

Overview of TANF Policy: In 2020, Delaware provided TANF cash support to 35% of families with children living below the poverty level, above the national average (21%).¹ The state provides a maximum monthly benefit of \$338 for a family of three (16% of the 2024 Federal Poverty Level, or FPL). According to a report from the Department of Health and Human Services, **as of 2021 the state held TANF funds in reserve of \$20,197,391; the state received \$36,018,484 in federal block grants the following year, 2022.**²

In Delaware, **the gross income of a family of three must fall below \$2,985/month (139% FPL)** to be eligible for TANF cash support. The state has **increased its asset test to \$10,000** and allows families to establish Education and Business Investment Accounts (EBIA) that are not considered resources. These EBIA's can hold as much as \$5,000 for expenses including dependent care and housing deposits.

Additionally, the state has **eliminated the eligibility ban for those convicted of drug-related felonies.**

Assessment of TANF Policy: By **increasing maximum benefits**, Delaware could lift more parents and children above the poverty level during periods of financial setback or acute need.³ The state could also consider **eliminating its asset limit for eligibility. Mandating recurring benefit increases tied to inflation or cost-of-living assessments** would also ensure adequate support for families in the future.

Delaware currently **limits a household's access to cash assistance to 36 months, although families can qualify for an additional twelve months in cases of hardship.** The state could consider **extending the lifetime limit for cash assistance to 60 months.**

Delaware may also consider **eliminating TANF's full-family sanctions** by reducing rather than terminating benefits for parents not fulfilling the program's work requirements, as more states are doing. Because sufficient economic support during pregnancy and very early childhood is essential to children's healthy development, the state may further consider **providing cash assistance for pregnant people without children beginning early in pregnancy**, instead of only in the ninth month.

¹ For more on TANF-to-poverty ratios, see <https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/state-fact-sheets-trends-in-state-tanf-to-poverty-ratios>.

² Block grants and spending priorities for 2022 for all states are accessible here: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/data/tanf-and-moe-spending-and-transfers-activity-fy-2022>.

³ For research detailing effects of some state-level TANF policies and administrative practices on children and families, see <https://www.nccp.org/ec-profiles-pes-policies-related-research-and-resources/#parenting>.

Delaware’s Cash Assistance (TANF) policy: Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program		
HOW MUCH CASH ASSISTANCE CAN A FAMILY OF THREE RECEIVE?		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Maximum benefit allowed</p> <p>What is the maximum monthly amount a family of three could receive in cash assistance?</p>	<p>\$338/month (or 16% FPL in 2024).</p>	<p>Increase the maximum benefit level.</p> <p>Example: California’s maximum payment for a family of three is \$1171/month, or 51% FPL.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has the state mandated increases to these amounts, as the cost of living rises?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Make recurring increases to the state’s Standard of Need or benefit amounts, tied to a cost-of-living or poverty measurement.</p> <p>Example: Ohio requires scheduled cost-of-living updates to TANF benefit amounts each year on January 1st.</p>
WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR CASH ASSISTANCE?		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Maximum income</p> <p>How much can a family of three earn and still be considered eligible to receive cash assistance?</p>	<p>A family of three cannot earn more than \$2,985/month (139% FPL).</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Asset limit</p> <p>How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Checking and savings accounts must hold no more than \$10,000.</p>	<p>Consider removing the asset limit entirely, as many states have (e.g., Maryland).</p>

<p>Eligibility during pregnancy for parents without children</p> <p>Are pregnant people with no children in the household eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes, from the ninth month of pregnancy.</p>	<p>Consider providing cash assistance as early as the first month of pregnancy (e.g., Connecticut).</p>
<p>ADDITIONAL RULES AND RESTRICTIONS</p>		
<p>Flexibility</p>	<p>Current policy</p>	<p>Potential improvement</p>
<p>Time limit</p> <p>Does Delaware allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p>	<p>No. Households may access cash assistance for up to 36 months with the possibility of qualifying for twelve additional months in cases of hardship.</p>	<p>Maintain the allowable lifetime limit of 60 months, as several states do (e.g., Iowa, Illinois).</p>
<p>Lifting full-family sanctions</p> <p>Are other family members able to continue receiving cash benefits if an adult does not meet work requirements?</p>	<p>No. Benefits can be sanctioned for the entire family.</p>	<p>Lower the benefit amount in place of full-family sanctions if parents do not meet work requirements (e.g., Illinois).</p>
<p>Lifting drug felony bans</p> <p>Are persons convicted of drug-related felonies eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Lifting the family cap for a new birth</p> <p>Can families receive additional cash assistance if they have another child while receiving assistance?</p>	<p>Yes; Delaware repealed the “family cap” in 2023.</p>	<p>N/A</p>