

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

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.

TAFDC Pathways to Work



TAFDC Work Program and ESP

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT PERIOD

- Pre-Benefit Job Search Replaced with Registration with MassHire Virtual Pathway Portal (formerly JobQuest)
- Redesigned Orientations offered to clients in multiple service delivery models
- Introduction of FEW Referral Actions
- Stepping Stones Replaces PSS Assessment
- Work Program Notices Revisions

1

IMPROVED DISABILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS

- Simplified disability process will not require disability determinations to be done by UMASS/DES
- A simple form will be filled out by a competent medical authority as defined by the Department.

2

TAFDC SANCTION REDESIGN

- Complicated 2-track sanction process for non-compliance and non-participation replaced with a single track
- Redesign WPR and Sanction Notices
- Eliminate most BEACON automation of notices and sanctions
- Create a culture of sanction prevention vs. one of remediation

3

STATE PLANS AND REGULATORY WORK

- TAFDC State Plan
- Work Verification Plan
- WIOA State Plan Amendments
- Update all TAFDC Work Program and ESP Regulations

4

5

6

TRAINING PLAN

- All EA staff trained on new Initial Engagement Period, FEW Referral Actions and the new disability determination process targeted for August 2021
- Option of contracting Mathematica Policy Research in FY22 to provide implementation and training support for field staff on coaching and motivation-driven practices
- Additional training required for EA staff on:
 - Sanction redesign

COMMUNICATION PLAN

- Create formal internal and external communications plan for DTA Pathways to Work
- Build out marketing strategy for DTA Pathways to Work programs
- Engage Pathways providers, MHCCs and external stakeholders
- Create new client notice structure, content, triggers, design hierarchy

CULTURE AND ORGANIZATION CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- Continue to promote a culture of dignity and respect among supervisors, staff, and clients within our economic mobility and employment programming
- Families are expert in their own lives. Create a culture of family-centered communication and positive regard within the agency vision

ENHANCED CLIENT ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

- Prioritize the use of *virtual* communication platforms and engagement strategies
- Identify ways to engage clients through more positive, proactive modes of communication that meet their individual needs

INCLUSION AND EQUITY

POLICY AND PROGRAM EVALUATION: FAMILIES AT THE CENTER

7

DTA

Pathways
to Work

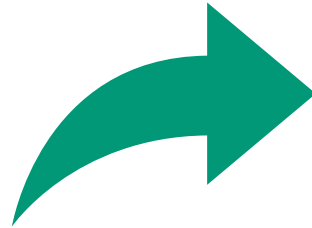
TAFDC Pathways to Work

Roadmap for TAFDC Work Program Policy and Employment Services Reforms

Evidence Driven Policy Changes

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

Family Centered Orientation

Orientations are available in multiple formats to meet the unique needs of each family

- Recorded video, PDF materials, telephonic & facilitated WebEx session options
- FEWs are using new tools to do proactive outreach
- Regional flyers with local contact and program information
- FEWs and families have access to short videos on specific topics such as employment and supportive services

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
- Directs families to the right program/service based on the goal they want to achieve.
- Road tested with staff and families

Goal4 It!
Stepping Stones to Success

MY NAME: _____ DATE: / /
MY SIGNATURE: _____

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

1 (not stressed at all) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (very stressed)

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	THROWING	
Housing	My family doesn't have housing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dependent Care	We have no child care.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation	We have no transportation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal Well-Being	My personal well-being needs my attention.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Well-Being	Family challenges interfere with my progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Support	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"/>
Financial Health	My income is not enough to cover my bills, living expenses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal	I work certain jobs or I have bad jobs because of my legal issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education/ Training	I don't have a high school diploma, GED or any other credential.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job Search/ Skills	I don't know where to find work, the jobs I apply for don't hire me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employment	I am working in a harmful job that isn't like an eventual goal.	<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.)

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Shifting Responsibility From Families to Staff

Initial Job Search Client Responsibilities

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

The applicant must enter the date s/he attended the 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.

As one of the first points of contact with DTA, case managers play a critical role in introducing families to the opportunities available to them as recipients of TAFDC. During an application interview, 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 when a client has been referred to the FEW for Initial Engagement, the FEW must ensure that they have been registered with MassHire Job Quest as one of the activities.

Assessing Outcomes

- 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 (continued)

- 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 enrollments
 - Sanctions
 - Employment outcomes

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