

OVERVIEW

Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) (TANF)	Arkansas	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount	\$56,545,640	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	1.9%	21.8%
% families who participated in TANF per 100 families with children living in poverty, 2022-23	2.0%	20%
Total # families receiving TANF in 2025	2.0%	848,631 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	38.3%	39.3%
"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$42,384,477	\$7,986,470,560 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	75.0%	49.5%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	-\$31,010,726	+\$241,306,628

ARKANSAS' CASH ASSISTANCE (TANF) POLICY

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>	\$204/month, or 10% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)	<p>Consider increasing the maximum benefit level to provide more support to families with children during challenging periods.</p> <p>Example: Louisiana provides \$484/month.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has Arkansas mandated increases to these amounts, as costs of living increase?</p>	No.	<p>Consider making recurring increases, tied to a cost-of-living or poverty measurement.</p> <p>Examples: Nebraska, Wyoming, and Texas mandates recurring increases.</p>

Arkansas

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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Deductions for calculation of benefit amount</p> <p>Can parents deduct some earnings or expenses from their income when calculating the benefit amount?</p>	<p>Employed parents are allowed to take a 20% work-related deduction followed by a 60% work incentive deduction.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>HOW ELSE DOES ARKANSAS DETERMINE THE GENEROSITY OF CASH ASSISTANCE?</p>		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Time limit</p> <p>Does Arkansas allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p>	<p>The state limits assistance to 12 months for families with work-eligible adults, although it is possible to apply for an extension.</p>	<p>Consider maintaining the lifetime limit of 60 months, as many states do, so that families can return to the support when setbacks like job loss occur.</p> <p>Examples: Alabama, Iowa, and Kentucky maintain the 60-month limit without restrictions.</p>
<p>Transitional cash benefits for families who become ineligible after receiving cash assistance</p> <p>Will parents and caregivers who are newly ineligible for cash assistance receive additional cash support for a limited period?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Consider providing a portion of the benefit once parents increase earnings, to avoid benefit cliffs and support economic stability.</p> <p>Examples: Georgia and West Virginia provide some transitional assistance to families no longer receiving assistance.</p>
<p>Providing one-time cash payments to families in with specific financial needs</p> <p>Does Arkansas provide a formal diversion program to support families with specific short-term needs?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Arkansas

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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Eligibility for monthly assistance less than six months after a diversion payment</p> <p>Can families who receive diversionary payments apply for monthly assistance within six months afterward?</p>	<p>Yes. The state imposes only a 100-day period of ineligibility.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Providing assistance with housing</p> <p>Does the state provide housing vouchers with TANF funds?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Providing housing vouchers alongside cash assistance can ease high costs for eligible families.</p> <p>Examples: Hawaii and Maine provide housing vouchers worth several hundred dollars.</p>
<p>Providing assistance with diaper purchases</p> <p>Does Arkansas provide assistance to families with diaper expenses using TANF funds?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Providing assistance with diaper costs provides significant support for families with young children.</p> <p>Examples: Hawaii and Washington provide assistance with diapers for families with very young children receiving TANF cash assistance.</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 for cash assistance eligibility?</p>	<p>Parents can earn up to \$641/month and still be considered for eligibility.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the gross income limit to provide potential eligibility to more families.</p> <p>Example: Florida maintains a gross income limit of 185% FPL, or \$4,109/month.</p>

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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Deductions for assessment of benefit eligibility</p> <p>Can families deduct a portion of earnings or some expenses from their income to meet income eligibility requirements?</p>	<p>Yes. Parents may deduct 20% from earned income for “work-related expenses.”</p>	<p>Consider providing a higher deduction to provide support to more employed parents.</p> <p>Example: Several states permit families to disregard 50% of their income during eligibility assessment.</p>
<p>Asset limit</p> <p>How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>\$3,000</p>	<p>Consider eliminating the asset limit to support families’ retention of savings.</p> <p>Example: Alabama has eliminated the consideration of cash assets or resource tests for eligibility.</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>No.</p>	<p>Providing cash assistance during pregnancy is critical for early development outcomes and in reducing parental stress.</p> <p>Example: Louisiana and Tennessee provide cash assistance to pregnant people starting in the sixth month of pregnancy, and Oklahoma provides it from the start of pregnancy.</p>
<p>Provision of federal TANF cash assistance to immigrant families who are lawful permanent residents (LPRs) *after* five years’ residence in US</p> <p>Can parents who hold green cards access cash assistance in Arkansas after five years’ residence?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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TANF State Profile Summary 2025-2026

