

TANF Funds and Healthy Marriage Activities

Headline/Trends

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was enacted in 1996. This reform of what is commonly known as “welfare” includes great flexibility for states implementing cash assistance and programs for needy families. It also expands the former entitlement program to serve non-needy families. In fact, three out of the four program goals focus on family formation (marriage, two-parent families and out-of-wedlock births). These goals are based on research that has found healthy marriages to be associated with positive outcomes for children and parents. However, over the past ten years only a few states have invested TANF and TANF-related funds on healthy marriage and relationship-related services.

Background

In 1996, Congress replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC) with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF provided States with a block grant that

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can be used for cash assistance to needy families. TANF funds are flexible and can be used to meet any of the four goals of the program. Three of the four goals of TANF focus on marriage and family formation.



The four goals are:

1. To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
2. To end the dependency of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage
3. To prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies
4. To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

Under goal two, a state can serve “needy” families and individuals, including a non-custodial parent or a working parent. Services may include a range of job-related activities that assist parents in obtaining and retaining jobs or support services such as marriage/relationship education. Services under goal two may be paid for with federal TANF or state MOE (Maintenance of Effort) funds.

Goal three is very broad and allows family formation support services (which may include relationship or marriage education) to be provided to not only needy families and individuals but to a larger population.

There are two restrictions with goal three. First, when funds are used for non-needy families and individuals, the state must establish criteria for delivery of services for that population. Second, goal three will not allow MOE funds to be spent where goal two allows for both Federal TANF funds and MOE to be used, as MOE funds are specifically for needy families and individuals.

Goal three can also be used for youth-based services that encourage healthy relationships and build a foundation for future healthy marriages. Potential activities that would be reasonably calculated to accomplish this purpose include abstinence and pregnancy prevention programs, as well as other broader awareness programs and campaigns.

The fourth TANF purpose, like the third, can be used for needy and non-needy families and individuals. It is so broad in scope that it can provide for any service that will assist in the maintenance and formation of two-parent families. This means that mothers, fathers, and children can all be provided services that will help the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. Activities under this goal can include but are not limited to marriage education and other services for both custodial and non-custodial mothers and fathers, individuals and couples. Similar to goal three, federal TANF funds can be spent on these activities, but MOE funds can only be spent on needy families and individuals.

For more information on how federal TANF and state MOE funds can be used to help states, tribes and territories implement healthy marriage activities refer to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Information Memorandum No. TANF-ACF-IM-2004-02 on

the web at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/im2004-2.htm>.

In addition to TANF's three of its four purposes focused on marriage and healthy families, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), which reauthorized the TANF program through fiscal year (FY) 2010, re-emphasized the need to strengthen families by encouraging marriage. The DRA included \$150 million a year for states, local governments, tribes, territories, and community and faith-based groups to design and implement programs that support healthy marriage activities. Activities that can be funded with this money include:

- Public advertising campaigns on the value of healthy marriages and the skills needed to increase marital stability and the health of the marriage.
- Education in high schools on the value of healthy marriages, healthy relationship skills, and budgeting.
- Marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs, that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement. These programs can be for expectant couples, both married and unmarried, as well as recent parents, both married and unmarried.
- Pre-marital education and marriage skills training for engaged couples and for couples or individuals interested in marriage.
- Marriage enhancement and marriage skills training programs for married couples.
- Divorce reduction programs that teach healthy relationship skills.
- Marriage mentoring programs which use married

couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities.

- Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described above.
- Conduct research on the benefits of healthy marriages and healthy marriage education.
- Provide technical assistance to grantees who are implementing any of the above activities to help them succeed.

In the fall of 2006, these funds were awarded as grants to local providers to deliver a variety of innovative healthy marriage, fatherhood and family strengthening programs. To learn more about how funds are being used and who received funds in your state refer to:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/hmabstracts/index.htm>

Research and Sub group Data

This fact sheet outlines how TANF funds can be used to fund programs that develop and maintain healthy marriages/families. The research below highlights economic, psychological and physical data that supports this public policy initiative and justifies the investment of public funds in healthy marriage activities.

Economic Data

Married households are the least likely household-type (with children) to experience poverty. Further data for the U.S Bureau of the Census¹ shows that married couple households have the highest mean and median income.

