

Overview of TANF Policy: In 2020, Louisiana provided TANF cash support to just 4% of families with children living below the poverty level, far below the national average (21%).¹ Even after first-ever benefit increases in 2023, the maximum “flat grant” amount in Louisiana remains at just 22% of the 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 \$0; the state received \$163,430,877 in federal block grants the following year, 2022.**²

Since Louisiana **eliminated its asset test for cash assistance**, parents can retain savings during setbacks like job losses. The state also **maintains the 60-month lifetime limit** on TANF cash assistance, though two-parent households can only receive assistance for 24 consecutive months. **Pregnant people without children are eligible from the sixth month of pregnancy.** Additionally, parents with previous convictions for drug-related felony crimes are eligible for assistance.

Assessment of TANF Policy: By **increasing maximum benefits and extending income limits** as well as allowable deductions from earned income, Louisiana could lift more parents and children above the poverty level during periods of financial setback or acute need. **Mandating recurring benefit increases tied to inflation or cost-of-living assessments** would also ensure adequate support for families in the future.

Louisiana could also consider **extending its eligibility limit for two-parent families**, since sufficient economic support during early childhood is essential to children’s healthy development.³

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>.

Louisiana'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>Louisiana's maximum cash benefit, or "flat grant amount," for a family of three is \$484/month (22% FPL in 2024).</p>	<p>Increase maximum benefit level further.</p> <p>Example: Washington's maximum payment for a family of three is \$706/month.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has the state mandated increases to these amounts in future, as the cost of living rises?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Make recurring increases to the state's Flat Grant Amount, 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>
<p>Deductions from countable income</p> <p>In what ways are Louisiana families able to increase the amount of assistance for which they qualify while retaining earnings, thereby encouraging their workforce participation?</p>	<p>Families can deduct the following from income: \$120 per working adult; and a one-time, six-month deduction of \$900 for those who qualify.</p> <p>Note: The \$900 deduction can be taken in non-consecutive months.</p>	<p>Allow families to deduct larger amounts of income to increase their benefit.</p> <p>Example: Ohio allows an initial household deduction of \$250/month, plus 50% of all remaining income.</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</p>	<p>A family's monthly income, minus deductions, must be</p>	<p>Increasing the maximum benefit (or "flat grant amount")</p>

eligible to receive cash assistance?	less than \$484/month (the “flat grant amount” for a family of three).	would enable families to retain cash support while earning more. Example: South Carolina allows a family of three earning \$1,035 (after deductions) to receive cash assistance.
Asset limit How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?	Louisiana has eliminated its asset limit for cash assistance.	N/A
Eligibility during pregnancy for individuals without children Are pregnant people with no children in the household eligible for cash assistance?	Yes, from the sixth month of pregnancy.	Consider providing eligibility from the first month of pregnancy (e.g., Maryland, Michigan).
ADDITIONAL RULES AND RESTRICTIONS		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
Time limit Does Louisiana allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?	The lifetime limit is 60 months for household units with only one parent or caretaker relative. Two-parent families may not receive assistance for more than 24 of the prior 60 months.	N/A
Lifting full-family sanctions Are other family members able to continue receiving cash benefits if an adult does not meet work requirements?	Louisiana imposes a 25% reduction in cash assistance for an initial violation of work requirements. The state terminates cash assistance for a subsequent material violation.	Several states do not impose sanctions on all family members when parents cannot meet work requirements (e.g., Illinois and Maryland).

<p>Lifting drug felony bans</p> <p>Are persons convicted of drug-related felonies eligible for cash assistance?</p>	Yes.	N/A
<p>Two-parent family eligibility</p> <p>Does Louisiana provide cash assistance to families with two parents?</p>	No.	Consider changing this policy, as 47 other states have.
<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>	Yes.	N/A