

TAFDC Basics

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Lisa Bradley, lbradley@gbls.org

Lizbeth Ginsburg, lginsburg@gbls.org

Greater Boston Legal Services

Goals

- Overview
 - Who is eligible for TAFDC
 - Rules for families on TAFDC
- Goal: Know enough to spot issues, when to refer to Legal Services

What is TAFDC & who is eligible?

What Is TAFDC?

- **TAFDC** = Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children
- Cash assistance (welfare) program in Massachusetts for low-income families with children and pregnant people
- Administered by the Department of Transitional Assistance (**DTA**)

What are the TAFDC benefits?

- **Cash grant** paid twice a month
- Annual clothing allowance (\$500 in 2024)
- Infant Allowance for new babies (\$300)
- Potential for **child care** and transportation benefits (\$80/mo)
- Relocation benefit (up to \$1000)
- Confers MassHealth eligibility

Who is eligible for TAFDC?

Families with dependent children

- Child
 - Under the age of 18, and/or
 - Age 18 and expected to graduate from high school by age 19
- Parent or other relative caretaker

Pregnant person

- Teens: any time in pregnancy
- Age 20 & up: within 120 days of due date

What are the benefits *after* TAFDC closes?

- **Transitional child care voucher:** if needed for work or education/training any time within 24 mos. *after* TAFDC closes.
- **Transitional Support Services** – if TAFDC closes due to earnings, will get cash stipend for 4 months after case closes
- **TBA SNAP:** TAFDC closes for earnings or other income like Unemployment – SNAP continues for 5 months without counting the new income

Financial eligibility overview

Income

- Unearned income – counts *unless* exception applies (e.g., SSI is non-countable)
- Earned income – deductions/disregards usually apply

No asset limit

TAFDC grant amount

TAFDC amount is based on:

- # of people included in grant
- Countable income (earned & unearned)
- Housing situation
 - Public/subsidized housing or private housing (+\$40/month)

TAFDC grant amount

Monthly TAFDC amount (no other countable income):

# of people	Public housing/ subsidized housing	Private housing (no subsidy)
2	\$648	\$688
3	\$783	\$823
4	\$912	\$952

Benefit Issuance Dates

Last digit of SSN*	1 st TAFDC Deposit Date / SNAP Deposit Date	2nd TAFDC Deposit Date
0	1	16
1	2	17
2	4	19
3	5	20
4	7	22
5	8	23
6	10	25
7	11	26
8	13	28
9	14	29

**If no SSN, DTA assigns a number called a 99 number or facsimile number.*

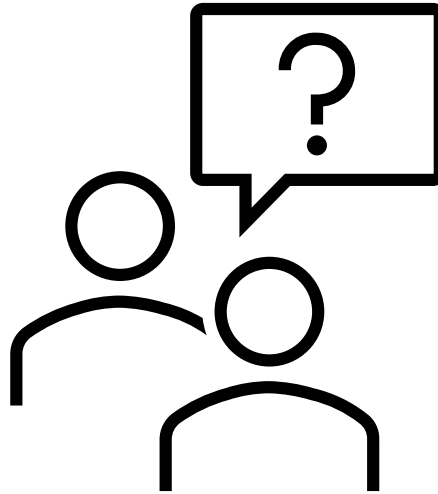
Immigrant eligibility rules

Complex eligibility rules for non-citizens

- Non-citizen parent can apply for eligible child regardless of status
- Separate session on this topic later today
- Consult an advocate, [TAFDC Advocacy Guide](#)
- Training on Immigrants and Public Benefits – date TBD (part of [Basic Benefits Training](#) series).

Note: Each DTA program has different immigrant eligibility rules.

Questions?





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TAFDC Rules

Key TAFDC rules

- Time limit & work requirement (Pathways)
- Exemptions
- Child support assignment & cooperation
- Immunization
- Learnfare – school attendance rules
- TAFDC & earnings

Time limit & work requirement – overview

Families on TAFDC are subject to time limit and work requirement rules unless **exemption** applies

Non-exempt

Subject to time limit
& work requirement

Exempt

Not subject to time
limit or work
requirement

Note – can move from exempt to non-exempt, and vice versa



Time limit

- For **non-exempt** families:
 - Limit of 24 months of TAFDC in a 5 year period
 - A new 5 year period starts 5 years after family first got TAFDC → family eligible for another 24 months of TAFDC
- If 24 months have been used and doing work activity, can request extension(s) in 3-month increments.

