



# Washington

TANF State Profile Summary 2025-2026

## OVERVIEW

Work First (TANF)	Washington	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount (for 2024)	\$378,987,702	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	15.9%	21.8%
% families who participated in TANF per 100 families with children living in poverty, 2022-23	39.0%	20%
Total # families receiving TANF in 2025	34,434	848,631 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	29.0%	39.3%
<b>"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)</b>		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$0	\$7,986,470,560 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	0.0%	49.5%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	\$0	+\$241,306,628

## WASHINGTON'S CASH ASSISTANCE (TANF) POLICY

HOW MUCH CASH ASSISTANCE CAN A FAMILY OF THREE RECEIVE?		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Maximum benefit allowed</b></p> <p>What is the maximum monthly amount a family of three could receive in cash assistance?</p>	<p>\$706/month, or 31% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in 2026</p>	<p><b>Consider increasing the maximum benefit level to support families with children during challenging periods.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> California provides as much as \$1,175/month.</p>
<p><b>Recurring benefit increases</b></p> <p>Has Washington mandated increases to these amounts, as costs of living increase?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p><b>Consider making recurring increases, tied to a cost-of-living or poverty measurement.</b></p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Colorado and California mandate routine increases to benefit amounts.</p>



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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. Parents may deduct \$500 of total earned income, and then 50% of remaining earned and unearned income, as well as some dependent care expenses.</p>	<p><b>Consider allowing larger deductions during the first few months of assistance.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> In Nevada, each employed household member can deduct 100% of their gross earnings for the first three months of assistance.</p>

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

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Time limit</b></p> <p>Does Washington 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>No.</p>	<p><b>Consider providing a portion of the benefit once parents increase earnings, to avoid benefit cliffs and support economic stability.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> New Mexico and Montana provide some transitional assistance to families no longer receiving assistance.</p>
<p><b>Providing one-time cash payments to families in with specific financial needs</b></p> <p>Does Washington provide a formal diversion program to support families with specific short-term needs?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>N/A</p>



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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<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>No, the state imposes a 12-month period of ineligibility.</p>	<p><b>Consider providing the grant followed by a period of ineligibility of no more than three months.</b></p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Arizona provides diversion payments to families who are then ineligible for monthly assistance for just three months. California imposes no ineligibility period.</p>
<p><b>Providing assistance with housing</b></p> <p>Does the state provide housing vouchers with TANF funds?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p><b>Providing housing vouchers alongside cash assistance can ease high costs for eligible families.</b></p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Hawaii and Maine provide housing vouchers worth several hundred dollars along with TANF cash assistance.</p>
<p><b>Providing assistance with diaper purchases</b></p> <p>Does Washington provide assistance to families with diaper expenses using TANF funds?</p>	<p>Yes, a diaper subsidy program for TANF recipients increases cash benefit by \$100 per month for households with child under 3 years.</p>	<p>N/A</p>



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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>\$2,412 for maximum gross earned income.</p>	<p><b>Consider increasing the gross income limit to provide potential eligibility to more families.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> Rhode Island provides gross income eligibility for families with income up to \$4,997/month, or 225% FPL in 2025.</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. Parents may deduct \$500 from household’s earned income, and then 50% of remaining earned and unearned income, as well as some dependent care expenses.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Asset limit</b></p> <p>How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Parents may retain up to \$12,000 in cash and savings accounts.</p>	<p><b>Consider eliminating the asset limit entirely to support families’ economic security.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b> Colorado has eliminated the asset limit for cash assistance.</p>
<p><b>Eligibility during pregnancy for parents without children</b></p> <p>Are pregnant people with no children in the household eligible for cash assistance?</p>	<p>Yes, during all months of pregnancy.</p>	<p>N/A</p>



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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<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 Washington once they have been in the country <i>for five years or longer</i>?</p>	Yes.	N/A
<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 Washington if they have been in the country for <i>less than five years</i>?</p>	Yes.	N/A
<b>HOW DOES WASHINGTON 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 Washington “pass through” a portion of the payments received by the state in child support for the family?</p>	Yes.	N/A
<b>WHAT ARE WASHINGTON’S WORK REQUIREMENTS FOR CASH ASSISTANCE?</b>		
Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Provision of cash assistance to out-of-work parents before they search for a job</b></p> <p>Does Washington provide eligibility to parents without a search for employment?</p>	Yes, there is no job search required.	N/A



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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Counting educational activities as “core” work requirements</b></p> <p>Does Washington provide credit for all educational activities, including college, as “core” work activities for cash assistance?</p>	No.	<p><b>Consider allowing postsecondary attendance and vocational education to count as “core” work participation.</b></p> <p><b>Examples:</b> New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island allow specific types of postsecondary education for different periods to exempt parents from work activities.</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>	Yes, parents are exempt when caring for children under 24 months.	N/A
<p><b>Other exemptions from work requirements</b></p> <p>What are other conditions for exemptions from work requirements?</p>	Other conditions for exemptions include having children age 6 or younger and being unable to access childcare.	<p><b>Consider adding other exemptions, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care of any ill or incapacitated family member</li> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Caregiver’s temporary medical inability to work</li> </ul>

## WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS WASHINGTON EASED?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<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>	No, the state will enact full-family sanctions although not immediately.	<p><b>In cases of non-compliance with work requirements, consider only reducing the benefit amount instead and eliminating full-family sanctions.</b></p> <p><b>Examples:</b> California and Oregon merely reduce the benefit.</p>



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Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p><b>Lifting drug felony bans</b></p> <p>Are persons convicted of drug-related felonies eligible for cash assistance?</p>	Yes.	N/A
<p><b>Refraining from drug testing applicants or recipients</b></p> <p>Does Washington refrain from enforcing drug testing of caregivers who are either receiving or applying for cash assistance?</p>	Yes.	N/A
<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>	Yes, the state never enacted a family cap.	N/A



### 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>