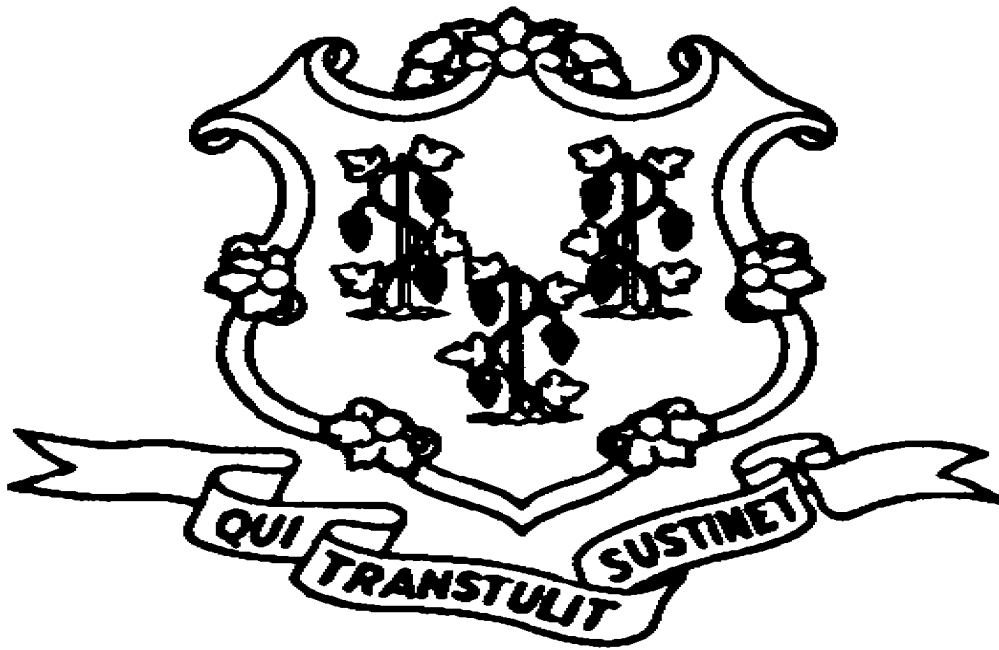


**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
STATE PLAN**

FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS

2024, 2025 & 2026

OCTOBER 1, 2023, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2026



Ned Lamont
Governor
State of Connecticut

Andrea Barton Reeves
Commissioner
Department of Social Services

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
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INTRODUCTION

This plan describes Connecticut's programs that furnish financial assistance and services to needy families in a manner to fulfill the purposes of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Connecticut administers a variety of programs through a number of state agencies under the TANF program. Each of the programs is designed to meet at least one of the following purposes of TANF.

TANF Purpose:

1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.
2. End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits 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.

The plan is for the federal fiscal years of 2024, 2025, and 2026.

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SECTION A

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SUMMARY OF CHANGES - PLAN REVISIONS

The State of Connecticut Department of Social Services has revised the most recent State Plan (2021 through 2023) for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for federal fiscal years 2024 through 2026. Revisions reflect changes in program funding and program implementation.

The 2024 - 2026 TANF Plan removes the descriptions of flexibilities that were implemented in the 2021-2023 Plan that were added in response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Additionally, the plan adds information about multiple legislative changes to the TANF cash assistance program, which take effect at various dates throughout fiscal year 2024. These changes include an increase to the asset limit, an increase to time limits, and an increase to wages a family can earn while receiving assistance.

These changes are applicable to the following sections:

- A.1. Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) - Department of Social Services
- C.5. Safety Net - Department of Social Services

The following section of the 2021 - 2023 TANF Plan was removed and replaced based on changes to state legislation:

Individual Performance Contracts (IPC) - Department of Labor

The following section of the 2024 - 2026 TANF Plan replaces Individual Performance Contracts (IPC):

Barrier Intervention Referrals (BIR) - Department of Labor

Minor grammatical and technical changes were made throughout the document for purposes of clarity and readability.

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OVERVIEW OF CONNECTICUT'S TANF PROGRAMS

Sec. 402 (a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act

(i) – This Overview part outlines how the state intends to conduct a program, designed to serve all political subdivisions in the state (not necessarily in a uniform manner), that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient.

Connecticut's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides assistance to needy families and pregnant women meeting eligibility criteria in all political subdivisions of the state. Assistance for basic needs is provided to needy families through the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) component of the Jobs First Employment Services program. Childcare assistance is also provided to unemployed persons in needy families.

Two-Parent TFA cases are those with two parents as defined at 45 CFR 261.24. The Two-Parent component of the TFA cash assistance program for those meeting these criteria is funded as a Solely State Funded (SSF) program and is no longer part of the TANF program or claimed as a separate state program. Other TFA families with two parents, other than those included in this definition, continue to be part of the TANF program. The eligibility criteria (including income and asset limits) vary from program to program. Connecticut defines a needy family as a family with a gross income less than seventy five percent (75%) of Connecticut's median income level. Exceptions to this definition are noted in specific program sections in Part I. The family must include a dependent child and a caretaker relative.

The goal of Connecticut's TANF programs is to provide assistance to needy families to enable them to move out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.

A dependent child must be either less than 18 years of age, 18 years of age and attending secondary school or its equivalent, or under age 24 and attending a post-secondary school and considered a dependent student through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process, or under age 25 and participating in a TANF job training or subsidized employment program.

A caretaker relative is a relative who cares for and supervises the dependent child. The caretaker may be a parent or other person related by blood, through adoption or marriage to a relative or another adult acting in loco parentis.

A needy parent is a parent of a child who is a member of a needy family. The parent may be the custodial or non-custodial parent.

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A. FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

This section, “Family Assistance Programs,” describes TANF programs that provide assistance to needy families.

A. 1. Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) – Department of Social Services

The Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) component of Jobs First is an employment focused, time limited assistance program based on the assumption that cash assistance should be temporary, and employment can help lift families out of poverty. Recipients are encouraged to assume personal responsibility for their economic self-sufficiency. Unless they meet exemption criteria, adults are required to seek employment. Recipients who are unable to secure employment receive services through the program, including education and training to assist them in becoming employed. Applicants must attend the initial employment services assessment intake session for further employment assessment/plan development before TFA cash assistance benefits are granted.

State laws limit TFA for non-exempt households to a time limit of 21-months, known as the Jobs First time limit. For the purposes of this State Plan, the “Jobs First time limit” refers to the initial 21-month period of time-limited assistance. Effective April 1, 2024, the Jobs First time limit will increase to 36 months, during which time a participant must work to obtain and retain employment.

The program asset limit is \$6,000 so families may set aside money for emergencies. Families are allowed to own a reliable car to seek employment, to travel to and from work, or to transport a disabled family member. To be excluded, the family’s equity in the vehicle must not exceed \$9,500 or the vehicle must be used to transport a disabled family member.

Applicants for TFA must have income below the state’s Standard of Need. The Standard of Need is equal to 55% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a given household size. \$90 is deducted from each person’s gross earnings at the time of application. Once enrolled, a household’s earned income is excluded up to 100% FPL. On and before December 31, 2023, once earnings exceed 100% FPL, the family becomes ineligible for assistance. On and after January 1, 2024, in the first month in which a family's total gross earnings exceed 100% of the FPL and for a period not to exceed six consecutive months, the Department shall disregard, for purposes of eligibility, a family's total gross earnings in an amount not to exceed 230% of the FPL. If a family's total gross earnings are an amount between 171% and 230% of the FPL, the Department shall reduce the household's benefit by 20% for the months in which earnings are between 171% and 230% of the FPL.

Up to \$50 per month of current child support is passed through to the family each month and excluded as income. Earned income from temporary employment with the U.S. Census Bureau in support of decennial censuses, including but not limited to positions as enumerators or post-enumeration surveyors, is excluded in TFA eligibility determinations. Childcare and transportation benefits are provided to enable individuals to prepare for, obtain, and retain employment.

If a family member refuses to participate in Employment Services activities, the family is penalized

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through a reduction in the amount of cash assistance benefits. Employment Services and benefits to support required work activities are provided through Connecticut's Department of Labor.

