



# DORCHESTER COUNTY: ADULTS RECEIVING TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE IN 2018

Rebecca McColl & Letitia Logan Passarella

Despite its small size, Maryland is a diverse state. Its 24 jurisdictions sometimes have very different populations, and, consequently, may have very different needs. While statewide data can be extraordinarily helpful to state-level program managers and policymakers, it may not reflect the customers that local departments of social services see in their offices.

To assist local departments in serving their Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) customers better, we are examining adult recipients in each of the 24 jurisdictions over the course of four years. In this brief, we focus on Dorchester County, which is located in Maryland's Eastern Shore. Dorchester County's percentage of families with children under 18 years of age living in poverty (23.9%) is over double the state average of 10% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b). The median family income (\$64,390) in Dorchester County is just two thirds the median family income in Maryland (\$95,597) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b). Dorchester County is among the five smallest jurisdictions in the state; thus, it is not surprising that it has a very small percentage (0.7%) of the statewide TCA caseload, even though it has relatively high poverty and low income.

Even though adult recipients in Dorchester County are a small portion of the state's TCA caseload, it is worth noting ways in which they differ from recipients in other parts of the state. Table 1, on the following page, provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of adult TCA recipients in Dorchester County. They are mostly African American (55.9%) women (86.6%) in their early 30s who never married (67.6%), which is mostly similar to adult recipients statewide. Compared to the rest of the state, Dorchester County recipients are less likely to be African American (55.9% vs 72.7%), and more likely to be Caucasian or Hispanic. Although their rates of marriage (8.5%) are similar to TCA recipients statewide, they are twice as likely to be divorced, separated, or widowed (23.9% vs 12.1%).

## KEY FINDINGS

- ❖ Dorchester County adult recipients are typically African American women in their early 30s who never married.
- ❖ Over one quarter of adults have not finished high school, and 20% have a disability that is expected to last over 12 months.
- ❖ Two in three Dorchester County adult recipients worked in the year before they began receiving TCA, but only one third of those employed worked all four quarters in that year.
- ❖ Earnings among employed adult recipients in that year were low, with a median close to \$5,300.
- ❖ Over 45% of Dorchester County adult recipients who worked in the year before they received TCA were employed in administrative and support services, general retail, or food and beverage stores.

**Table 1. Demographics**

<b>Gender</b>	
% Female	86.6%
<b>Age</b>	
Average	31.6
<b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b>	
% Caucasian <sup>^</sup>	34.6%
% African American <sup>^</sup>	55.9%
% Hispanic	7.4%
<b>Marital Status</b>	
% Married	8.5%
% Never Married	67.6%
% Divorced, Separated, or Widowed	23.9%

**Note:** <sup>^</sup>=non-Hispanic. Valid percentages reported.

For adult recipients who are required to work or to participate in work-related activities, educational attainment is a particularly important characteristic, as it can affect the job opportunities that are available to customers. Figure 1 places educational attainment among Dorchester County adult recipients in context with adult recipients statewide and in other

jurisdictions. The lines represent the range of values seen in all 24 jurisdictions, with the bars at the top and bottom indicating the *statewide high*—the highest value across all jurisdictions—and the *statewide low*—the lowest value across all jurisdictions. The square shows what the statewide average is, and the colored diamond denotes where Dorchester County falls.

The educational attainment of adult recipients in Dorchester County is largely comparable to statewide averages. Over one quarter (27.5%) of Dorchester County adult recipients have yet to finish high school or receive a GED, which is virtually the same as the statewide average (27.2%).

Similarly, the percentage of adult recipients in Dorchester County who have finished high school (65.5%) is just above the statewide average of 63%. In the jurisdiction with the lowest percentage, half (51.9%) of adult recipients completed high school. Conversely, three in every four (74.6%)

### *Data and Study Population*

Data comes from the Client Automated Resource and Eligibility System (CARES) and the Maryland Automated Benefits System (MABS), which are the administrative data systems for TCA and Unemployment Insurance (UI), respectively. CARES provides individual- and case-level data on demographics and program participation for families receiving TCA. Additional data on adult recipients' disabilities comes from WORKS, which documents participation in work and work-related activities. The MABS system includes data from all employers covered by the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) law and the Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) program. Together, these account for approximately 91% of all Maryland civilian employment.

