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Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Work Participation Report

August 2019



**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN
CONSOLIDATED REPORT
AUGUST 2019**

OVERVIEW

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is pleased to submit this comprehensive report on the status of the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program, as required by section 2(B) of Chapter 18 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION

DTA's mission is to assist and empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency. DTA offers a comprehensive system of programs and supports to help individuals and families achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment supports.

DTA serves one out of every nine people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, elders, and people with disabilities.

TAFDC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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

The goal of TAFDC is to support families as they transition from economic crisis to stability. Over the past three years DTA has worked to remove barriers to economic mobility and to help families find their own best path to success. The Department has pursued a three-pronged approach disrupt multi-generational poverty and meet labor market demands through multi-year reforms that:

- Simplify and streamline program rules and requirements for working families,
- Better incentivize and support employment and employment related activities, and
- Ease the "cliff effect" during the transition to economic mobility.

UPDATE ON TAFDC WORK PROGRAM REQUIREMENT

DTA has expanded employment resources through the procurement of the Young Parents Program (YPP) and the Competitive Integrated Employment Services Program (CIES). The YPP started last July and CIES will begin this July. Through both procurements, DTA switched to outcomes-oriented contracts, placing an emphasis on meeting participants where they are and extending eligibility to non-custodial parents in order to better support children receiving TAFDC. Similarly, DTA continues to strengthen its growing partnership with the statewide network of MassHire Career Centers. The Department has also developed a strong partnership with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) to engage parents with a disability who, historically, have trouble accessing effective employment supports.

Participants in work-related activities, including paid employment, are eligible to receive child care and transportation supports. This year, to comply with new federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) regulations, DTA worked collaboratively with the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to make substantial changes to the child care referral process in an effort to better meet the needs of TAFDC families. Most significantly, parents that are enrolled in an approved employment activity are able to keep their child care for a full year before needing to reauthorize, thus supporting stable employment for parents and stable care for children.

As of May 2019, 29,043 households comprised of 65,373 recipients received TAFDC. Of this total, 7,794 heads of households were required to participate in an employment-related activity and 21,248 heads of households were exempt from the work program requirement. Exemptions are granted based on 106 CMR 703.100 and include:

- Having a verified disability or medical condition that prevents you from working
- Having a child less than two years of age
- Being in your 33rd week of pregnancy
- Being a teen parent and attending school full time
- Being age 60 or over
- Caring for a disabled household member
- Being a non-parent relative care giver.

Each of the 7,794 heads of households required to participate in an employment-related activity reports one or more significant challenges to employment, such as:

- Lack of employment-related skills and training;
- Lack of work experience;
- Limited literacy/math skills;
- Health Issue; and
- Homelessness.

DTA collects this information through the Pathways to Self-Sufficiency Assessment.

Families who are required to participate in the work program are only eligible to receive 24 months of TAFDC benefits in a five-year period. In accordance with 106 CMR 703.130, the Department may grant an extension of benefits beyond the 24-month limit when the grantee has been complying with work program requirements and has made a good faith effort to meet their economic independence goals. Extensions may also be approved when a grantee is participating in a work program activity and needs time to complete the activity. In Fiscal Year 2019, DTA received 559 extension requests, and approved 159 of those requests.

Heads of households who are exempt from the work program requirement but do have earnings received TAFDC for an average of just under 2 years. Those who are exempt but do not have earnings receive TAFDC for an average of just under 4 years. Heads of households who are required to participate in the work program receive TAFDC on average for just over 1 year whether or not they have earnings.