

OVERVIEW

Hawaii Temporary Assistance for Needy Families] (TANF)	Hawaii	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount (for 2024)	\$98,578,402	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	8.8%	21.8%
% families who participated in TANF per 100 families with children living in poverty, 2022-23	23.0%	20%
Total # families receiving TANF in 2025	1,796	848,631 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	28.8%	39.3%
"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$393,789,423	\$7,986,470,560 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	399.50%	49.5%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	-\$58,711,613	+\$241,306,628

HAWAII'S 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>	<p>\$985/month (reduced to \$788/month after two months' assistance if there is a work-eligible adult in the home): from 39% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) down to 31% FPL.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the maximum benefit level to provide more support to families with children during challenging periods.</p> <p>Example: California provides \$1,175 or 55% FPL.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has Hawaii mandated increases to these amounts, as costs of living increase?</p>	<p>No. Recurring cost-of-living increases are not mandated, although there was an increase in 2025.</p>	<p>Consider making recurring increases, tied to a cost-of-living or poverty measurement.</p> <p>Examples: California legally mandates annual cost-of-living updates (subject to budgeting).</p>

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>Parents can deduct 20% of their income, then deduct \$200, and then deduct 55% of remaining income for the first two years (replacing the 55% deduction w/ 36% after two years).</p>	<p>The state could consider a larger deduction for a period after family member becomes employed.</p> <p>Example: Rhode Island allows a deduction of 100% of earned income when an adult first gains employment while in the state’s works program for up to six months.</p>

HOW ELSE DOES HAWAII DETERMINE THE GENEROSITY OF CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Time limit</p> <p>Does Hawaii allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</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>Yes, but only for families exceeding the 60-month time limit in cases of hardship involving domestic violence or medical disability relating to substance use, or other specified causes.</p>	<p>The state could consider providing a portion of the benefit amount to families who have exceeded the income threshold for a few months, to counter benefit cliffs and encourage workforce participation.</p> <p>Example: Wyoming provides 50% of families’ former assistance amounts for up to six consecutive months.</p>

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Providing one-time cash payments to families in with specific financial needs</p> <p>Does Hawaii provide a formal diversion program to support families with specific short-term needs?</p>	No.	<p>Consider providing a generous one-time “diversion” payment that can help families with critical expenses (such as car repairs), enabling caregivers to remain employed and deferring the need for cash assistance.</p> <p>Examples: California provides diversion payments.</p>
<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>	N/A	N/A
<p>Providing assistance with housing</p> <p>Does the state provide housing vouchers with TANF funds?</p>	Yes, housing supplements up to \$500 per month are available to families.	N/A
<p>Providing assistance with diaper purchases</p> <p>Does Hawaii provide assistance to families with diaper expenses using TANF funds?</p>	The state does distribute diapers purchased with TANF funds.	N/A

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>	Income cannot exceed \$2,941 (185% of Hawaii's 2006 FPL).	<p>Consider increasing the gross income limit to provide eligibility to more families.</p> <p>Example: Rhode Island’s gross income limit is \$4,997/month, or 225% FPL in 2025.</p>

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>Parents can deduct 20% of their income, then \$200.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Asset limit</p> <p>How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Hawaii disregards assets in assessing TANF eligibility.</p>	<p>N/A</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>Yes, in the ninth month of pregnancy.</p>	<p>Consider providing cash assistance during any month during a pregnancy, to support early developmental outcomes and reduce parental stress.</p> <p>Example: California and Colorado provide cash assistance to pregnant people 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 Hawaii once they have been in the country <i>for five years or longer</i>?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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 Hawaii if they have been in the country for <i>less than five years</i>?</p>	<p>Yes. Hawaii instituted the state-funded Temporary Assistance for Other Needy Families (TAONF) program in 1996 to provide funds to families with mixed-citizenship and non-citizenship families living in the state. (All other TAONF rules mirror those of TANF.)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

HOW DOES HAWAII 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 Hawaii “pass through” a portion of the payments received by the state in child support for the family?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<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: California passes through a portion of child support to families receiving assistance.</p>

WHAT ARE HAWAII’S 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 Hawaii provide eligibility to parents without a search for employment?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Counting educational activities as “core” work requirements</p> <p>Does Hawaii provide credit for all educational activities, including college, as “core” work activities for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes, although caregivers participating in postsecondary education are required to engage in paid employment for a minimum of four hours/week as well, and the education activities must be part of an overall participation plan.</p>	<p>N/A</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 for single parents of children under six months.</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: Colorado provides exemptions for parents with children up to twelve months of age, and California provides them for children up to 24 months.</p>
<p>Other exemptions from work requirements</p> <p>What are other conditions for exemptions from work requirements?</p>	<p>Another condition for exemption involves providing care to a disabled relative in the home.</p>	<p>Consider adding other exemptions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver’s disability or temporary medical inability to work • Care of any person living in the home with a disability • Circumstances involving domestic violence

WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS HAWAII 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>No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.</p>	<p>In cases of non-compliance with work requirements, consider only reducing the benefit amount instead and eliminating full-family sanctions.</p> <p>Examples: California merely reduces the benefit.</p>
<p>Lifting drug felony bans</p> <p>Are persons convicted of drug-related felonies eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes, for those in compliance with treatment plan or probation.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Refraining from drug testing applicants or recipients</p> <p>Does Hawaii 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>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. The state never enacted a family cap.</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>