There are a variety of limitations to MABS data. MABS only reports data on a quarterly basis, which means that it is not possible to calculate weekly or monthly employment and earnings. Another limitation is that MABS does not contain data on certain types of employment, such as self-employment, independent contractors, and informal employment; consequently, earnings from under-the-table jobs are not included. Finally, MABS has no information on employment outside Maryland. In Dorchester County, 5% of residents work out of the state, which is lower than the state average (16.8%), but higher than the national average (3.7%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). As a result, we may be understating employment and some earnings.

The study population in this report is the unique number of adults who received at least one month of TCA in SFY 2018 (July 2017 to June 2018). Statewide, 20,798 adults received TCA in SFY 2018; in Dorchester County, 142 adults received TCA.

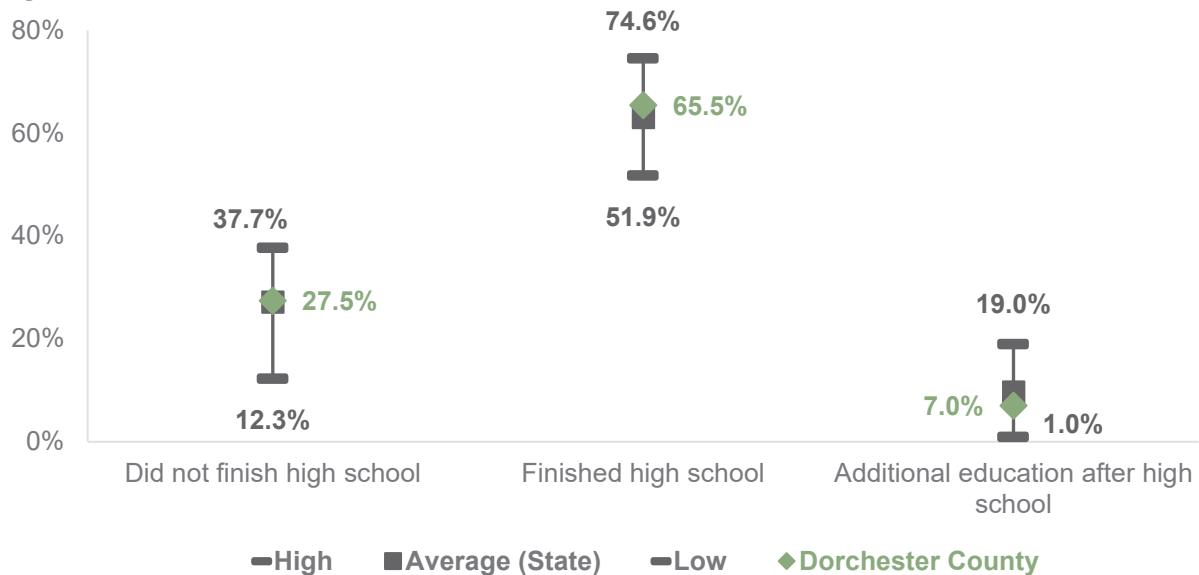
adult recipients completed high school in the jurisdiction with the highest percentage.

The percentage of Dorchester County adult recipients who have additional education after high school is slightly below the statewide average. Only 7% of Dorchester County recipients have additional education after high school, compared to 19% for the jurisdiction with highest percentage and 1% for the statewide low.

Although the majority of adult recipients in Dorchester County have completed high school, more than one in four do not have a high school diploma, and less than one in 10 have any additional education after high school. Our research shows that economic stability and good jobs are both more likely when adults have more education (Nicoli, Passarella, & Born, 2013; James & Nicoli, 2016). Obtaining additional education may improve the outcomes of these adult recipients.

