

Grand Resources:

A Fact Sheet for Grandparent and Relative Caregivers to Help Access Support through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program

Introduction

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is often the only financial support available for grandfamilies like yours—families in which children are being raised by extended family members, like grandparents, and close family friends.

TANF may provide you and your grandfamily with support in several ways:

- Monthly cash to help meet the needs of your grandfamily or to meet the needs of just the children you're raising
- short-term help to meet a need like buying a crib or paying a utility bill
- a pathway to access other important supports, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/food stamps and Medicaid

TANF is a federal program, so it's available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam. However, it varies dramatically from state to state. States have a lot of flexibility to decide who is eligible and how much support to provide. States can even call TANF by different names. For these reasons, this fact sheet answers questions from caregivers like you in general terms that apply no matter where you live. This fact sheet also has a chart that has contact information so you can get information about the specific TANF program in your state.

Questions and Answers That Apply No Matter Where You Live

(1) I hear there are two types of TANF grants. What are they?

The two types of TANF grants are known as "child-only" and "family" grants. They may be called different things where you live.

Child-only grants

Child-only grants were designed to consider only the needs and income of the child. A child's income might include child



Photo by Pedra R.

support payments or a public benefit like Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Because most children have limited income, most relative caregivers can receive a child-only grant on behalf of the children in their care.

Child-only grants are usually smaller than family grants. Although they may not be enough to meet all the needs of the children you're raising, they can be a big help. The average grant is about \$8 per day for one child. This is the national average, so some states pay more and some pay less. All states, however, pay only slightly more for any additional children in the grandfamily.¹ In other words, the children you raise would not each get \$8 (on average) per day to meet their needs; only the first child would get the full amount.

Family grants

The second type of TANF grant you may be eligible for is a "family grant." If you meet your state's income guidelines, you can receive a grant that addresses your needs, as well as those of the children you're raising. These grants are limited under federal law to no more than 60-months and you typically have to meet requirements to work or look for work.

States can make exceptions to these work requirements and time limits. Many states make these exceptions and/or allow time extensions for caregivers who are over age 60, are needed in the home to care for an incapacitated/disabled household

member or are providing care for young children. Some states make other exceptions that might be specific to relative caregivers like you.

(2) For either type of grant, I've been told that I have to give my right to child support to the state, so the state can try to collect money from the parents. I don't want to make the parents mad and have them physically hurt my grandchild and me. What do I do?

There is a federal requirement that you give your right to child support to the state. However, you can ask for a "good cause" exception to this requirement. The federal government allows states to make these exceptions. "Good cause" usually includes your fear that the parents will be violent towards you and the children. Some states spell out in writing how to get one of these exceptions, and some don't, but all states can grant them.

(3) I'm not related by blood, marriage or adoption to the child I'm raising. He's my godchild (or my neighbor or the child of a family friend). Can I still get a family or a child-only TANF grant?

The ability to get TANF if you're not related by blood, marriage or adoption depends on where you live. The federal government allows states to define "relative" for TANF, and some define "relative" to include godparents and other family friends.

(4) If my granddaughter and I get TANF, can we also get Medicaid and SNAP/food stamps?

Yes. If you get TANF, you should be able to get other supports as well. In several states, TANF application forms are "combined application" forms. These forms usually include TANF, SNAP/food stamps, and Medicaid. Even if the forms are not combined, states often automatically enroll beneficiaries in SNAP/food stamps, child care assistance (if working or in school), and Medicaid. While these programs have different eligibility rules, many are not applied to TANF recipients.²

You should know that if you apply for SNAP at the same time as a TANF child-only grant, you will be asked about your income, in addition to the child's income. In most states, your income information is only used to figure out the amount of SNAP benefits you can get. The state will not use your income information for any other purpose.

(5) My friend told me she got some short term benefits through TANF to help her pay for her nephew's school supplies and bed. How can I get some help like that?

The federal government allows states to use TANF funds to pay for short-term benefits. Many states offer these benefits. Depending on where you live, they may be used to cover many different types of expenses, like a utility bill or a burial. These benefits are usually one-time benefits to help with a specific crisis or need, and will not last more than four months. To get this help, you do not have to meet work requirements.



Photo by Liz Larkin

(6) TANF could really help us, but I've never asked for help from the government and I don't want to start now. What should I do?

We often hear these types of comments and concerns from grandfamilies like yours. Caseworkers, judges, attorneys, and others can add to your concerns by saying insensitive things – things like "you're only raising the children for the money," or "family should take care of family without government help." Try to dismiss these ignorant comments. You and others like you have heroically stepped forward to care for children and keep families together. Congress said that one of the three primary reasons TANF was created was to help grandfamilies like yours.

