

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must outline how the State will meet the requirements of section 402 of the Social Security Act including how it will:

(a) Conduct a program designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner) that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program, specifically cash assistance, and become self-sufficient (section 402(a)(1)(A)(i) of the Social Security Act).

On November 1, 1997, Washington's WorkFirst Program became operational statewide. The program design was to move families on welfare into employment as quickly as possible through upfront job search, work experience activities, and short-term education and training. (TANF State Plan Introduction i)

The State has instituted, by rule, uniform program policies in all political subdivisions, including uniform TANF cash benefit standards. (TANF State Plan V B 2)

Washington State provides cash benefits to all needy families who meet the eligibility criteria established by rules of the Department of Social and Health Services and in accordance with this State Plan. WorkFirst will be the major cash assistance program providing cash benefits and services for low-income families with (or expecting) children in Washington State. (TANF State Plan I A 1)

The WorkFirst program offers services and activities to help people in low-income families find jobs, keep their jobs, find better jobs, and become self-sufficient. Low-income families are those with income below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. The program links families to a variety of state, federal, and community resources to meet this goal. Examples include:

- (1) Child support collection
- (2) Food assistance
- (3) Subsidized child care
- (4) Medical assistance
- (5) Tuition assistance at community and technical colleges
- (6) WorkFirst support services (TANF State Plan I A 1 e)

WorkFirst support services include assistance with work clothing, work tools, car repair, and transportation. Job preparation services also include education and training tuition assistance, books, test fees and subsidized work experience. These services are designed to help individuals keep their jobs or get better jobs. (TANF State Plan II G 1)

The WorkFirst Program is focused on obtaining paid, unsubsidized employment for all recipients. In addition, WorkFirst is dedicated to assisting families up and out of poverty once they become employed by providing employment retention and wage progression services. In operating the WorkFirst Program, the State will: provide up-front employability screening for participants prior to job search; require WorkFirst clients to participate in initial job search as one method to determine employability and refer for further assessment if he or she fails to find a job; reassign participants who do not find work to additional job search activities for a short length of time or to paid work experience or subsidized employment or other work-like activities; provide post-employment services to assist clients in remaining employed and to progress in skills and wages; provide educational opportunities in the context of learning while working, both in classroom settings and on the work-site; and encourage a new alliance of state, local, and tribal government, business, churches, nonprofit organizations, and individuals, who dedicate themselves to helping families in poverty overcome barriers. (TANF State Plan II A 1)

As the WorkFirst program has evolved, more emphasis has been placed on overcoming barriers to employment, job retention, and reducing the re-cycling that characterizes a significant part of the TANF population.

(b) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance to engage in work (defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once he or she has received 24 months of assistance, whichever is earlier, consistent with the child care exception at 407(e)(2) (section 402(a)(1)(A)(ii) of the Social Security Act)

The State includes the following activities in its definition of work: unsubsidized paid employment, subsidized paid employment, work experience, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness assistance, community service, vocational education, job skills training related to employment, education related to employment for a parent who has not completed high school or equivalent, providing childcare for an individual engaged in community service, internships, practicums, participation in other programs by persons needing special assistance to become employable to the extent federally countable, and participation in post-employment activities to the extent federally countable. (TANF State Plan II B 1)

What criteria will Washington State use to determine whether a parent or caretaker relative is ready to engage in work before 24 months? The State requires all nonexempt WorkFirst clients to be screened upon application and then enter into an initial work search or take whatever actions necessary in order to engage in the initial work search. (TANF State Plan II C 1)

What criteria has the State established relative to a single custodial parent's "demonstrated inability" to obtain needed child care? The State recognizes that informed choice is consistent with individual responsibility and that parents should be given a range of options for available child care while participating in the WorkFirst Program. Criteria established for "demonstrated inability" to obtain

needed child care include: is not affordable (costs more than the co-payment would be under the Working Connections Childcare Program); is not appropriate (not licensed, certified or approved under federal, state, or tribal law and regulations for the type of care used or there is no appropriate relative or in-home provider available); or is not within a reasonable distance (within reach without traveling farther than is normally expected in the community). (TANF State Plan II C 5)

(c) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance engage in work in accordance with section 407 (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Social Security Act). Consistent with the required strategic elements discussed in section II (a)(2) herein, provide a specific analysis of how the State's workforce development activities are addressing employment and training services for parents or caretakers receiving assistance.

