



Answers to Your Questions

TANF

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF IS TIME LIMITED

You may only receive cash assistance for a total of five years (60 months).

WHAT DOES THE TIME LIMIT MEAN?

You may only receive cash assistance as an adult for a total of five years in your lifetime, no matter where you live. Any month in which you receive cash benefits counts toward the five-year (60-month) time limit. If you leave and then come back on cash assistance, the count picks up where it left off. It does not start over. A relative who only receives cash for the children living with them has no time limit.

WHAT STOPS THE TIME LIMIT?

Your TANF 60-month clock runs unless:

- Your case number starts with 04 or P4 **and**
 - you work at least 30 hours per week **or**
 - you attend college full-time in a degree program and have at least a 2.5 grade point average on a 4-point scale. (Limit of 36 months not counted for this reason.)
- Your case number starts with 06 or P6 **and** you and the children's other parent work a total of at least 35 hours per week.
- You have a disabled child under 21 approved for a Home & Community-based Care Program waiver.
- We approve you to care for a child under age 18 or your spouse due to their medical condition.
- We approve you for a Family Violence Exclusion.

If you work enough hours, you will NEVER use up your time!

IS THERE A TIME LIMIT FOR MY SNAP BENEFITS AND MEDICAL?

No, the TANF five-year time limit does not affect SNAP or medical.

AFTER MY TIME LIMIT IS UP, CAN MY CHILDREN STILL GET CASH ASSISTANCE?

No. A parent who uses up their five years (60 months) of TANF cannot get cash benefits just for the children.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE 60-MONTH LIMIT

Your family might be able to receive more than the 60 months of TANF benefits if you or another adult in your case:

- have a pending SSI application and are determined disabled by us; or
- are determined unable to work at least 30 hours per week due to a medical condition; or
- are in an intensive program that prevents working at least 30 hours per week (includes DCFS, domestic or sexual violence, homeless services, mental health, substance abuse, and vocational rehabilitation programs); or
- are in an approved education or training program that will be finished within 6 months after the end of the 60 months; or
- are approved to care for a related child under 18 or spouse due to their medical condition; or
- have a disabled child under 21 who is approved for a Home and Community-based Care waiver.

WHAT MUST I DO TO GET OFF WELFARE?

If you are able to work, you must get a job as soon as possible or take part in activities that help you get a job, such as:
✓ Job-search ✓ Work experience ✓ Self-employment ✓ Work First ✓ Community service ✓ Basic education
✓ Vocational training ✓ Education beyond high school ✓ Foster parenting ✓ Self-sufficiency activities
such as: ■ treatment for alcohol or substance abuse ■ mental health treatment ■ domestic violence counseling

THE ACTIVITIES LISTED ABOVE DO NOT STOP THE CLOCK ON YOUR TIME LIMIT.

WHAT IS MY 1ST STEP?

Each family who gets TANF must have a plan to get off welfare. When you come to a DHS office, you will work out a plan with your worker. This plan is called a Responsibility and Services Plan and includes steps to finding a job.

To help you make your plan, your worker asks questions about you and your family. These questions help you look at areas where you are strong and areas where you need help. If you need help in an area (*e.g.*, child care, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic or sexual violence), the worker will connect you to those services. It is important to be as open and honest with your worker as possible.

You must follow everything in your plan. However, there are things that may stop you from doing so or your situation may change. If this happens, get in touch with your worker right away and talk about why you cannot follow your plan or why you need to change your plan. If you do not call your worker right away, your cash assistance may be stopped.

Remember, if you need help, let your worker know right away.

HOW CAN I GET HELP FINDING A JOB?

Your worker will help you choose the steps that will lead to a job. Some steps:

- If you have finished high school or have your GED and you have worked, you will need to look for a job right away. Your caseworker can link you to places that can help you find a job, such as an Illinois Employment & Training Center (IETC) or employment and training contractors.
- If you can't find a job or if you have not worked or finished high school, you may get into one of these programs:
 - ✓ A work activity
 - ✓ Adult Basic Education
 - ✓ GED classes
 - ✓ Vocational Training
 - ✓ English as a Second Language
- ✓ A degree program, if you also work 20 hours per week
- ✓ A combination of these school programs and work

DHS can help with child care, books, fees, supplies, and transportation. Your worker can give you information on classes and help you enroll in them. DHS can give you job leads and link you with other places that can help you find a job.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GO TO WORK?

