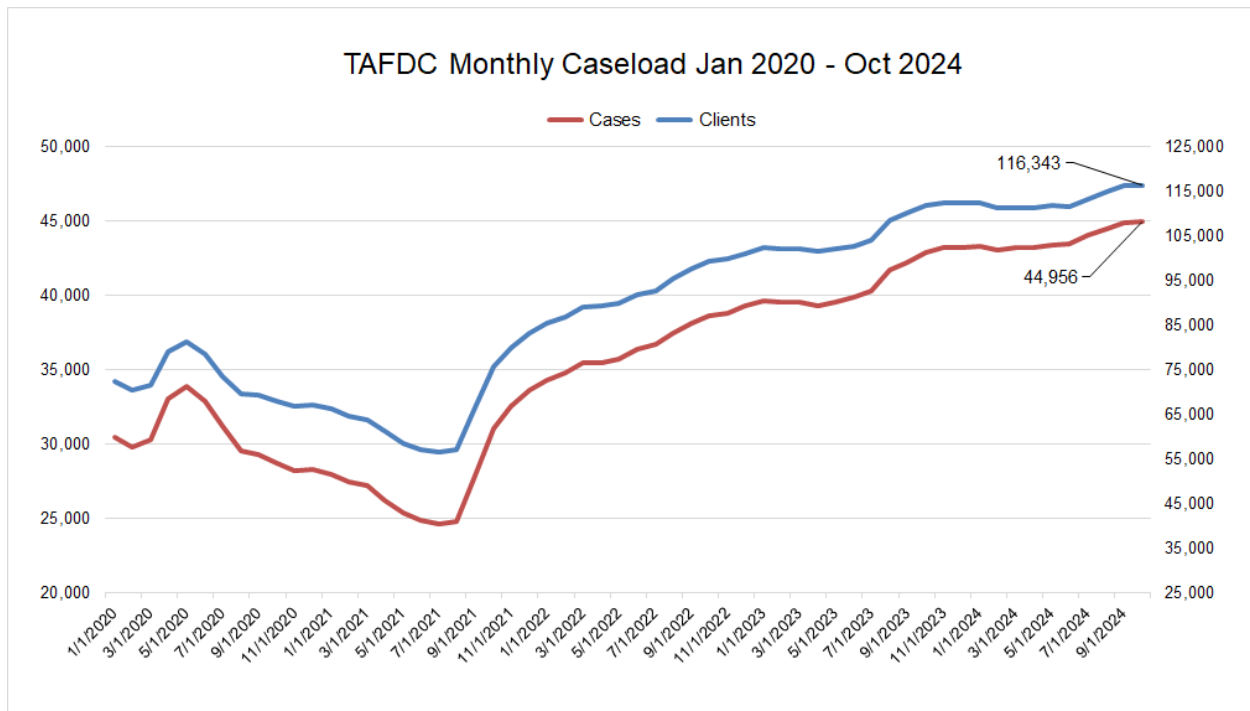


Figure 1. Monthly TAFDC Caseload (January 2020 through October 2024)

IMPROVING PROGRAM ACCESS

DTA continues to broaden its digital services to increase access for clients to all programs administered by the Department. DTA Connect, our client-facing web-portal, is now also available in Haitian Creole in addition to English, Vietnamese, Portuguese (Brazilian), and Simplified Chinese. Through DTA Connect

clients can reschedule their appointments with DTA staff as well as update certain personal information. The Department has also completed a project making it easier for clients to receive their notices in large print. Virtual meetings are now an option for TAFDC clients who want or need a face-to-face interaction but are not able to come into an office. This has increased the accessible options for DTA clients, especially clients who rely on closed captions. It has also enhanced meetings that include multiple people.

TAFDC WORK PROGRAM

TAFDC recipients are required to participate in work-related activities as a condition of eligibility, unless specifically exempted. DTA provides employment services for TAFDC clients through the Pathways to Work Program. The primary goals of DTA's employment programs are to prepare TAFDC clients for work opportunities, connect clients with career pathways, and resolve barriers for sustained employment. DTA case managers connect TAFDC clients to employment and training programs by referring them to appropriate activities based on their skill level and economic mobility goals.

