

TAFDC – Practical Tips

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Greater Boston Legal Services

Overview

- Practical info about TAFDC – how to apply, get information, etc.
- Protections for certain populations
- Problem solving & advocacy tips

Practical information: How to
apply, submit documents, etc.

Current challenges

- Hard for DTA to keep up with demand of high caseloads
- Delays in processing
- More errors
- Can't get through by phone
- All compounded by language and/or disability barriers

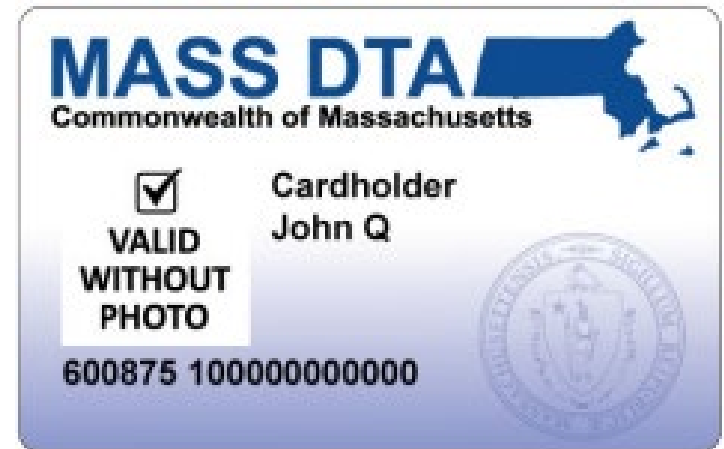
DTA Offices

- DTA offices are open
 - Hybrid work schedule for DTA workers
 - Services for clients who go to an office:
 - Get EBT card
 - Use DTA Connect on an iPad kiosk
 - Use scanner to scan documents
 - Talk with worker if needed
- Should have needs addressed while in the office

EBT Cards

How to get a replacement EBT card:

- DTA Connect mobile app
- DTAConnect.com
- Call TAFDC worker
- Call Assistance Line at # 877-382-2363 and follow prompts for EBT cards
- In person at [DTA offices](#) (anyone who asks for a card should get one)



Applying for TAFDC

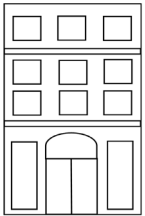


DTAConnect.com (online or smartphone)

- Can complete application in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, & Haitian Creole
- No need to make an account
- Tell DTA during interview if also want SNAP application



Call [local DTA office](#) and leave a message asking for callback to apply



Go to local DTA office

Application process

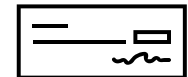
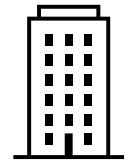
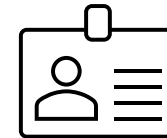
- Phone interview – telephonic signature
 - Ask for Agency ID (if not known)
- Client must submit:
 - Verifications – DTA sends Verification Checklist (VC1)
 - Signed child support assignment form
- DTA must approve or deny within 30 days

Verifications

Verifications required at application (TAFDC):

- Identity
- Give Social Security Number(s)
- Relationship to children
- Immigration status (unless opting out)
- Citizenship - *only if questionable*
- Income
- Living situation*
- Type of housing* (private/subsidized)
- Immunization (given 60 days to provide)

* Can be self-declared



Verifications

Verification issues & reminders:

- Over-verification
- DTA should check information available in data sources
- Collateral contacts

Email from Lynda

From: lynda@example.com

Sent: Thursday, November 21, 2024, 7:36 PM

To: welfare-help@gbls.org

Subject: Lynda & Verifications

Hey, I just got temporary custody of my niece, Ruby, because my sister can't take care of her. I applied for TAFDC but I really don't want DTA going after my sister for child support. My sister is pretty angry and not in a good place. She might get worse if forced to pay child support. How can I stop the state from pursuing child support?