In operating the WorkFirst program, the State uses the work participation rates specified in federal welfare reform legislation (P. L. 104-193) as its work participation goal. However, the state, to the extent possible, will use the work participation rates as a minimum standard and will work toward exceeding these goals. Washington has established program goals around reduced caseloads and wage progression efforts with the expectation that low-income families will be lifted up and out of poverty through employment, and WorkFirst is designed to meet that expectation. To the degree possible, all low-income families will have access to services that will help them gain in work skills and earn enough to become financially stable. (TANF State Plan II A 3)

The State used various welfare-to-work models, including models focused on moving job ready individuals into work as rapidly as possible, and providing employment-related training that is expected to lead directly to work for those lacking work skills. (TANF State Plan II A 2)

While the Department of Social and Health Services is the single State agency responsible for administering the TANF program, six core state agencies are designated to work together to manage the WorkFirst program. These agencies include the Office of Financial Management, Department of Commerce, the Employment Security Department, the Department of Social and Health Services, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Department of Early Learning. (TANF State Plan IV B 1)

More specifically, the Employment Security Department provides labor exchange (Wagner-Peyser) services for WorkFirst clients, the community and technical colleges provide various kinds of vocational education and subsidized work experience, and the Department of Commerce provides subsidized jobs and unpaid work experience opportunities for clients with barriers to employment. In addition, the Department of Early Learning has a subsidized child care program for low-income working (including TANF) parents and also manages a home visiting program for low-income at-risk pregnant or parenting (including TANF) parents. The WorkFirst Leadership Team and the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Oversight Task Force provide oversight.

Within the Department of Social and Health Services, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation serves TANF/WorkFirst clients who qualify under its rules.

Post-TANF parents may be eligible for services through the Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program up to its 200% FPL level of eligibility.

In the TANF program, the education and training options for parents are circumscribed by various process rules (Work Participation Rates or WPR) which don't apply to the WIOA core programs. Examples include: the 12-month limit on stand-alone vocational education and the 30% cap on how much of the TANF caseload can be participating in vocational education at any one time, that can be counted by the State towards the State's WPR. On the other hand, TANF/WorkFirst can provide tuition assistance and childcare for parents engaged in approved education and training activities.

Historically, the one-stop workforce development system in Washington State has not focused on providing services to clients with the range of barriers to employment identified in WIOA, who can be found in disproportionate numbers on the TANF caseload. With the expanded number of partners represented in this Combined State Plan, and the efficiencies that go with improved coordination, Washington State seeks to improve its capacity to serve these disadvantaged populations.

(d) Take such reasonable steps as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iv) of the Social Security Act)

The State has established confidentiality rules and procedures within the guidelines provided under state (RCW 74.04.060 and RCW 74.04.062) and federal law. The following changes have been made in response to state and federal welfare reform legislation:

The State has revised confidentiality provisions that expand access to client records by law enforcement officials. Specifically, in accordance with state welfare reform legislation, the Department of Social and Health Services will disclose the current address and location of a WorkFirst recipient to an officer of the law or a person identified as a United States immigration official if the department is given the recipient's name and social security account number and the officer/official satisfactorily demonstrates that the recipient is a fugitive, that the location or apprehension of the recipient is within the officer's/official's duties, and that the request is made in the proper exercise of those duties. In addition, if the department becomes aware that a WorkFirst recipient is the subject of an outstanding warrant, the department may contact the appropriate law enforcement agency and, if the warrant is valid, provide the law enforcement agency with the location of the recipient.

The State will comply with federal Immigration and Naturalization Services reporting requirements, as specified in federal law (P. L. 104-193).