The Pathways to Work program provides access to meaningful, tailored career pathways for families by offering participants more time working with DTA's full engagement workers (FEWs) and providing the supportive services necessary for families to invest in training, education, job readiness activities, and to work on their economic mobility goals. Career pathway programs, when combined with supportive services, make it easier for clients with higher barriers to employment to earn industry-recognized credentials necessary for higher wage jobs; participate in education and training programming; and to attain market identifiable skills that can transfer into work opportunities that provide a path towards economic independence.

DTA's economic assistance case workers and FEWs engage with Pathways to Work-eligible families through new goal-setting and coaching strategies designed to connect participants with opportunities that best match individual career and family goals, and support clients' progress as they position themselves to successfully participate in the Commonwealth's labor market. Participants in work-related activities, including TAFDC Pathways programs and paid employment, are eligible to receive child care and transportation supports. Any TAFDC family who needs child care for employment or to participate in a work activity program is eligible for a referral from DTA.

State law requires TAFDC recipients who meet certain criteria to be exempted from the work program requirement, including if:

- Their youngest child is less than two
- They have a verified disability
- They are in their 33rd week or third trimester of pregnancy
- They are a teen parent attending school full time
- They are over age sixty, or
- They are caring for a disabled household member.

Clients who are exempt from the work program are still encouraged to participate in Pathways to Work programs or other approved employment and training activities, though they do not experience negative consequences if they are not able to participate.

Non-parental relative caregivers, such as grandparents or other extended family members, have the option to receive TAFDC assistance for only the children in their care. In this situation, the relative caregiver is not considered a recipient of assistance, and the work program rules are not applicable.

WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

The Department is committed to supporting the state's economic development and meaningful participation in the workforce for all DTA clients, including those with significant barriers to employment, to ensure economic mobility for all.

DTA continues to explore opportunities to expand on existing initiatives and partnerships that address the needs of the whole family, connecting parents and caregivers with career pathways that match their goals, and providing the necessary supportive services to help families achieve them. All DTA Pathways to Work programs are built on a two-generation approach that helps both parents and their children make progress together and provide interventions that can help break the cycle of multi-generational poverty.

DTA Works, the Department's Internship Program, provides interns with the opportunity to acquire or develop skills necessary to re-enter the workforce. Interns are placed at a variety of locations including DTA offices, partner state agencies, and non-profit community-based organizations where they receive on-the-job training and mentorship. Interns work with a mentor and program coordinators to identify barriers that may be interfering with their economic mobility. Once identified, the intern and coordinator create specific goals to overcome any barriers and support the intern on their path to economic mobility. Interns also receive financial education through Women's Money Matters, a non-profit organization focused on empowering women with low incomes to navigate their financial goals confidently. Additionally, interns receive a stipend while enrolled to help offset the cost of engaging in training and work readiness. This stipend supplements the benefits received from DTA and is a critical support to families navigating their way back to work.

Over the past several years, DTA Works has moved to a sector-based track model, where interns participate in a cohort of fellow interns and receive soft skills training through a training partner and on the job training through an employer partner. Currently, DTA Works is operating an IT training track with Per Scholas and Tech Foundry and the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) as an employer partner. Additionally, DTA Works is operating a paraprofessional track, in partnership with Holyoke Community College serving as the training partners and Springfield Public Schools serving as the employer partner. DTA Works continues to provide multiple learning opportunities, offering in person, virtual and hybrid settings, with close to 60% of participants exiting the program for employment in FY24.

DTA remains a key partner in the state's implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) focused on addressing "cliff effects" for families receiving public assistance. DTA is supporting Springfield WORKS in implementing a 3-year Bridge to Prosperity Pilot Program that seeks

to address cliff effects for residents and their families in Springfield, Boston and Worcester who are in receipt of public assistance and working on attainment of higher wage jobs. Bridge to Prosperity will provide cash payments, financial coaching and connections to employer partnerships for up to 100 families beginning in 2025. Evaluation of the pilot will include measuring key impacts to employment and financial wellness, as well as systemic impacts for employers and worker retention.

OTHER PROGRAMS

At this time, the Department is unable to provide the number of TAFDC recipients that also receive benefits under the following line items: 7004-0101, 7004-0108, 7004-9024 or 7004-9316. This is because these are programs administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), and DTA does not have immediate access to client data from other agency's systems to compare clients.

In order to meet this requirement of this report, DTA is engaging in a data sharing agreement with EOHLC to securely access and analyze the information to identify the population of TAFDC recipients that receive these benefits under these items and expects to be able to provide this information in a subsequent annual report.