



Department of Transitional Assistance

April 2024 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

Benefit Decision Notice (BDN)

The Department has launched the Benefit Decision Notice (BDN) now in four new languages: Portuguese (Brazilian), Chinese (Simplified), Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole, in addition to our existing English and Spanish languages. This is a significant milestone in terms of language access because it marks the first time the Department is sending notices in these languages. This comes as a result of years of hard work, including nine months of rigorous design, development, and testing of this brand-new functionality. Notice language can be selected at application, be over DTA Connect, phone, or paper app. Clients can also change at any time by calling DTA or updating on DTA Connect as well.

Update My Information (UMI)

DTA has expanded the utilization of DTA Connect through the Update My Information (UMI) rollout. This enhancement is a major improvement to DTA Connect that will allow DTA clients to update their profiles and case information themselves without having to speak directly to DTA staff. We are looking forward to working with our SNAP partners to spread the word. Clients can now update the following info from DTA Connect:

- Phone Number and Text notification preferences
- Email address and notification preferences
- Residential Address
- Mailing Address (which is now separate from residential)
- Preferred Language
- Shelter Expenses
- Utility Expenses
- Dependent Care Expenses
- Medical Expenses
- Health Insurance for active TAFDC/EAEDC cases

Please continue to encourage people to download the DTA Connect App or go to the online portal DTAConnect.com.

Governor's Budget Highlights

Governor Maura Healey released her FY25 budget in January. Some of the FY25 budget highlights for DTA include:

- \$89 million total increase from FY24 for DTA
- \$25 million for the Healthy Incentives Program
- \$974,000 for the SNAP Mobile EBT Payment Pilot
- \$51 million increase to maintain eligibility and benefit levels for TAFDC and EAEDC

You can look through the entire budget [here](#) and check out this [budget brief](#) that highlights ways in which the budget address food insecurity.

This is just the beginning of the budget process and there may be changes to it over the next few months as it goes through the legislative process.

State SNAP Supplement for Certain Noncitizens

The new State SNAP Supplement began in February. This program supports certain noncitizens who do not current qualify for federal SNAP benefits. The benefit calculation and eligibility determination are complex due to the interplay of citizenship rules and differing state and federal funding sources, all of which requires significant technical systems and policy work to mobilize.

As this supplement is subject to available funding, and was not sufficiently resourced, it will not run through the end of Fiscal Year 2024 unless a supplemental budget is passed. At this time the plan is for the program to provide benefits to all clients eligible for benefits through the April issuance. Clients and partners will be notified of program changes with as much advance notice as possible.

For more information please see [our website](#).

Benefit Theft

The Department has recently seen an increase in stolen benefits. We believe that this is due to card skimming at point-of-sale systems. The Department is closely monitoring the situation and has taken the following steps:

1. We are engaging in a direct texting campaign to clients who live in areas we have identified with higher levels of activity to notify them of the skimming. We are also recommending that they change their EBT card PIN, which protects them if their card has been skimmed and reduces the chance their benefits are stolen. We are also sharing resources on how to keep their information safe.
2. We have put up a banner on our website and on our social media pages warning clients about an increase in thefts and sharing information on how to protect their benefits. These include links to information to better protect EBT cards from theft.
3. We are using analytics to monitor spending and usage to help us identify trends and act to prevent theft, and to see if we can identify and contact any specific locations where the skimming could be taking place.
4. We are working with local law enforcement in the identified locations due to that fact that the skimming is not target at EBT cards, but all debit cards, to see if they are seeing any trends. We are also collaborating with our state and federal partners to report and investigate fraudulent activity.

We encourage you to direct your DTA clients who believe their benefits were stolen to our website here: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/report-stolen-benefits-to-dta>. We will process their request and provide them with replacement benefits as quickly as we can. More about how to protect their benefits here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/protect-your-benefits-from-scams>.

