

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN POVERTY



BACKGROUND

In 1996, Congress created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to provide states with funds to assist families earning low incomes and their children through a variety of services or activities, including monthly cash aid payments and child care assistance. TANF replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which had provided cash welfare to families earning low incomes, and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program, which provided these families with job training and job search help. While caseloads under TANF have dropped by 60 percent since 1996, only about 40 percent of income-eligible families receive TANF. About 80 percent of eligible families benefited from TANF's predecessor, AFDC.¹

Nearly 60 percent of the TANF caseload decline reflects fewer eligible families receiving assistance, not a decline in families who are eligible for TANF. TANF does not lift families out of poverty. In 2008, with the exception of Alaska, all states set benefit levels for TANF at less than half the federal poverty line (and about 20 states had benefits below 25 percent of the poverty line). Even when combining TANF and food stamps (renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP), all but three states (Alaska, Hawaii and California) have benefits below 75 percent of the poverty line.²

2011 Federal Poverty Guidelines³

People in Family	Poverty Line	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$10,890	\$13,600	\$12,540
2	\$14,710	\$18,380	\$16,930
3	\$18,530	\$23,160	\$21,320
4	\$22,350	\$27,940	\$25,710
5	\$26,170	\$32,720	\$30,100
6	\$29,990	\$37,500	\$34,490
7	\$33,810	\$42,280	\$38,880
8	\$37,630	\$47,060	\$43,270

Note: For families with more people in the 48 contiguous states, add \$3,820 for each additional person. For families in Alaska, add \$4,780 for each additional person. For families in Hawaii, add \$4,390 for each additional person.

Families with young children continue to disproportionately experience poverty.

- About one-quarter (24.5 percent) of all children younger than age 5 lived in poverty in 2009.

¹ US Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2008). *Indicators of Welfare Dependence: Annual Report to Congress 2008*. Retrieved February 24, 2011, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/indicators08/index.shtml#hardcopy>.

² Center on Budget & Policy Priorities.(2008). *TANF Benefits Are Low and Have Not Kept Pace with Inflation*. Retrieved February 24, 2011, from <http://www.cbpp.org/11-24-08tanf.pdf>.

³ US Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2011). *Federal Register*, Vol. 76, No. 13, January 20, 2011, pp. 3637-3638 Retrieved January 11, 2012. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml>

2009 Poverty Rate and Number of People Living in Poverty⁴

Age Group	2009 People in Poverty	2009 Percentage of People
Under 5 years	5.2 million	24.5 %
5-17 years	10.2 million	19.2 %
Under 18 years	15.5 million	20.7 %
18-64 years	24.7 million	12.9 %
Over 65 years	3.4 million	8.9%
US Total	43.6 million	14.3 %

- For African American children under age 5, 41.7 percent were living in poverty -- three out of every five (60.2 percent) African American children under age 5 living with their mother alone were living in poverty.⁵
- For Hispanic children under age 5, 34.5 percent were living in poverty - more than half of Hispanic children under age 5 (56.1 percent) living with their mother alone were living in poverty.⁶

Single-parent households are particularly vulnerable to poverty.

- For children under age 6 in households headed by a single mother, more than half (54.3 percent) lived in poverty in 2009 - four times the rate of children in married couple families (13.4 percent).⁷
- About 90 percent of adult TANF recipients are women, and 40 percent of TANF recipient children are younger than age 6.⁸

December 2011 Unemployment Data in Brief

- 13.1 million people were unemployed, 8.5 percent.
- The number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) was 5.6 million.
- The number of people working part-time because they could not find full-time work was 8.1 million.
- The unemployment rate for African Americans was 15.8 percent.
- 13.8% of those without a high school degree were unemployed; 8.7% of those with a high school degree; 7.7% for those with an Associate's degree or some college; and 4.1% for college graduates.

Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). *THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION - JANUARY 2012*. Retrieved January 11, 2012 from, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>.

⁴ US Census Bureau. (2010). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement, 2009 Poverty Table of Contents*. Retrieved February 25, 2011, from <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032010/pov/toc.htm>.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. (June 2009). *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Eighth Annual Report to Congress*. Retrieved February 24, 2011 from, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/annualreport8/ar8index.htm>.