

OVERVIEW

South Carolina Family Independence (TANF)	South Carolina	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount	\$21,207,402	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	13.6%	21.8%
% families who participated in TANF per 100 families with children living in poverty, 2022-23	7%	20%
Total # families receiving TANF in 2025	5,456	848,631 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	54.4%	39.3%
"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$25,824,999	\$7,986,470,560 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	121.8%	49.5%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	-\$5,732,894	+\$241,306,628

SOUTH CAROLINA'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>\$449, or 21% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)</p>	<p>Consider increasing the maximum benefit level to provide more support to families with children during challenging periods.</p> <p>Examples: West Virginia provides \$542/month, and Maryland provides a maximum benefit of \$753/month.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has South Carolina mandated increases to these amounts, as costs of living increase?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<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>Yes, parents can deduct 50% of income for four months, and after they can deduct \$100/month for each working adult.</p>	<p>Consider extending earned income deductions to provide more support and incentivize workforce participation.</p> <p>Example: Arkansas provides a 20% “work-related” deduction as well as a 60% “work incentive” deduction throughout the course of benefit access.</p>
---	---	---

HOW ELSE DOES SOUTH CAROLINA DETERMINE THE GENEROSITY OF CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Time limit</p> <p>Does South Carolina allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p>	<p>No. Families are limited to 24 months within a ten-year period.</p>	<p>Consider maintaining the lifetime limit of 60 months, as many states do, so that families can easily return to the program after setbacks like job loss.</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>Example: Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky provide some transitional assistance to families no longer receiving assistance.</p>

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Providing one-time cash payments to families with specific financial needs</p> <p>Does South Carolina provide a formal diversion program to support families with specific short-term needs?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Providing a generous one-time “diversion” payment can help families with critical expenses (such as car repairs).</p> <p>Examples: Florida and Georgia provide 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>	<p>N/A</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 South Carolina 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>Families must earn no more than \$2,053/month.</p>	<p>Consider increasing gross the income limit to support more families.</p> <p>Example: Florida maintains a gross income limit of 185% FPL, or \$4,109/month.</p>
<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>No.</p>	<p>Consider providing a deduction in order to increase support for employed parents.</p> <p>Examples: Alabama allows parents to deduct 30% of earned 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>The family can maintain savings of no more than \$2,500.</p>	<p>Consider increasing or eliminating the asset limit to support families' retention of savings.</p> <p>Examples: Arkansas' limit on resources is \$3,000. 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: North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Ohio provide cash assistance to pregnant people in any trimester.</p>

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<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 South Carolina once they have been in the country <i>for five years or longer?</i></p>	<p>Not uniformly. Eligibility for LPRs after five years' residence is available only under certain conditions.</p>	<p>Consider providing access to otherwise eligible applicants who are legally-protected residents after five years' US residence, as 43 states and the District of Columbia do.</p>
<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 South Carolina if they have been in the country <i>for less than five years?</i></p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Consider using state funds to provide cash assistance to these parents.</p> <p>Example: Maryland provides cash assistance before five years' residence, using state funds.</p>
<p>HOW DOES SOUTH CAROLINA TREAT CHILD SUPPORT OWED TO A FAMILY APPLYING FOR AND RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE?</p>		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Child support pass-through</p> <p>Does South Carolina “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 SOUTH CAROLINA'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 South Carolina provide eligibility to parents without a search for employment?</p>	<p>No. An applicant must contact five jobs within the first 2 weeks after applying for cash assistance.</p>	<p>Consider providing cash assistance to families before or during the search for employment.</p> <p>Examples: Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas require no job search before processing applications.</p>
<p>Counting educational activities as "core" work requirements</p> <p>Does South Carolina 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: Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania count postsecondary education for different periods as core work activities.</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>Yes, exemptions apply for parents of children under twelve months.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<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"> • Pregnancy • Being "incapacitated" • Care for someone who is "incapacitated" • Being unable to obtain child care/transportation 	<p>N/A</p>

WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS SOUTH CAROLINA 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 withdraws the benefit for the entire household.</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 withdraws a portion of the benefit, never enacting a full-family sanction.</p>
<p>Lifting drug felony bans</p> <p>Are persons convicted of drug-related felonies eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Consider modifying or eliminating the ban on assistance for those with drug-related felony convictions to provide support for families in challenging times.</p> <p>Examples: Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi consider those with felony convictions eligible as long as they meet other requirements.</p>
<p>Refraining from drug testing applicants or recipients</p> <p>Does South Carolina 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>



South Carolina

TANF State Profile Summary 2025-2026

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<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.</p>	<p>Consider discontinuing the family cap in order to support early development and reduce parental stress after birth.</p> <p>Examples: Alabama has never enacted a family cap, since it did not originate in federal guidelines. Georgia repealed its family cap in 2023.</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>



South Carolina

TANF State Profile Summary 2025-2026