Also know that most people – with the exception of the very wealthy – need help to meet the many needs of children they didn't expect to raise. Consider the costs. It will cost about \$240,000 for a middle-income couple to raise a child born in 2012 for 18 years.³ This does not even include the cost of college. The costs of extra food, clothes, child care, school supplies all add up.

Despite the costs of raising children and the fact that TANF was created to help relatives raising children, only 12 percent of grandfamilies access it.⁴ We want to see it help more families like yours. So, please get the support you deserve to meet the needs of the children you're raising. Think of it as helping the children, which is what TANF will do.

Questions to Ask Your State or Local TANF Caseworker

We hope we've given you a general idea of TANF benefits. Please now look at the chart, refer to your state TANF website, and call your state office. The person on the phone may be able to help you or refer you to someone in a local office who can.

- (1) *What are the state's income and other eligibility requirements for TANF family and child-only grants?*
- (2) *What kind of documents do I need in order to apply for a TANF family or child-only grant?*
- (3) *Does the state make exceptions to the TANF family grant's work requirements and time limits for caregivers like me? --*
 - Are there exceptions for caregivers who are over age 60?
 - Are there exceptions for caregivers who are needed in the home to care for an incapacitated/disabled household member?
 - Are there exceptions for caregivers who are providing care for young children?
 - Are there exceptions for relative caregivers in general?
 - Is there another exception that may apply to me?
- (4) *(If you need one), can I get an exception to the requirement to give the rights to collect child support to the state?*
- (5) *(If you're not related by blood, marriage or adoption), can I access a TANF family or child-only grant?*
- (6) *Can I apply for Medicaid, child care assistance, and SNAP/food stamps at the same time I apply for TANF?*
- (7) *Does the state offer any short term or one-time benefits to help pay for things like a crib or the rent that I owe?*
- (8) *Are there any other services or benefits, which are funded by TANF, that I may be able to access where I live? Are there any state programs funded by TANF that provide services or supports specifically for grandfamilies?*

Other Resources That May Help Answer your Questions

www.grandfactsheets.org

This website contains fact sheets for each state and the District of Columbia with state-specific data, services, and programs for grandfamilies. You may be able to find a local group that can help you access TANF and other services.

Kinship Navigators

Your state may also have people known as kinship navigators who can help you access TANF and other programs for you and your grandfamily. These navigators are a great resource, but they do not exist in all areas of the country. To see if there are navigators where you live, go to www.grandfamilies.org/KinshipNavigator-Programs/KinshipNavigatorProgramsSummaryAnalysis.aspx.

2-1-1

Many communities have these staffed phone lines that can help you access services. Check www.211.org to see if 2-1-1 exists in your area or look in your local phone book.

AARP Foundation Benefits QuickLINK website

Another resource that may help you see what benefits you can access is www.aarp.org/quicklink. This website can help link you with TANF, SNAP/food stamps, Medicaid, and other services. You can input your and your grandfamily's information in the QuickLINK tool and it will tell you what help you may be eligible to receive.

<http://insurekidsnow.gov/>

This is a great resource to find out more about Medicaid in your state. You can also call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (Toll Free).

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/apply.htm

This website will tell you more about SNAP/food stamps where you live. You can find contact information for local offices and the state hotline, along with each State's application.



Photo by Yesenia H.

Additional National Resources

www.gu.org – The Generations United website contains free fact sheets and publications concerning grandfamilies, and the latest federal public policy activity impacting the families.

www.grandfamilies.org – The Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center contains a database of laws and legislation impacting grandfamilies both inside and outside the foster care system for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, in addition to analyses of these laws and legislation.

www.aoa.gov – The National Family Caregiver Support Program may be able to provide you with support services through your local Area Agency on Aging if you are age 55 or older.

Through this program, AAAs or community agencies they contract with can provide up to five types of supportive services. Among those services is help learning about available services and gaining access to those services, support groups, training, respite care, and supplemental services that may include legal help. Even if you are younger than 55, you should contact the AAA, because it may use other funds to help younger caregivers. For contact information for your local AAA, visit www.n4a.org/about-n4a/?fa=aaa-title-VI or call the eldercare locator at 1-800-677-1116 (Toll-free).

www.aecf.org – The Annie E. Casey Foundation website contains publications and resources concerning grandfamilies, including a May 2012 Kids Count essay, *Stepping Up for Kids: what government and communities should do to support kinship families*.

www.brookdalefoundation.org – The Brookdale Foundation's Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) is a national network of support groups and services for grandfamilies. They have grantees in almost all states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

www.extension.org – An eXtension office in a land-grant university near you may be able help. They also have a lot of information on the Internet at www.extension.org/category/family_caregiving_grandparents_raising_grandchildren.

www.urban.org – The Urban Institute compiles both a data-

base and databooks of TANF rules. They are a bit complicated to use, but can be helpful in looking up the rules for your state. The databooks and database can be found at <http://www.urban.org/welfare/databook.cfm>