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Use of state funds to provide cash assistance to immigrant families who are lawful permanent residents (LPRs) with less than five years' residence in US</p> <p>Can parents who hold green cards access cash assistance in Arkansas if they have been in the country for <i>less than five years</i>?</p>	No.	<p>Consider using state funds to provide cash assistance to these parents.</p> <p>Example: Maryland provides cash assistance to some caregivers before five years' residence, using state funds.</p>

HOW DOES ARKANSAS TREAT CHILD SUPPORT OWED TO A FAMILY APPLYING FOR AND RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Child support pass-through</p> <p>Does Arkansas “pass through” a portion of the payments received by the state in child support for the family?</p>	No.	<p>Consider “passing through” at least a portion of child support payments collected by the state for this family, to contribute to the household’s economic stability.</p> <p>Example: Mississippi provides up to \$100 of any child support to the household.</p>

WHAT ARE ARKANSAS’ WORK REQUIREMENTS FOR CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Provision of cash assistance to out-of-work parents before they search for a job</p> <p>Does Arkansas provide eligibility to parents without a search for employment?</p>	Yes.	N/A

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Counting educational activities as “core” work requirements</p> <p>Does Arkansas provide credit for all educational activities, including college, as “core” work activities for cash assistance?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Consider allowing postsecondary attendance and vocational education to count as “core” work participation.</p> <p>Examples: Several states allow specific types of postsecondary education for different periods to exempt parents for other work activities, including Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.</p>
<p>Exemption for caregivers of infants</p> <p>Are parents or caregivers caring for a child under twelve months of age exempt from work requirements?</p>	<p>No. Exemptions apply only for children under three months, although it can be extended if childcare is not available.</p>	<p>Consider providing an exemption from work requirements for the first year of each infant’s life, to support parents’ mental health and children’s development.</p> <p>Example: Georgia and Mississippi provide exemptions for parents with children up to twelve months of age.</p>
<p>Other exemptions from work requirements</p> <p>What are other conditions for exemptions from work requirements?</p>	<p>Other exemptions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A disability. • Care for a relative with a disability who is living in the home. • Pregnancy in the third trimester. • Domestic violence. • Teen parenthood while under 20 years of age and a full-time student. 	<p>N/A</p>

WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS ARKANSAS EASED?		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<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>Yes, in cases of noncompliance with work requirements the state only reduces the benefit amount.</p>	<p>N/A</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>Refraining from drug testing applicants or recipients</p> <p>Does Arkansas refrain from enforcing drug testing of caregivers who are either receiving or applying for cash assistance?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Consider making treatment available to all parents and refrain from any drug testing, since it does not effectively support low-income parents or children.</p> <p>Examples: Florida and Alabama refrain from drug testing applicants and recipients.</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>No, Arkansas is one of few states to enforce a family cap.</p>	<p>Consider discontinuing the family cap, which has never been part of the federal guidelines, in order to support early development and reduce parental stress after birth.</p> <p>Examples: Alabama never enacted the ban on cash assistance for newborn children, and Georgia has repealed its family cap.</p>

NOTES ON SOURCES:

TANF state profiles were compiled by extensive review of administrative guidelines including those published in state TANF manuals. Additionally, NCCP researchers referred to enacted state legislative resources.

NCCP gratefully acknowledges the of states' TANF-to-poverty ratios as developed and provided by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2025, April 11). *AFDC and TANF caseload and poverty data*. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/afdc-and-tanf-caseload-and-poverty-data>

We have drawn on the publication of federal data on states' TANF block grant spending, including financial data, spending allocations, and caseload information:

Office of Family Assistance. (2026, February 10). *TANF and MOE spending and transfers by activity, FY 2024*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://acf.gov/ofa/data/tanf-and-moe-spending-and-transfers-activity-fy-2024>

Office of Family Assistance. (2025). *TANF caseload data 2025*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://acf.gov/ofa/data/tanf-caseload-data-2025>