

A 50-State Comparison of Restrictions on TANF Access

The table below presents [a comparative view of restrictive TANF policies](#) across 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See also [individual state profiles of TANF policies](#).) This resource provides the 2024 status of five state policies that affect family and child well-being:

- By **adhering to the federal lifetime limit of 60 months** without restrictions, states guarantee that low-income families with children can receive cash assistance in cases of economic shocks or personal reversals such as job loss. This policy option, alongside others limiting access to the benefit, has also been linked to reductions in physical abuse, child neglect, and foster care placements.^{1,2}
- By **lifting the family cap that restricts additional cash assistance for new babies** born to low-income families, states recognize the critical role of adequate family support during the earliest stages of children’s development.³
- By **discontinuing full-family sanctions** that terminate cash assistance for entire households when parents fall short of work requirements, states ensure that children continue to receive needed support; this policy option has been shown to reduce child maltreatment and avoid family disruptions.⁴
- By **providing the benefit to families with two parents in the household**, states enact one of the four original purposes of the TANF program, “the formation and maintenance of two-parent families,” by supporting parents as they weather economic setbacks together.⁵
- By **providing benefits during pregnancy for low-income parents without children**, states bolster children's healthy perinatal development and reduce parental stress during an especially vulnerable time for low-income parents.⁶

Other policy options that can limit or restrict families’ access to TANF benefits, including drug-testing of parents, one-time diversion payments that preclude access to monthly assistance for six or more months, and work requirements for mothers of children younger than twelve months, have been shown to predict higher rates of child maltreatment and higher numbers of family disruptions. Many states have modified or eliminated these policies in recent years, and NCCP plans additional 50-state comparison resources that will feature them.

Finally, while the federal government empowers states to set the rules affecting the eligibility and regulation of TANF benefit receipt as well as many other programs, state-level decisions that may restrict or expand access are highly consequential for parents and children. Analysis of states’ investment finds that improved outcomes related to child maltreatment, including reports of child abuse or neglect, substantiated reports, foster care placements, and fatalities, are associated with higher levels of expenditure in social safety net policies per person living in poverty.⁷

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State	Allows Full Lifetime Limit of 60 Months Without Restrictions?	Provides Additional Assistance to Families Who Have Another Child While Receiving Benefit (i.e., does not enforce a "family cap")?	Provides Benefit to Families When Parents are Noncompliant With Work Requirements (i.e., does not enact "full-family sanction")?	Provides Benefit to Families With Two Parents in the Household?	Provides Benefit to Pregnant Individuals With No Children in Household From the First Month of Pregnancy?
Alabama	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately	Yes	No
Alaska	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately	Yes	No
Arizona	No, the state limits assistance to 12 months, with possible extensions of an additional 12 months.	No, although there may be an exception for the first child born to a minor in an assistance unit.	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately	Yes	No
Arkansas	No, the state limits assistance to 12 months for families with work-eligible adults	No	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	No
California	Yes	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	Yes
Colorado	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	No, the state limits assistance to 36 months, with possible extensions of six months (no more than two extensions can be provided).	No, the state provides only partial benefits for children born to families currently receiving assistance.	Yes, the state enacts reductions in benefit amount only, and reductions cannot be greater than 25% of the total benefit.	Yes	Yes

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Delaware	No, the state limits assistance to 36 months; extensions granted under special circumstances for a maximum of 12 months	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
District Of Columbia	Yes, DC provides TANF cash assistance with no time limit (i.e., beyond 60 months).	Yes	Yes, D.C. protects almost all of the benefit amount from sanctions.	Yes	No
Florida	No, the state limits assistance to 48 months	The state provides 50% of the normal benefit for first child born while a family receives assistance, and no additional benefits for children born subsequently.	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Georgia	No, the state limits assistance to 48 months	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	Yes
Hawaii	Yes	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Idaho	The state provides assistance for 24 months; extensions of 36 months are available for a few specific circumstances (e.g., caring for an ill/incapacitated child)	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	No

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Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	Yes
Indiana	No, the state provides assistance to children for 60 months, but limits it to 24 months for adults	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Iowa	Yes	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Kansas	No, the state limits assistance to 24 months	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	Yes
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
Louisiana	No, the state provides assistance for 60 months, but families may not receive assistance for more than 24 out of the prior 60 months	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	No	?
Maine	Yes	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	No
Maryland	Yes	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	No, the state limits assistance to 24 months within a five-year period	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	No

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Michigan	No, the state limits assistance to 48 months	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	Yes
Minnesota	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	Yes	No	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Missouri	No, the state limits assistance to 45 months	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
Montana	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
Nebraska	Yes	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Nevada	No, the state provides assistance for 60 months, but families must take a 12-month "break" after 24 cumulative months of benefit receipt.	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
New Hampshire	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	No	No

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New Jersey	No, the state provides assistance for 60 months, but parents must be working by the 24th month.	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	?
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
New York	No, the state provides assistance for 60 months, but counts any months of SNAP receipt without cash assistance as part of the total.	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.	Yes	No
North Carolina	No, the state provides assistance for 60 months, but families must take a 36-month "break" after 24 cumulative months of benefit receipt.	No, although the restriction does not apply to adopted children.	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
North Dakota	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	No	Yes
Ohio	No, the state limits assistance to 36 months, although families can apply for an extension of benefits.	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	Yes

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Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	Yes
Oregon	Yes	Yes	Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit, and never more than 25%.	Yes	No
Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	No, the state provides assistance for 60 months, but families have a limit of 24 months within a ten-year period	No, although some exceptions may be made.	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
South Dakota	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
Tennessee	Yes	No, although there may be exceptions for births resulting from rape or incest or for the first child born to a minor who is currently receiving assistance in the household.	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No

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Texas	Yes	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Utah	No, the state limits assistance to 36 months, although families can apply for an extension.	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Vermont	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
Virginia	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
Washington	Yes	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	Yes
West Virginia	Yes	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No
Wisconsin	No, the state limits assistance to 48 months, with only 24 months permitted per work placement.	Yes	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	Yes	No
Wyoming	Yes	Yes	No, the state withdraws the benefit for the entire household.	Yes	No

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- ¹ Spencer, R. A., Livingston, M. D., Komro, K. A., Sroczynski, N., Rentmeester, S. T., & Woods-Jaeger, B. (2021). Association between Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and child maltreatment among a cohort of fragile families. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 120*, 105186.
- ² Ginther, D. K., & Johnson-Motoyama, M. (2022). Associations between state TANF policies, child protective services involvement, and foster care placement. *Health Affairs, 41*(12), 1744-1753.
- ³ Duncan, G. J., Magnuson, K., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2014). Boosting family income to promote child development. *The Future of Children, 24*(1), 99-120.
- ⁴ Paxson, C., & Waldfogel, J. (2003). Welfare reforms, family resources, and child maltreatment. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 22*(1), 85-113.
- ⁵ Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-193, 110 Stat. 2105 (1996).
- ⁶ O'Sullivan, A., & Monk, C. (2020). Maternal and environmental influences on perinatal and infant development. *The Future of Children, 30*(2), 11-34.
- ⁷ Puls, H. T., Hall, M., Anderst, J. D., Gurley, T., Perrin, J., & Chung, P. J. (2021). State spending on public benefit programs and child maltreatment. *Pediatrics, 148*(5), e2021051980. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-051980>.