



## TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

# TANF

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (**TANF**) is the primary support to help parents find work and alleviate the impact of poverty on families. TANF improves economic security by providing minimal cash assistance to families with children to ensure that parents can cover the costs of basic needs while they look for adequate and stable employment.

### WHY IS TANF NEEDED?

In a state economy characterized by underemployment and low-wage work, too many families don't have the opportunity to meet their basic needs.

- Nearly 1 in 4 workers (**23%**) lives in poverty
- 31%** of kids have parents that struggle to find stable and secure employment
- Nearly 1 in 5 kids (**19%**) live in poverty.
- 1 in 5 kids (**20%**) in Washington live in households that struggle to put food on the table
- The number of homeless youth has **increased from 20,780 in 2008 to 32,494 in 2013**

### WHO RECEIVES TANF ASSISTANCE?

**62,579** ○ **KIDS**

**39,354** ○ **FAMILIES**

**12,091** ○ **HOMLESS TANF RECIPIENTS**

**6,389** ○ **HOMLESS CHILDREN ON TANF (10% OF ALL KIDS WITH TANF)**

**TANF** recipients are more likely to face barriers that make finding stable employment particularly difficult, such as: acute or chronic health issues, domestic violence, homelessness, and child care constraints.

### BENEFITS OF TANF

#### 1. REDUCES CHRONIC STRESS

##### WHY DOES ECONOMIC SECURITY MATTERS FOR FAMILIES?

One in four kids in Washington state face economic hardship at least once during their childhood. Taking steps to ensure economic well-being for kids and families reduces the chronic stress caused by these adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and can improve long-term outcomes for the entire family.

#### 2. REDUCES PARENTS RISK OF:



Depression



Chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes



Family Instability

#### 3. REDUCES KIDS RISK OF:



Low birth weight (which is linked to chronic disease later in life)



Behavioral and emotional problems



Poor working memory (which can affect learning poor economic outcomes later in life)

## SHORT-TERM GOALS FOR TANF:

**WE MUST RESTORE TANF** by reinvesting savings from reduced participation in TANF right back into the program and restore funding to core elements, including cash assistance, job training and education, and child care. For example:



For a family of three, the cost of basic needs has increased by 54 percent since 2001. During that same time, the value of the TANF cash grant has eroded by 34 percent.



The TANF cash grant would have covered 83 percent of housing costs for a family of 3 in 2000; in 2014, the cash grant will only cover 49 percent.

### RESTORING THE CASH GRANT TO PRE-RECESSION LEVELS

would put children and families on a path toward improved economic well-being. Before the recession, this three-person household would have received \$562 in TANF cash assistance per month. With cuts to the cash grant, they now receive \$478, an \$84 difference.

### WHAT DOES \$84 A MONTH BUY YOU?



1 month of diapers for a child



2 winter coats



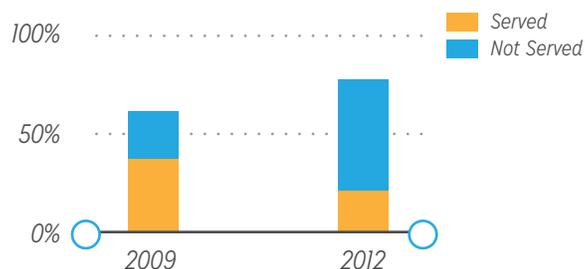
2.5 Tanks of gas for work commuting

## CUTS TO TANF HAVE LEFT IT SEVERELY WEAKENED

The **TANF** cash grant, meager to begin with, has been cut by 15 percent since 2009. Spending has also declined by \$300 million, significantly weakening the program's ability to respond to the economic downturn.

- TANF spending **-35%**, child poverty **+18%**
- These cuts resulted in thousands of families losing assistance, demonstrating that the caseload decline is nothing to celebrate. **For every 100 children living in poverty, TANF covered 41 in 2009. By 2012, that number declined to just 28.**

## BUDGET CUTS NEGATIVELY IMPACT TANF CASELOAD



**A STRONGER TANF  
EQUALS  
STRONGER FAMILIES**

## LONG-TERM GOALS FOR TANF:

**WE MUST RESTRUCTURE TANF** through an integrated set of policies that maximize the opportunity for both children and parents to achieve long-term economic security. This means:

1. Increasing resources for the work supports, education, and training opportunities proven to support low-income parents' career pathways to self-sufficiency
2. Increasing investment in high-quality early learning opportunities to help children reach their full potential
3. Ensuring equity and dignity for all who are unemployed regardless of gender, social class, and personal circumstance.



### SOURCES:

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