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Generations United is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. Generations United represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans. Since 1986, Generations United has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. Generations United acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between again, children, and youth organizations providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). TANF and Child Welfare Programs: Increased Data Sharing Could Improve Access to Benefits and Services (Washington, DC: GAO, October 2011). Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-2>

² Sheila Zedlewski, TANF and the Broader Safety Net. (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2012). Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412569-TANF-and-the-Broader-Safety-Net.pdf>

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture. Expenditures on Children by Families, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/CRC/crc2012.pdf>

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Stepping Up For Kids: what government and communities should do to support kinship families*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={642BF3F2-9A85-4C6B-83C8-A30F5D928E4D}>

State	Name of State TANF Program	Operating Agency Name	Website	Phone
Alabama	Family Assistance	Dept. of Human Resources	http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Family_Assistance/Family_Assistance_Program.aspx	(334) 242-1773 or (334) 242-1950
Alaska	ATAP (Alaska Temporary Assistance Program)	Dept. of Health & Social Services	http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/atap/default.aspx	(907) 465-3347
Arizona	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), Cash Assistance (CA)	Dept. of Economic Security	https://www.azdes.gov/cash_assistance/	(800) 352-8401 or (602) 542-9935
Arkansas	TEA (Transitional Employment Assistance)	Dept. of Workforce Services	http://dws.arkansas.gov/Programs/TANF/Programs.htm	(501) 682-1001
California	CalWORKS (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids)	Dept. of Social Services	http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calworks/	(916) 657-2128
Colorado	Colorado Works/TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services	https://www.colorado.gov/coloradworks http://coloradopeak.force.com/	(303) 866-6210
Connecticut	TFA (Temporary Family Assistance), Jobs First	Dept. of Social Services	http://www.ct.gov/dss/cwp/view.asp?A=2353&Q=305260	(855) 626-6632
Delaware	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Health and Social Services	http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dss/tanf.html https://assist.dhss.delaware.gov/	(302) 255-9500
District of Columbia	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services	http://dhs.dc.gov/service/temporary-cash-assistance-needy-families-tanf	(202) 671-4200
Florida	TCA (Temporary Cash Assistance)	Dept. of Economic Opportunity	http://www.floridajobs.org/office-directory/division-of-workforce-services/workforce-programs/welfare-transition-program http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/	(850) 245-7105
Georgia	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services	http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/temporary-assistance-needy-families	(877) 423-4746
Guam	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Public Health and Social Services	http://dphss.guam.gov/document/application-public-benefits-parts-1-2	(671) 735-7101
Hawaii	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services, Benefit, Employment & Support Services	http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/tanf/	(808) 586-4997
Idaho	TAFI (Temporary Assistance for Families in Idaho)	Dept. of Health and Welfare	http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/FoodCashAssistance/CashAssistanceforFamilies/tabid/1172/Default.aspx	(877) 456-1233
Illinois	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services	http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30358	(800) 843-6154
Indiana	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Family and Social Services Administration	http://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/2684.htm	(800) 403-0864
Iowa	FIP (Family Investment Program)	Dept. of Human Services	http://www.dhs.state.io.us/Consumers/Assistance_Programs/CashAssistance/FamilyInvestmentProgram.html	(800) 972-2017 or (515) 281-6899
Kansas	Successful Families Program (family grants) and GPCG (Grandparents as Caregivers Assistance or child-only grants)	Dept. for Children and Families	http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/ees/Pages/Cash/CashAssistance.aspx	(888) 369-4777
Kentucky	KTAP (Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program)	Dept. for Community Based Services, Division of Family Support	http://dhs.ky.gov/dchs/dfs/	(502) 564-3440
Louisiana	KCSP (Kinship Care Subsidy Program) and FITAP (Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program)	Dept. of Children and Family Services, Economic Stability Section	http://www.dss.state.la.us/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&nid=158&pnid=0&nid=294	(888) 524-3578
Maine	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office for Family Independence	http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/of/index.html	(800)-442-6003 or (207)-624-4168

