

Overview of TANF Policy: In 2020, Virginia provided TANF cash support to 18% of families with children living below the poverty level, slightly below the national average (21%).¹ The state provides varied maximum monthly benefits depending on geographic area, ranging from \$481 to \$587 (22-27% of the 2024 Federal Poverty Level, or FPL). Recent legislation mandates an administrative plan to institute **recurring annual increases to benefit amounts** “until they equal 50% of the FPL.” According to a report from the Department of Health and Human Services, as of 2021 **the state held TANF funds in reserve of \$56,178,038; the state received \$157,762,831 in federal block grants the following year, 2022.**²

Depending on geographic area, gross income limits for cash assistance range from \$966/month to \$1,175/month (45-55% FPL). The state has **eliminated its asset test for eligibility.**

Virginia **maintains the 60-month lifetime limit** on TANF cash assistance; however, parents participating in the state’s education and work program are restricted to 24 months of benefit receipt and then must wait another 24 months before regaining eligibility.

Virginia **eliminated the family cap** for households receiving assistance if they have another child and has also **eliminated the ban on eligibility for those convicted of drug-related felonies.**

Assessment of TANF Policy: By **increasing maximum benefits** and **extending income limits**, Virginia could lift more parents and children above the poverty level during periods of acute need.³

The state 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. **Maintaining the 60-month lifetime limit for cash assistance without restrictions** for families with children would also provide more substantial support to families.

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.**

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>.

| Virginia'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>Amounts range from \$481 to \$587 (22-27% FPL in 2024), depending on the geographic area.</p> | <p>Increase the maximum benefit level.</p> <p>Example: California's maximum payment for a family of three is \$1,171/month (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>Yes. Legislation mandates an administrative plan to institute recurring annual increases to benefit amounts "until they equal 50% of the federal poverty level."</p> | <p>Ensure that continued measures are taken to follow up on the increase in benefits to very low-income families with children.</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 household's gross income cannot exceed the range of \$966/month to \$1,175/month (45-55% FPL), depending on the geographic area.</p> | <p>Consider increasing income limits to extend cash assistance to more families.</p> <p>Example: Minnesota provides eligibility to families earning up to 70% FPL.</p> |
| <p>Asset limit</p> <p>How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?</p> | <p>There is no limit on savings.</p> | <p>N/A</p> |
| <p>Eligibility during pregnancy for parents without children</p> | <p>No.</p> | |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Are pregnant people with no children in the household eligible for cash assistance?</p> | | <p>Consider providing eligibility to low-income pregnant people with no other children, as several other states have.</p> <p>Example: Ohio provides eligibility from the sixth month of pregnancy, and Washington in the first month.</p> |
| <p>ADDITIONAL RULES AND RESTRICTIONS</p> | | |
| <p>Flexibility</p> | <p>Current policy</p> | <p>Potential improvement</p> |
| <p>Time limit</p> <p>Does Virginia allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p> | <p>The lifetime limit is 60 months, though parents participating in the education and job program are limited to 24 months of benefits and then must wait an additional 24 months to reapply.</p> | <p>Maintain the federal lifetime limit of 60 months with no restrictions, as many states do (e.g., Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi).</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.</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; Virginia eliminated its family cap in 2020.</p> | <p>N/A</p> |