

OVERVIEW

TANF Cash Help (TANF)	Texas	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount (for 2024)	\$484,652,105	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	2%	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	10,957	848,631 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	61.9%	39.3%
"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$322,804,580	\$7,986,470,560 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	66.6%	49.5%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	-\$32,319,336	+\$241,306,628

TEXAS' 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>\$370/month for a single-parent family with two children, or \$405/month for a two-parent family with one child. This is either 16% or 18% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in 2026.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the maximum benefit level to provide more support to families with children during challenging periods.</p> <p>Example: Utah provides \$662/month.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has Texas mandated increases to these amounts, as the costs of living increase?</p>	<p>Yes, the state reviews this amount annually to ensure the amount is ~17% FPL.</p>	<p>N/A</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>Yes, parents can deduct up to \$120 for each employed adult. Then they can deduct 90% of the remaining income (up to \$1,400) of each employed adult for up four non-consecutive months in a 12-month time period.</p>	<p>To help families establish financial security, consider providing a significant deduction from earnings more consistently.</p> <p>Example: In Nevada, each employed household member can deduct 100% of their gross earnings for the first three months; 75% for the next three months; and 65% for the next three months.</p>

HOW ELSE DOES TEXAS DETERMINE THE GENEROSITY OF CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Time limit</p> <p>Does Texas 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>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 and Florida provide some transitional assistance to families no longer receiving assistance.</p>

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Providing one-time cash payments to families in with specific financial needs</p> <p>Does Texas provide a formal diversion program to support families with specific short-term needs?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</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>No. The state imposes a 12-month period of ineligibility.</p>	<p>Consider providing the grant followed by a period of ineligibility of no more than three months.</p> <p>Example: Arizona provides diversion payments to families who are then ineligible for monthly assistance for just three months.</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 Texas provide assistance to families with diaper expenses using TANF funds?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Providing assistance with diaper costs provides significant support.</p> <p>Examples: Hawaii and Washington provide assistance with diapers for families.</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>A single-parent family with two children can earn up to \$870.50/month, and a two-parent family with one child can earn up to \$1,063/month.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the income limit in order to provide more working families with assistance.</p> <p>Examples: In Nevada, families can earn up to \$2,888/month to be considered for eligibility. Florida maintains a gross income limit of \$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>Yes, for eligibility assessment parents can deduct \$120 per employed adult and 1/3 of the remaining income.</p>	<p>Consider providing a higher deduction to provide greater support to employed parents.</p> <p>Examples: Idaho deducts 60% of gross income in assessing eligibility for cash assistance. In Kansas, families may deduct \$90 and then another 60% of remaining earned income.</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 no more than \$1,000 in cash or savings.</p>	<p>Consider increasing or eliminating the asset limit to support families' ability to save.</p> <p>Examples: Nevada's asset limit is \$10,000. Colorado has eliminated the asset test entirely.</p>

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Eligibility during pregnancy for parents without children</p> <p>Are pregnant people with no children in the household eligible for cash assistance?</p>	No.	<p>Providing cash assistance during pregnancy is critical for early development outcomes and in reducing parental stress.</p> <p>Example: Oklahoma, and Ohio provide cash assistance to pregnant people in any trimester.</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 Texas once they have been in the country <i>for five years or longer</i>?</p>	No. Assistance is only available under certain conditions.	<p>Consider providing access to LPRs 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 Texas 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 more immigrant parents.</p> <p>Example: Colorado provides cash assistance to some families before five years' residence.</p>
<p>HOW DOES TEXAS 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 Texas “pass through” a portion of the payments received by the state in child support?</p>	Yes.	N/A

WHAT ARE TEXAS' 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 Texas 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 Texas 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: New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island allow specific types of postsecondary education for different periods to exempt parents from 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.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Other exemptions from work requirements</p> <p>What are other conditions for exemptions from work requirements?</p>	<p>Another condition for an exemption is care of an incapacitated individual.</p>	<p>Consider adding other exemptions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver's disability • Circumstances involving domestic violence • Being a single parent and unable to find childcare for a child under six years

WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS TEXAS 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 Texas 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 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>