



# California

TANF State Profile Summary 2025/2026

## OVERVIEW

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	California	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount	\$3,634,115,206	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	44.7%	24.6%
% families who participated in TANF per 100 families with children living in poverty, 2022-23	65%	21%
Total # families receiving TANF in 2025	303,676	826,345 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	33.2%	46.6%
<b>"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)</b>		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$0	\$7,745,163,932 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	\$0	47.7%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	\$0	N/A

## CALIFORNIA'S CASH ASSISTANCE (TANF) POLICY

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?	\$1,175/month in urban counties or \$1,115/month in rural counties. Both are close to 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).	N/A
<b>Recurring benefit increases</b>  Has California mandated increases to these amounts, as costs of living increase?	Yes, annual increases are mandated in consideration of the California Necessity Index (CNI).	N/A



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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Deductions for calculation of benefit amount</b></p> <p>Can parents deduct some earnings or expenses from their income when calculating the benefit amount?</p>	<p>Yes, they can deduct the first \$600 of all earned income and then 50% of all remaining income.</p>	<p><b>The state could consider a larger deduction for a period after family member becomes employed.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> Rhode Island allows a deduction of 100% of earned income when an adult first gains employment for up to six months.</p>

## HOW ELSE DOES CALIFORNIA DETERMINE THE GENEROSITY OF CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Time limit</b></p> <p>Does California allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Transitional cash benefits for families who become ineligible after receiving cash assistance</b></p> <p>Will parents and caregivers who are newly ineligible for cash assistance receive additional cash support for a limited period?</p>	<p>Yes, children may continue to receive “Safety Net” assistance after parents have received 60 months of assistance.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Providing one-time cash payments to families in with specific financial needs</b></p> <p>Does California provide a formal diversion program to support specific short-term needs?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Eligibility for monthly assistance less than six months after a diversion payment</b></p> <p>Can families who receive diversionary payments apply for monthly assistance within six months afterward?</p>	<p>Yes, the state imposes no ineligibility period.</p>	<p>N/A</p>



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<p><b>Providing assistance with housing</b></p> <p>Does the state provide housing vouchers with TANF funds?</p>	<p>Yes, recipients of cash assistance may qualify for the state’s Housing Support Program (HSP) to access permanent housing as quickly as possible.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Providing assistance with diaper purchases</b></p> <p>Does California provide assistance to families with diaper expenses using TANF funds?</p>	<p>Yes, the state provides a \$30/month diaper benefit per child.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Maximum income</b></p> <p>How much can a family of three earn and still be considered for cash assistance eligibility?</p>	<p>Families living in urban counties may earn up to \$1,892/month. Families living in rural counties may earn up to \$1,795/month.</p>	<p><b>Consider increasing the gross income limit to provide eligibility to more families.</b></p> <p>Washington’s gross income limit is \$2,412/month.</p>
<p><b>Deductions for assessment of benefit eligibility</b></p> <p>Can families deduct a portion of earnings or some expenses from their income to meet income eligibility requirements?</p>	<p>Yes, they may deduct \$450 from each working adult’s income.</p>	<p><b>Consider providing a higher deduction to provide support to more parents.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> In Arizona, parents may deduct \$90 and then 30% of the remaining income and some child care expenses.</p>



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<p><b>Asset limit</b></p> <p>How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Most families may retain as much as \$12,552 in cash or savings accounts. Families with an elderly or disabled member may retain up to \$18,829.</p>	<p><b>Consider eliminating the asset limit to support families' retention of savings.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> Colorado has the eliminated asset limit for cash and savings.</p>
<p><b>Eligibility during pregnancy for parents without children</b></p> <p>Are pregnant Californians with no children eligible?</p>	<p>Yes, during any month of pregnancy.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Provision of federal TANF cash assistance to immigrant families who are lawful permanent residents (LPRs) *after* five years' residence in US</b></p> <p>Can parents who hold green cards access cash assistance in California after five years' residence?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>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</b></p> <p>Can parents who hold green cards access cash assistance in California before five years' residence?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<b>HOW DOES CALIFORNIA TREAT CHILD SUPPORT OWED TO A FAMILY APPLYING FOR AND RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE?</b>		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Child support pass-through</b></p> <p>Does California "pass through" a portion of the payments received by the state in child support?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>



<b>WHAT ARE CALIFORNIA’S WORK REQUIREMENTS FOR CASH ASSISTANCE?</b>		
<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Current policy</b>	<b>Potential improvement</b>
<p><b>Provision of cash assistance to out-of-work parents before they search for employment</b></p> <p>Does California provide eligibility to parents without a job search?</p>	<p>Yes, there is no job search required.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Counting educational activities as “core” work requirements</b></p> <p>Does California provide credit for all educational activities, including college, as “core” work activities for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Exemption for caregivers of infants</b></p> <p>Are parents or caregivers caring for a child under twelve months of age exempt from work requirements?</p>	<p>Yes, parents are exempt until children reach 24 months of age.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Other exemptions from work requirements</b></p> <p>What are other conditions for exemptions from work requirements?</p>	<p>Other conditions for exemption include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnancy</li> <li>• Caring for a relative’s child</li> <li>• Caring for a family member who in the household who requires care</li> </ul>	<p><b>Consider adding other exemptions, including circumstances involving domestic violence.</b></p>
<b>WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS CALIFORNIA EASED?</b>		
<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Current policy</b>	<b>Potential improvement</b>
<p><b>Lifting full-family sanctions</b></p> <p>Are other family members able to continue receiving cash benefits if an adult does not meet work requirements?</p>	<p>Yes, the state will only reduce the benefit.</p>	<p>N/A</p>



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<p><b>Lifting drug felony bans</b></p> <p>Are persons convicted of drug-related felonies eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes, as long as individuals with felony drug convictions are compliant with parole or probation and with any drug treatment requirements.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Refraining from drug testing applicants or recipients</b></p> <p>Does California refrain from enforcing drug testing of caregivers who are either receiving or applying for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Lifting the family cap for a new birth</b></p> <p>Can families receive additional cash assistance if they have another child while receiving assistance?</p>	<p>Yes. The rule implementing a family cap was repealed in 2016.</p>	<p>N/A</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>