The Maryland Department of Human Services is already pursuing one potential avenue to increase educational attainment through partnering with the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning. Adult basic education can help adult recipients who lack a high school education with any number of goals, from improving literacy to completing a GED. Furthermore, federal law, in the form of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), encourages this kind of partnership, and Maryland has been a leader in ensuring that high-need adults, such as TCA recipients, receive priority of service as the law mandates (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2016). Additionally, Chesapeake College offers adult education courses, including GED preparation and English-language classes, to adults throughout the Eastern Shore (Chesapeake College, n.d.).

**Figure 1. Educational Attainment**



**Note:** *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. General Education Development program (GED) certificates are included in high school completion rates. Valid percentages reported.

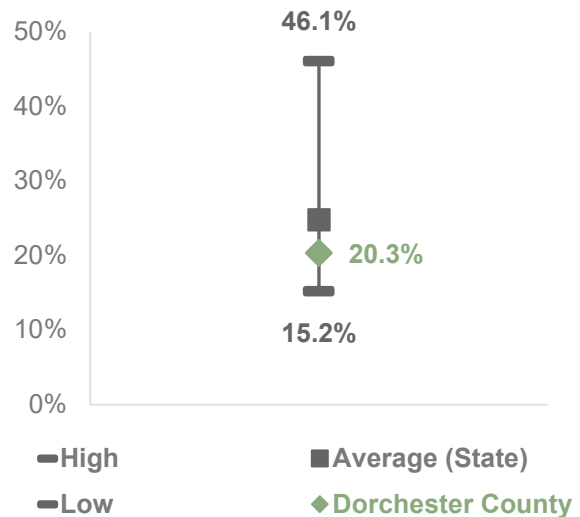
Partnerships with other entities within Maryland's workforce system may also be beneficial for adult recipients with disabilities. Figure 2 shows the percentage of adult recipients who have disabilities that are expected to last longer than 12 months.<sup>1</sup> As with education, the figure includes the percentage for Dorchester County adult recipients, the statewide average, and the highest and lowest percentages among all 24 jurisdictions. One in five (20.3%) adult recipients in Dorchester County has such a disability, compared to one quarter of adults across the state. The range across the state is much larger, though. In the jurisdiction with the highest percentage, 46% of adult recipients have long-term disabilities, compared to only 15% in the jurisdiction with the lowest percentage.

Even though the percentage of Dorchester County adult recipients with disabilities is below the statewide average, there are customers who may require disability-related services. This could include assistance with applications for federal disability programs, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or support for finding and keeping jobs while also managing disabilities. Through a statewide contract with a vendor, caseworkers can already offer assistance to those who need help with applications. For those who want to work, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), located within the Maryland State Department of Education, may be an excellent resource. For Dorchester County residents, the closest DORS office is in Easton or Salisbury. Like the TCA program, DORS is part of Maryland's workforce

<sup>1</sup> This data, which comes from WORKS, represents the percentage of adult recipients with an OTD code at any point in SFY 2018. OTD is a state-defined activity code indicating that the individual has a disability that is expected to last over 12 months.

system, so this is another way that closer collaboration with workforce partners may benefit TCA customers.