When you go to work, DHS reduces your cash assistance only \$1 for every \$4 your job pays. While you are working and getting a smaller TANF grant, you still get medical help and SNAP benefits. The amount of your SNAP benefits depends on your household's income and the number of people eating together.

- DHS helps with job costs. This includes money for uniforms, tools, beginning transportation, and child care. DHS will also help you keep your job (*e.g.*, help with car repairs if your car breaks down).
- DHS helps you apply for the EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT. This credit gives you a tax break and lets you keep more of the money you earn.
- DHS' goal is to help you find a job so you can support your family and you no longer need welfare. If you work and want to get a better job, you can enroll in classes. DHS can help with transportation and child care costs while you go to school.

- When you go to work, tell your worker or the Change Report Hotline at 1-800-720-4166 (866-324-5553 TTY/Nextalk or 711 TTY Relay) within five days. This makes sure you get the right benefits. After that, you need to report your earnings to your DHS office once every six months. You will get reminders in the mail.

DO I HAVE TO PAY ANY OF MY CHILD CARE COSTS?

Yes, all working families pay part of their child care costs. The amount you pay is based on your income and the number of children in the family. As your pay goes up and you no longer can get cash assistance, you may still get help with child care. However, the part you pay will go up as your paycheck goes up.

WHAT ABOUT CHILD SUPPORT?

- If each month the other parent of your child pays at least \$100 in current child support, you receive up to \$100 of your child support payment. If you have two or more children on your case, and the other parent of your children pays at least \$200 in current child support, you receive up to \$200 of your child support payment. This \$100/\$200 pass through does not count against your TANF cash Benefits.
- If you have not established paternity or are not getting child support, you must work with DHS and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to establish paternity and receive child support.
- For more information on establishing paternity or help with getting child support, call the Department of Healthcare and Family Services' Child Support Helpline at 1-800-447-4278 (Voice) or 1-800-526-5812 (TTY).

WHAT IF I DON'T AGREE WITH AN ANSWER I GET FROM A DHS OFFICE?

If you don't agree with a decision, first talk to your worker. If you still think what is happening is wrong, ask your worker for an appeal form or call 1-800-435-0774 (Voice) or 1-312-793-2697 (TTY).

ARE THERE SPECIAL RULES?

Yes, some people have special rules.

- A relative who receives cash assistance only for the children living with them does not have to look for work. However, if they do work, DHS can help pay for child care.
- A single parent with a child younger than 12 months does not have to find or start a job until the child is 1 year old, unless they choose to. However, each month the person does not work during pregnancy or during the child's first year counts against the five-year (60 months) time limit.
- A parent age 60 or older does not have to find or start a job unless they choose to. However, they still may only receive cash benefits for a five-year (60 months) time limit.
- If both parents are in the home, one or both parents must either work or get into a work experience program for 35 hours or more per week. These hours per week may be split between both parents.
- A teen parent under age 18 must live at home. There are some exceptions to this policy, such as unsafe conditions. In addition, teens may receive TANF for 6 months while they attempt to meet this requirement.
- A parent under age 20 who doesn't have a high school diploma or GED must be in school or taking GED classes to receive TANF cash.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) WHO CAN GET IT?

FAMILY GROUP

- One parent with child(ren)
- Both parents living with their child(ren)
- A pregnant woman with no other child(ren)
- A pregnant woman & husband with no other child(ren)
- Children who live with a relative
- Children who live with a parent & stepparent

- Children who live with a parent who gets disability benefits (not SSI)
- Children who live with a parent who gets SSI benefits
- Children who live with a parent who has been convicted of a class 1 or class X drug offense
- Children who are citizens but whose parent(s) are not citizens or eligible immigrants

WHO CAN GET TANF?*

ALL

ALL

ALL

ALL

ALL or CHILDREN ONLY

ALL or CHILDREN AND PARENT
WITH STEPPARENT INCOME
COUNTED FOR SPOUSE.

ALL or CHILDREN ONLY
Income up to the Supplemental Security Income
(SSI) level is not counted

CHILDREN ONLY

CHILDREN ONLY

CHILDREN ONLY - PARENT'S INCOME COUNTED

CHILDREN MUST BE AGE 18 OR YOUNGER.

When only the children are receiving TANF, there is no time limit.

***specific eligibility requirements must be met**