Until March 31, 2024, if the family still has income below the payment standard at the end of the Jobs First time limit, a six-month extension of benefits may be given. To qualify for an extension through March 31, 2024, the family's income cannot exceed the payment standard corresponding to the size of the family. Effective April 1, 2024, a family may have income less than 100% of the FPL and be eligible to receive a six-month extension of benefits.

The state imposes the Jobs First time limit for non-exempt families (also called "time-limited" families). Time limited families cannot receive more than two six-month extensions to the Jobs First time limit except when all adults meet one or more of the following criteria:

- the adult is precluded from obtaining or maintaining employment due to domestic violence or another circumstance beyond his or her control; or
- despite working thirty-five or more hours per week, earning at least the minimum wage, the adult earns less than the family's TFA payment standard; or
- the adult is employed and working less than thirty-five hours per week due to (1) a documented medical impairment that limits his/her hours of work, or (2) the need to care for a disabled member of the household; or
- the adult has two or more substantiated barriers to employment such as the lack of available childcare, substance abuse or addiction, severe mental or physical health problems, one or more severe learning disabilities, domestic violence, or a child who has a serious physical or behavioral health problem.

There are also overall 60-month state and federal time limits. which include months of benefits received by a time-limited family in Connecticut plus any months of TANF benefits that an adult received in another state. If all adults in the family meet at least one of the following exemption criteria, the family is not subject to the time limits. A person is exempt from the Jobs First and 60-month state and federal time limits if he or she is: incapacitated; age 60 or older; ; a non-parent caretaker relative who does not receive assistance; ; pregnant, if a physician has certified that she is unable to work; post-partum for six weeks, or longer if a physician certifies she is unable to work; unemployable; or a minor parent attending and satisfactorily completing a high school or high school equivalency program

The State of Connecticut also recognizes the following two exemptions:

- Caring for an incapacitated household member; or
- Caring for a child under the age of one (after the first six weeks).

These exemptions always apply to the state and Jobs First time limits but do not apply to the 60-month federal limit. When the federal time limit exceeds 60 months due to the state-allowed exemptions,

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Connecticut uses state funds to pay for the months that exceed 60 federal time-limited months. If the family moves to another state, these months will be reported to the new state as non-exempt months.

A family that includes a member who has been battered or subject to extreme cruelty is considered a hardship case for TANF funded benefits and can receive benefits beyond the 60-month federal limit.

Effective October 1, 2008, TFA families in which all adults are exempt based on incapacity, age 60 or older, pregnant, or post-partum, or unemployable, are identified as "Certain Exempt" and funded outside of the TANF program in a solely state-funded program.

Any relative may receive assistance for a child. In addition, legal guardians and others acting *in loco parentis* may receive such assistance. Pregnant women are eligible for assistance throughout the entire pregnancy. Children are eligible for assistance if they are less than 18 years of age or if they are 18 years of age and attending secondary school or its equivalent.

Pursuant to Public Act 22-118, effective July 1, 2022, TFA benefit levels became uniform across the state. Prior to this change, the TFA benefit levels varied across three regions and were originally calculated based on variations in the average cost of rent in each area. Additionally, pursuant to Public Act 22-118, the standard of need used to calculate TFA income eligibility and benefit levels now equals 55% of the federal poverty level. This change allows for an increase to the TFA income eligibility thresholds and payment standards and ensures that eligibility and benefits will be adjusted annually to account for cost-of-living increases built into the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Effective January 1, 2014, the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services revised the Connecticut Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program and the TANF Plan to comply with the federal mandate in Section 4004 of Public Law 112-96. Effective January 1, 2014, TFA electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card benefits cannot be used for goods, services or cash at liquor stores, casinos, gambling casinos, gaming establishments, off-track betting branch facilities, and establishments that provide adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment.

The state has imposed penalties for Failure to Comply. If TFA electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card benefits are used in any of the places listed above, the TFA client will be subject to the following penalties: for the first violation, a warning that a prohibited transaction occurred; for the second violation, a penalty in the amount of the EBT transaction that occurred at the prohibited location; for the third violation, a penalty of one month's suspension of TFA benefits in addition to the amount of the EBT transaction that occurred in the prohibited location; for the fourth violation, DSS may suspend the TFA benefits for a certain amount of time or may stop the TFA benefits forever. If DSS plans to impose a penalty for failure to follow the new law, a notice will be sent to the TFA recipient explaining the violation of the rules and client rights to a Fair Hearing

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Connecticut ensures that TANF cash assistance recipients have the ability to use and access their benefit with minimal or no fees or charges through the use of an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card or an Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT). Connecticut does not issue checks for TANF cash assistance. When a client chooses EFT, they retain the ability to control the location and fees associated with their card use and cash access. The EBT cards are useable at all Point of Service (POS) devices (as cash back) and at all ATMs that display the Quest logo. If the TFA recipient is having problems accessing a local POS or ATM device, he/she can contact the EBT customer service statewide free phone line, which will assist with identifying other locations or will refer the recipient to the regional state office where the recipient applied for assistance. The EBT contract provides two free cash withdrawals per month at ATMs, and unlimited cash back with purchase at those POS locations that allow cash back with purchase. After the two free withdrawals, the client is subject to all the normal bank fees associated with an ATM transaction, in addition to a \$.50 EBT charge. Balances on ATM receipts and on receipts at POS devices also provide updated information about the client's cash assistance balance, and clients are advised to keep these receipts and note their balance.

Information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions is provided to TFA recipients via the following publication "*Electronic Benefit Transfer: How to use your EBT Card.*" EBT and other program information is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/dss>.

A monthly audit process has been established and is monitored by DSS staff.

TANF Purpose #1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

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A. 2. Child Care Assistance for Unemployed Persons – Office of Early Childhood

Connecticut provides childcare assistance to TFA family members preparing for employment through Jobs First Employment Services activities. Childcare assistance is also provided to teen parents who need childcare while completing high school.

Childcare assistance payments are based on several factors including: the local market rate, the childcare setting, the number of hours care is needed for, the age of the child, and the special needs of the child. Unemployed families are not required to pay a family fee.

TANF Purpose #1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Funding: Separate State Program that uses state maintenance of effort funds.

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B. FAMILY ASSISTANCE – MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT (MOE) PROGRAMS

This section, “Family Assistance – Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Programs,” outlines programs that provide assistance to needy families using state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds.

B. 1. Lawfully Present Non-Citizens- Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) - Department of Social Services

Connecticut provides Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) to lawfully present non-citizens who reside in the state. Eligibility criteria and benefit levels are the same as they are for citizens.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

Funding: Segregated State Program that uses state maintenance of effort funds to provide cash assistance to lawfully present non-citizens who are not eligible for federal TANF benefits solely due to their citizenship status.

B. 2. Non-Hardship Families – Department of Social Services

Connecticut provides TFA benefits to families who have exhausted the federal 60-month limit on benefits and do not qualify for a federal hardship exception. Connecticut applies a 60-month limit for non-exempt families who do not meet the federal hardship criteria. The exemption criteria for the state time limit are broader than the hardship criteria for the federal limit. If a family loses an exemption and becomes time-limited again, the state will continue to provide benefits to these families up to the state’s 60-month time limit. Eligibility criteria and benefit levels for these families are the same as they are for families who have not yet received 60 months of federal TANF benefits.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

Funding: Segregated State Program that uses state maintenance of effort funds.

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C. SERVICES & NON-ASSISTANCE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT (MOE) PROGRAMS

This section, “Services and Non-Assistance Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Programs,” describes how Connecticut provides services and non-assistance benefits to needy families through TANF and Maintenance of Effort programs. The programs described in this section use either segregated state funds or separate state programs.

C. 1. Jobs Funnel - Department of Labor

The Department of Labor funds Jobs Funnel programs in various cities to help individuals avail themselves of career opportunities in construction jobs. The projects represent joint, public-private efforts to create career opportunities in the construction trades for residents in participating cities. Services through the Jobs Funnel projects include outreach, recruitment, assessment, case management, pre-employment preparation (consisting of math, remediation, life skills workshops, customized training, and/or pre-apprenticeship training), job placement, and retention support services for people who want to pursue construction related careers. The program offers an initial training followed by assistance in finding employment in apprenticeships and other jobs in the local areas. Integral to the program are the outreach, assessment, and support services provided by community-based organizations. By providing these services, the goal of the program is to help participants become more job ready.