Work requirement

- Non-exempt → must participate in a **work activity** for required hours each week
 - 20 hours if youngest child is 2 through 5 years old
 - 30 hours if youngest child is 6 years old or older
- Can be sanctioned for not participating
 - Sanctions lower or stop TAFDC
- Entitled to child care referral if needed to meet work requirement
- **Pathways to Work**

Pathways Planning Period

- Pathways Planning Period – first 60 days after coming under work requirement
- Register with MassHire [JobQuest](#)
- Find program/activity
- Child care, transportation benefits
 - DTA can give short-term child care referral if needed to find an activity.

Work requirement - activities

- Education or training
- Paid work, employment programs
- Job search
- Vocational rehabilitation programs
- Community service
- Housing search by those in shelter

Work requirement - other

- Can do more than one activity
- In 2-parent family, both parents are subject to work requirement
- DTA Full Engagement Workers (FEWs)
 - Discuss activities
 - Request child care referral

Work requirement - participation

Must confirm participation *each month* by the 10th of the month for the prior month.

- Can use participation form that DTA mails out
- Phone call or other contact with DTA
- FEW may verify directly with program

Work requirement - sanctions

If parent is subject to and not meeting the work requirement, DTA will impose sanctions:

- 1st level – reduce grant by parent's portion (\$100)
- 2nd level – stop assistance to **entire family**

Note: DTA supervisor review is required before sanction is imposed.

Work requirement – good cause

DTA should not impose a sanction if parent has **good cause**, including:

- No available and appropriate child care
- No affordable and reliable transportation
- No available and appropriate activity
- Family crisis, illness or disability

Work requirement – undoing sanctions

Restoring benefits after a sanction:

- DTA will remove sanction if:
 - Client completes Pathways to Work Plan or resumes activity; or
 - Good cause or exemption
- **Explore barriers!**

Exemptions

Exemptions from the time limit and work requirement:

- Parent is disabled (SSI/SSDI or DTA standard)
- Caring for disabled family member
- Child under age 2

Exemptions (continued)

- Pregnant & within 120 days of due date
- Relative (non-parent) not on grant
- Aged 60 or older
- Teen parent meeting teen parent rules
- Immigrants without work authorization – family is exempt from time limit but not work requirement

Exemptions (continued)

- How to get exemption
 - Some are automatic
 - Some require process to show eligibility
- 2-parent families – both parents must be exempt for family to be exempt
- **Exempt recipients can ‘volunteer’** for activity and most can get related benefits (child care, transportation)

Disability Exemption – Temporary Procedures

- No formal disability review process in place right now
- Self-declare disability (verbal or written):
 - “I cannot work or participate in a Pathways programs due to a health problem or disability that is expected to last more than 3 months.”
 - DTA should not ask for any medical documentation.

Caretaker Exemption

- Cannot work full-time because needed to care for a child, spouse or child's other parent who lives in the home.
- Medical provider fills out [Caretaker Exemption form](#)
- Exemption should last for one year.

Exemptions – Issue Spotting

- Exemption is approved but then DTA removes it in error.
- Exemptions in 2-parent families can be more complicated.
- DTA sends notice saying it will lower or stop TAFDC under a work program sanction.

Case example – Email from Sharon

From: visitingnurse@healthcenter.org

Sent: Friday, November 8, 2024, 5:36 PM

To: Bradley, Lisa <lbradley@gbls.org>

Subject: Myra – TAFDC problem

Hi Lisa,

I'm working with a family in shelter and I'm hoping you can help me understand what's happening with their TAFDC. Myra has 2 kids – ages 7 and 9. She has gotten notices from DTA saying that she has to talk with them about something called Pathways, and she has to do 30 hours/week of an activity starting in a month or she could lose TAFDC. The problem is, she is really struggling with her anxiety and she also has a bad back, so she's not sure she can handle anything new right now. Please advise - this is really stressing Myra out!

Thanks,

Sharon

Responding to Sharon

– explore barriers

Family is in shelter – can meet work program requirement with housing search

- Give DTA proof of shelter placement
- Will still get notices about Pathways but cannot be sanctioned
- Still under time limit

Responding to Sharon

– explore barriers

Myra has health issues – can claim a disability exemption

- Once approved, exempt from work requirement and time limit
- Can still do an activity if/when she's ready (education/training, work)

Child support assignment

- Parent/caregiver must **assign** to the state (DOR) the right to seek child support &/or medical insurance from non-custodial parent(s)
 - Child getting TAFDC: child support & medical support
 - Child not getting TAFDC: medical support only
- If refuse to assign, assistance to *entire family* is denied or terminated
- DTA will mail a child support form – parent/caregiver **must** sign and submit form. Cannot do a telephonic signature.

