

OVERVIEW

Pennsylvania Temporary Assistance to Needy Families	Pennsylvania	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount	\$717,124,957	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	7.6%	24.6%
% families who participated in TANF per 100 families with children living in poverty, 2022-23	19%	21%
Total # families receiving TANF in 2025	20,137	826,345 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	37%	46.6%
"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$1,347,943,907	\$7,745,163,932 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	187.96%	47.7%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	+\$73,529,705	N/A

PENNSYLVANIA'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>\$365/month to \$421/month, depending on county, or from 16% to 18% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in 2026.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the maximum benefit level to provide more support to families during challenging periods.</p> <p>Examples: Michigan provides a maximum benefit of \$583/month, Ohio provides \$623/month, and Minnesota provides \$1,430/month.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has Pennsylvania mandated increases to these amounts, as costs of living increase?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Consider making recurring increases, tied to a cost-of-living or poverty measurement.</p> <p>Example: Ohio mandates annual cost-of-living updates.</p>

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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>Parents can deduct \$200 deduction for each working individual, then 50% of all remaining income.</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 for up to six months when an adult first gains employment.</p>
HOW ELSE DOES PENNSYLVANIA DETERMINE THE GENEROSITY OF CASH ASSISTANCE?		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Time limit</p> <p>Does Pennsylvania allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p>	<p>Yes. Families in special circumstances (e.g., those involving domestic violence) may be able to receive assistance for additional months (more than 60).</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.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Providing one-time cash payments to families in with specific financial needs</p> <p>Does Pennsylvania provide a formal diversion program to support families with specific short-term needs?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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, families are eligible after just three months.</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 along with TANF cash assistance.</p>
<p>Providing assistance with diaper purchases</p> <p>Does Pennsylvania 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.</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>Families may earn up to between \$929 and \$1,041/month depending on the county in which they live.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the gross income limit to provide support to more families.</p> <p>Example: Minnesota maintains a gross income limit of 85% FPL, or \$3,211/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>Parents can deduct \$200 deduction for each working individual.</p>	<p>Consider increasing disregards in order to provide support for more families.</p> <p>Example: In Michigan, families may deduct \$200, then disregard 20% of remaining 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>Families can maintain up to \$1,000.</p>	<p>Consider increasing or eliminating the asset limit to support families' retention of savings.</p> <p>Examples: In Michigan, families may retain up to \$15,000 in cash, investments, and retirement plans. Ohio has eliminated the consideration of cash assets or resource tests for cash assistance 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>Yes, during any month once the pregnancy and expected delivery date have been established by a physician, clinic, or another medical source.</p>	<p>N/A</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 Pennsylvania once they have been in the country <i>for five years or longer</i>?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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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 Pennsylvania if they have been in the country for <i>less than five years</i>?</p>	<p>Yes, state-funded assistance is available for some groups before five years of U.S. residence.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
HOW DOES PENNSYLVANIA 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 Pennsylvania “pass through” a portion of the payments received by the state in child support for the family?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
WHAT ARE PENNSYLVANIA’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 Pennsylvania provide eligibility to parents without a search for employment?</p>	<p>Yes, there is no job search required.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Counting educational activities as “core” work requirements</p> <p>Does Pennsylvania provide credit for all educational activities, including college, as “core” work activities for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes, for up to 12 months of attendance.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Exemption for caregivers of infants</p> <p>Are parents caring for a child under twelve months of age exempt from work requirements?</p>	<p>Yes, the state provides exemptions for single parents with children under 12 months.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Other exemptions from work requirements</p> <p>What are other conditions for exemptions from work requirements?</p>	<p>Other conditions for exemptions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental or physical disability of parent • Inability to obtain childcare for a child under 6 	<p>Consider adding other exemptions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy • Care of a person living in the home with a disability • Domestic violence
WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS PENNSYLVANIA 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: Arkansas 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.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Refraining from drug testing applicants or recipients</p> <p>Does Pennsylvania refrain from enforcing drug testing of caregivers who are either receiving or applying for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes. Although legislation to enforce drug testing passed, it was never implemented.</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. Pennsylvania never implemented a family cap policy.</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>