Services for program participants who are members of families with dependent children are U.S. citizens and have income less than seventy five percent (75%) of the State Median Income (SMI) are funded by the TANF program.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents by promoting work, job preparation, and marriage.

Funding: Separate State Program that uses state maintenance of effort funds.

C. 2. Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative - Department of Social Services

The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) is a broad-based, multi-agency, statewide effort led by the Department of Social Services that is focused on changing the systems that can improve fathers’ ability to be fully and positively involved in the lives of their children. The goal of the CFI is to support children, mothers, and fathers, through ongoing system change efforts as well as supporting direct services and programming for fathers, by focusing on the important influence of men who are or will be in fathering roles. The target population is fathers between the ages of 16 and 65 who reside in Connecticut. The program also serves noncustodial mothers.

The objectives of the CFI are as follows:

- Promote public education concerning the financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood

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- Assist men in preparing for the legal, financial, and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood
- Promote the establishment of paternity at childbirth.
- Encourage fathers, regardless of marital status, to foster their emotional connection to and financial support of their children
- Establish support mechanisms for fathers in their relationship with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status

The CFI's contracted community-based fatherhood programs provides access to an array of services including but not limited to: Comprehensive Intake & Assessment, Case Management Services, Curriculum-based Group Instruction, Access to Domestic Violence Prevention Services, Voluntary Parentage/other child support matters, State-Owed Arrearage Adjustment Program, Internal & External Referrals, Systems navigation, assistance with completing court documents, financial literacy, employment/education, access/visitation/custody, health/mental health/substance use services, and conflict resolution/anger management.

TANF Purpose #4: Encourages the formation and maintenance of two parent families.

Funding: Commingled funds that uses state maintenance of effort funds.

C. 3. Safety Net Services - Department of Social Services

Safety Net services are available to families who have exhausted the Jobs First time limit of TFA benefits, have income below the payment standard for the appropriate family size, and are not eligible for any future extensions. Effective April 1,2024, families must have income below 100% of the Federal Poverty level for their family size. This program works to 1) minimize the likelihood of harm to the children, 2) stabilize families and assist with access to resources to strengthen parenting skills and protect children and 3) assist families to attain and maintain employment through the identification and amelioration of existing psychological, personal, and structural barriers.

Services provided include the following:

- Intensive family-focused support and case management services that are based on mutual trust and respect.
- In-home, office-based, or virtual assessments, referrals, and follow-up conducted by regional staff who are bilingual and bicultural.
- Comprehensive, qualitative assessment of family strengths and risk factors using a unique tool designed for the program

These services are offered to families with a gross income less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the State Median Income (SMI).

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Effective 10/1/06, non-TANF funds (Solely State Funded) are used to provide basic needs payments for rent, utilities, food, and other essential household items for eligible families receiving Safety Net Services.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Funding: Separate State Program that uses state maintenance of effort funds.

C. 4. Child Care Assistance for Employed Persons - Office of Early Childhood

Connecticut provides childcare assistance to low-income working families to enable parents to work, including families receiving TFA or transitioning off TFA.

Initial eligibility for childcare assistance is based on countable family income and the need for childcare. At application, a family may be eligible if their countable income is below fifty percent (50%) of the state median income (SMI) related to family size. Child support received or paid by the family is not considered countable income. Once determined eligible, a family may receive childcare assistance as long as their need for care continues and their countable income remains under eighty-five percent (85%) of the SMI related to family size. There is no time limit on a family's eligibility for childcare assistance.

Childcare payment rates are based on several factors including: the local market rate, the childcare setting, the number of hours care is needed, the age of the child, and the special needs of the child. All working families are required to pay a portion of the approved childcare assistance payment. This Family Fee, paid by the family directly to the childcare provider, is calculated based on countable family income in accordance with the following scale.

<u>COUNTABLE FAMILY INCOME</u>	<u>FAMILY FEE</u>
Less than 20% of SMI	2%
20% to 30% of SMI	4%
30% to 40% of SMI	6%
40% to 50% of SMI	8%
50% or more of SMI	10%

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Funding: Separate State Program that uses state maintenance of effort funds.

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C. 5. School Readiness - Office or Early Childhood

The initiative is designed to ensure that children from low-income families have access to high-quality early learning experiences by combining the strengths and resources of the public and private childcare and school systems. Funds are made available to School Readiness Councils in communities with large numbers of low-income children. The Councils assess community needs, identify gaps, and allocate funds. Each Council is allocated funds to increase the number of 3- and 4-year-old children served in early care and education programs and to improve the quality of those services. The Councils are required to ensure that full-day early childhood care and education services are available year-round. Additionally, funds are made available on a statewide basis to train new early childhood teachers.

These services are offered on behalf of families with a gross income less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the State Median Income (SMI).

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Funding: Separate State Program that uses state maintenance of effort funds.

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D. SERVICES AND NON-ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

This section, “Services and Non-Assistance Programs” describes how Connecticut provides services and non-assistance benefits to needy families through TANF programs. The programs described in this section use federal funds or commingled state and federal funds.

D. 1. Child Welfare Prevention and Intervention Services – Department of Children and Families

These services are provided when conditions exist requiring the intervention of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Unless noted, all programs/services are TANF Purpose #1. These services include:

Care Coordination (Local Systems of Care) – provides intensive individualized case management and support services to a family with a child with complex behavioral health needs, who are at-risk of being removed from their homes and who are not involved in DCF Protective Services.

Case Management Services – services provided by DCF staff, as well as a variety of home and community-based services to families to address issues that may cause a child to be abused or neglected in an effort to allow a child to remain in his or her home.

Community Support for Families – engages families who have received a Family Assessment Response from the Department and connects them to concrete, traditional and non-traditional resources and services in their community. This inclusive approach and partnership, places the family in the lead role of its own service delivery. The role of the external contractor is to assist the family in developing solutions, identify community resources and supports based on need and help promote permanent connections for the family with an array of supports and resources within their community.

Early Childhood Services – promotes school readiness skills and healthy development for children, ages birth to six, who may be identified as at risk for abuse and/or neglect and who may have developmental delays through center-based programs and home visitation. These services provide support to at-risk children that help prepare them to be successful in school, provide for healthy development, and reduce the risk of unintended teen pregnancy. TANF Purpose #3.

Mobile Crisis Intervention Services – provides mobile response crisis intervention and mental health assessments for children in homes, schools, and other locations in the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Additional services include medication consultation, assessment, and short-term medication management; behavioral management services; substance abuse screening and referral to services for families with a child in crisis. Providing this support helps to gain an understanding of factors that led to the crisis, provides resources to restore previous level of functioning, helps in the development of coping strategies for current and future use, helps to connect current stressors with past experiences, and reduces the risk of poor health and other outcomes in teens including unintended pregnancy.

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Extended Day Treatment Program – site-based, before or after school, treatment and support service for children and youth with behavioral health needs who have returned to their homes from out-of-home care or are at risk of placement due to mental health issues or emotional disturbance. Services are provided daily before and after school, with extended daily service on days or weeks in which school is not in session. TANF Purpose #3.

Intimate Partner Violence – Family Assessment Intervention Response (IPV-FAIR) - service is to establish a comprehensive response to intimate partner violence that offers meaningful and sustainable help to families that is safe, respectful, culturally relevant, and responsive to the unique strengths and concerns of the family. This service provides a supportive service array of assessments, interventions, and linkages to services to address the needs of families impacted by intimate partner violence. The service will respond to both caregivers and the children. Safety planning will be at the center of the service provision.

Intensive Family Preservation – short-term, intensive, in-home service designed to intervene quickly in order to reduce the risk of out of home placement and/or abuse and/or neglect. Services are provided to families 24 hours per day, seven days a week, with a minimum of 2 home visits per week for to 12 weeks.