Percent of Households with Children in Poverty and Average Welfare Ratios, By Race and Household Status in Survey Month²

Percent of Households in Poverty

Type of Household	All Races	White	Black	Hispanic
Married Couples	8.2	6.3	9.4	17.9
Cohabiting Couples	16.0	10.8	18.4	27.6
Single Parents, Other Adult in Household	24.2	14.7	31.4	36.1
Single Parents, No Other Adult in Household	38.1	27.4	52.4	49.3
All Households	14.4	9.3	28.4	25

¹ Marriage and the Economic Well-Being of Families with Children: A Review of the Literature, Robert I. Lerman, Urban Institute and American University, page 33 Table 1: Differences in Average Income and Family Size Among Families with Children, by Marital Status and Sex of Household Head 2000

² How do Marriage, Cohabitation, and Single Parenthood Affect the Material Hardships of Families with Children, July 2002 Urban Institute and American University page 26, Table 3: Percent of Households with Children in Poverty and Average Ratio by race and Household Status in Survey Month

Differences in Average Income and Family Size Among Families with Children, by Marital Status and Sex of Household Head: 2000

Type of Family	Mean Income	Median Income	Income per Person	Family Size
Married Couples Families	79,048	62,931	18,515	4.27
Male Householder, No Wife Present	44,270	32,516	14,719	3.01
Female Householder, No Husband Present	29,075	21,529	9,023	2.92

Physical and Psychological Benefits³

Children	Mothers	Fathers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ More likely to attend college ✓ More likely to succeed academically ✓ Less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol ✓ Less likely to commit delinquent behaviors ✓ Have a better relationship with their mothers and fathers; and are ✓ Less likely to become pregnant as a teenager, or impregnate someone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Less likely to be victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or other violent crimes ✓ Less likely to attempt or commit suicide ✓ Decrease risk of drug and alcohol abuse ✓ Have better relationships with their children ✓ Physically healthier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Physically healthier ✓ Increase in the stability of employment ✓ Higher wages ✓ Emotionally healthier ✓ Decrease risk of drug and alcohol abuse ✓ Have better relationships with their children ✓ Less likely to commit violent crimes ✓ More satisfying sexual relationship

State TANF and TANF Related Funded Activities

According to TANF State Plans, the following states have used or currently use TANF funds for marriage support services.

Alaska The Department of Health and Social Services in 2005-2006 used segregated TANF funds for

grants to faith and community-based organizations for the development of innovative, community-oriented strategies designed to:

- Encourage marriage as a positive and viable life choice for unmarried parents.
- Increase the percentage of children who are raised by two parents in a healthy marriage.

³ Why Marriage Matters, Second Edition: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences, September 2005

- Increase the percentage of married couples who are in healthy marriages.
- Increase the percentage of youth and young adults who have the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about healthy relationships including skills that can help them eventually form and sustain a healthy marriage.
- Increase public awareness about the value of healthy marriages and the skills and knowledge that can help couples form and sustain healthy marriages.
- Increase the percentage of women, men and children in homes that are free of domestic violence.
- Expand and enhance partnerships with community and faith-based organizations capable of supporting and implementing healthy marriage strategies.
- Augment and support pregnancy prevention and teen parent services.

Louisiana used TANF Block Grant Funds and state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Funds for family strengthening programs during fiscal year 2004. This initiative included providing services to improve and promote family relationships, encourage marriage, reduce incidence of out-of-wedlock births, decrease the rate of divorce, and provide services that will educate and supply young people with the guidance to break the cycle of living in fatherless homes.

Louisiana used TANF Block Grant Funds and State Maintenance Effort (MOE) Funds for family strengthening programs during fiscal year 2004.

Maryland used federal TANF funds for the Maryland Healthy Marriage/Healthy Families Initiative effective fiscal years 2006-2008. The purpose of the initiative is to build the capacity of participants so that they are prepared for the responsibilities of parenting and marriage and ultimately to enhance the lives of children. There are several family-focused programs within the initiative:

- The family focused programs target mothers, fathers and youth, providing a continuum of services to strengthen and empower families. The programs include fatherhood and non-marital birth reduction initiatives and a marriage preparation curriculum.
- The Maryland Healthy Marriage / Healthy Families Initiative focuses primarily on expectant and never married parents and fragile families in need of support services.
- The initiative connects participants with resources, information and services to strengthen and empower families. Some of the services offered include parenting skills enhancement, educational activities, employment development, job search and support, counseling, and anger management. The services are provided through a network of social service systems, educational systems, and community and faith based organizations.

