



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Authorizing legislation

Title I of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Legislation/pdfs/PL_104-193.pdf

Federal funding agency

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Administration for Children and Families – Office of Administration: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa

Point of contact

TANF is a state-administered federal block grant program. This website provides direct links to the state TANF directors: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/states/tanf_dir.html

Program purpose

Established in 1996 as part of a major federal welfare reform legislative overhaul, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC). Whereas AFDC was primarily an individual cash assistance entitlement program, TANF is a state-administered block grant program with the goal of moving families from welfare to work. While states have flexibility to develop and implement strategies and services, they are also accountable for minimum work participation rates for TANF-participating families.

Funding formula

As a state block grant, the federal government funds TANF through a complex allocation formula based on a state's spending in the AFDC program. States also are required to fund a portion of the TANF program – an amount unique to each state – through the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds also similarly based on prior state AFDC spending.

Funding eligibility

HHS distributes TANF funds to states, which in turn implement a range of programs and services in their states to support families as they work toward economic self-sufficiency. In addition to these programmatic supports administered through government and community agencies, states also provide means-tested cash assistance directly to families. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 created some changes to TANF. Most notably it created the Emergency Contingency Fund for state TANF programs that provides up to \$5 billion to help states, territories and tribes in FY 2009 and 2010 that have an increase in caseloads and expenditures.

Activities supported by the funding

The TANF program has the following objectives:

- > Assisting needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of relatives.
- > Reducing the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage.
- > Preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
- > Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

When fulfilling the first two aforementioned objectives, states are limited to only spend federal TANF funds on “needy” families. By contrast, states can offer services to all families when implementing federal TANF funded services that meet the last two objectives. TANF activities funded through state MOE resources must always be targeted to needy families, regardless of which objective is being addressed.

Parents as Teachers alignment with TANF goals

- > To achieve the TANF objective of caring for children in their own homes, states may fund parent education and home visiting services to improve parenting skills and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- > Home visits provided for teen parents also can be funded through TANF dollars, if one of the objectives of the service is, at least in part, to reduce the incidence of subsequent teen pregnancies.
- > Programs offering Parents as Teachers services that emphasize father involvement in their home visits may be able to utilize TANF funds to achieve the objective of maintaining two-parent families.



Program example

Project RAPPORT in Pennsylvania utilizes TANF funding to help support services to pregnant and parenting teens and also to women of any age facing an unplanned pregnancy. The program director has found TANF funds to be helpful but limiting, because they are restricted for teens and women with unplanned pregnancies. This program relies on multiple funding sources of funding and the director says multiple sources are necessary to sustain program services. The program also has found that having somewhat stable, middle-income, intact families participating with families facing social, emotional and financial needs creates a supportive atmosphere that includes the modeling of some positive parenting practices.

Parents as Teachers research support for funding

Prevents child abuse and neglect

- > Parents as Teachers children are less likely to be treated for injury (Wagner, Iida & Spiker, 2001).
- > Teen mothers showed greater improvement in knowledge about discipline, organized their home environment in a more appropriate way (Wagner, Iida & Spiker, 2001) and were less likely to be subjects of child abuse investigations when also receiving case management (Wagner & Clayton, 1999).
- > Parents as Teachers parents have significantly fewer cases of abuse and neglect (Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1991).

Closes the achievement gap for low-income children

- > With at least two years of Parents as Teachers combined with a year of preschool, 82 percent of poor children were ready for school at kindergarten entry – a level identical to non-poverty children with no Parents as Teachers or preschool (Zigler, Pfannenstiel & Seitz, 2008).
- > Children in high-poverty schools who participated in Parents as Teachers were equivalent to those of children at low-poverty schools with no preschool enrichment (Parents as Teachers or preschool). In addition, when children attending high-poverty schools participated in both Parents as Teachers and preschool, their scores were significantly higher than those of children in low-poverty schools with no preschool enrichment (Parents as Teachers or preschool) (Pfannenstiel, Seitz & Zigler, 2002)

Additional considerations

- States have great flexibility in administering their TANF block grant funds, as long as the plan is "reasonably calculated to accomplish the purposes of TANF."
- Programs should first determine if their state agency administering TANF considers home visiting a service that can be funded by TANF dollars.
- Some states administer TANF funds directly from the state to community agencies that may provide home visiting services to families. Other states delegate administration of TANF to local government consortiums that determine the home visiting services to be provided.

Related links

Center for Law and Social Policy: www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/TANFBlockGrant.pdf

National Governor's Association: www.nga.org/Files/pdf/000204TANF.pdf

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.hhs.gov/recovery/programs/tanf/tanf-overview.html