Intensive Home-Based Services – Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) - provides intensive home-based clinical interventions for children, ages 11 to 18, with significant behavioral health service needs who are at imminent risk of removal from their home or who are returning home from a residential level of care. After a comprehensive evaluation, a strength-based Individualized Service Plan is developed to include goals, interventions, services and supports that address the issues and problems threatening the maintenance of the child in the home or the return of the child to the home.

Investigations – DCF staff provide investigations of reports of child abuse and neglect, to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of children from their homes in cases where a removal has not occurred, but such a removal is a reasonable possibility in the absence of preventive services. Investigations had been part of the state’s Emergency Assistance program in effect on September 30, 1995.

Therapeutic Child Care - This service offers a range of support services for children in a licensed childcare facility, designed for infants, toddlers, and pre-school age children who have behavioral health and/or developmental needs. This service is claimed under TANF purpose 3.

Parenting Support Program – in-home, evidence-based program that provides parenting education services.

Youth Services Bureau – DCF grants funds to Youth Service Bureaus to promote positive youth involvement and to support at-risk youth in their communities by addressing issues related to social development, mental health, and physical well-being, teen pregnancy prevention, diversion from juvenile justice services. The bureaus provide counseling on at-risk behaviors such as out-

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of-wedlock births. There are no income guidelines for this program. This service is claimed under TANF Purpose 3.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 2. Addiction Treatment Services – Department of Correction

The Department of Correction (DOC) provides addiction services to clients who have varying levels of needs, from basic addiction education to intensive counseling. Services are optional and based on self-identification and evidence-based screening tools. TANF claiming is limited to costs of non-medical services provided to clients who are noncustodial parents. By providing addiction treatment to parents, the program helps them become clean and sober, which ultimately will enable them to become contributing and positively engaged members of the family when transitioning out of incarceration.

TANF Purpose # 4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 3. Education and Training Services – Department of Correction

The Department of Correction (DOC) provides education and training services that prepare noncustodial parents to develop job skills and ultimately secure employment upon reentry to their communities. By providing education and training services to parents, the program helps them obtain the skills and ultimately jobs that will enable them to be contributing members and positive role models within their families upon transitioning out of incarceration. These services are not a general cost of government because the state is not obligated to provide these services. The state statute that establishes the DOC school district (CGS 18-99a) through which these services are provided is permissive, stating the Commissioner "may" create a school district, not that a school district is required. A school district has been created and education and training services are offered to all inmates at all DOC locations, but inmates are not required to participate in the education and training services. There is no general state requirement to provide education services to individuals aged 18 or older. TANF is only used to fund services for noncustodial parents aged 18 or older with dependents. TANF claiming is limited to costs related to services provided to noncustodial parents.

TANF Purpose # 4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 4. Respite Centers - Department of Developmental Services

Respite is the temporary care of a person with a disability for the purpose of offering relief to the family or caregiver. It is a service that allows family of respite participants time to re-energize, deal with emergency situations, or engage in personal, social, or routine activities and tasks that otherwise may be neglected, postponed, or curtailed due to the demands of caring for a person who has

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intellectual disabilities. This service provides important assistance to a caregiver so a child with intellectual disabilities may continue to be cared for in their own home rather than be institutionalized. Respite Centers provide 24-hour care for extended weekends in comfortable home-like environments. Centers offer guests opportunities to participate in recreational activities amongst the guest group and within the local community. Each center can accommodate up to 6 guests. Centers generally operate Thursday at 4pm to Monday at 10am.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose # 4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 5. Employment Services – Department of Labor

The state provides employment services to recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA). Employment services are also provided to those who are participating in an employment service activity authorized by their employment plan at the time of becoming ineligible for TFA until they complete that activity. The state refers to these employment services as Jobs First Employment Services (JFES). The Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) administers JFES through the American Job Centers (AJCs). The American Job Centers are a partnership of the CT Department of Labor, the five Workforce Development Boards (WDB's), and other state and local agencies, including the Department of Social Services.

Jobs First Employment Services are provided to adults or minor parents in families applying for or receiving Temporary Family Assistance funded by TANF, and to Two- Parent families funded as a solely state funded program. All TFA applicants and recipients, including Two-Parent families, are eligible for employment services even if they are not required to participate by the regulations governing the TFA program.

If a TANF funded TFA recipient is in an employment service activity authorized by the employment plan at the time of becoming ineligible for TFA, employment services continue until completion of that activity, provided the individual remains part of a needy family with income less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the state's median income level.

Similarly, services to participants in two-parent families who become ineligible for TFA while in an authorized activity will continue until the completion of that activity. The goals of the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program are as follows:

1. Enable TFA participants, through employment, to become independent from cash assistance by the end of the Jobs First time limit established by state law;
2. Enable TFA participants who become independent from cash assistance to remain employed

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and independent of TFA; and

3. Ensure that federally established participation rates are met through employment of TFA participants and engagement in other countable TANF work activities deemed appropriate based on assessments of clients' needs.

Operating Principles

1. The primary focus of JFES is to assist participants to become independent of assistance through employment.
2. Every participant is assigned to activities that will enable him/her to become and remain independent of TFA. Whenever possible, activities are combined in a way that will meet the federally established participation rates.
3. Each service delivery area manages its caseload in such a way as to meet the state target levels for the participation rates.
4. An individualized employment plan based on an assessment of skills, abilities, work experience, education level, aptitudes, interests, and program goals is developed for every participant. The individual employment plans for parents in a two-parent family are coordinated with each other in order to meet program goals. The combination of both parents' plans constitutes a plan for the family.
5. If the assessment shows that the family is capable of obtaining employment at earnings equal to the Federal Poverty Level for their family size, the participant (s) are required to find and/or maintain employment at the Federal Poverty Level as soon as possible.
6. If it is determined that the family cannot obtain earnings at the Federal Poverty Level (in the case of a two-parent family, both parents wages or potential wages are combined) without further training and/or education, the participant (s) are assigned work, education and/or training activities that will maximize the family's income level within the Jobs First time limit. For participants in extensions, work, education and/or training activities that will maximize the family income level as soon as possible are assigned. Whenever possible, employment is combined with education and training in such a way that the combination is countable toward the federally established participation rate.
7. As long as consistent with the program goals, employment plan activities are based on the participant's interests, ability, availability of resources and labor market demands.
8. If it is evident that the family will not be able to become or remain independent of TFA through current employment or future employment that is secured (such as seasonal employment) without additional education and/or training, new or additional activities designed to increase the family income may be assigned, which may preclude continuation of existing employment or self-employment.

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9. These operating principles apply to all participants according to their needs, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

Type of Employment Services

JFES is a “balanced work first” program. This means that if the cash assistance recipient is capable of going to work, he or she is expected to work. It also means that if cash assistance recipients are capable of working but need education or training to improve earnings to better support their families, they will generally be expected to work while receiving that training. In some cases, work follows immediately upon completion of intensive, short-term training or education.

To attain all three program goals, JFES includes a combination of job search, employment, education, training, and support services. The combination of services varies with each individual participant. This balance of employment activity with other services uses individual strengths and resources while addressing employment-related needs. This balanced work first approach ensures that participants will not only become independent but will remain independent from assistance while the federal participation rates are met.

Each participant, including volunteers, may receive employment services that include, but are not limited to, the following: orientation, assessment, case management, employment plan development, barrier resolution, employment related education and training programs, subsidized employment, job search skill training, job placement services, support services (such as Special Benefits), retention services, and re-employment services.

Post-secondary education (two- and four- year degree programs) is an allowable JFES activity when included in an employment plan as permitted by state and federal regulations. Self-initiated participation in such educational programs may co-exist with approved plan activities if funded with other resources, to the extent that such enrollment does not preclude participation in required plan activities.

Entry into Jobs First Employment Services

The Department of Social Services (DSS) refers clients to the JFES program. DSS conducts a service needs assessment of the TFA applicant during or soon after the initial TFA intake interview. The service needs assessment includes gathering information from the applicant on their education, employment and training history, time on assistance and social service needs. The result of the service needs assessment are then reviewed by the local case management entity.

