

MEET THE NEED: NO CHILD SHOULD LIVE IN DEEP POVERTY

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides cash assistance to Pennsylvania families with the lowest incomes, filling gaps left by other subsidy programs for the families most in need of financial support. TANF is a key lifeline for families, but the number of Pennsylvanians receiving TANF has declined dramatically overtime, despite the number of children in extreme poverty being relatively stagnant.

TANF provides assistance to:

- Pregnant people
- Minor children and their parents who live with them
- Survivors of domestic violence who are escaping abuse
- Children and their relative caregivers, such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Because of systemic racism and historic disinvestment in Black communities, TANF serves a disproportionately high percentage of Black families. Making changes to make TANF accessible and impactful will improve the well-being of all Pennsylvanian children, but especially the well-being of Black and Brown children.

IMPROVE TANF BENEFITS TO MEET THE NEED OF PA'S CHILDREN

Increase the Cash Grant

- TANF benefit amounts have not been increased since 1990.
- A family of three whose only source of income is TANF receives only \$4,836 per year.
- **TANF benefits keep recipients in deep poverty, at only 22% of the Federal Poverty Level.**
- TANF benefits should be increased incrementally until they reach 50% of the federal poverty level, and ensure that benefit levels increase with inflation.

Improve Work & Training Programs

- Successful work readiness programs typically combine education, training, and support services.
- Rigid work hours requirements should not take precedence over quality of programs.
- **More needs to be done to help parents remove barriers to employment, or education and training that will enable them to get good jobs.**

Allow More Exceptions from the Child Support Requirement

- In order to get TANF, applicants must pursue a child support case.
- Forcing parents to sue for child support harms otherwise friendly co-parenting relationships, and can jeopardize custody for relatives caring for children who are not their own.
- **Pennsylvania should allow for more "good cause" exceptions to the child support requirement when doing so is in the best interest of the child and caregivers.**

Allow Families to Save

- PA is one of only four states with a \$1,000 asset limit for TANF eligibility.
- The asset limits traps families in poverty by cutting off their TANF if they manage to save over \$1,000
- Families receiving TANF can't save for emergencies or big purchases that would improve their stability
- **Pennsylvania should increase the asset limit and allow families to save more**

Create a Smooth Transition to Work

- Increasing the cash grant will allow families to earn more before losing their TANF benefits.
- The transition period should be 6 months, so families can stabilize before their benefits are cut off.
- TANF recipients should be given tools to understand all their benefits so they can plan for any benefit changes when they earn more income.

READ THE FULL REPORT:
tinyurl.com/improve-TANF-now

