

# DTA's Pathways to Work: Promoting Economic Mobility to Improve Lives

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Reimagining TANF through a pandemic



Department of  
Transitional  
Assistance

# The Ecosystem for Change





Family well-being &  
economic stability

Goal Achievement

TAFDC Pathways  
opportunities &  
supports

Stable benefits

## Policy Shifts Make a Real Difference for Families

Ensuring policies are simple and meaningful allows DTA to focus on supporting families by providing stable benefits and focusing interactions on goal achievement.

For families, work program reforms will mean less time spent navigating the system and more time available to focus on their career pathways and the long-term well-being of themselves and their children.

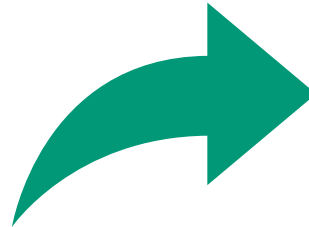
For DTA staff, streamlining procedures and administrative tasks through systems enhancements will increase efficiency and provide more time building relationships with families and supporting positive outcomes.

# Evidence-Driven Policy Changes

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## TAFDC Work Program

- Pre-Benefit Job Search
- Employment Planning Period
- Orientation
- Pathways to Self-Sufficiency Assessment
- Sanctions



## TAFDC Pathways to Work

- **Register with MassHire at application**
- Initial Engagement Period
- **Family Centered Orientations**
- **Stepping Stones to Success**
- Consequences for not engaging

# Stepping Stones to Success

- A custom designed assessment tool developed by Mathematica Policy Research
- Can be completed by a parent on their own or with DTA staff
- Helps families identify goals they want to work on
- Sparks conversation between parent and staff
- Directs families to the right program/service based on the goal they want to achieve
- “Road-tested” with staff and families

**Goal4It!**  
Stepping Stones to Success

MY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: / /  
MY SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**1** What is your overall stress level right now? (FILL IN A CIRCLE)

I am VERY stressed | I am not stressed at all

**2** Where do you feel you and your family currently are in these areas of life? (Fill in a circle in each Pathway row)

	Area of Significant Need	Area of Need	Stable, But Could Improve	Stable	Thrive
<b>Housing</b> ▶ My family doesn't have housing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Dependent Care</b> ▶ We have no child care.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Transportation</b> ▶ We have no transportation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Personal Well-Being</b> ▶ My personal well-being needs my attention.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Family Well-Being</b> ▶ Family challenges interfere with my progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Social Support</b> ▶ I have no social support or my network is not supportive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Financial Health</b> ▶ My income is not enough to cover my basic living expenses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Legal</b> ▶ I work outside public or I have had jobs because of my legal issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Education/Training</b> ▶ I don't have a high school diploma, GED or any level certificate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Job Search/Skills</b> ▶ I don't know where to find work or the job is not for what I know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Employment</b> ▶ I am working in a seasonal job that I don't like or I am not working.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**3** What is one goal you have for today's meeting?

**4** Do we need to update any of your information? (Example: address, phone number, email, employment, etc.)

OCTOBER 2019 > mathematica.org

# Shifting Responsibility From Families to Staff

## **Before:** Initial Job Search Client Responsibilities

The applicant must make 3 job contacts to meet this job search requirement.

The applicant must attend an in-person Orientation. Applicants must return the completed Initial Job Search Referral/Log 1, no later than day 30 of the application, as a condition of eligibility.

If the applicant does not return the log, the log does not reflect three job contacts, or the applicant does not have good cause, the grantee and/or other parent is denied assistance.

## **Now:** DTA staff promote JobQuest and Pathways to Work

At application, case managers must introduce Pathways to Work opportunities, connect families to the MassHire JobQuest system and inform families about the role of the FEW.

At application, case managers are required to assist all clients aged 18 and older to register with MassHire JobQuest.

After TAFDC case approval, a client is referred to the FEW for Initial Engagement activities. The FEW ensures that they have been registered with MassHire JobQuest and is aware of the resources available.

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AT DTA

The Employment Services Program is comprised of outcomes-driven (pay-for-performance) programs and partnerships, including:

- Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES)\*
- Employment Supports Services Program, via the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)
- Secure Jobs Program\*
- DTA Works Program
- Work Participant Program (WPP)\*
- Young Parents Program (YPP)
- Empowering to Employ (ETE)

\* MassHire partner with regional contacts

DTA also administers the [SNAP Path to Work](#) program, a partnership between federal, state, and local partners administered by DTA that provides the state's SNAP clients with the skills, training, experience, education, and employment supports needed to find and keep good paying jobs.

In FY21, DTA launched a rebrand of its employment services programs now known as the [TAFDC Pathways to Work Program](#).