The Department of Social and Health Services will provide the Employment Security Department with the names and social security numbers of all recipients in the WorkFirst program (or any successor state welfare program). This information will be used for the purposes of statistical analysis and evaluation of the WorkFirst (or any successor state welfare) program only. (TANF State Plan V C 1)

Attachment A [of the TANF State Plan] is written certification by Governor Jay Inslee that during the fiscal year the State will: Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure that the State will screen for and identify WorkFirst clients with a history of family violence as defined under P. L. 104-193 (while maintaining confidentiality), refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services and waive some requirements, such as time limit, work participation, and child support cooperation, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for clients to escape family violence or unfairly penalize clients.

(TANF State Plan IV A 3)

(e) Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies (section 402(a)(1)(A)(v) of the Social Security Act)

Under state welfare reform legislation, the director of the Office of Financial Management (OFM) is directed to establish an interagency task force on unintended pregnancy in order to: review existing research on the short and long-range costs; analyze the impact on the WorkFirst program; and develop and implement a state strategy to reduce unintended pregnancy.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Health Care Authority (HCA), Department of Health (DOH), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and other state programs will establish goals and continue to take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies. The numerical goal for reducing the illegitimacy ratio of the state has been established 1% per year for federal Fiscal Years 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Through a federal waiver, called TAKE CHARGE, the State provides pre-pregnancy family planning services to citizen men and women with family incomes up to and including 260% of the federal poverty level. The State also extends eligibility for family planning services to citizen women up to 260% of the federal poverty level for a year after their pregnancy ends. Non-citizen women with Medicaid coverage for the birth of a child receive state-funded family planning services for 1 year after the end of their pregnancy. These women are NOT eligible for family planning services under the federally-approved family planning waiver. Non-Medicaid, low-income men and women can also receive family planning services through DOH Title X-funded family planning clinics.

Additional programs that contribute to achieving out-of-wedlock pregnancy goals include: the State Need Grant and College Bound Scholarship programs for low-income students wishing to pursue higher education; the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program serving low-income 3 and 4 year old

children; the Promoting Academic Success and Learning Assistance Programs for low-income and high-risk public school students; and the full-day kindergarten and reduced class size programs in high-poverty elementary schools. All of these programs affect long-term outcomes including less contact with the criminal justice system, higher earnings as adults, less reliance on social services as adults and fewer out-of-wedlock births.

(TANF State Plan IV B 1)

(f) Conduct a program designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded to include men (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vi) of the Social Security Act)

In conjunction with the Washington State Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, through the WAPA/State Judicial Case Processing Task Force, the state has developed mandatory reporting protocol for child support cases meeting the criteria for statutory rape.

The state has linkages with an Interagency Workgroup on Unintended Pregnancy Prevention to review current outreach programs for men and women which deal with teen pregnancy, and make recommendations concerning the incorporation of appropriate education about the crime of Rape of a Child.

Under state welfare reform legislation, for the purposes of minor parents' or pregnant minors' living arrangement requirements, the most appropriate living situation cannot include a living situation including an adult parent of the qualifying child and is found to meet the elements of Rape of a Child as set forth in state law (See RCW 9A.44.079). (TANF State Plan IV C)

(g) Implement policies and procedures as necessary to prevent access to assistance provided under the State program funded under this part through any electronic fund transaction in an automated teller machine or point-of-sale device located in a place described in section 408(a)(12), including a plan to ensure that recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vii) of the Social Security Act)

In 2011 the legislature enacted RCW 74.08.580 to address concerns regarding use of benefits at prohibited establishments; specifically, the following activities and products: gambling, pari-mutuel betting, lottery tickets, tattoos, body piercings, tobacco products, and alcoholic beverages. It further prohibits taverns, beer/wine specialty stores, nightclubs, contract liquor stores, bail bond agencies, gambling establishments, tattoo/body piercing shops, adult entertainment venues, or any establishment where persons under the age of eighteen are not permitted, from having Automated Teller Machines (ATM's) and Point of Sale (POS) terminals on their premises that accept EBT cards.

