



Department of Transitional Assistance

February 2025 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

Governor's Budget Highlights

Governor Maura Healey released her FY26 House 1 budget in January. Some of the FY26 budget highlights for DTA include:

- \$64.9 million (+6%) total increase from FY25 for DTA
- Maintaining TAFDC/EAEDC benefit levels in effect as of January 2025, including clothing and rental allowance
- \$18.8 million for the Healthy Incentives Program
- Building on the Administration's maternal health equity initiatives to invest \$700,000 to expand TAFDC eligibility to ensure access for people throughout the full pregnancy
- Increases HIP benefits to \$30/month
- Maintaining funding to support operation of food security programs including SNAP, which supports 670,000 households, and SUN Bucks (aka Summer EBT), which delivers about \$70 million in food assistance to school aged children during the summer break

You can look through the entire budget [here](#), review the EOHHS agency proposals [here](#), and read the [budget brief](#) that highlights how the budget is promoting health, resilience, and independence.

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.

EBT System Conversion

DTA is in the process of switching to a new Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) vendor. After almost 20 years of working with Conduent, DTA has signed a contract with Fidelity Information Services (FIS) to be Massachusetts' new EBT vendor. DTA will transition its EBT system to FIS in late April 2025.

During the official systems transition, there will be a brief period of time when DTA clients will not be able to use their EBT cards. DTA anticipates this period of downtime will begin in the late evening of Saturday, April 26, and end the afternoon of Sunday, April 27. More specific information about the downtime period will be available closer to the conversion weekend. We will share more information as it is finalized with you and other partners in the weeks and months leading up to the transition.

2025 SSA COLA

Every year in January, the Social Security Administration (SSA) implements a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for RSDI and SSI recipients. This COLA can affect TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

benefits. This year, the SSA COLA will increase RSDI and SSI income by 2.5%. As a reminder, an increase to income generally decreases DTA benefits. Everyone impacted by this change will receive a notice informing them of their new benefit amount.

Jackson Square Office Opening

In response to growing client needs in Boston, DTA opened a second office at 1785 Columbus Avenue, near Jackson Square in Roxbury. This new location complements DTA's existing high-volume office in Nubian Square. Boston-area clients have been assigned between the two offices to reduce the current high volume at Nubian Square.

The new office opened and began servicing DTA clients on January 27. DTA has reached out to clients who will be served by staff at the Jackson Square office. This new office space features state-of-the-art technology and universal design accessibility enhancements, including a communication board, on demand ASL virtual interpreter services, and sensory-friendly light dimmers in interview rooms.

You can find more information on Jackson Square and the clients the office serves [here](#). Clients are always encouraged to consider using additional avenues to do business with DTA, including using DTA Connect, the automated options on the DTA Assistance Line, SNAP outreach partners, etc., if they meet their needs.

SNAP Replacement Benefits

Congress did not include funding for SNAP replacement benefits in the continuing resolution that passed in December, and therefore, federal funding used to replace stolen SNAP benefits will not be available for thefts that happen after December 20, 2024.

DTA clients are encouraged to continue to report any stolen benefits to DTA as soon as they discover it. Even if we are unable to replace stolen benefits right now, we may be able to replace it if additional funding become available.

How to Report Stolen Benefits:

- Call the DTA Fraud Line at 833-602-9247
- Fill out the [Claim for Replacement of Stolen Benefits form](#) online
- Complete and mail [the Claim for Replacement of Benefits Stolen Electronically form](#) to:
DTA Program Integrity Fraud Investigation Unit
P.O. Box 4411
Taunton, MA 02780-0435
- [More information can be found here](#).

HIP Benefits Remain at Single Level

Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) benefits have changed as of December 1, 2024, the maximum HIP a client can earn each month is \$20, regardless of household size.

Governor Maura Healey requested \$25 million to fully fund HIP in her FY 2025 budget proposal. The final budget provided \$15 million, leaving a \$10 million deficit.

DTA worked with our partners at the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to evaluate options to meet the \$15 million budget that would cause the least disruption to clients and farmers. We determined that reducing the monthly incentive to \$20 was the only option that ensured the program could operate year-round.

Clients are encouraged to visit our website for [more information on how to maximize their SNAP benefits](#). More information on the benefit change can be found [here](#).

EBT Card Safety

Clients are now able to control when their card is usable and when it is not by locking and unlocking their EBT card through their DTA Connect account.

Simply put, the card lock feature gives clients who get benefits on an EBT card the power to decide when their card is usable. When a client locks the card, it cannot be used to purchase anything or perform any other transactions with the EBT account, such as ATM withdrawals, PIN changes, or balance inquiries. When it is unlocked, it can be used. The lock feature can be turned on and off easily using DTA Connect.

Clients are encouraged to leave their cards locked until they need to use it in order to prevent skimming or other benefit theft. It is important to note that if clients are requesting a new EBT card and they had previously locked their EBT account, they must unlock their account in order to get a new card.

DTA continues to pursue additional EBT card security measures, including chipped cards, but that change will not be available very soon. We appreciate your help in promoting this feature among our shared clients!

DTA also continues to urge clients to be vigilant and reset their PIN before each benefit issuance. Clients should continue doing visual checks of point-of-sale (POS) devices before swiping their EBT card.

Reinstating Collections

DTA reviews client eligibility for benefits based on provided information like income and household size. If incorrect information is provided or clients break program rules, DTA must collect back any benefits that clients weren't eligible for.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DTA paused collections. Collections will restart in 2025. More information about this process will be shared in the coming months.

Assistance Line

The DTA Assistance Line continues to experience an incredibly high volume of callers. In an average day, the Assistance Line receives nearly 10,000 calls from people hoping to speak to a DTA staff member. More than half of those calls hear the high-volume message and about 2,000 are able to speak with a Case Manager.

DTA is exploring new strategies and appreciates your help in promoting other self-service options for clients, such as increasing use of DTA Connect.

By using DTA Connect, a client can submit an application, submit verifications, check their case status, check their balance, and more. We also encourage clients to work with contracted SNAP outreach partners, which are approved community-based organizations that are able to help clients apply for and maintain their SNAP benefits. A list of partners can be found online [here](#).