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Employment Services Program Report

March 2020



**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM REPORT
MARCH 2020**

REPORT OVERVIEW

Pursuant to line item 4401-1000 of the FY2020 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is required to report on the status of its Employment Services Program, including the number of clients served by these programs, the number of clients who transition into employment, the number of clients who remain in employment after 90 days, and the number of clients who remain in employment after 1 year.

Note on Report

Because FY2020 has not concluded before the submission of this report, DTA reported on the previous fiscal year's ESP activities.

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. We do this through a comprehensive system of programs and supports, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment supports.

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

TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN (TAFDC)

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.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

The Massachusetts economy remains the strongest it has been in a generation and we've been working with our partners in the workforce system to both provide our clients with the opportunity to participate in this labor market and to help meet employers demands for skilled labor. DTA is focused on using our Employment Services Program (ESP) resources strategically and on forging new partnerships to expand opportunity for all DTA clients, including young parents, those with disabilities, homeless families as well as those with education or behavioral health barriers, in activities that will ultimately increase their skills, employability and economic independence.

The theory of change for all DTA programs is that a two-generation approach helps both generations make progress together and provides interventions that can break the cycle of multi-generational poverty.¹

The ESP is an integral part of DTA's efforts to move our TAFDC clients to work and increase their economic mobility. Each year, the Massachusetts Legislature allocates funding for employment services for TAFDC clients through ESP. The primary goals of ESP are to assist TAFDC clients to prepare for and connect with career pathways and resolve barriers to continued employment. Case managers assist TAFDC clients to meet their work program requirements primarily by referring them to appropriate activities for their skill level and goals.

The ESP is comprised of a number of outcomes driven (pay-for-performance) programs funded through line-item 4401-1000 in the FY20 GAA, which includes:

- Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES);
- Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI);
- Secure Jobs Program;
- DTA Works Program;
- Work Participant Program (WPP);
- Young Parents Program (YPP); and
- Empowering to Employ (MRC).

Over the last three fiscal years funding has been included for DTA in the GAA for an additional supportive service providing transportation for TAFDC families through two pilot programs in Framingham and Worcester. Both are areas where transportation is limited, creating a significant barrier for families. These pilot programs provide free transportation to educational and employment related activities as well as to childcare. In FY19, DTA served a total of 150 families. Because of the success of these programs, funding has continually been included in the line item.

COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

In FY10, DTA converted much of its funded employment services programs to the CIES program. Under the CIES procurement, overseen by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), proposals for services were solicited from potential providers. In FY19, DTA re-procured this program on its own. Through the new CIES procurement, DTA has taken a whole family approach to providing individualized, human-centered services that places clients on career pathways to jobs in high-growth industries.

Through the CIES program, DTA hopes to affect change for families by:

- Empowering participants to pursue a path to economic mobility through education, training and job readiness,

¹[Two-Generation Playbook](#), Ascend at the Aspen Institute, September 2016

- Actively engaging participants to develop the skills necessary to achieve economic stability in a fulfilling career path, and
- Providing participants with hope and aspiration to break the cycle of poverty and achieve personal and economic growth as they pursue their goals

The CIES program provides a comprehensive array of job search, training and education services focused on successful employment placement, career growth and retention. Clients may also participate in industry-validated occupational/vocational training. The CIES model broadens the scope of job readiness beyond education and work history to include other issues such as health, housing stability, and family life that can have a substantial impact on an individual’s ability to maintain employment. The CIES model provides workforce development, contextual learning, and empower participants to build family stability. CIES providers actively engage with participants to set family goals and develop individualized employment plans. These service plans include four components: Assessment and Goal setting, Job-targeted Education and Skills Training, and Job Retention at 30, 90 and 180 days. Job Retention Services include goal setting, continued skill development and coordinated case management.

Employment outcomes are targeted to match high-demand labor markets with growth potential. To obtain these outcomes, service providers support families as they pass through recognized milestones. These milestones are organized based on each client’s goals and needs. Providers provide post-employment supports to clients for up to one year. To ensure providers have the resources to provide post-employment supports, outcome payments are made to service providers when clients retain employment and/or experience wage growth.