Child support cooperation

- Parent/caregiver must agree to **cooperate** with DOR efforts to collect child support *unless* good cause
 - Give information about other parent
 - Genetic testing
 - Talk to DOR, go to court
- If parent doesn't cooperate and no good cause, TAFDC will be reduced

Child support cooperation – Good Cause

- **Good cause** for not cooperating
 - Physical or emotional harm to parent or child
 - Rape or incest
 - **Relative caretaker** can claim good cause if pursuing child support is not in the child's best interest (no proof needed)
- Alternative to claiming good cause – work with DOR to pursue child support safely

Verification of Good Cause

- **Examples:** restraining order, police or medical record, statement from social worker
- **If no 3rd party proof:** DTA will accept a statement from the parent (can be done by phone).
- TAFDC application should be approved while waiting for proof of good cause (if needed).

Child Support – Haitian new arrivals

New rule (Oct 2023) for Haitian families in which parents are temporarily separated

No requirement to cooperate with child support if:

- Recently arrived in the U.S.
- One parent is not living with the child(ren) and other parent due to homelessness/circumstances of migration
- Plan to reunify when possible

Case example - Email from Maria

From: maria@example.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 5:36 PM
To: Bradley, Lisa <lbradley@gbls.org>
Subject: Maria- please help

Hi, I have 2 teenagers, David and Jayden. I have no income. My unemployment claim is taking forever and I'm falling behind in rent. I get SNAP but it's not enough to feed my boys who are eating constantly.

My friend said to apply for TAFDC. Problem is I heard DTA will go after my children's father for child support. I'm scared. He was abusive but I don't have any proof of that – I was always too scared to go to court or call the police.

Can I get TAFDC without DTA going after child support? I'm overwhelmed working with so many agencies right now.

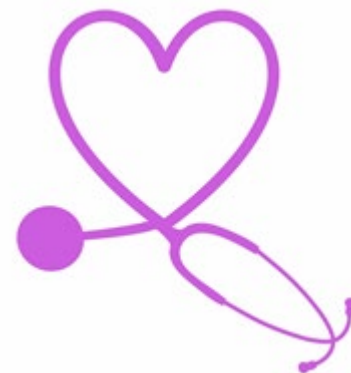


Responding to Maria

- ❑ Maria can apply for TAFDC & ask for **good cause** not to cooperate with child support enforcement.
- ❑ If Maria doesn't have proof from a third party (no restraining order, court document, police record, etc.), she can give a statement.
- ❑ She will still have to sign a paper to assign her right to child support to DTA, but DTA won't take any action.

Immunization

- Proof of immunization is required for all dependent children applying for or getting TAFDC unless there is good cause
- Can claim **good cause** for religious or health reasons



Learnfare – school attendance

- School-aged children under age 16 must attend school:
 - Unexcused absences may lead to a sanction
- Rule does not apply to a family in which the parent is disabled
- DTA sends notices about unexcused absences before any sanction – important to respond.



TAFDC Earned Income Disregard

100% earned income disregard for 6 months:

- TAFDC is **not reduced** due to earnings
- Applies if total household income is under 200% of the federal poverty level

***Note:** DTA does not apply the 100% disregard to earnings of ineligible non-citizens.

TAFDC Earned Income Disregard

After 100% earnings disregard:

- To decide if still eligible after 100% disregard ends, DTA deducts \$200 and subtracts 50% of what's left.
- May be eligible for 6-month 100% disregard again with different job.

Note: Clients must still report changes in earnings to DTA!

Case example - Email from William

From: william@example.com
Sent: Sunday, November 3, 2024, 6:36 PM
To: Ginsburg, Lizbeth <lginsburg@gbls.org>
Subject: William & TAFDC

Attny Ginsburg, My neighbor said to contact you. I am a single dad of two little girls, ages 3 and 4. My delivery job ended and I used up my unemployment. I heard I should apply for TAFDC but I don't know. I hope to work again soon. Unfortunately, the girls' babysitter moved and I don't have anyone else to watch them. I'm stuck.

Should I apply for TAFDC?

What if I get a new job soon, does that matter?

-William

Responding to William

- ❑ Apply for TAFDC? Yes, apply and get TAFDC for household of three.
- ❑ If he gets a new job:
 - ✓ Eligible for a child care voucher (no wait list)
 - ✓ \$80/mo transportation benefit
 - ✓ DTA doesn't count earnings for 6 mos., as long as total income is < 200% federal poverty level
 - ✓ After 6 mos., TAFDC closes due to earnings. William gets transitional benefits (cash stipend, special SNAP rules for 5 mos. & eligible for Transitional Child Care for up to 24 months)

Questions?