**Figure 2. Percent with Disabilities Lasting 12+ Months**

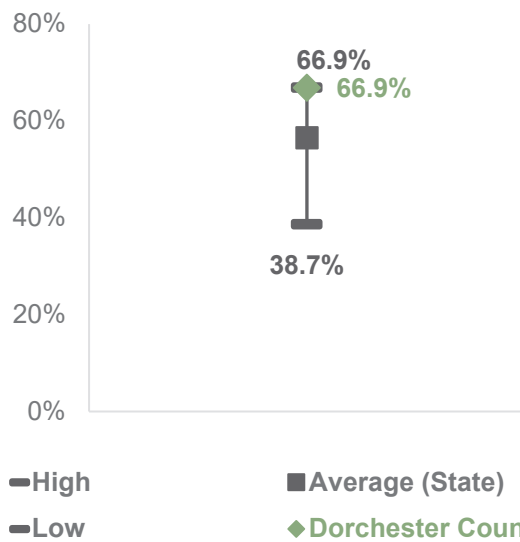


**Note:** *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Valid percentages reported.

As TCA moves toward being more fully integrated with its workforce partners, understanding adult recipients' work histories is even more important. After all, past employment experiences can shape future employment and earnings. To that end, Figure 3 displays the percentage of adult recipients who worked in the year before they began receiving TCA.<sup>2</sup> Two in three (66.9%) Dorchester County adult recipients were employed in that year, which is the highest percentage in the state and is 10 percentage points above the state average. The high level of recent work history suggests that Dorchester County adult recipients may have an easier time finding work after TCA.

<sup>2</sup> This percentage reflects adult recipients who were engaged in formal employment in a job covered by the Maryland Unemployment Insurance system. Please see the sidebar on data on page 2 for more information.

**Figure 3. Percent Employed**  
Year before TCA Receipt



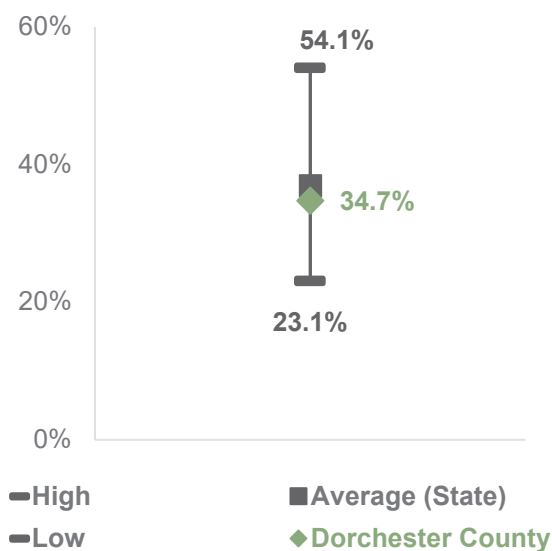
**Note:** *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Valid percentages reported.

Although adult recipients in Dorchester County were the most likely to be employed among their counterparts across the state, it may also be helpful to know how many quarters adult recipients worked in the year before they began receiving TCA. Each year contains four quarters, so Figure 4 presents the percentage of employed adult recipients who worked all four quarters of that year. One third (34.7%) of employed Dorchester County adult recipients worked all four quarters, which is slightly less than the statewide average (36.9%). There is considerable variation across the state, however. In the jurisdiction with the highest percentage, over half of employed adult recipients worked in all four quarters, but the statewide low is 23%.

Knowing that two in three Dorchester County adult recipients were employed in the year before receiving TCA and that just 35% of those employed adults worked in all four quarters provides some context on what these recipients may need in order to

become self-sufficient. These findings indicate that many adult recipients have worked in the recent past, but 65% of those who were employed did not work consistently over the course of a year. Thus, while some adults may need assistance in finding a job, those who find jobs may need ongoing services, at least at first, to help them maintain employment.

**Figure 4. Percent Who Worked Four Quarters**  
Year before TCA Receipt

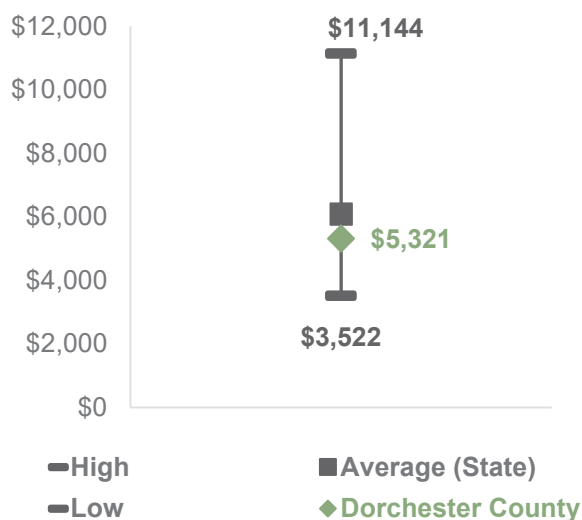


**Note:** *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Valid percentages reported.

Another critical aspect of adult recipients' employment histories is how much they are able to earn. Figure 5 shows median earnings in the year before adult recipients began receiving TCA for Dorchester County, the state, and the jurisdictions with the highest and lowest earnings. Even though these earnings represent what employed adult recipients earned in one year, it is important to remember that these earnings usually do not reflect full-time, full-year employment. As Figure 4 revealed, most employed adults work less than four quarters in a year.