State	Name of State TANF Program	Operating Agency Name	Website	Phone
Maryland	TCA (Temporary Cash Assistance)	Dept. of Human Resources	http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/?p=93	(800) 332-6347
Massachusetts	TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children)	Health and Human Services, Dept. of Transitional Assistance	http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dta/cash-assistance.html	(617)348-8500 or (877) 382-2363
Michigan	FIP (Family Independence Program)	Dept. of Human Services	http://www.michigan.gov/dhs/0,1607,7-124-5453--00.html https://www.mbridges.michigan.gov/access/	(855) 275-6424
Minnesota	MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program)	Dept. of Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity	http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/t4plg?lcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&DocName=id_004112	(651) 431-4000 or TTY/TDD service: (800) 627-3529
Mississippi	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services, Division of Economic Assistance	http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/ea_tanf.html	(800) 948-3050 or (601) 359-4419
Missouri	Temporary Assistance	Dept. of Social Services	http://www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/tempa.htm	(573) 751-3221 or (800) 392-1261
Montana	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Public Health and Human Services	http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/programsservices/publicassistanceprograms.shtml	(406) 444-1917
Nebraska	ADC (Aid to Dependent Children)	Dept. of Health and Human Services	http://dhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Pages/ffa_adc.aspx http://dhs.ne.gov/Children_Family_Services/AccessNebraska/Pages/accessnebraska_index.aspx	(800) 383-4278 Lincoln only: (402) 323-3900 Omaha only: (402) 595-1258
Nevada	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Health and Human Services, Division of Welfare and Supportive Services	https://dhwss.nv.gov/	(800) 992-0900 Northern Nevada: (775) 684-7200, Southern Nevada: (702) 486-1646
New Hampshire	FANF (Financial Assistance to Needy Families)	Dept. of Health and Human Services	http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/tanf/index.htm	(603) 271-9700
New Jersey	WFNJ (Work First New Jersey)	Dept. of Human Services, Division of Family Development	http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/programs/workfirst/	(800) 792-9773
New Mexico	NM Works	Human Services Dept.	http://www.hisd.state.nm.us/isd/tanf.html	(505) 827-7250
New York	FA (Family Assistance)	Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance	http://otda.ny.gov/programs/temporary-assistance/	(800) 342-3009
North Carolina	Work First	Dept. of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services	http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/workfirst/index.htm	(919) 527-6300
North Dakota	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services, Economic Assistance Policy Division	http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/tanfjobs.html	(800) 755-2716 or (701) 328-2332. Relay TTY: (800) 366-6888
Ohio	OWF (Ohio Works First)	Dept. of Job and Family Services	http://jfs.ohio.gov/ofam/index.stm	(614) 466-4815
Oklahoma	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services	http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/tanf/	(866) 411-1877 or (405) 521-4391
Oregon	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services	http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/assistance/pages/cash/tanf.aspx	Contact local office: http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/pages/localoffices.aspx
Pennsylvania	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Public Welfare	http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/foradults/cashassistance/tanfandmovingindependence/index.htm	(800) 692-7462
Puerto Rico	TANF (Programa de Ayuda Temporal para Familias Necesitadas)	Administración de Desarrollo Socioeconómico de la Familia (ADSEF)	http://servicios.adsef.pr.gov/index.aspx	(787) 289-7600 or 3-1-1
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Works	Dept. of Human Services	http://www.dhs.ri.gov/FamilieswithChildren/RhodeIslandWorks/tabid/195/Default.aspx	(401) 462-5300
South Carolina	FI (Family Independence)	Dept. of Social Services	https://dss.sc.gov/content/customers/finance/fin.aspx	(800) 616-1309
South Dakota	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Social Services	http://dss.sd.gov/tanf/	(605) 773-4678

State	Name of State TANF Program	Operating Agency Name	Website	Phone
Tennessee	Families First/TANF	Dept. of Human Services	http://tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/dfs_tanf.html	(866) 311-4287
Texas	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Health and Human Services Commission	http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/Help/Financial/temporary-assistance.shtml	2-1-1 or (877) 541-7905
Utah	Specified Relative Program	Dept. of Workforce Services	http://jobs.utah.gov/customereducation/services/financialhelp/family/sprelative.html	(866) 435-7414 Salt Lake Area: (801) 526-0950
Vermont	Reach Up	Dept. for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services	http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/reach_up	(800) 479-6151
Virgin Islands	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Human Services	http://www.dhs.gov.vi/financial_programs/TANF.html	St. Thomas: (340) 774-0930; St. Croix: (340) 773-2323; St. John: (340) 776-6334
Virginia	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Social Services	http://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/tanf/index.cgi	(800) 552-3431 or (804) 726-7385
Washington	TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	Dept. of Social and Health Services	http://www.dshs.wa.gov/onlineco/TANF_Support_Services.shtml http://www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare/	(877) 501-2233
West Virginia	WW WORKS	Dept. of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Children & Families	http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/family_assistance/wwworks.asp	(800) 642-8589 or (304) 558-0684
Wisconsin	W-2 (Wisconsin Works)	Dept. of Children and Families	http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/w2/	Milwaukee Only: (414) 227-4633, Rest of State (not Milwaukee): (855) 757-4539
Wyoming	POWER (Personal Opportunities With Employment Responsibilities)	Dept. of Family Services, Family Assistance Division	https://sites.google.com/a/wyo.gov/dftsweb/economic-assistance/power	(307) 777-5841