Also, DTA needs proof that I'm not working at the Burger Joint anymore. That job is old. Boss won't write a letter, says he's not allowed. I really need help.

Thx, Lynda

Responding to Lynda

☐ Child Support

- ✓ As a **relative caretaker**, Lynda can claim good cause for not cooperating with child support since it's not in Ruby's best interest. (Must still sign the child support form.)
- ✓ No proof needed; claim good cause on child support form.

☐ Proof that job ended

- ✓ Give DTA a verbal or written self-declaration that job ended; and
- ✓ Submit a signed [DORL1](#) form for DTA for collateral contact (allows DTA to contact employer directly)

Check TAFDC Case Info

DTA Connect (app & online portal)

- Set up account with email, Agency ID or EBT card #

Use DTA Connect to:

- See case status
- See notices for last 12 months
- Upload documents
- Update information
- Request new EBT card
- See history of benefits
- Request income verification



Submitting documents to DTA

- Upload via **DTA Connect** (fastest option – goes right into client's DTA case record)
- In-person at DTA office
- Fax to 617-887-8765
- Mail to:

DTA Processing Center

PO Box 4406

Taunton, MA 02780



Put DTA Agency ID or last 4 of SSN on the top of each page if faxing or mailing documents.

Reporting changes to DTA

- Report changes within 10 days – best to report changes **in writing/DTA Connect**
- What changes matter for TAFDC?
 - New income or change in income
 - Earnings
 - Unemployment, SSI, child support, etc.
 - Someone moves into or out of household
 - Birth of baby
 - Change in address or phone number

Update info on DTA Connect

Use DTA Connect to update:

- Residential &/or mailing address
- Phone number &/or email address
- Preferred language
- Shelter &/or utility expenses
- Dependent care expenses
- Medical expenses (only relevant for SNAP & for certain households)

Tip: On DTA Connect, go to **My Info** tab, and then click **Edit** next to the info to be updated.

Reevaluation

- Every 6-12 months
- May or may not be at same time as SNAP recertification
- Process:
 - Notice of appointment for phone interview
 - Phone interview:
 - Can verify some information verbally
 - Can sign application telephonically
 - DTA sends Verification Checklist for any remaining verifications
 - DTA sends notice approving reevaluation or stopping TAFDC if reevaluation isn't completed or if review shows no longer eligible

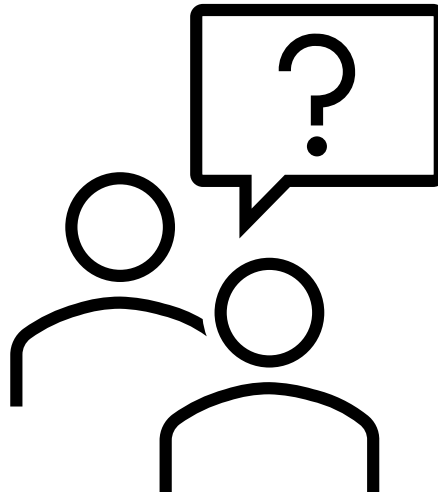


Reevaluation Issues

Reevaluation issues

- DTA automatically sends TAFDC closing notice if:
 - Case worker doesn't call at appointment time
 - Client misses DTA's call
- To resolve:
 - Contact DTA office managers and/or Ombuds Unit
 - Appeal in time for aid pending
 - Contact Legal Services

Questions?



Protections for specific populations

Disability Access & Accommodations

- DTA Client Assistance Coordinators (CACs)
 - [CAC contact info](#)
- Common accommodations
 - Help with forms, verifications, understanding notices
 - Reminder calls
 - Sign language interpreter
 - Large print notices
- See DTA's [Disability Access Info](#)

Domestic Violence Protections

- Block online & automated phone services – can request verbally
- Heightened Level of Security (HLS)
 - Request in writing. Can use HLS form ([English](#) / [Spanish](#)) but not required
 - No phone communication with DTA – must go to DTA office
 - Exception for advocates
 - Also blocks online and automated phone services
- [DV Specialist](#) in each DTA office