TABLE I CIES ENROLLMENTS & OUTCOMES					
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Job Placements	Performance Rate	#90-Day Retention	Retention Rate
FY2018	2,370	1,432	60.4%	1,223	85.4%
FY2019	2164	1341	62.0%	1162	86.7%

As of January 2020, 2,584 clients had been served through the new CIES program with 554 job placement outcomes.

MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) offers bilingual/bicultural employment services aimed to assist employment-authorized noncitizens who are also TAFDC clients in achieving economic mobility as newcomers to the United States.

Services are provided in the client’s primary language as they work to build their English language skills. ORI serves refugees, asylees, and other immigrants for whom English is not their primary language. Puerto Rican evacuees are also served through ORI. Youth participants can enroll in this program after completing a HiSET or DTA’s Young Parents Program (YPP). Through ORI services, families are able to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers which may hinder them from obtaining and retaining employment. ORI’s employment services include comprehensive assessment of family’s needs, employment readiness, access to vocational skills trainings, job placement and retention. Currently, ORI serves the areas of Boston, Brockton, Lawrence, Lynn, Lowell, Worcester and West Springfield.

TABLE 2 MORI ENROLLMENTS & OUTCOMES			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Job Placements	# 30-Day Retention
FY2018	352	242	214
FY2019	282	232	208

In FY20, ORI was allocated \$1M with an additional \$250,000 adding a cost reimbursement component to enhance ESOL instruction and expand vocational skill training programs.

SECURE JOBS PROGRAM

DTA collaborates with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to administer the Secure Jobs Program, which was created through a partnership between the Fireman Foundation and the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness. The program addresses both homelessness and joblessness by bringing together employment and housing agencies from across the state to help homeless families increase their economic mobility. 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. Secure Jobs focuses on three key domains: Education and Career, Stable Housing and Economic Stability, and Family Stability and Well-Being. Participants have access to flexible funds, which are used to address individual barriers to employment.

Secure Jobs serves homeless or previously homeless families receiving assistance from DHCD in the areas of Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Framingham, Lawrence, Lowell, Holyoke, Springfield and Worcester.

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.

Through Secure Jobs, DTA and DHCD have also aligned policies to reduce barriers for our shared families that support the best outcomes. This alignment is supported by the Secure Jobs Program

Coordinator who provides both administrative and programmatic support in coordination with DHCD.

In partnership with DHCD, DTA has been afforded the opportunity to provide 50 Mobile Section 8 Vouchers over three years to Secure Jobs participants who have obtained and maintained employment for six months. To date, 25 vouchers have been made available. Out of the 25, 16 families are in the process of obtaining a voucher with 9 families having obtained their vouchers.

In FY20, Secure Jobs increased its funding from \$1M to \$2M. These additional funds were allocated to providers based on their previous performance and will support continued access to flexible funds.

TABLE 3 SECURE JOBS ENROLLMENTS & OUTCOMES		
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Job Placements
FY2018	634	265
FY2019	577	277
FY2020	227	107

For more information, see report on the status of the Secure Jobs program submitted pursuant to line-item 4400-1020 of the FY2019 General Appropriations Act.

DTA WORKS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The DTA Works Internship Program is a work ready program funded for TAFDC recipients. DTA Works provides TAFDC recipients 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 mentor support. Interns also work with their 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 may participate for up to 24 weeks. They receive a monthly education and training stipend to support their participation. The monthly stipend is in addition to their TAFDC benefits and does not impact those benefits.

DTA Works has two program coordinators that provide statewide support and provide capacity for DTA to expand internship opportunities. DTA is currently developing partnerships with private employers to provide meaningful internship tracks that will lead to employment in high demand labor markets such as healthcare.

TABLE 4 DTA WORKS ENROLLMENTS & OUTCOMES			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Post-Internship Employment	Performance Rate
FY2018	74	40	54%
FY2019	73	49	67%

YOUNG PARENTS PROGRAM

The Young Parents Program serves young parents, ages 14 through 24, who are receiving TAFDC or are the non-custodial parent of a child receiving TAFDC. YPP is a year-round, full-time program that focuses on education to career pathways as the primary goal for young parents. The theory of change for YPP is that a two-generation approach helps both generations make progress together and provides interventions that can break the cycle of multi-generation poverty.² YPP supports positive outcomes across three domains; Education and Career; Life and Personal; Parenting and Family.

