

**Overview of TANF Policy:** In 2021, Washington, D.C. spent 47% of its total TANF funding on cash assistance, compared to an average of only 23% for the country.<sup>1</sup> The District provides a maximum monthly benefit of \$712 for a three-person family (33% of the 2024 Federal Poverty Level, or FPL). According to a report from the Department of Health and Human Services, **as of 2021 the District held TANF funds in reserve of \$31,615,830; it received \$103,300,207 in federal block grants the following year, 2022.**<sup>2</sup>

Washington, D.C. **increases its maximum benefit levels annually**, according to measures of inflation published through the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics. The District has also **eliminated both the federal 60-month lifetime limit for TANF cash assistance, and the eligibility ban for those convicted of drug-related felonies.** Washington, D.C. **does not impose full-family sanctions** when parents do not fulfill the program’s work requirements; instead, the District preserves 80% of a family’s full benefit by sanctioning only the specific, noncompliant household member.

The District also provides cash assistance to **pregnant people without children in the last three months of pregnancy**, which is critical given that sufficient economic support during pregnancy and very early childhood is essential to children’s healthy development.<sup>3</sup>

**Assessment of TANF Policy:** By **increasing maximum benefits, extending income limits, and dropping its asset limit**, Washington, D.C. could lift more parents and children above the poverty level during periods of financial setback or acute need.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/tanf\\_spending\\_dc.pdf](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/tanf_spending_dc.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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>.

<sup>3</sup> 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>.

Washington, D.C.'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
<b>Maximum benefit allowed</b>  What is the maximum monthly amount a family of three could receive in cash assistance?	\$712/month (or 33% FPL in 2024).	<b>Increase the maximum benefit level.</b>  <b>Example: California's maximum payment for a family of three is \$1,171/month, or 51% FPL.</b>
<b>Recurring benefit increases</b>  Has the District mandated increases to these amounts, as the cost of living rises?	Yes.	N/A
WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR CASH ASSISTANCE?		
Flexibility	Current Policy	Potential Improvement
<b>Maximum income</b>  How much can a family of three earn and still be considered eligible to receive cash assistance?	A family of three must have gross income below the Standard of Need, which is \$379/month (18% FPL in 2024).	<b>Increase limits, disregards, and/or deductions as other states have done to extend cash assistance to more families.</b>  <b>Example: Wisconsin provides gross income eligibility to three-person families earning up to \$2,382/month (111% FPL).</b>
<b>Asset limit</b>  How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?	\$2,250 (or \$3,250 for households with one elderly or disabled member)	<b>Consider removing or increasing the asset limit to allow families to retain emergency funds and savings.</b>  <b>Example: Maryland does not consider assets or resources</b>

		<b>when determining eligibility for cash assistance.</b>
<b>Eligibility during pregnancy for parents without children</b>  Are pregnant people with no children in the household eligible for cash assistance?	Yes, during the last three months of pregnancy.	<b>Consider providing eligibility earlier in pregnancy.</b>  <b>Example: Maryland provides eligibility from the first month of pregnancy.</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL RULES AND RESTRICTIONS</b>		
<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Current Policy</b>	<b>Potential Improvement</b>
<b>Time limit</b>  Does Washington, D.C. allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?	D.C. has eliminated the time limit completely; it uses District funding to pay for cash assistance periods longer than 60 months.	N/A
<b>Lifting full-family sanctions</b>  Are other family members able to continue receiving cash benefits if an adult does not meet work requirements?	Yes. Sanctions are limited to no more than 80% of the full benefit amount.	N/A
<b>Lifting drug felony bans</b>  Are persons convicted of drug-related felonies eligible for cash assistance?	Yes.	N/A
<b>Lifting the family cap for a new birth</b>  Can families receive additional cash assistance if they have another child while receiving assistance?	Yes.	N/A