

Part 6 Applications and Proofs

100 Where do you apply for TAFDC?

Apply for TAFDC at your local DTA office. 106 C.M.R. § 702.130. Some DTA offices have extended hours in the early morning and in the evenings. If you are sick or disabled and cannot go to the office, tell the local office you want a home visit. 106 C.M.R. § 701.600(Y).

Be sure to sign an application the first time you go into the welfare office. You can do this even if there is no worker there to take your application. The date you sign is the earliest date your benefits will begin. You have a right to sign an application even if the worker thinks you are not eligible. 106 C.M.R. §§ 702.115, 702.150.

Advocacy Reminders:

- ✓ DTA must provide a professional interpreter if you want one and you use American Sign Language or your primary language is not English, regardless of language, national origin or noncitizen status. You can use your own interpreter if you want, but you cannot use a child to interpret for you except to schedule an appointment. 106 C.M.R. 701.360; DTA Field Operations Memo 2008-16 (April 1, 2008).
- ✓ You have the right to refuse a particular interpreter if you are uncomfortable with the interpreter for personal or other reasons. You don't have to give a reason. DTA must then provide a professional telephone interpreter.

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What should you bring with you?

A DTA intake worker will interview you and is supposed to help you with your application. You will have to bring in proof of your eligibility before your application will be approved. Your worker will give you a list of what to bring. 106 C.M.R. §§ 702.120, 702.125.

If you do not have everything, bring what you have. In many cases, you can sign a sworn statement to prove something. You can also sign a form letting your worker contact someone else to get the proof. 106 C.M.R. § 702.340.

Things you might be asked to bring are

- proof of who you are (for example, your driver's license, birth certificate, voter registration verification),
- social security numbers for everyone in your family (except for ineligible non-citizens) or proof that you have applied for their social security numbers,
- proof that your children are related to you and how old they are (for example, birth certificates, school records, a statement from someone who knows you and them),
- proof of your immigration status if you are not a citizen and you are requesting benefits (see **Question 8**),
- proof that the other parent of your children does not live with you (for example, papers showing he is dead, you are divorced or separated, you have brought an action against him for abuse, other evidence that he does not live with you or, if none of this is available, a sworn statement),
- proof of your income (for example, pay stubs, government checks),
- proof that you are not eligible for unemployment compensation (available from the Division of Unemployment Assistance),

- proof of where you live (for example, a landlord's statement or utility records) unless you are homeless (see **Question 7**), *and*
- proof you have housing expenses – to qualify for the rent or mortgage allowance and to avoid the in-kind deduction (for example, a lease, rent receipt, mortgage or statement from a landlord).

There are many other proofs that DTA can ask for in a particular case. Do the best you can to get them, but if you cannot get them, ask for help from the worker and ask if you can verify the information by signing a statement. Your worker is supposed to help you get required proof when your worker has been told or is otherwise aware that you need help. See 106 C.M.R. § 702.310(B).

If you need more time to get proofs, you can get an extension. If you have trouble, talk to an advocate.

Advocacy Reminders:

- ✓ If DTA schedules your appointment for a time that is bad for you, you can reschedule. See **Question 105**.
- ✓ Try to keep a copy of any verifications you give to DTA. If you are leaving verifications when your worker is not there, try to get a copy date-stamped. See **Question 105**.
- ✓ DTA may ask you to bring proof of citizenship for all citizen members of your household. Proof of citizenship is not required for TAFDC unless it is questionable, but may be required for MassHealth so you should provide it to DTA if you can. Your TAFDC application should not be delayed or denied pending DTA's receipt of proof of citizenship. DTA Field Operations Memo 2007-10 (Feb. 20, 2007).
- ✓ DTA is required by law to keep the information you give confidential. If you are concerned about confidentiality (for example, because you or a member of your family is at risk of abuse), you can ask for extra security. Extra security means you will have to give written consent every time you want information released and that no information will be released over the telephone. This can be inconvenient, so it is a good idea not to ask for extra security unless you need it. DTA Field Operations Memo 2008-23 (May 23, 2008).

102 How long does it take to decide whether you are eligible?

DTA must decide on your application within 30 days and either pay you benefits or deny your application. The 30-day time limit can be extended if you ask for more time to get proof of eligibility. 106 C.M.R. § 702.160. If you get a notice saying you did not bring enough proof, you have 30 days from the date of the notice to bring in proof.

103 What if you need help right away?

You can get help with *immediate needs* for shelter expenses, food, or health insurance within 24 hours of your application. 106 C.M.R. § 702.125(F). Be sure to tell the worker if you need help with immediate needs.

Rent, Utilities or Fuel

If you need help right away with rent, utilities or fuel *and you appear to be eligible*, you can get an advance on your TAFDC benefits to pay for these things. The advance will be paid as a voucher to the landlord, utility or fuel company.

Food

You may qualify for emergency or “expedited” food stamps (SNAP). If not, you can get an advance on your TAFDC benefits to pay for food.

MassHealth

You can get a temporary MassHealth card.

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What is BEACON?

BEACON is DTA's computer system. The DTA worker puts information about each client into BEACON. BEACON then decides eligibility and benefit amounts, creates a list of proofs you need to bring, calculates how many months you have used on your time clock, keeps track of when you have to meet with your worker, and automatically sends out notices in your case.

Sometimes BEACON makes mistakes because the worker did not give BEACON the right information. Sometimes BEACON makes mistakes because the computer program is wrong. Sometimes BEACON tells the worker to ask for information or proofs you should not have to give. BEACON is only a computer system. It does not set the rules or make policy. If you have any questions or problems with BEACON or you get notices from DTA you think are wrong, talk to your worker or your worker's supervisor. If the problem is not fixed right away, you should contact an advocate and appeal. See **Part 9**.