



Oregon TANF Alliance

Strengthening Families, Protecting Children

APANO • Black Parent Initiative • Central City Concern • Children First for Oregon • Community Action Partnerships of Oregon • Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon • El Programa Hispano • IRCO: Africa House, Asian Family Center and Slavic Network of Oregon • Oregon Center for Public Policy • Oregon Food Bank • Oregon Housing Authorities • Oregon Hunger Task Force • Oregon Law Center • Oregon Women's Rights Coalition • NAYA • Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon • Urban League of Portland

Preserve Oregon's Lifeline for Children and Parents

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) protects Oregon's most vulnerable children and improves their chances in life. Lawmakers should reject proposals to balance the budget on the backs of poor children. Instead, lawmakers should strengthen TANF by updating the cash grant amount, making services more culturally responsive, and strengthening the program's financing.

TANF protects Oregon's most vulnerable children

TANF helps families that have fallen on hard times avoid homelessness and get back on their feet. Often these are women and children escaping abuse. TANF provides modest cash assistance and services, such as subsidized child care, job training, and employment supports. Parents are limited to five years of assistance in their lifetime. Oregon TANF now serves about 24,000 families, including about 42,000 children per month.

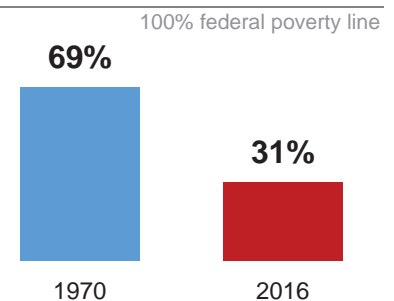


Lawmakers should preserve and improve TANF

Oregon should protect and strengthen TANF. Specifically, lawmakers should:

- **Reject time limit cuts.** TANF helps parents for only a fraction of their parenting years. Lawmakers should reject proposals to shorten the time parents can get assistance. The current 5-year lifetime limit is not enough for some families with mental and physical health issues. Cutting the limit would target those with the biggest barriers, and would disproportionately impact Blacks and Native Americans.
- **Increase the grant amount.** Lawmakers have let the TANF grant amount erode. At times, they have even cut it. The current maximum for a parent with two children is \$506 per month — just 31 percent of the federal poverty level. By contrast, the maximum grant in 1970 was 69 percent of the federal poverty level.
- **Make services more culturally responsive.** Cultural differences can make it hard for families of color to get assistance and get the most benefit from TANF. Adjusting agency practices to accommodate a family's culture makes assistance more effective.
- **Create a cycle of success.** A broader array of services are needed for some TANF families with challenges to become employed. To ensure TANF has the resources to help all families, lawmakers should direct any budget savings created by families successfully leaving TANF back into the program to improve the array of support services available, as they did in HB 3535 (2015).

Oregon's TANF grant has shrunk



Oregon Center for Public Policy

The positive effects of TANF are enduring

TANF can shield children from the harshest effects of poverty, with long-term benefits. Research in adverse experiences in childhood shows that the stress caused by poverty can jeopardize a child's cognitive development, physical health, and economic future as an adult.

TANF can improve a family's economic security and reduce the harm to children wrought by extreme poverty. An increase in the cash grant amount could reap societal benefits. Researchers have found that a modest increase in household resources for a child in poverty results in an outsized boost in adulthood earnings.

"I did a couple classes in a row. First I did a business office and got a certificate. That helped me refresh my skills for the business admin part. Then after that I got to take a medical office/medical assistant class. And that was all through DHS TANF program."

TANF focus group participant, 2014



TANF Leadership Development Initiative

The Oregon TANF Alliance is a collaboration of anti-poverty organizations formed with the purpose of promoting TANF policies that advance the economic prosperity and wellbeing of Oregon's most marginalized children and families.

The Alliance is committed to developing leaders among TANF recipients to advocate for a more effective, culturally-responsive program. We have launched a project to bring families of color together with decision-makers to promote TANF policy that addresses oppression and increases equitable opportunity and outcomes.

Groups representing communities of color are engaged with the TANF Alliance and play a lead role in the leadership development work. These groups are the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), Black Parent Initiative, Urban League of Portland, El Programa Hispano, Asian Pacific American Network for Oregon (APANO), the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization's (IRCO) Africa House, Asian Family Center and Slavic Network of Oregon. Central City Concern is principle coordinator of the leadership development project.

This fact sheet provided by Oregon Center for Public Policy.