American Job Center Intake

Intake sessions include a virtual orientation, employability assessment, initial employment plan development, eligibility determination for separately funded employment programs, assignment of a case manager, and assignment to initial employment plan activities by case managers.

All new participants for employment services must attend an intake session. However, special

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accommodations are made for participants who cannot attend the group sessions due to their employment schedule. These participants are scheduled for separate individual appointments at times that do not interfere with work hours. Participants are not required to miss work, training, or a job interview to attend any employment services activity.

Every participant leaves the intake session with a clear understanding of the next step in his/her employment plan, the name and phone number of his/her case manager and a copy of his/her employment plan.

Case Management

After intake into American Job Center, the assigned case manager in conjunction with the participant completes the employment plan. The case manager arranges for services and tracks and monitors the participant to ensure progression towards independence from cash assistance. If the participant does not comply with the provisions of the employment plan without good cause, the case manager refers the participant to DSS for conciliation and possible sanctioning. Prior to referring any participant for sanction, the participant is given a Barrier Intervention Referral to a contracted support agency in an attempt to re-engage the participant into their JFES activities and avoid a sanction.

Special Benefits and Child Care Assistance

To facilitate maximum participation, TFA applicants or recipients who participate in employment services are supported by special benefit payments.

Transportation benefits are provided to participants of regular, on-going employment services activities other than unsubsidized employment. Payment is made for mileage reimbursement, bus passes, ride sharing services, taxi and train fares or other reasonable transportation solutions.

A participation allowance which is intended to assist participants with transportation and baby-sitting expenses is provided for short-term, intermittent employment services activities that last no longer than five consecutive days. In addition, participants that secure either part – time or full-time employment are provided with transportation supports in the form of mileage reimbursement, bus passes, ride sharing services, taxi and train fares or other reasonable transportation solutions for the entire time they are working and still on TFA.

Ongoing childcare assistance is provided through the Care 4 Kids Program administered by the Office of Early Childhood.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Funding: Commingled funds that use state maintenance of effort funds.

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D. 6. Barrier Intervention Referral Program – Department of Labor

The Barrier Intervention Referral (BIR) program has been implemented through an agreement between the State of Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) and the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) for the provision of BIR services to families in the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program who have barriers to employment that impact their ability to participate in JFES. These BIR services are provided by a third-party social services agency with offices located around the state.

DSS provides safety net services for certain families identified as having significant barriers to employment and families who are at risk of losing benefits under the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program or are no longer receiving TFA benefits. BIR services are services provided directly to TFA/JFES program participants who are experiencing one or more barriers to employment that impact their ability to participate in the JFES program. BIR referrals are made by JFES case managers directly to the third-party social services agency so that the agency can assist the JFES client in reducing or eliminating the barrier(s) that prevent the client from participating in the JFES program.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Funding: Commingled funds that use state maintenance of effort funds.

D. 7. Earned Income Tax Credit Program – Department of Revenue Services

The Connecticut Earned Income Tax Credit (CT EITC) is a refundable state income tax credit for low income working individuals and families. The state credit mirrors the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. The Connecticut General Assembly approved the CT EITC during the 2011 legislative session. When both the federal and CT EITC amounts exceed the amount of taxes owed, it results in a tax refund to those who claim and qualify for the credit.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Funding: Commingled funds that use state maintenance of effort funds.

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D. 8. Young Adult Services - Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

The Young Adult Services (YAS) program was established to facilitate the successful transition of young adults from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to the adult mental health system and support the acquisition of the necessary skills for adulthood. YAS serves young adults who often present with extensive histories of trauma as well as complex psychiatric and social/behavioral needs. YAS currently has Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with DCF, the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and Carelon to facilitate early engagement, referral, assessment and transition planning for youth and young adults.

These youth are especially vulnerable to engaging in risk-taking behaviors within the community, including high-risk sexual behaviors, which place them at heightened risk for unwanted pregnancies. YAS program staff help to identify these risk factors and facilitate intervention to mitigate these risks. All aspects of YAS services are trauma-informed, built upon the principles of trauma treatment, predicated upon a young adult's individualized needs, and are voluntary, strength-based, person-centered, and recovery-oriented.

YAS programs operate at both state-operated and private non-profit Local Mental Health Authorities throughout the state. YAS programs aim to create a "community of care" that fosters mutual respect and encourages collaborative partnerships with young adults, their families, identified significant persons, community service providers and other stakeholders. Specific supports provided include clinical treatment, employment/education support, life skill development, peer support, housing assistance, and perinatal support services.

There are no income guidelines for this program.

TANF Purpose # 3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 9. Safety Net Services Barrier Resolution Program - Department of Social Services

This program is designed to identify and immediately address barriers to self-sufficiency. Barrier resolution services are provided to families receiving TFA benefits and those who are engaged with employment services. This program provides TFA/JFES participants with in-depth home-based assessments, intensive case management, and referral to community resources. The goal is to increase successful employment outcomes and reduce the likelihood of ongoing dependency on TANF benefits. Families with serious conditions are evaluated for an incapacity exemption from the time-limited program.

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Services are provided to families with income at or below the TFA income limits.

TANF Purpose # 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

TANF Purpose #2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Funding: Commingled funds that use state maintenance of effort funds.

D. 10. Outreach - Department of Social Services

Outreach services include costs associated with the administration of the *Help for People in Need* program. *Help for People in Need* is an informational brochure provided to all recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with income less than 200% of the federal poverty level. The brochure contains information on how to access benefits and services such as the School Breakfast and School Lunch programs; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); HUSKY health care coverage; Care 4 Kids childcare assistance; the state's Fatherhood Initiative; family planning and pregnancy prevention services; domestic violence services; energy assistance; free tax preparation services; and housing services. This service helps households by facilitating "broad-based categorical eligibility" for SNAP and ensuring that families are able to access critical supportive services. The "Help for People in Need" brochure's costs are allocated as TANF MOE reported under TANF DSS administrative costs.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

TANF Purpose #4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 11. Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI) - Department of Social Services

The Department of Social Services (DSS) operates a statewide teen pregnancy prevention initiative comprised of individual programs run by not-for profit organizations and municipalities in eleven (11) Connecticut towns and cities. The communities served are Bridgeport, East Hartford, Hartford, Killingly, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Waterbury, and Willimantic. The programs in these areas serve five-hundred fifty (550) participants.

The implemented programs use the Teen Outreach Program (TOP), a service-learning model, where participants engage in, reflect on, and learn from community service projects. TOP is a science-based model that has been evaluated and has shown evidence that it is among the most effective

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approaches to preventing teen pregnancies. The teen pregnancy prevention initiative funds primarily support the individual programs, but also cover independent research and evaluation with Philliber Research Associates (PRA), statistical analysis (UConn Family Planning Division), and training from Wyman Associates who owns the Teen Outreach Service-Learning program. Teen-pregnancy prevention programs funded by DSS work intensively with young men as well as young women to address health, education, and other life issues.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 12. Family Resource Centers – State Department of Education

Operated through the State Department of Education, these centers are designed to promote comprehensive, integrated, community-based systems of family support, parent education and training, and child development.

Family Resource Centers provide or collaborate with existing agencies to operate full-time preschool childcare, school-age childcare, families-in-training (including home visiting and monitoring of child development for new and expectant parents), adult education, support and training for family daycare providers, teen pregnancy prevention, positive youth development services, and resource and referral services. There are no income or asset limits for this program.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

TANF Purpose #4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 13. Leadership, Education and Athletics in Partnership (LEAP) – State Department of Education

The State Department of Education (SDE) funds the Leadership, Education, Athletics in Partnership (LEAP) program. This program provides neighborhood-based education and mentoring programs that match children, ages 7 to 14 from high poverty urban neighborhoods with trained high school and college student counselors, to help children develop their academic skills, self-esteem, improve their ability to succeed in school, and to be involved in their community. The children meet with their mentors after school and during the summer. There are no income guidelines for this program.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

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Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 14. Neighborhood Youth Centers - State Department of Education

The State Department of Education (SDE) offers competitive grants to priority cities to create and maintain neighborhood youth centers. The grantees must use the funds to provide skill development training, tutoring, parental involvement, and other supportive services increase the range and extent of positive experiences for at-risk youth. Programs offer athletic and recreational opportunities, enrichment or tutoring activities, skills training, and other preventive and intervention services for youth ages 12 to 17 and their families. These services take place after school hours, during evenings, and on weekends. There are no income limits for this program.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 15. Priority School Districts, Extended Hours - State Department of Education

The State Department of Education provides funds to priority school districts to fund extended day programs that offer academic enrichment and recreational programs in hours beyond the normal school term and alternative programs for students. These services are offered through extended hours and extended year programs. These programs are targeted to priority school districts and offer support services outside of basic education that are designed to foster success and result in enhanced opportunities for children as they mature into adulthood.

