

CHILD CARE BENEFITS

Under TAFDC law, recipients and former TAFDC recipients qualify for child care benefits paid through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) when needed to attend approved education and training programs or to work. Unlike other child care benefits, DTA's child care does not involve long waiting lists. However, many recipients do not know that they are eligible for child care benefits or how to go through the process to get actual child care slots that meet their family's specific needs.

Who qualifies for DTA Child Care Benefits?

1. **Current TAFDC recipient families** in which the parent or grantee relative (such as a grandmother or aunt) is:

- ♦ Working part time and receiving partial TAFDC benefits
- ♦ In an education or training program approved by DTA (in an Employment Development Plan or EDP). Education or training programs can include adult basic education, ESL, GED, high school, college and skills training programs, as well as any program funded by DTA as part of its Employment Services Program (ESP).
- ♦ Actively seeking employment through an employment development plan.
- ♦ In school for a high school diploma or GED under the teen parent school attendance requirement.
- ♦ In need of child care for up to two weeks while waiting to start an approved activity.

Note: TAFDC recipients are entitled to child care benefits for children who are not on the grant due to the family cap, foster care, SSI or other reasons.

2. **Former TAFDC recipient families** in which the parent or grantee relative is:

- ♦ Currently employed and the family's TADFC case has closed within the past 12 months. Under the current policies of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), these transitional child care benefits will automatically convert to Income Eligible benefits at the end of the 12 months if the parent is still employed (number of hours may matter) or has another service need (such as education).
- ♦ Completing an education or training activity that DTA approved in an Employment Development Plan for up to six months following the termination of TAFDC.

What is the cost to the family?

TAFDC recipients are not charged for day care. Former TAFDC recipients are subject to a sliding fee scale.

How does the process work?

TAFDC recipients and former recipients who need child care must obtain a Child Care Authorization from their local welfare office, usually from the worker who most recently had the family's case. The recipient takes the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCRRA) where a child care voucher is issued for a specific number of hours and days per week. The voucher is proof that the child care provider will be paid. When parents/guardians sign the DTA voucher they are agreeing to notify the CCRRA staff and the child care provider of any changes in income, family size or service need. Parents/guardians are expected to give notice before either changing providers or terminating service. DTA child care benefits to the recipient may be terminated only by DTA and only after notice and an opportunity for an appeal hearing. The family has the right to up to 5 child care hours per week to cover the time of transportation between the child care provider and the work or other approved activity.

What types of child care can be covered by DTA child care benefits?

- ♦ Formal (licensed day care center)
- ♦ Informal (Licensed family day care in the provider's home or unlicensed child care by a relative or, if in the child's own home, by a babysitter. The caregiver must be at least 16 years old. In order to be paid, informal unlicensed care givers must be registered with the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCRRA). Informal care givers are paid approximately \$15 per eight hour day (per child).

Note: Parents have the right to choose the form of child care. Families should not be pressured into using informal care (which is cheaper) if they prefer formal, licensed day care.

Will a voucher be for full-time or part-time child care?

A parent who participates in a qualifying activity for 30 or more hours per week will be considered to have a full time service need. This can include up to five hours spent for transportation between the child care provider and the activity (i.e. work or school). A parent participating in 12 or more college credit hours will be considered to have a full time service need. For education and training programs other than college, one hour of care will be approved for each hour of class. Work study hours and time spent in a clinical or practical internship will be counted toward determining the service need. Work hours and education hours (plus travel) may be added together and if the combined total is 30 hours or more, a full time child care voucher will be issued to the parent.

What if the family has never been on TAFDC or has not received TAFDC within the previous twelve months but needs help to pay for child care?

If the family is financially eligible and has a service need (work, job search, education, training, or parent or child disability) the family can apply for income eligible child care. There are very long waiting lists for income eligible child care. Fees for income eligible child care are based on a sliding scale.

Help needed?

Call the Department of Early Education and Care at 617-988-6600 or visit the EEC website at www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/.