New Mexico The Human Services Department appropriated TANF funds for a contractor to implement family preservation and fatherhood initiatives throughout the State. Examples of the services offered include parenting, marriage enrichment, and conflict resolution classes.

Ohio has used TANF funds beginning in 2006 to develop the Strengthening Families Initiatives, which is administered by the Governor's Office of Faith-Based

and Community Initiatives. The program funds faith-based and community-based organizations to employ research-based strategies to reduce Ohio's out-of-wedlock birth rate and to encourage and support healthy marriages. The long-term goal of this initiative is to improve child well-being and reduce childhood poverty. Services are available to families whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level.

In FY 2003 New Mexico spent TANF monies on pre-marital training and marriage education classes. Topics of the classes include money management, coping with stress and maintaining healthy couple relationships. Classes are taught in English and Spanish.

Oklahoma has the largest and most longstanding TANF-funded, statewide, multi-sector effort to improve the well being of children by strengthening marriages, called the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI). With high-level leadership from the Oklahoma State Department of Human Services (DHS), the OMI has functioned as a public/private partnership since its inception in 1999. The OMI's major focus is on building

This Service Delivery System (SDS) consists of over 2,000 professional and paraprofessional volunteers trained to provide community-based services to diverse audiences across the state.

and growing a sound system for delivering relationship education services to married and premarital couples, as well as to individuals who may marry in the future. This Service Delivery System (SDS) consists of over 2,000 professional and paraprofessional volunteers trained to provide community-based services to diverse audiences across the state. The OMI has worked to integrate marriage education skills

into ongoing service systems through staff training in curriculum concepts and referrals, and development of population-specific program and curriculum adaptations.

Be advised that the following information on **Texas** was updated after a conversation with state officials in January 2008. Furthermore, the information provided is not limited to what was in the posted state plan. The state of Texas reserved the right in their state plan to use TANF funds to operate a program designed to strengthen families and encourage healthy marriages. Effective September 1, 2007, the state of Texas planned to spend one percent of monies received under TANF (an estimated ten million dollars annually) to provide programs for low-income persons that support the development of healthy marriages and strengthening families. Healthy Marriage programs will be offered by local service providers and deliver a minimum of eight hours of skill-based and research based marriage education. These funds will also be used to target healthy marriage/relationship education services to TANF recipients that include communication skills, conflict resolution and parenting education.

Virginia used segregated federal TANF funds effective fiscal year 2006 to fund the Partners in Prevention (PIP), a community-based non-marital pregnancy prevention program). Under the direction of the Virginia General Assembly, the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, and the Department of Health and Social Services, the PIP program was established to encourage and support community-directed strategies to prevent and reduce the incidence of non-marital births.

Definitions

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Entity within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with oversight of TANF and the healthy marriage/fatherhood grants released in 2006.

Federal TANF funds

Can be used for any activity, benefit or service that accomplishes the four goals of the TANF program. State TANF funds are set amounts that are based on AFDC historic spending.

Needy Family and Individual

The definition of needy family and individual is defined by the state, not the federal government, and can be changed by a state, if desired, providing that the change is made in the state TANF plan submitted to ACF.

State MOE funds

State funds that must be used to help needy families as defined in a state TANF plan. The amount a state must spend of its own money to meet the MOE is either 80% or 75% and is determined by meeting the TANF work participation rate.

State Plan

This document outlines and updates state programs that will provide assistance to families with children from funds provided under Title I of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 (P.L. 104-193)

Additional Resources

State TANF Plan website links:

Alaska

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/features/pubcomment/stateplan/regs.html>

Louisiana

<http://www.dss.state.la.us/Documents/OFS/TANFStatePlanAmenJuly20.pdf>

Maryland

<http://www.dhr.state.md.us/fia/pdf/tanf06.pdf> New Mexico- <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/pdf/TANF%20State%20Plan%2011-15-05.doc>

Ohio

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/owf/Tanf/StatePlan.pdf>

Oklahoma

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/MOE-05/oklahoma.htm>

Texas

http://www.twc.state.tx.us/welref/tanf_workver_plan.pdf

Virginia

http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/about/reports/financial_assistance/tanf/2006/vip_annualreport_sfy2006.pdf

Thanks to April Kaplan for her contributions to this Fact Sheet. She has 15 years experience working on social service, justice and labor issues and holds a Master's degree in Social and Economic Development from the University of Pennsylvania.