Through the Young Parents Program DTA seeks to:

- Empower parents to pursue a path to economic mobility through education pathways and job readiness, while establishing support networks that allow parents to successfully access and maintain active benefits,
- Actively engage participants to develop the skills necessary to advocate and care for their children so that ultimately the children in this program are safe, healthy, and thriving and,
- Provide a sense of hope and aspiration to empower families to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty through sustained school and community involvement and engagement with the program.

The 2Gen approach of YPP 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. By promoting education and supports for children along with tools to improve parents’ economic situations, outcomes for both the parent and child can improve.

TABLE 5 YPP PROGRAM ENROLLMENTS & OUTCOMES			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	# Outcomes Achieved	Utilization
FY2018	426	387	74%
FY2019*	562	323	84%

*As of September 2019, all enrollments & outcomes were based on the new procurement program.

² “Two-Generation Playbook “Ascend, The Aspen Institute (ascend.aspendinstitute.org)

THE WORK PARTICIPANT PROGRAM

DTA is an essential partner in Massachusetts’ implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA seeks to integrate states’ workforce systems to better serve employers and jobseekers. Signed into law in 2014, WIOA reauthorized the nation’s employment, training, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs for the first time in 16 years. WIOA’s emphasis is on targeting low-income adults and youth with limited training and skills as well as individuals with disabilities to help them overcome barriers to economic success.

Since the passage of WIOA, DTA has worked closely with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) to implement a new, more integrated system of workforce development for DTA clients and other priority populations with significant barriers to work. The aim of this collaboration is to:

- Develop meaningful pathways to work and economic mobility for low-income, disabled and chronically un/underemployed individuals/families, and
- Ensure that DTA clients and families with significant barriers can access the workforce system with the support needed to attain and sustain employment.

This partnership has allowed DTA to provide additional employment supports to TAFDC and SNAP clients through the network of MassHire Career Centers. Located throughout Massachusetts, each MassHire Career Center offers services to DTA clients through the Work Participant Program (WPP). Through WPP, clients receive access to individualized career counseling and guidance, workshops, job fairs, employer recruitment, and access to free resources to assist with their job search and applications.

In FY20, DTA invested \$1,000,000 in career services for our clients through WPP. Since the execution of the preliminary ISA in FY17, this partnership has resulted in significant progress. The percent of the MassHire customer base who are also TANF and SNAP clients has doubled from 6% to more than 12%.

TABLE 6 WPP PROGRAM ENROLLMENTS & OUTCOMES			
Fiscal Year	# Enrollments	Training Vouchers Issued	Entered Employment
FY2017 (partial)	195	47	1530
FY2018	1944	160	
FY2019	1349	97	959**
FY2020 (July-September)	394	24	

***Employment numbers are based on a combination of DCS’s MOSES data and DTA’s BEACON data, accounting for more employments than previous numbers reported.*

DTA is also focused on increasing work opportunities among our SNAP clients. The SNAP Path to Work program is designed to assist unemployed and under-employed SNAP participants to gain valuable skills and experience, and secure employment in a career-path job through a network of contracted community partners. DTA has contracts with 52 SNAP Path to Work providers across the state and the statewide MassHire Career Center network to provide services to program participants. USDA has approved provider reimbursements of approximately \$6.6M as part of the FFY20 SNAP Employment and Training State Plan.

In September 2019 DTA was awarded \$1.6M in pledge funds from USDA designed to serve SNAP clients subject to the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) work requirement. DTA is using these funds to further expand our partnership with the Department of Career Services through the MassHire Career Centers to expand recruitment and engagement of SNAP clients, including those clients subject to the ABAWD work requirement.

EMPOWERING TO EMPLOY

Empowering to Employ is a partnership between DTA and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) that maximizes employment opportunities for workforce engagement for TAFDC families and clients with disabilities. This initiative was launched on July 1, 2018, with a shared mission to establish an integrated employment model for individuals with disabilities receiving TAFDC leading to sustained employment, economic independence and family stability.

DTA and MRC use a jointly-funded model of client engagement and intensive co-case management to provide individualized and meaningful services with a focus to:

- Shift the paradigm from *exemption* due to a disability to individualized vocational supports needed for employment,
- Work in partnership with local teams to identify “best practices” for improved employment-related outcomes for clients with disabilities and their families,
- Engage and sustain TAFDC clients in meaningful employment-related activities that lead to jobs in high demand industries,
- Develop and “test” an intensive co-case management model to promote, engage, and support clients on their path to economic stability.

