

Department of Public Health  
and Human Services

Section:  
INTRODUCTION

TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

Subject:  
TANF Philosophy and Programs

**Supersedes:** TANF 0-3 (07/01/02)

**Reference:** ARM 37.78.101 - .103

**TANF** - Montana's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is called TANF cash assistance, a welfare reform program that promotes the values of work, responsibility, and family.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services, hereafter referred to as the Department, is committed to the philosophy that public assistance is intended to provide temporary support to eligible individuals for the purpose of assisting them to reach economic self-support. The opportunity for self-support will be achieved through immediate employment, the vigorous pursuit of child support, and other alternatives to public assistance.

► **NOTE:** At one time anyone in the assistance unit was categorically eligible for Medicaid if they were included in the cash grant. However, in February 2001, a clarification was received that de-linked TANF and Medicaid and required eligibility to be determined separately for each program. When a new TANF application is registered, a Family Medical (MA/FM) application will be automatically registered on the system and the assistance unit will be evaluated for eligibility.

Economic self-support may not always be achieved at once but, more often is a gradual process that begins with part-time employment or full-time employment at lower wages, and progresses to a full-time higher paying job that leads to independence.

In addition, we believe the following:

- \* Public assistance participants want to be independent and off "welfare."
- \* Public assistance participants are capable of work and of reaching economic self-support.
- \* Public assistance participants are always better off working than being completely dependent on the government for support.
- \* Becoming self-supporting requires the personal effort of the public assistance participant and the support of the Department to engage in activities that will result in greater economic independence.

- \* It serves the best interests of the community for its citizens to participate in the local job market.

## **TANF CASH ASSISTANCE**

TANF cash assistance is a time-limited cash assistance program designed to provide families with monthly cash grants and opportunities leading to self-support. A family's TANF cash assistance eligibility is limited to 60 months in the adult's lifetime.

The major elements of the TANF cash assistance are:

- \* Earned income disregards of \$200 for each employed individual and a 25% deduction off of the remainder. Also, up to \$200 per child for child care expenses related to employment, training, and/or job search.
  - \* Income disregard for legally-binding child support payments
  - \* Resource limitation of \$3000
  - \* Information about and assistance in applying for the earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
  - \* Referral to appropriate community resources
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- \* Certain participants must also complete a Family Investment Agreement/WoRC Employability Plan (FIA/EP), a document listing activities, time frames, and mutual obligations of the State and the participant regarding the course of action to necessary for his/her family to become self-supporting.

## **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

TANF cash assistance is administered in joint cooperation by Federal and State governments. The local Office of Public Assistance provides the daily client contact using the rules and policy written and disseminated by the State and the Federal government.

## **USING THIS MANUAL**

The policies and procedures throughout this manual are intended to be a guide for eligibility and/or grant determination and are written within the limits imposed by PRWORA. The policies contained in this manual are intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow workers to exercise reasonable judgment in executing their responsibilities.

It is impossible to write a procedure that will cover every possible contingency that specific cases may present to the worker.

In this regard, the concept of the "prudent worker" can be helpful. The term refers to the reasonableness of the judgments made by an individual

worker in a given situation. In making an eligibility decision, the worker should be conscientious about making a decision that is reasonable, based on his/her knowledge of and experience with the programs.

If the worker encounters a problem in a specific case that is felt to be outside the ordinary policy and procedure, the problem should be referred through administrative channels.

If the problem has application to only a specific case or to a limited number of cases and is generally covered by existing policy guidelines, the worker should make a judgment that can be defined as reasonable and prudent.

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