



The Mass Cultural Council and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services' Department of Transitional Assistance

## EBT Card to Culture

Access the power of culture with your EBT Card

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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#### About the Program

##### **Is there a fee to participate in the EBT Card to Culture program?**

No. There is no cost to enroll in the program. You just need to register your organization, and adhere to the minimum guidelines.

##### **Is this a grant program? Will admission be subsidized?**

Neither the Mass Cultural Council nor the Department of Transitional Assistance are able to offer grants to subsidize discounted admission at this time. However, we are able to offer certain marketing and promotion benefits and training to participating organizations. The program can open avenues for new partnerships and fundraising opportunities within your community, and we encourage you to promote your participation to other funders.

##### **Are there any reporting obligations for participation?**

Participating organizations will be asked to report attendance statistics about usage of the discount annually. Prepare to report the number of times the discount was used, as well as how many adults and how many children attended with the discount.

## **Is participation required for Massachusetts Cultural Council grantees? Will it affect my organization's ability to receive a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council?**

No. Although the Mass Cultural Council encourages its grantees to be accessible to all, participation in the EBT Card to Culture program is voluntary. It is not a requirement for funding through the Cultural Investment Portfolio, or any other grant at the MCC. Nor is it a determining factor in the Mass Cultural Council's granting decisions. Participation is an indicator of community involvement and accessibility, however, which are review criteria of some grants.

## **How do I sign up? Is there a deadline?**

Organizations may sign-up at any time throughout the year. To sign up, make sure that your organization meets the minimum requirements and then submit your information [via this online form](#).

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## **Setting a Discount and Policies**

### **What kind of organizations are participating in the EBT Card to Culture program?**

All types of organizations are encouraged to be a part of the program, and we will work with you to figure out how a discount can work for your specific programming. There are models for museums, performing arts organizations, membership-based organizations, and schools. You can view this [list of participating organizations](#) and their proposed discounts to get an idea of what you might choose to offer.

### **What are the requirements of an eligible discount?**

- Discount must be for regular admission, during all normal operating hours, or for every regular season performance, to be used at any time. (NOT "free after 5pm" or "every second Saturday")
- Available to the adult individual or family holding the EBT card. (NOT "free to children only")
- Offered through the regular admissions process, or redeemable in the same manner that other discounts at the organization are. (NOT "call for discount, not available at admissions")

### **What if my organization already offers membership or other benefits to families receiving food assistance? What if all of our programming is *always* free? Can we still participate?**

If your organization offers benefits above and beyond the minimum benefits outlined above, such as free memberships, or if attendance is *always* free for *all*

activity and *all* patrons, we would be happy to have you participate. Requirements for signing-up, reporting, and staff training still apply.

**My organization offers other discounts and accessible programming, such as rush tickets and free nights. Does this qualify my organization to participate?**

No. The EBT card discount program is designed to promote standing discounts to general admission rates to individuals and families receiving food assistance. Special-hours programming, free days, and other outreach alone do not meet the requirements for the program.

**Is free or reduced entry to special, fee-based exhibits required?**

No, entry to experiences that are treated as "upcharges" (e.g., IMAX movies, special exhibitions, etc.) is not required. However, organizations wishing to include admission to these activities as a part of their implementation of the program are welcome to do so.

**May we limit the number of spots available to EBT cardholders, depending on the program?**

Yes. If you are a performing arts organization, a community arts center, or have similar capacity considerations, you may choose to limit the number of individuals per activity. An example of this might be, "10% of the house set aside for EBT cardholders, as supplies last" or "One spot held per class, pending sufficient enrollment."

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## How it Works

**Who is eligible for free or discounted tickets/admission/services through the program?**

Participating organizations must extend the discounted rate to any bearer of a Massachusetts-issued EBT card. There is only *one* card issued per family, so the name and photo on the card may not be the individual who requests the discount.

The discount must extend to the *adult* individual attending, not only children. It is likely that patrons will visit your organization or attend your event *with* someone, so please consider extending the discount to cover at least two people.

**Do patrons use the EBT card as payment?**

No. The EBT cards are simply used by their bearers as identification, showing that they are eligible for your discounted rate. They must use a method your

organization accepts to pay (e.g. cash, credit card, check, etc.).

