

TANF Eligibility Overview

Updated June 28, 2022



All funding spent on TANF must be reasonably calculated to accomplish one or more of the purposes of TANF. Any use of Federal TANF funds must be allowable under TANF rules. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) states that “Activities, benefits, or services that are reasonably calculated to accomplish a TANF purpose are those that directly lead to (or can be expected to lead to) achievement of a TANF purpose. It also includes activities whose relationship to a purpose may not be obvious, but for which there is evidence that it achieves a purpose.”

Any costs charged to the TANF program must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the program under Federal Cost Principles. TANF funding cannot supplant other funding.

- 1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.**
- 2. Reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage.**
- 3. Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.**
- 4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.**

Purposes 1 and 2 require eligibility determination.

Purposes 3 and 4 may require eligibility determination depending on the services.

General Eligibility Determination



- Must have a child under 18 in the household
- Household income needs to be below 200% FPL
- Must be a U.S. citizen or employment eligible non-citizen
- Need to be able to determine eligibility for those serving

Administrative costs cannot exceed 15%, and all administrative costs must support direct services to families.

Not Allowable Expenses

- Assistance beyond 4 months
- Housing – sheltering of any kind
- Transportation
- Food
- Clothing
- Utilities
- Household goods or personal care items
- General incidental expenses
- Child care
- Cash payments or vouchers
- Any form of benefit designed to meet a family's basic needs

TANF Eligibility Overview Continued

Allowed 	Disallowed 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative expenditures • Advertising and public relations • Audit costs and related services • Basic needs (i.e. food, clothing, shelter)* • Bonding costs • Communication costs (i.e. telephone services, postages, electronic or computer transmittal services) • Compensation (salaries, wages, fringe benefits, pension, retirement benefits, severance pay) • Eligibility determination (i.e. completing forms, gathering documentation) • Equipment (i.e. office equipment, furnishings, HVAC copiers, IT equipment and systems)** • Food service costs (i.e. catered meals for trainings, meetings or conferences) ** • Indirect costs • Insurance and indemnification • Maintenance and repairs (i.e. vehicles, buildings, security, janitorial, upkeep of grounds) • Materials and supplies • Meetings and conferences • Memberships (i.e. business, professional organizations) • Professional services • Publication and printing • Rental costs of building and equipment • Subsidized wages for participants* • Training and education for staff • Training and education for participants* • Transportation costs for staff • Transportation costs for participants* • Travel (i.e. airfare, lodging, transportation, meals) • Incentives ** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcoholic beverages • Alumnae activities • Bad debts (i.e. contractor debts, uncollectable accounts, collection costs, legal costs) • Building purchases, facilities, land or real estate • Capital expenditures (unit cost of \$5,000 or more) • Construction (i.e. new buildings, remodeling, renovation) • Cost incurred in criminal and civil proceedings • Contributions or donations rendered • Employee morale/team building • Entertainment (i.e. amusement, diversion, entertainers, social activities, tickets to shows, sports events, meals, lodging, gratuities) • Entertainment related food services costs (i.e. catered parties or holiday parties for staff or clients, award dinners, Mother's Day lunch at a local restaurant, catered lunch for Grand Opening events) • Fines and penalties • Fund raising (i.e. financial campaigns, endowment drives, solicitation of gifts and bequest) • Goods or services for personal use • Gift cards • Idle facilities or idle capacity (i.e. unused facilities and cost associated) • Medical services • Prescriptions or copays • Participant gifts • Mortgage payments • Vehicle purchases • Stipends and honorariums • Supplanting other funding • Foreign travel

Items with an * or ** require pre-approval by TANF staff to ensure the items meet federal requirements to be considered allowable.



This guide does not include all TANF regulations, laws, or federal guidance. It is intended for a general screening of potential TANF eligibility.