



Oregon TANF Alliance

Strengthening Families, Protecting Children

AAUW-Oregon • Children First for Oregon • Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Oregon Food Bank • Oregon Hunger Task Force • Oregon Law Center
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon • Urban League of Portland

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TANF Alliance Concerns - February 2012

Do No More Harm: Maintain a strong safety net for children and their families.

Here in Oregon we have put in place safety net programs that are designed to provide the basics and to protect families with children. Families are struggling to survive even with TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) support – facing choices like paying rent or buying food and medicine. We need to maintain basic safety net programs such as TANF. They aren't a luxury, but a life-raft for kids and families. TANF provides minimal assistance – a family of three would receive a maximum of \$506 per month (only 33% of poverty) to meet expenses such as housing, food, and other necessities.

Help stabilize families so their children can succeed in school.

During times of economic downturn and hardship, people often move home to be closer to family and people turn to safety net programs like TANF to help feed and house their children. We have programs like TANF to help protect families in hard times, and to help them get back on their feet. TANF has experienced increases in caseloads during other times of recession.

Strengthen programs for families to help our economy improve.

Our communities are stronger when families are healthy and thriving. The TANF Alliance remains concerned about the health of children and the parents who must care for them during this long recession. Four critical issues must be addressed in February to protect the ability of struggling families to move off of TANF.

- 1. JOBS program** – Fund additional childcare and transportation services so that families can complete needed programs and re-enter the job market. (\$2.5 million).
- 2. Employment-Related Day Care (ERDC)** – Use extra Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) dollars to fund 10,000 families as originally proposed in the 2011-13 budget (rather than the current rebalance proposal of 8,500).
- 3. Post-TANF** - Restore second year stipend of \$50.00 per month for newly employed parents. (\$1.4 million).
- 4. Family Pre-SSI/SSDI Enhanced Grant**– Restore partial funding so no families experience more than \$100 cut per month. (\$330,000).

(more details on the back)



JOBS services help families move into work.

Severe cuts in support services are making it hard for families to move off of TANF and into jobs. Without childcare and transportation funds, families cannot participate in JOBS training, treatment, and certification programs that allow them to move forward into the job market. Some clients will lose their children to the foster care system without this assistance, a much more costly option at \$9,000 to \$26,000 per year.

ERDC helps families keep their jobs and keep their children safe.

Employment Related Day Care provides child care assistance to families earning less than 185% of the federal poverty level, helping working parents remain employed. DHS estimates 12,000 families need ERDC. In August, the program was limited to 9,000 families, with a plan to do a slow ramp-up to 10,000 families by the end of the biennium. The current budget proposal limits the program to 8,500 families, even though there are sufficient carryover Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) dollars to fund ERDC for 10,000 families as planned. This money can only be used for child care services, and using it to fund ERDC would not cut funding to any other program. We ask that the CCDF money be used to provide ERDC to 10,000 families.

Post-TANF helps families maintain new jobs.

A new job can be a strain on a family's budget due to costs associated with employment. Transportation costs often increase, as do childcare expenses. A requirement for new clothing or tools can also break the household budget. The stipend of \$50/month for a year helps about 2,200 families maintain new employment. Without Post-TANF support, some newly-employed families may re-apply for TANF.

Pre-SSI/SSDI helps families remain stable while waiting for federal disability benefits.

Most families with a disability have a multitude of medical and other needs that must be addressed as they are applying for federal benefits. This program operates like a bridge, providing cash for basic needs and access to medical care until federal benefits can be secured. A family who qualifies for SSI/SSDI assistance has less need for TANF services. This helps about 850 Oregon families and their children stabilize. The state general fund dollars are mostly recouped when SSI benefits are retroactively granted

What is TANF? Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a program that helps Oregon children and families through the most difficult of times. Hunger, lack of housing and lack of basic necessities like heat and warm clothing keep children from attaining their full potential and can lead to families being pulled apart.

The small cash support provided by TANF allows parents to provide a more stable home for their children. The services provided by TANF connect parents to community resources such as job assistance and education opportunities that lead to a better future. Over 90 percent of families who apply have zero income. For most, TANF is their only support and often the last resort before homelessness.