In Dorchester County, and across the state, median earnings are very low. Employed adult recipients in Dorchester County earned \$5,321 in the year before TCA receipt, which is less than the state median. It is about \$1,800 more than the statewide low, although it is \$5,800 less than the statewide high. Regardless, even in the jurisdiction with the highest median earnings (\$11,144), earnings were far below \$20,780, which was the 2018 federal poverty threshold for a three-person household (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

**Figure 5. Median Earnings**  
Year before TCA Receipt



**Note:** *High* refers to the jurisdiction with the highest percentage. *Low* refers to the jurisdiction with lowest percentage. Earnings are standardized to 2018 dollars.

These low wages add another piece to the puzzle. From earlier figures, we know that many adult recipients work before receiving TCA, but they often do not work in all four quarters. Low wages may be both cause and consequence of this inconsistent work.

Adult recipients may be unable to earn enough to cover their job-related expenses, such as transportation, uniforms, and child care, which may lead to an inability to work. At the same time, inconsistent work is likely to drive wages downward.

One strategy to increase wages focuses on the industries in which adult recipients work. Some jobs can be performed in a number of different industries. For example, administrative assistants may work in health care settings, in schools, or in private firms, but each of these industries may compensate administrative assistants differently. Helping adult recipients find employment in industries that offer higher pay is one way to increase self-sufficiency.

In Table 2 we report the three most common industries among Dorchester County adult recipients who worked in the year before receiving TCA.<sup>3</sup> Nearly one in five (17.9%) worked in administrative and support services, about one in seven (14.7%) worked in general retail, and one in eight (12.6%) were employed in food and beverage stores. Hence, almost half of all employed adult recipients in Dorchester County worked in one of these industries.

Prior research has found that administrative and support services and general retail are not associated with high earnings. Individuals who left TCA and initially worked in these industries had below-average earnings, and they were more likely to return to TCA (Nicoli, Passarella, & Born, 2014). They were also less likely to realize economic stability after exiting TCA (James & Nicoli, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Industries were identified with three-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes and are described in Table 2.

**Table 2. Most Common Industries**  
Year before TCA Receipt

<p><b>Administrative &amp; Support Services</b> Organizations that support day-to-day operations—clerical, cleaning, and general management activities—and temporary employment services. (NAICS 561)</p>	17.9%
<p><b>General Retail</b> Department stores and other general merchandise stores. (NAICS 452)</p>	14.7%
<p><b>Food &amp; Beverage Stores</b> Retail stores that sell food and beverages, such as grocery stores and specialty drink stores. (NAICS 445)</p>	12.6%

**Note:** Valid percentages reported.

However, individuals who left TCA and initially worked in health care, government, or education industries had above-average earnings (Nicoli et al., 2014) and were more likely to attain economic stability after exit (James & Nicoli, 2016). Three of the top 10 employers in Dorchester County—University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Dorchester, Signature HealthCARE at Mallard Bay, and Genesis HealthCare’s Chesapeake Woods Center—are in the health care industry, suggesting that jobs in this industry may be attainable for TCA recipients (Maryland Department of Commerce, 2019). Furthermore, adult recipients can also obtain industry certifications through Chesapeake College’s skilled trades program (Chesapeake College, n.d.). Helping adult recipients work in higher paying industries is one potential pathway to increase earnings.

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For additional information, please contact Dr. Lisa Nicoli (410.706.2763; [lnicoli@ssw.umaryland.edu](mailto:lnicoli@ssw.umaryland.edu)) at the School of Social Work.

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525 W. Redwood Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410-706-2479  
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