

## What is a RSP?

RSP stands for Responsibility and Services Plan. **Your RSP is your contract with DHS.** You and your caseworker work together to write your RSP for your family. Your RSP should:

- List the steps you will take to provide for your family;
- List school, work or other activities you will do while you are on TANF; and
- List things you need help with to go to school or work, such as child care or transportation.

You and your caseworker will both sign your RSP. Keep your copy of your RSP handy.

Talk to your caseworker when you need changes to your RSP.

## What should I do if my caseworker and I don't agree on my plan to go to school?

If you disagree, you have the right to a **reconciliation** meeting with your caseworker.

If you still don't agree, a mediator will be brought in to make a final decision.

## For more information:

**Call or visit your Illinois Department of Human Services' Family Community Resource Center (FCRC).**

If you have questions about any Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) program, call or visit your FCRC. We will answer your questions. If you do not know where your FCRC is or if you are unable to go there, you may call the automated helpline 24 hours a day at:

**1-800-843-6154**

(866) 324-5553 TTY/Nextalk or 711 Illinois Relay

You may speak to a representative between:  
**8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.**  
**Monday - Friday** (except state holidays)

For answers to your questions, you may also write:

**Illinois Department of Human Services**  
Bureau of Customer Support and Services  
600 E. Ash, Bldg 500-5th Floor  
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Visit our website at:

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/contactus>



Programs, activities and employment opportunities in the Illinois Department of Human Services are open and accessible to any individual or group without regard to age, sex, race, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion. The department is an equal opportunity employer and practices affirmative action and reasonable accommodation programs.

**DHS 4709 (R-05-17) Know Your Opportunities - Going to College**  
Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois.  
3000 copies P.O. #17-1756



State of Illinois  
Department of Human Services

# Know Your Opportunities

For  
Going to College



**TANF**  
**Single Parent**  
**Families**



## Should I go to college?

Going to college is a personal decision. You and you alone control the things that lead to your personal success.

Keep in mind that full-time college with a 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale stops the TANF clock. Going to college part-time won't stop the clock, but it may count as TANF work and training activity if it is included in your RSP.

Once you've decided to go to college DHS may be able to help.

### Going to college can help you earn more money.

People with a college education usually earn more money than people with only a high school diploma.

### Going to college can help you start a career.

Getting a college education may open doors to better jobs with good benefits.

### Going to college sets an example for your children.

Children do better in school when their parents have more education.



## Can I go to college while I get TANF?

**YES.** These are the rules for going to college:

- You must have a high school diploma or GED.
- You must be accepted to a college program for a 2-year degree (Associate's degree) or a 4-year degree (Bachelor's degree).
- You must have college as part of your Responsibility and Services Plan, or RSP. (See "What is a RSP?" section in this brochure).
- You must have your caseworker's approval.

*The education and training rules are different for teen parents and for two-parent families. Ask your caseworker about these rules*

## Will going to college affect my TANF clock?

**YES.** Attending **college full-time** can stop your 60-month TANF clock **if** you maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. This is a C+ average. (You will not have a work requirement).

- If you have more than one semester when your grades **fall below a 2.5** grade point average, you will have a work requirement the following term.
- You can stop your TANF clock a maximum of 36 months by going to college full-time.

If you go to **college part-time**, this will not stop your 60-month TANF clock.

## Can I get help paying for college tuition?

**DHS does not pay for tuition**, but you can apply for other kinds of financial aid to help you pay for college. There are four different kinds of financial aid for college:

- **Grants** are money that is given to students who have financial need. Federal and state governments and colleges all give grants to students. You do not need to pay back grants when you finish college.
- **Scholarships** are money that is given to students for things such as getting good grades in high school or having a special talent. You do not need to pay back scholarship money when you finish college.
- **Loans** are money that you borrow to pay for school. If you take out loans to help pay for your education, you must pay all of it back, plus interest, after you finish college. **You must pay back loans even if you drop out of college.**
- **Work Study Programs** are for students who need to earn money while they are going to school. These programs are available at most colleges.

*Ask the college you are planning to attend how to apply for financial aid.*

## Can I get help with child care, school fees and transportation?

**YES.** DHS can help you pay for things you need to go to work or college. These include:

- Child care,
- Special uniforms,
- Books and school supplies, and
- Transportation.

Talk to your caseworker if you need these things.

You must have college listed in your RSP to get child care, school fees or transportation help to go to college.