

Part 7 Proving Continuing Eligibility

107 How often will DTA review your eligibility?

DTA reviews (“reevaluate”) eligibility for most TAFDC recipients every six months. DTA reviews households once a year if the adults are on SSI or the adult is a grandparent or other relative who is not and does not have to be in the assistance unit. See **Questions 30-32. Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links).

- DTA will schedule a telephone interview at least 30 days before the deadline for your review. You can reschedule the date and time if you need to. You can ask for a virtual Zoom meeting if that is better for you. See **Question 99**. If a telephone or Zoom meeting doesn’t work for you or you have a Heightened Level of Security, see **Question 106**, go to the local DTA office and ask for an in-person interview. If you miss the interview, DTA will send you a notice of missed interview.
- As part of the review, you may need to give DTA proofs to show you are eligible for TAFDC. If the DTA worker thinks DTA needs more proofs, the worker is supposed to send you a checklist (VC-1) listing the proofs that are needed. If the worker does not send you a checklist, the DTA computer will automatically send you a checklist. DTA should not ask for proof of things that it already has and that probably did not change. 106 C.M.R. § 702.230; **Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links).

Part 7 ■ Proving Continuing Eligibility

- DTA will stop your benefits if
 - the interview is not completed by the end of reevaluation period, *or*
 - DTA has not received and processed the required proofs before the end of the reevaluation period.
- DTA should not stop your benefits if it is DTA's fault the reevaluation was not completed or DTA has agreed you had good cause to reschedule your interview.
- You can appeal DTA's decision to stop your benefits. If you appeal within 10 days of the notice saying your benefits will be stopped or before your next benefits are due, you can keep your benefits while you are waiting for a hearing decision. See **Part 8 Appeal Rights**.
- DTA will reinstate your case if you complete your reevaluation within 30 days of the closing. 106 C.M.R. § 702.240. See **Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links); DTA Operations Memo 2012-39 (Aug. 27, 2012).

DTA can review your case sooner if it thinks your eligibility may have changed. 106 C.M.R. § 702.210. Also, if you are getting close to the time limit, DTA may review your eligibility when you go to the office for meetings on how you are preparing for the time limit.

Your case may also be selected for a quality control (QC) review. 106 C.M.R. §§ 701.430, 706.700-706.710. This is a special review to make sure the local welfare office is following the rules. Being selected for QC review does not mean you have done anything wrong. You must cooperate with the QC review or your case will be closed.

Advocacy Reminders:

- ✓ Tell your DTA worker if you need an interview at a special time because of work, child care, a medical problem, or other reason. If DTA schedules an interview for a time that is bad for you, call your worker before the interview to reschedule. If you cannot reach your worker or your worker will not reschedule, call the supervisor,

Assistant Director, Director, or the DTA Ombuds Office, 617-348-5354. See **Appendix B** for Assistant Director and Director names and phone numbers.

- ✓ Each time you go to the DTA office, ask to sign a log if there is one. If you are dropping off proof, ask to have a copy made and date-stamped. Write down the name of the DTA staff you talk to. You can use this as proof later if DTA cannot find the proof or says you missed your appointment.
- ✓ It may be easier to keep a record of what you sent to DTA if you are able to fax the information and get a fax receipt or you use DTA Connect, see **Question 100**.
- ✓ If you are sending proof by mail, use the DTA postage-paid envelope if you have one. Try to keep a copy of anything you mail and make a note on the copy of the date that you mailed it. See **Question 100**.
- ✓ DTA may combine your TAFDC with your SNAP review. Even if DTA does not complete the SNAP review on time and closes the SNAP benefits, it must send you at least 10 days' advance notice of termination or reduction in your TAFDC benefits. See **Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links); DTA Operations Memo 2012-42 (Sept. 21, 2012).

108 Does DTA send texts or leave voicemail?

Text Messages. DTA texts important messages, including general information and information specific to your case. You can opt out by replying to the text. You will continue to get all paper notices and forms by regular mail in addition to text messages.

Voicemail. You can authorize DTA to leave detailed messages about your case on your phone. You will continue to get all paper notices and forms by regular mail in addition to the voice mail messages. You can opt out at any time.

109 When do you have to report changes?

DTA regulations say for TAFDC you have to report changes that could make you ineligible or decrease your benefits within 10 days. You do not have to report changes in earned income of less than \$100 a month. 106 C.M.R. § 701.420.

DTA may send you a notice telling you to provide proof of the change. You should have 20 days to respond to the notice. **Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links).

Report changes that will increase your benefits, such as a drop in income, at any time.

Because it is hard to know what changes you have to report, it is good to report other changes promptly, too. For example, you should report a change of address even if it will not affect your eligibility so that DTA notices will not be mailed to the wrong address.

Advocacy Reminders:

- ✓ Although the regulations and DTA notices say you have to report a change in 10 days, DTA policy says you have 20 days to report a change for TAFDC. **Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links). If everyone in your household also gets SNAP, you have 10 days to report for SNAP. So it is safer to report in 10 days if you can. Contact your local legal services office, **Appendix D**, if the reporting times are a problem for you.
- ✓ What if you can't reach your worker to report a change? If possible, send a picture with DTA Connect or fax or mail information about the change to the Document Processing Center and keep a copy. See **Questions 100** and **104**. Also keep a record of any phone calls you make to report a change (or to try to report a change). You may need this record later to prove that you tried to report a change.

- ✓ You can report a change of address or a new phone number to the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system or on DTA Connect. See **Question 104**.
- ✓ Be sure to report a change of address and tell the post office about the change. If DTA mail is returned to you without a forwarding address, DTA will send you a request for verification of address and will close your case if you do not respond within 10 days (30 days for applications). DTA Operations Memo 2013-13A (March 28, 2013).
- ✓ If DTA has information that your address has changed, it should send notices to the new address whether or not you reported the change. **Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links); DTA Transitions, Feb. 2012, p. 3; DTA Field Operations Memo 2008- 22 (Apr. 30, 2008).
- ✓ If you move to an address covered by a different DTA office, your case should be transferred to the new office unless you are doubled up with a host family. If there is a problem, ask to speak with the Transfer Specialist in the new office. DTA Operations Memo 2012-39 (Aug. 27, 2012).
- ✓ DTA may get a report that says you may have wages you didn't report. DTA may then send you a notice requiring you to verify your wages. If you don't respond to the notice, DTA will close your case. Be sure to tell DTA if you are having a problem getting the information DTA says it needs. **Appendix E** (DTA Online Guide Links). Email info@masslegalservices.org if DTA asks you to verify wages for a job you didn't work at or if you don't understand this notice.