The services offered under these programs are targeted to children of needy families, although services are provided to all children within the school district who would benefit by receiving the service.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 16. Priority School Districts Grants - State Department of Education

The State Department of Education provides funds to priority school districts to fund extended school hour programs, summer programs, early reading intervention, parent involvement programs, parent-teacher communication, drop-out prevention, and alternative programs for students, development or expansion of extended day kindergarten programs and technology enhancement to support instruction or improve parent and teacher communication. These services are offered through after school and summer, extended hours, and extended year programs. These programs

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are targeted to priority school districts and offer support services outside of basic education that are designed to foster success and result in enhanced opportunities for children as they mature into adulthood.

The services offered under these programs are targeted to children of needy families, although services are provided to all children within the school district who would benefit by receiving the service.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

D. 17. Young Parents Program - State Department of Education

The State Department of Education (SDE) provides funds for programs to help teen parents stay in school. The funds are used to cover transportation costs for teen parents and their children to and from school and childcare facilities. The funds are also used to operate parenting education programs and prevention programs for teens that are at-risk of becoming teen parents. There are no income guidelines for this program.

TANF Purpose #3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Funding: Segregated Federal TANF funds

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WORK REQUIREMENTS - SECTION A - PART II

Sec. 402(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act

(ii) - The Work Requirements part describes how the state intends to require a parent or caretaker relative receiving assistance under the program to engage in work (as defined by the state) once the state determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months (whether or not consecutive), whichever is earlier, consistent with Section 407(e)(2).

Work Requirements

Upon entering the time-limited program, all adult recipients must participate in work activities, unless specifically exempted by state regulation. A person is exempt if he or she is incapacitated; age 60 or older; responsible for the care of an incapacitated family member; a non-parent caretaker relative who does not receive assistance; caring for a child under the age of one; pregnant or postpartum if a physician has certified that she is unable to work; or unemployable. Minor parents are exempt if attending and satisfactorily completing high school or high school equivalency programs.

Please review *Part I, Section D - Department of Labor - D.5. - Employment Services* for further description of CT work requirement expectations.

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WORK ACTIVITIES - SECTION A - PART III

Sec. 402(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act

(iii) – The Work Activities part describes how the state intends to ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance under the program engage in work activities in accordance with section 407 of the Social Security Act.

Please review *Part I, Section D – Department of Labor – D.5. – Employment Services* for further description of CT work requirement expectations.

Connecticut cash assistance recipients are required to engage in work activities as prescribed by their employability plans. Failure to participate without good cause results in a penalty being imposed on the non-compliant TFA recipient until such person becomes compliant with Jobs First Employment Services and their employability plan. The penalty shall continue until the noncompliant family member (1) begins to comply with employment services requirements, (2) becomes exempt from such requirements, or (3) demonstrates good cause for his or her failure to comply with such requirements. If only one member of a family is eligible for TFA and such member fails without good cause to comply with an employment services requirement, the penalty is a 25% benefit reduction in each month of non-compliance.

Work Activity Exception Due to Lack of Childcare

The State may not reduce or terminate assistance based on the refusal of an individual to engage in required work activities if the individual is a single custodial parent, caring for a child under 13 years of age, and the individual proves that he or she has demonstrated an inability (as determined by the state) to obtain needed childcare for one or more of the following reasons:

- A. Unavailability of appropriate childcare within a reasonable distance from the individual’s home or work site.
- B. Unavailability or unsuitability of informal childcare by a relative or under other arrangements.
- C. Unavailability of appropriate and affordable formal childcare arrangements.

In determining if a person meets the requirements of this provision, the following definitions apply:

- A. Appropriate childcare - care that meets the health and safety standards that are required for providers who receive payments under the provisions of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), as mandated by Connecticut General Statutes 17b-749.
- B. Reasonable distance - care that can be accessed by public or private transportation that is available to the client without interfering with the parent’s ability to maintain employment. If transportation is not available, childcare must be within reasonable walking distance from the person’s home.

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- C. Unsuitable informal care - care that is exempt from the State's licensing requirements but does not meet the health and safety standards described in A. above or is otherwise shown to be unsafe or inappropriate for the child.
- D. Affordable formal childcare - licensed childcare that costs the parent (after subsidies) no more than ten percent of his or her total income.

The following are the categories and state definitions of the **Work Activities** for Connecticut's program:

Work Activity Categories:

1. Unsubsidized Employment
2. Subsidized Private Sector Employment
3. Subsidized Public Sector Employment
4. On-the-Job Training
5. Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance
6. Work Experience
7. Community Service Programs
8. Vocational Educational Training Not to Exceed 12 Months
9. Child Care for an Individual Participating in Community Service Program
10. Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment
11. Education Directly Related to Employment
12. Satisfactory Attendance at Secondary School or a GED program

State Definitions of Countable Work Activities

1. **Unsubsidized Employment:** Full- or part-time employment in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program.
2. **Subsidized Employment:** Employment in the private or public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all the wages and costs of employing an individual.
3. **Subsidized Employment:** Employment in the private or public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all the wages and costs of employing a recipient. This includes work-study and stipend programs.
4. **On-the-Job Training:** Training in the public or private sector that is given to a paid employee while he or she is engaged in productive work and that provides knowledge and skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job.
5. **Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance:** The act of seeking or obtaining employment, preparation to seek or obtain employment, including life skills training, and short-term

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substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities. Such treatment or therapy must be determined to be necessary and documented by a qualified medical, substance abuse or mental health professional. Job search and job readiness assistance activities must be supervised by the TANF agency or other responsible party on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate. This activity is limited by statute to count toward the Participation rate for no more than six weeks per year (no more than four weeks may be consecutive to count toward the work participation rates).

6. **Work Experience:** A work activity performed in return for welfare that provides an individual with an opportunity to acquire the general skills, training, knowledge, and work habits necessary to obtain employment. The purpose of work experience is to improve the employability of those who cannot find unsubsidized employment. This activity must be supervised by an employer, work site sponsor, or other responsible party on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate.
7. **Community Service Programs:** Structured programs in which TANF recipients perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. Community service programs must be limited to projects that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social service, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, recreation, public facilities, public safety, and childcare. Community service programs are designed to improve the employability of recipients not otherwise able to obtain employment and must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate. A State agency shall take into account, to the extent possible, the prior training, experience, and skills of a recipient in making appropriate community service assignments.
8. **Vocational Educational Training Not to Exceed 12 Months:** Organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations requiring training including a baccalaureate or advanced degree if incorporated in employment plan and in compliance with state and federal regulations. Vocational educational training must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate and may include work-focused general education and language instruction.
9. **Child Care for an Individual Participating in a Community Service Program:** Providing childcare to enable another TANF recipient to participate in a community service program. This activity must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate.
10. **Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment:** Training or education for job skills required by an employer to provide an individual with the ability to obtain employment or

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to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace. Job skills training directly related to employment must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate.

11. **Education Directly Related to Employment:** Education related to a specific occupation, job, or job offer. Education directly related to employment must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate.

12. **Satisfactory Attendance at Secondary School or in a GED Program:** Regular attendance, in accordance with the requirements of the secondary school or course of study, at a secondary school or in a course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalence, in the case of a work eligible individual who has not completed secondary school or received such a certificate. This activity must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate.