Although DTA clients have always had access to MRC services, this initiative streamlines the enrollment process and allows DTA to take a targeted approach to connecting potential participants. Both agencies have been committed to learning each other’s services, developing strategies to blend agency strengths and creating a process to meet the needs of individuals and families, with the goal of connecting participants to the workforce.

In FY2019, the ISA provided \$270,700 for three MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and one shared Job Placement Specialist in three designated DTA office locations; Quincy, Lawrence and Brockton. In FY20, funding was increased, and the North Shore and Fitchburg DTA offices were added to the pilot along with another Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and two more Job Placement Specialists.

TABLE 7 EMPOWERING TO EMPLOY PROGRAM OUTCOMES	
Program Status	# Of Job Seekers
In Training/Job Ready	30
Job Placements	46
Employment Outcomes	14
Currently Receiving Counseling & Guidance	89
Consumers Served to date	197

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED SUPPORTS & SERVICES

DTA's Full Engagement Workers (FEWs) are located in each DTA office to assist clients in workforce training, obtaining and maintaining employment, and other issues that present barriers to employment. The FEWs conduct client orientations twice a week providing an overview of the transitional nature of TAFDC benefits and ensuring clients are aware of available local employment and training opportunities and available supports. FEWs also work in collaboration with MassHire Department of Career Services staff and Employment Service Providers to support ESP participant engagement in activities and to identify non-DTA funded employment and training resources in their areas.

Eligible TAFDC clients participating in most work-related activities, or any of the ESP programs listed above, have access to the following supports as needed: ESP childcare referrals, transportation benefits of \$80 per month, learning disability screening and assessments, and Hi-SET vouchers, information about the benefits of employment and eligibility for tax credits via the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Earned Income Credit (EIC).

Eligible former TAFDC clients who have transitioned to employment receive the following supports: Transitional Child Care referrals and information about the benefits of employment and eligibility for tax credits via EITC and EIC. Most also receive Transitional Benefit Alternative (TBA) SNAP benefits, which provides additional nutritional supports as former clients transition to work.

DTA provides Transitional Support Services (TSS) to support employment retention and prevent the need to return to TAFDC for clients whose case closed due to earnings. TSS includes Work Related Expense and Transportation stipends which begin when a case has been closed for 30 days. TSS stipends are available for a period of four months, in amounts that decrease over the TSS period. The Work Related Expense stipend is \$200 in the first month, decreasing by \$50 dollars over the next three months, ending in a \$50 stipend in the fourth month. The Transportation stipend is \$80 in the first month, decreasing by \$20 over the next three months, ending in a \$20 stipend in month four.

These small but meaningful supports help to mitigate the “cliff effect” many clients face when transitioning off TAFDC and allow clients to experience the benefits of work.

ALIGNING DTA EFFORTS WITH BROADER WORKFORCE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

DTA has been working over the past several years to simplify and streamline program rules to better support and incentivize employment, particularly in our TAFDC program but also across programs. With the support of the Legislature, in FY19 and FY20 the Administration implemented important changes to TAFDC policies. These include the sixth month earnings disregard for working families, restructuring of grant payments, providing child care for working relative caregivers, excluding one household vehicle from the asset limit for TAFDC eligibility, and eliminating a grant reduction for homeless families. These policy reforms not only better support working caregivers but also align TAFDC policies with those of other means-tested benefit programs in the state.

The impetus for many of the reforms came directly as a result of DTA’s participation as a key partner in Governor Baker’s Learn to Earn Initiative (LTE), a cross-secretariat Working Group (K-12 Education, Higher Education, Child Care, SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, MRC’s Vocational Rehabilitation program, Housing, Workforce Development) convened out of the work to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) state plan to analyze existing “safety net” benefit programs and develop policy recommendations to address “cliff effects” and promote employment, wage growth, and permanent exit from public benefits.

DTA looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the legislature and our community partners to reform policies that get in the way of families achieving their goals; expand and diversify employment services programming options for TAFDC clients through new purchasing approaches and partnerships; and exploring new approaches to conducting DTA business and engaging with families.