# WORK PARTICIPANT PROGRAM

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DTA and MassHire WIOA partnership, initiated in 2017, to:

- Develop meaningful pathways to work and economic mobility for low-income, disabled, and chronically un/underemployed individuals/families, and
- Ensure that DTA clients and families with significant barriers can access the workforce system with the support needed to attain and sustain employment.

Through the DTA and MassHire partnership, TAFDC (TANF) and SNAP clients can access employment supports through the network of MassHire Career Centers. Clients receive access to individualized career counseling and guidance, workshops, job fairs, employer recruitment, and access to free resources to assist with their job search and applications.



# DTA Works

Creating meaningful opportunities through  
strategic partnerships

# DTA Works Internship

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**Primary Goal:** to support successful sustained entry or re-entry into the workforce for recipients of Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) through mentorship, training and resources.

**Who is eligible?**

- Active TAFDC recipients
- Must be able to pass a CORI check
- Additional requirements for employment tracks, ex. DTAW-HAST.

**Internship Parameters:**

- 30 hours per week for 36 weeks
- One on One mentoring from internship site staff and/or program coordinator
- Additional support from DTA Works program coordinator/program partners around economic mobility planning, including employment search
- 10-13 week required financial coaching
- Weekly stipend of \$125 that does not affect TAFDC or SNAP benefits
- Tracked and non-tracked opportunities based on geographic location.

# DTA Works – Employment Tracks – EAST DTAW - HAST

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In June of 2020, DTA Works launched its Health Administration Services Training (**HAST**) through a partnership with Mass General Brigham (MGB - FKA Partners Health) and Project Hope. Interns are guaranteed hire in at least an entry level position within the MGB health system upon successful completion of both training and internship components. Track currently available in the Boston and Greater Boston areas.

- paid 6-week training facilitated through Project Hope and up to a year of wrap around support
- paid 3-month internship at an MGB location
- support from MGB employment specialist to place in roles at MGB
- tech (laptop/WiFi hotspots) provided free of charge as necessary
- mentorship and case support through DTAW program coordinator
- **4th cohort begins in-person training on 9/12/2022.**

# DTA Works – Employment Tracks – WEST

## DTAW - PARAEDUCATOR

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Employer Need Driven Training & Internship Opportunity for Springfield, Holyoke, Greenfield TAOs

- **Springfield WORKS:** engages and aligns employers, educators, community leaders, and jobseekers to address the economic needs of both residents and local businesses
  - **Holyoke Community College:** 5 weeks of hybrid job readiness training (TRAIN) followed by 2 weeks of paraprofessional job instruction
    - Tech provided by HCC and/or MIC for Career Center customers; support to prepare for WorkKeys exam necessary for para certification.
  - **Springfield Public Schools/Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals:** Host interns to support classrooms & practice skills learned during 7 weeks of training through end of school year, provide mentorship to participants
    - Internships of up to 29 weeks available both in person and remote
  - **DTAW:** provide mentorship, case support, & overall program guidance; paid stipend for TAFDC participants
- Last training class started on 7/5/2022. Track expanding to the Chicopee and Holyoke Public school districts for 10/22 cohort.***

# Assessing Outcomes

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- DTA is obligated to use the resources at its disposal to ensure unbiased and equitable treatment of all clients regardless of demographics and to identify particularly vulnerable client groups
- Current data collection is based on federal minimum standards and contains substantial number of unknowns
- Data team has developed a constructed indicator to address this issue by combining race, ethnicity, and language to fill in the gaps in our understanding of our clients.

# Assessing Outcomes

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- Data, Policy and Equity Leadership Teams, researched best practices relating to collecting and utilizing gender and ethnicity data
- These research-backed findings will inform new data fields, caseworker training content, and data usable for robust analytic projects
  - Program referrals and enrollments
  - Employment outcomes
  - Sanctions

# Young Parent Systems Alignment Work in Massachusetts

## Focus Groups and Young Parent Pilots (2021)

- Focus groups in 2019 and statewide meetings 2019/2020
- Young Parent Pilot in 2021  
Provided insights into practice and policy challenges
- How to build trust and leadership of young parents

## Best Practices Toolkit (2022)

- Informed by pilots
- Resources and insights from youth serving systems
- Resources and insights from parent serving/child serving systems
- Adolescent brain research summarized
- Developing on-line training curricula, materials and resources for those working with young parents

## Adolescent Developmental Policy Audit (2023)

- Building on pilot on policy and systems changes
- Building on adolescent brain development work in the toolkit
- PRODUCT: Policy focused audit to see where systems can improve based on developmental needs of young parents

## Young Parent Leaders Advisory Pilots (2022)

- Cross-agency pilots in local communities with young parent advisory group
- Leaning on pilot information
- And best practices toolkit
- Goal: Statewide Young Parent Advisory Group

## Statewide Young Parents Advisory (2023)

- All of the work building towards a meaningful statewide parent advisory to inform policy and practice



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