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SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION - SECTION A - PART IV

Sec. 402(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act

(iv) - The Safeguarding Information part describes how the state intends to take such reasonable steps as the state deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

The use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program is restricted. The Department releases information concerning recipients only for purposes directly connected with the administration of the Department's programs; an investigation, prosecution, or civil or criminal proceeding related to the administration of the Department's program; the administration of any other federal or federally assisted program which provides assistance in cash, or in kind, or services directly to individuals on the basis of need; certification of receipt of assistance to an employer for the purposes of claiming a tax credit; an audit or similar activity conducted in connection with the administration of the program by any governmental entity authorized by law to conduct such audit or activity. The Department may also disclose, upon request by law enforcement officers, the address of any recipient who is wanted on charges of a felony or high misdemeanor or who is in violation of parole or probation. Any suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are reported to the Department of Children and Families.

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TEEN-PREGNANCY PREVENTION - SECTION A -PART V

Sec. 402(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act

(v) - The Teen-Pregnancy Prevention part describes how the state intends to establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) operates a statewide teen pregnancy prevention initiative comprised of individual programs run by not-for profit organizations and municipalities in eleven (11) Connecticut towns and cities. The communities served are Bridgeport, East Hartford, Hartford, Killingly, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Waterbury, and Willimantic. The programs in these areas serve five-hundred fifty (550) participants.

The implemented programs use the Teen Outreach Program (TOP), a service- learning model, where participants engage in, reflect on, and learn from community service projects. TOP is a science- based model that has been evaluated and has shown evidence that it is among the most effective approaches to preventing teen pregnancies.

The teen pregnancy prevention initiative funds primarily support the individual programs, but also cover independent research and evaluation with Philliber Research Associates (PRA), statistical analysis (UConn Family Planning Division), and training from Wyman Associates who owns the Teen Outreach Service-Learning program. Teen-pregnancy prevention programs funded by DSS work intensively with young men as well as young women to address issues of health, education, and other life issues.

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STATUTORY RAPE - SECTION A - PART VI

Sec. 402(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act

(vi) - The Statutory Rape part describes how the state intends to conduct a program, designed to reach state and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded in scope to include men.

The statutory rape laws in Connecticut, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, are enforced throughout the state. State agencies work together on implementation of protocol for referral of statutory rape cases. In addition, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has notified its employees that information pertaining to any possible case of statutory rape should be referred to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for investigation of possible child abuse. DCF may further refer the case to the Chief State's Attorney's Office for prosecution. DSS also encourages the victim and their family to report the case to the Chief State's Attorney's Office.

The Department directly funds two statewide programs with several regional contractors and sites that contribute to the education and explanation of statutory responsibilities for males pertaining to reproductive rights. This added service is in addition to the core scope of service provided by each program/contractor. These two programs and contractors are as follows:

1. Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Program – See Page 35 of this State Plan for a narrative description.
2. Family Planning Services – services defined as educational and comprehensive medical/social services which enable individuals, including minors to determine the number and spacing of their children. Specific component services include general reproductive health care and counseling. Planned Parenthood is the statewide contractor. They have a number of sites throughout the state to provide accessibility to clients.

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SECTION B

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SECTION B - PART I - TREATMENT OF FAMILIES MOVING INTO THE STATE

Sec. 402(a)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act

(i) - The Treatment of Families Moving into the State part indicates whether the state intends to treat families moving into the state from another state differently than other families under the program, and if so, how the state intends to treat such families under the program.

The state does not treat families moving into the state from another state differently than other families under the program.

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SECTION B - PART II - TREATMENT OF NON-CITIZENS

Sec. 402(a)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act

(ii) - The Treatment of Non-Citizens part indicates whether the state intends to provide assistance under the program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States, and if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

Connecticut provides assistance to mandatory and optional qualified aliens, as defined in Title IV of P.L. 104 - 193. All eligibility requirements, level of benefits and other provisions that pertain to U.S. citizens also apply to these non-citizens.

Aliens determined eligible for assistance must pursue citizenship to the extent possible. This requirement does not apply to victims of domestic violence or persons with developmental disabilities or other mental impairment.

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SECTION B - PART III - OBJECTIVE CRITERIA

Sec. 402(a)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act

(iii) - The Objective Criteria part sets forth objective criteria for the delivery of the benefits, the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how the state will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a state administrative or appeal process.

Connecticut's Objective Criteria

The State of Connecticut has developed objective criteria for the delivery of benefits, the determination of eligibility, and for fair and equitable treatment. These criteria are described in official state policies and regulations. The policies and regulations have been legally adopted under applicable provisions of state law.

Connecticut's objective criteria for delivery of benefits and determination of eligibility for TFA include standards of promptness for the determination of eligibility, periodic reviews of eligibility, standards of verification, determination of good cause for not complying with employment services requirements, and treatment and limits on income and resources.

The standard of promptness is 45 days from the date of application for inactive cases. If the family applies for an extension of benefits before the end of the Jobs First time limit or extension, the standard of promptness is 30 days.

Periodic reviews of eligibility are after twelve months of continuous assistance and in the twentieth month of the time limit. On or after April 1, 2024, the twentieth month review will take place in the thirty-fifth month because the Jobs First time limit will increase from 21 months to 36 months.

Documents are the primary sources of verification. Affidavits are accepted when other sources of verification are not available. The preponderance of evidence is the department's standard of verification. Good cause for non-compliance with and employment services activity is defined as circumstances beyond a person's control that reasonably prevent a person from participating in an activity.

Earned income of recipients is totally excluded up to the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Once earnings reach the FPL, the family becomes ineligible for assistance. On and after January 1, 2024, in the first month in which a family's total gross earnings exceed 100% of the FPL and for a period not to exceed six consecutive months, the Department shall disregard, for purposes of eligibility, a family's total gross earnings in an amount not to exceed 230% of the FPL. If a family's total gross earnings are an amount between 171% and 230% of the FPL, the Department shall reduce the household's benefit by

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20% for the months in which earnings are between 171% and 230% of the FPL. Unearned income must be less than the department's standard of need for a family to be eligible for TFA. Earned income from temporary employment with the U.S. Census Bureau in support of decennial censuses, including but not limited to positions as enumerators or post-enumeration surveyors, is excluded in TFA eligibility determinations.

The resource limit is \$6,000. Families are allowed to own a vehicle with an equity value less than \$9,500 or a vehicle used to transport a disabled family member.

Benefits are paid through electronic benefits transfer into an account that may be accessed by the eligible family or through direct deposit to the recipient's own bank account. The department may limit a person's control over an account through restricted payment or by providing payment directly to a third party when it has been determined that the person has mismanaged his or her finances.

Connecticut's Appeals Process

Connecticut provides timely and adequate notice prior to taking an adverse action and provides opportunities for the recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a state administered appeals process. There are set time limits for requesting and holding hearings and issuing decisions. Hearings are presented before impartial hearing officers. Clients are allowed to present a case, bring witnesses, ask questions, and cross-examine. If the client is unhappy with the decision, he or she may request reconsideration or appeal to the courts.

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SECTION B - PART IV- WORK OPTION

Sec. 402(a)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act

(iv) - Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Section, unless the chief executive officer of the state opts out of this provision by notifying the Secretary, a state shall, consistent with the exception provided in section 407(e)(2), require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving such assistance for 2 months is not exempt from work requirements and is not engaged in work, as determined under section 407(c), to participate in community service employment, with minimum hours per week and tasks to be determined by the state.

On September 30, 1996, the Governor sent a letter to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to opt out of this provision. While the state may use community service as a work activity, requiring every parent or caretaker to do it after two months of assistance is not consistent with the design of the Jobs First Employment Services program.

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SECTION B – PART V – EMPLOYMENT IN LONG-TERM CARE AND ELDER CARE

Sec. 402(a)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act

(v) - The document shall indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment – (I) providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 2011); or (II) in other occupations related to elder care determined appropriate by the State for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and, if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

Connecticut intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment through training and job placement, to the extent possible within the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program, providing direct care, in a long-term care facility or in other occupations related to elder care determined appropriate by the State of Connecticut for which an unmet need for service personnel, is identified by the state.