The Department compares a list of EBT transactions at ATMs and Point of Sale (POS) machines monthly to a list of prohibited locations throughout the State provided by appropriate licensing authority for the state. The state Office of Fraud and Accountability or the state licensing authority for that business type (e.g. Liquor Control Board, Gaming Commission) physically inspects the location to verify that the match is accurate and appropriate and first sends letters to non-compliant businesses and clients; continued non-compliance by businesses result in referral to individual licensing authority for regulatory action. Continued non-compliance by clients results in opening of intentional program violation investigation.

(TANF State Plan V D 1)

(h) Ensure that recipients of assistance provided under the State program funded under this part have the ability to use or withdraw assistance with minimal fees or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available (section 402(a)(1)(A)(viii) of the Social Security Act)

Adequate authorized access to cash by recipients is ensured via an analysis required of the EBT vendor. The vendor is required by contract to perform a cash access assessment on an annual basis. The results are reviewed with the Department to address any drought identified, especially related to remote locations. If such a locale is identified during the annual review, the EBT vendor is prepared to deploy EBT-only POS machines that would allow case transactions and cash-back access for those clients.

As of August 1, 2012, the EBT transaction fee was eliminated. Clients are notified that if they choose to withdraw cash benefits using an automated teller machine (ATM), the state's EBT vendor may charge a fee for the transaction in addition to any charges by the bank or ATM owner. This information is provided on the form "Your DSHS Cash or Food Benefits" (DSHS 14-520), the informational pamphlet "Your Washington EBT Quest Card" (DSHS 22-310), and in rule at WAC 388-412-0005(8). (TANF State Plan V D 1)

(i) Indicate whether it intends to treat families moving from another State differently from other families under the program, and if so how (section 402(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Social Security Act)

Families from other states receive the same benefits as other Washington state residents. (TANF State Plan I A 4)

(j) Indicate whether it intends to provide assistance to non-citizens, and if so include an overview of the assistance (section 402(a)(1)(B)(ii) of the Social Security Act)

The State exercises its option to provide federally funded TANF, Medicaid, and social services block grant (SSBG) benefits to qualified alien families who are eligible to receive these benefits. The State provides State Family Assistance (SFA) which is a state-funded WorkFirst cash and medical benefits to those individuals in families who do not qualify for federally-funded assistance, including children and pregnant women. These are segregated funds and expenditures are claimed toward the state's MOE requirement.

The State follows federal sponsor deeming rules for qualified alien families receiving federally funded benefits. The income and resources of the sponsors for families receiving state-funded assistance will be deemed for up to five years in accordance with state law.

(TANF State Plan I D 8 a)

(k) Set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how it will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process (section 402(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Social Security Act)

The State will provide client protections by requiring that clients be treated with dignity and respect, be given sufficient opportunity to make their needs known to the Department, be free from discrimination on any basis prohibited by state or federal law, have their eligibility determined according to rules and procedures of the Department promulgated pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act (RCW 34.05), be permitted to make applications for benefits and have the application processed and decision made in a timely manner, have their rights and responsibilities explained to them, be informed of which programs and services are available to them through the Department, have the conditions, requirements and benefits for which they are eligible explained to them, and be allowed to exercise, after full explanation, options and choices available to them.

Fair and equitable treatment does not mean that all WorkFirst benefits and services are available to all clients in all areas of the state at any one time. The state's need in some cases to gradually phase in a new service or to undertake pilot initiatives for purposes of determining program effectiveness may limit access to some services for some clients for limited periods of time. (TANF State Plan IV C 3)

Washington will ensure applicants and recipients of assistance are notified in writing: of the decisions of the Department regarding the type and amount of benefits available to them, including an adequate and advance notice of adverse actions; the legal basis for the determination; that they may request, within 90 days of such notice an administrative hearing, with due process protections, and conducted by the independent Office of Administrative Hearings pursuant to Chapters 74.08 and 34.05 RCW; and that they may obtain judicial review of an adverse decision without payment of a fee or posting a bond for

filing such appeal or preparation of any necessary record. The State will provide an opportunity for any applicant or recipient aggrieved by an agency action to have an impartial administrative hearing before an Administrative Law Judge pursuant to RCW 74.08.080 and Chapter 34.05 RCW. The State will continue benefits pending the hearing decision, pursuant to WAC 388-458-0040. (TANF State Plan IV C 2)

