



Wisconsin

TANF State Profile Summary 2025/2026

OVERVIEW

W-2 (TANF)	Wisconsin	U.S. Average or Total
Annual (federal-only) block grant amount	\$312,845,980	\$16,488,600,000 (total)
% of TANF block grants spent on cash assistance, 2024	10.5%	21.8%
% families who participated in TANF per 100 families with children living in poverty, 2022-23	20%	20%
Total # families receiving TANF in 2025	11,169	848,631 (total)
% of cases designated "Child-Only" in 2025	71.7%	39.3%
"Unobligated balance" (or stockpiled amounts, which must be used for cash assistance or admin)		
TANF Funds "unobligated balance," as of 2024	\$375,489,411	\$7,986,470,560 (total)
"Unobligated balance" as share of total block grant amount	120%	49.5%
Change (+ or -) in "unobligated balance" from 2023	- \$21,605,098	+\$241,306,628

WISCONSIN'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>\$653/month, or 29% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), only for those working full time.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the maximum benefit level to provide more support to families with children during challenging periods.</p> <p>Example: Illinois provides \$777/month.</p>
<p>Recurring benefit increases</p> <p>Has Wisconsin mandated increases to these amounts, as the 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>	No.	<p>Allowing income deductions when calculating benefit amounts can provide more support to parents and incentivize work participation.</p> <p>Example: Michigan parents can deduct \$200 as a work expense and then deduct 50% of their remaining earnings.</p>

HOW ELSE DOES WISCONSIN DETERMINE THE GENEROSITY OF CASH ASSISTANCE?

Flexibility	Current policy	Potential improvement
<p>Time limit</p> <p>Does Wisconsin allow families to receive cash assistance up to the federal limit of 60 months?</p>	No. The state limits assistance to 48 months.	<p>Consider maintaining the lifetime limit of 60 months so that families can easily return to the program after setbacks like job loss.</p> <p>Examples: Pennsylvania and Michigan 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>	No.	<p>Consider providing a portion of the benefit, to avoid benefit cliffs and support economic stability.</p> <p>Example: Wyoming provides 50% of benefits for up to six consecutive months.</p>
<p>Providing one-time cash payments to families in with specific financial needs</p> <p>Does Wisconsin provide a formal diversion program to support families with short-term needs?</p>	Yes.	N/A



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<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, the state imposes no ineligibility period.</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: North Dakota provides housing assistance along with TANF cash assistance.</p>
<p>Providing assistance with diaper purchases</p> <p>Does Wisconsin 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>Example: Washington provides a diaper subsidy program.</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>\$2,618 per month.</p>	<p>Consider increasing the gross income limit to provide potential eligibility to more families.</p> <p>Examples: Minnesota parents may earn as much as \$3,276/month. North Carolina maintains a gross income limit of \$4,442/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>	No.	<p>Consider providing income disregards in order to provide support for more families.</p> <p>Example: In Michigan, families can first deduct \$200 and another 20% of their remaining earned income to be considered for eligibility.</p>
<p>Asset limit</p> <p>How much can a family maintain in savings while still being eligible for cash assistance?</p>	\$2,500	<p>Consider eliminating the asset limit to support families' retention of savings.</p> <p>Example: 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>	Yes, from sixth month of pregnancy.	<p>Consider providing assistance throughout pregnancy to improve early development outcomes.</p> <p>Example: Michigan provides cash assistance during 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 Wisconsin once they have been in the country <i>for five years or longer</i>?</p>	Yes.	N/A



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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 Wisconsin if they have been in the country for <i>less than five years</i>?</p>	Yes.	N/A

HOW DOES WISCONSIN 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 Wisconsin “pass through” a portion of the payments received by the state in child support for the family?</p>	Yes.	<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: In Michigan, 100% of child support payments are “passed through” to families.</p>

WHAT ARE WISCONSIN’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 Wisconsin provide eligibility to parents without a search for employment?</p>	No. Parents must participate in a job search program, or the application may be denied.	<p>To help unemployed parents to stabilize their financial circumstances quickly, consider providing cash assistance without requiring an immediate job search.</p> <p>Examples: Ohio and Pennsylvania do not require a job search during application.</p>



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<p>Counting educational activities as “core” work requirements</p> <p>Does Wisconsin 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: Several states allow specific types of postsecondary education for different periods to exempt parents for other work activities, including Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.</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>Parents of children under two months.</p>	<p>Consider providing an exemption from work requirements for the first year of each infant’s life, to support their early development and reduce parental stress.</p> <p>Example: Ohio and Pennsylvania provide exemptions for parents with children up to twelve months of age.</p>
<p>Other exemptions from work requirements</p> <p>What are other conditions for exemptions from work requirements?</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Consider adding other exemptions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy • Caregiver’s disability • Care of any person living in the home with a disability • Domestic violence



WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON CASH ASSISTANCE HAS WISCONSIN 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 by closing a case, 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>Example: Oregon merely reduces the benefit, and never more than 25%.</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 Wisconsin 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: Ohio refrains from drug testing applicants and recipients.</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. Wisconsin 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>