In the JFES program, the Workforce Development Boards may arrange for JFES participants to become certified nursing assistants and patient care technicians. It is the intent that some of the graduates of these programs will be employed in convalescent homes or become home health aides for the elderly. The Workforce Investment Boards are required to conduct an assessment of the needs of employers in their regions. Part of the annual plan is to address the employment needs of JFES participants and employers in general. Long-term care facilities and occupations related to elder care are included in the regional assessment.

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SECTION B - PART VI - Sexual Harassment, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking

Section 402(a)(8) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(8)); Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, section 703.

In General - Each state must certify that it has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure that applicants and potential applicants for TANF are notified of assistance made available by the state to victims of sexual harassment and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

It must also ensure that case workers and other agency personnel responsible for administering the TANF program are trained in: the nature and dynamics of sexual harassment and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking; state standards and procedures relating to the prevention of, and assistance for, individuals who are victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; and methods of ascertaining and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information and documentation related to applicants for assistance and their children who have provided notice about their experiences of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

If the state has adopted the Family Violence Option (optional certification) set forth in section 402(a)(7) to establish and enforce standards and procedures regarding the screening for, and identification of, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, it must provide information about the options available to current and potential beneficiaries and ensure that case workers and other agency personnel are provided with training regarding relevant state standards and procedures.

Connecticut certifies that it has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure TANF applicants and potential applicants are notified of and referred to resources that provide help with domestic violence, sexual harassment and/or assault, and stalking.

The Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program requires an interview and needs assessment that includes screening questions to identify if domestic violence is a challenge present in any form for each family. If domestic violence does exist and is made known at the interview, the family is offered the opportunity to connect with an agency Social Worker. The Social Worker can coordinate and provide funding for shelter services including staffing, food, and social services for victims, and offer preventative education programs to support victims and reduce incidence of abuse.

CT Safe Connect, Connecticut's Domestic Violence Resource Hub, offers confidential, safe, free, and voluntary services available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week by phone, text, chat, or email. Brochures are advertised and available for clients in all twelve DSS Service Centers that provide in-person services.

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Screening for domestic violence also takes place when clients are connected to Jobs First Employment Services and an employment barrier assessment is conducted. If domestic violence is discovered at this phase, the client is referred to the state's contractor responsible for assisting in barrier removal to prepare for employment. The contractor provides intensive solution-focused case management and care coordination and has access to a large network of community organizations and resources.

Staff that determine eligibility for the TFA program receive specialized training including domestic violence training including methods of ascertaining and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information and documentation related to applicants for assistance and their children who have provided notice about their experiences of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Training courses include:

- TFA Domestic Violence Verification and Monitoring
 - Covers the three-tiered verification rules, monitoring of domestic violence cases and general information for understanding domestic violence and its impact on clients.
- Intimate Partner Violence
 - Provides an overview of the history of intimate partner violence including the various types of abuse, risk and protective factors, understanding the scope of the problem, assessment and referrals for treatment and prevention strategies.
- Safely Pursuing Child Support
 - Family-centered strategies must not put women and children at greater risk of violence. Because the child support program services both parents, often around a crisis point, it has a unique responsibility - and a unique opportunity - to reduce the risk of family violence and help family violence survivors pursue child support safely. Collaborating with the programs that address fatherhood, domestic violence, and child welfare can simultaneously reduce family violence, increase father involvement, and improve child support outcomes. This training is designed to help child support workers identify and respond to safety issues that may arise for parents seeking child support services.
- The Effects of Trauma
 - Trauma can be caused by violence, hate crimes, sexual abuse, and other events. High rates of trauma are often linked with an increase of substance use, mental health problems, disease, violence, abuse, and suicide. This training helps learners define Trauma, recognize the importance of trauma-informed practices and why workers should use them.

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SECTION B - PART VII - DENIAL OF ASSISTANCE BASED ON ABSENCE FROM THE HOME

Sec. 408(a)(10) of the Social Security Act

(A) IN GENERAL. – A State to which a grant is made under section 403 shall not use any part of the grant to provide assistance for a minor child who has been, or is expected by a parent (or other caretaker relative) of the child to be, absent from the home for a period of 45 consecutive days or, at the option of the State, such period of not less than 30 and not more than 180 consecutive days as the State may provide for in the State plan submitted pursuant to section 402.

(B) STATE AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH GOOD CAUSE EXCEPTIONS. – The State may establish such good cause exceptions to subparagraph (A) as the State considers appropriate if such exceptions are provided for in the State plan submitted pursuant to section 402.

Except as limited by state statute or regulation, Connecticut opts to deny assistance to any minor child who is absent from the home for more than 180 consecutive days.

Connecticut also applies a good cause exception to this 180-day standard in cases where the consecutive days of absence are up to half of one calendar year because of split custody or other situations that cause a minor child to be absent from one home not more than 183 consecutive days.

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SECTION C

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
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CERTIFICATIONS

STATE PLAN CERTIFICATIONS

The State of Connecticut will operate a program to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; to end dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

The following certifications, in accordance with Sec. 402 (a) of the Social Security Act, are made by the Chief Executive officer of the State of Connecticut. The Chief Executive Officer of the state is Governor Ned Lamont.

CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL OPERATE A CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The state will operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D.

CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL OPERATE A FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The state will operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and the state will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under title XIX.

CERTIFICATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Department of Social Services is the agency responsible for the administration and supervision of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

The state consulted with and has given local governments and private sector organizations the opportunity to comment on the plan and the design of the services provided by the program described in this plan, so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations. The department also gives notice and seeks comments from the public any time it amends its regulations.

Anyone wishing to comment has had at least 45 days to submit comments on the substance of the plan and the design of such services.

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CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INDIANS WITH EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE

The state will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the state and not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the state program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the federal government.

CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE AGAINST PROGRAM FRAUD AND ABUSE

The state has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the state program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage.

CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO NOTIFY APPLICANTS OF SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, OR STALKING

The state has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure that applicants and potential applicants for TANF are notified of assistance made available by the state to victims of sexual harassment and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

OPTIONAL CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THAT THE STATE WILL SCREEN FOR AND IDENTIFY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

For individuals receiving assistance, the state has established and enforces standards and procedures to screen for and identify domestic violence.

Certified by Peter Hadler, Connecticut TANF Administrator, DSS Deputy Commissioner, and designee of Governor Ned Lamont:

Peter Hadler Digitally signed by Peter Hadler
DN: cn=Peter Hadler, o=DSS, ou=Deputy
Commissioner,
email=peter.hadler@ct.gov, c=US
Date: 2023.12.30 22:01:34 -05'00'

Peter Hadler

December 30, 2023

Date

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ADDENDUM A

TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE PAYMENT STANDARDS

Pursuant to section 236 of Public Act 22-118, effective July 1, 2022, there is a single statewide standard of need and uniform payment standards for TFA based on household size without regard to geographic region.

**TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE PAYMENT STANDARDS
EFFECTIVE October 1, 2023**

Family Size	Payment Standard
1	\$489
2	\$661
3	\$833
4	\$1,044
5	\$1,177
6	\$1,349
7	\$1,520
8	\$1,693

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ADDENDUM B

Notice for Public Review and Comment

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
STATE PLAN FFY 2024 - 2026**

The State of Connecticut Department of Social Services has revised the State Plan for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to plan for federal fiscal years 2024 through 2026. Connecticut has made revisions to reflect changes in program funding and program implementation.

The Department of Social Services is the agency responsible for the administration and coordination of the TANF program.

The TANF Plan 2024-2026 is available for review by visiting the Department of Services website: <http://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/State-Plans>

Anyone wishing to comment on the TANF Plan shall have from December 12, 2023, to January 26, 2024, to submit comments. Please direct comments and/or questions to: Daniel Giacomi, Director - Program Oversight and Grant Administration at Daniel.Giacomi@ct.gov before January 26, 2024.

The State of Connecticut is hereby consulting with local governments, tribal nations and private sector organizations and giving the opportunity to comment on the plan and the design of the services provided by the program described in this plan, so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations. The department also hereby gives notice and seeks comments from the public at this time and any time it amends its regulations.