**Can I accept an EBT card over the phone, or through an online ticketing system? Do they have ID numbers?**

Yes, it is possible to set-up a system to accept the EBT card discount virtually. Some organizations may select to have a discount code – ie. “FREEEBT.” You may advertise this discount and code on your own website, or if you’re afraid it will be abused by the general public, you can choose to only share the code with EBT cardholders via the DTA’s website and flyers. Include the discount code when you sign-up for this program.

Alternatively, all EBT cards start with the same six digits... 600875. Places that require a code could say “enter the first six digits of your EBT Card Number.” Please do not ask for the entire card number, as that must remain confidential per the contract with our card vendor.

**Are patrons with EBT cards from other states eligible for this rate?**

It is not required, but highly encouraged. This program aims to increase accessibility for everyone, and many families travel to visit our cultural assets in Massachusetts. Know that each state’s EBT card looks different.

**What does the Massachusetts EBT Card look like? Does it have the card holder's photo on it? Is it OK for me to ask for a photo ID in addition to the EBT card?**

We do not recommend you ask for a photo ID in addition to the EBT card. Not all Massachusetts EBT cards *have* photos on them, however EBT cards without photos are still valid for other benefits and should be accepted for the discount.



Also know that there is only *one* card issued per family, so the name and photo on the card may not be the individual who requests the discount. It could happen that a two-parent family of four receives SNAP benefits and the parent who is bringing their child(ren) to your institution is not the “head of household” so does not have their photo on the card.

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## About the DTA and EBT Cards

### What is the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Transitional Assistance? What is SNAP? What is EBT?

1. **Executive Office of Health and Human Service (EOHHS):** The largest executive agency in Massachusetts State Government, EOHHS oversees a \$22 billion state budget, 12 state agencies (including DTA), and 22,000 employees. 1 in 4 residents of the Commonwealth have their lives touched by EOHHS.
2. **Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA):** DTA's mission is to assist and empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency. DTA administers three main programs:
  - a. **SNAP:** the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides food assistance to 1 in 9 residents of the Commonwealth. SNAP was formally referred to as food stamps. SNAP cannot be converted to cash. In FY17, DTA projects to administer nearly \$1.18 billion in SNAP benefits to an average of nearly 450,000 households monthly.
  - b. **TAFDC:** the joint state and federally funded Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children provides cash assistance to families with children and certain pregnant women. Many TAFDC recipients are required to meet a work program requirement in order to maintain eligibility. TAFDC supports approximately 32,000 households monthly.
  - c. **EAEDC:** Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) is a state-funded program, which provides cash assistance to low-income elderly individuals and people with disabilities. Those eligible for EAEDC include people over 65, individuals unable to work due to a physical or mental incapacity, and individuals participating in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission program. EAEDC supports approximately 21,000 households monthly.
3. **Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card:** An EBT card is the means by which DTA administers benefits to program recipients. An EBT card is similar to an ATM card and can be used at point of sale terminals to redeem SNAP benefits; those who receive cash assistance can also access their benefits at a point of sale terminal or at an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM).

### What is SNAP? What is EBT? What's the difference?

SNAP is a food assistance program (formally called food stamps, see above). EBT stands for Electronic Benefit Transfer... it is the card by which benefits are administered.

**What is WIC? Are there any other national or state programs we should know about or include for the discount?**

WIC stands for Women, Infants, and Children program. This is a federal program administered by the Department of Public Health. Some organizations may choose to extend their discount to EBT cardholders and WIC cardholders.

**How does someone qualify for benefits and an EBT card?**

Benefit eligibility for SNAP is based on income and generally speaking must have a gross monthly income of below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. For a family of 3 this is just over 2,000 per month. For TAFDC and EAEDC income and assets are both considered. While each case is unique, generally speaking to be eligible for TAFDC a family must have under 2,500 in countable income/assets; for EAEDC, \$250.

**How many people in MA have an EBT card? What are the demographics of the people with EBT cards in MA?**

There are approximately 443,305 SNAP households in Massachusetts. Additionally there are approximately 20,000 EAEDC households and 30,000 TAFDC households. Most cash assistance clients are also SNAP clients, so the number of active cards is around 445,000 in any given month.