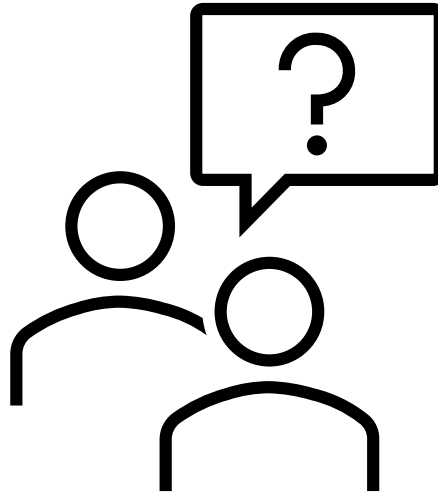
If issues with DTA rules because of DV - contact DV specialist and/or Legal Services.

Language Access

- **Right to interpreter!**
- Some DTA communications in 6 languages
 - English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese (Simplified) and Vietnamese
 - Includes some notices, DTA Connect, and DTA texts



Questions?





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... and justice for all

Problem Solving & Advocacy Tips

TAFDC Advocacy Resources

- Check the TAFDC regulations & DTA's Online Guide
 - DTA [Regulations](#)
 - DTA [Online Guide](#) (policies & procedures)
- [TAFDC Advocacy Guide](#)

Problem Solving – Advocacy Tips

- Contact Assistant Director or Director of local DTA office (use Assistance Line for automated info only)
- Contact DTA Ombuds Unit: 617-348-5354 or email sara.craven@mass.gov
- Will need a release giving DTA permission to talk to you (sample [English](#) & [Spanish](#))

Appealing a DTA Decision

- How to [file appeal](#) with DTA Division of Hearings
 - Call 617-348-5321 & leave message
 - Fax appeal form or written request to 617-348-5311
- When to appeal
 - Within 90 days of date on notice under appeal
 - For **continued benefits during appeal process** (aid pending), **appeal before the date the change takes effect**
- Hearing will be by phone unless client requests in-person or Zoom
- Contact [Legal Services](#) for possible representation

Resolving Appeals

- Gather DTA Documents
 - Notices, Narratives, Scanned Documents, etc.
 - Get info from DTA Connect and DTA Ombuds Unit
- Review Rules
 - DTA [Regulations](#)
 - DTA [Online Guide](#) (policies & procedures)
 - DTA [Fair Hearing Regulations](#)
- Help get missing evidence

Resolving Appeals

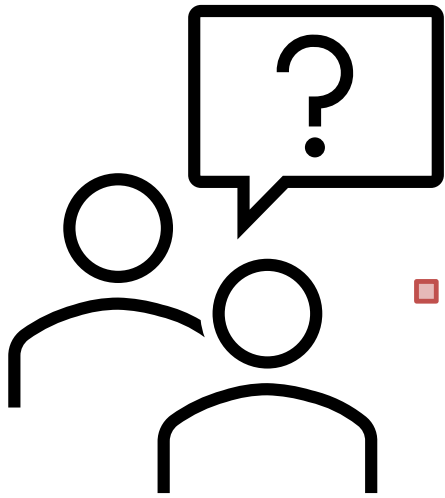
- Negotiate with DTA
 - Assistant Directors, Directors, DTA Central
 - Submit Required Proof
 - Request Prehearing Adjustment 106 CMR 343.350(B)
 - Assert De Novo Rule 106 CMR 343.500(A)
- Right to Postpone Hearing if good cause

Problem solving – advocacy tips

Referring cases to GBLS Welfare Law Unit:

- If client lives in Greater Boston area (check [service area](#))
 - 617-603-1806, or welfare-help@gbls.org
 - We will use interpreter, provide disability accommodations as needed
- Other areas: Find [Legal Services](#) in other parts of Massachusetts

Questions?



... and thank you!