(l) Indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment (Section 402(a)(1)(B)(v) of the Social Security Act)—

(1) providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 1397j of this title); or

(2) in other occupations related to elder care, high-demand occupations, or occupations expected to experience labor shortages as, determined appropriate by the State for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and, if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

The state will assist TANF adults in receiving training for or obtaining employment in eldercare related employment in the home, health, community care, and long-term care facilities when there are identified employment opportunities in local communities. (TANF State Plan II A 4)

In general, the TANF/WorkFirst program seeks to balance meeting the needs of adults, based on their particular work histories, employment barriers, and personal goals, with the actual opportunities available to them on the job market. As indicated under (c) above, the Department relies upon its WorkFirst partner, Employment Security, to provide job market information and other employment services to its clients. The State Board for Community and Technical colleges, another WorkFirst partner, provides oversight of high-wage, high-demand education and training program approval and career pathway planning services to clients. The ultimate goal is economic self-sufficiency and an end to reliance on public assistance.

(m) Provide for all MOE-funded services the following information: the name of the program benefit or service, and the financial eligibility criteria that families must meet in order to receive that benefit or service. In addition, for TANF MOE-funded services (co-mingled or segregated MOE) describe the program benefit provided to eligible families (SSP services do not have to include a description but the Department of Health and Human Services encourages it) (§263.2(b)(3) & §263.2(c) preamble pages 17826-7)

MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT (MOE)

Through a variety of state and community-based service providers, the State offers the following types of services which help families remain intact, reduce their dependence on public assistance by encouraging employment, reduce risky behaviors which can result in unplanned out of wedlock

pregnancies, or support the formation of two-parent families. Services are provided to families (and qualifying non-custodial parents) whose income is at or below 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL):

- a) Financial literacy;
- b) Classes in child development, community resources, and parenting skills;
- c) One-to-One mentoring of children and youth in professionally supported relationships;
- d) Individual, marital, and family counseling services, to include domestic violence counseling for victims and offenders;
- e) Alternative secondary education for at-risk youth that provides education, clinical counseling, and social services to students and families who have social adjustment, emotional, or school related difficulties;
- f) Community centers that provide family support and family preservation services;
- g) Domestic abuse shelters provide victims of domestic violence and their families with a safe haven of temporary shelter with provisions for basic needs (food, clothing, etc.), counseling, and services for children;
- h) Housing for eligible victims who need safety and support and are ready to go to school/work;
- i) Preschool programs for 3 and 4 year old children provided at no cost to income eligible children;
- j) Medical services and financial benefits to needy family members to address work-related injuries;
- k) Domestic violence services such as assessment service, planning, counseling services, case management, and linkage and referral to recipients of TANF and Temporary Assistance to Other Needy Families who have or are currently experiencing issues of safety and functioning related to domestic violence, which would adversely affect their ability to become self-sufficient;
- l) State funded medical care to help needy families;
- m) After school programs for children;
- n) Food, meals, groceries, and volunteer services at food and commodity outlets and soup kitchens;
- o) Services and education activities to prepare for employment;
- p) Residential shelter and outreach to eligible teens;
- q) One-time financial and material assistance to eligible families;
- r) Education and enrichment programs to children from infancy and up;
- s) Youth development programs
- t) Programs that address social-economic barriers, family violence, inadequate parenting skills, lack of workplace skills, poverty, teenage pregnancy, poor school performance, and behavioral difficulties;
- u) Programs that provide public awareness, education, and advocacy to prevent child abuse and neglect in families; and
- v) Drug and alcohol treatment. (TANF State Plan I H)
- w) Subsidized and unsubsidized work experience