

# TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

Low-income working families.

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Social-insurance Undergraduate  
Research Fellowship



States use federal TANF block grants for a wide range of benefits, services, and cash welfare to meet the goals of: 1. Providing economic help to low-income families with children; 2. Ending dependence on government benefits through work; 3. Reducing pregnancies among unmarried persons; and 4. Promoting two-parent families.

## ELIGIBILITY

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### Individual Requirements

- Has a child < 18.
  - Has income below a specified level, determined by the state.
  - 20 hours/week work-related activities requirements, defined by the state.
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### Disqualification Criteria

- TANF time limit: received aid for 60 months (child-only cases exempt).
  - Unwed teen parents.
  - Teens who have not completed high school nor made progress in an educational program.
  - Some noncitizens.
  - Felons and parole violators.
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## BENEFICIARIES

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- Since TANF's creation, the national caseload has declined by 76 percent, far exceeding the decline in poverty.

## BENEFITS

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- Benefit amounts determined by states.
- TANF benefit levels are low. In every state, the maximum TANF benefit leaves a family of three below 60 percent of the federal poverty line. In more than one-third of states, it leaves a family of three below just 20 percent of the poverty line.

## HISTORY

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- Created in the 1996 welfare reform law.
- Replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which had provided cash assistance to families with children in poverty since 1935.

## EXPENDITURES

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- The basic TANF block grant has been set at \$16.5 billion each year since 1996 → Its real value has fallen by 40 percent due to inflation.

# EFFECTIVENESS

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## Standard of Living

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## Labor Force

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## Other

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# POLICY QUESTIONS

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