

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/Nexttalk or 711 TTY Relay

You may speak to a representative between:

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Monday - Friday (except state holidays)

For answers to your questions, you may also write:

Illinois Department of Human Services
Bureau of Customer and Support Services
100 South Grand Avenue East, 2nd Floor
Springfield, Illinois 62762

Visit our website at:

www.dhs.state.il.us

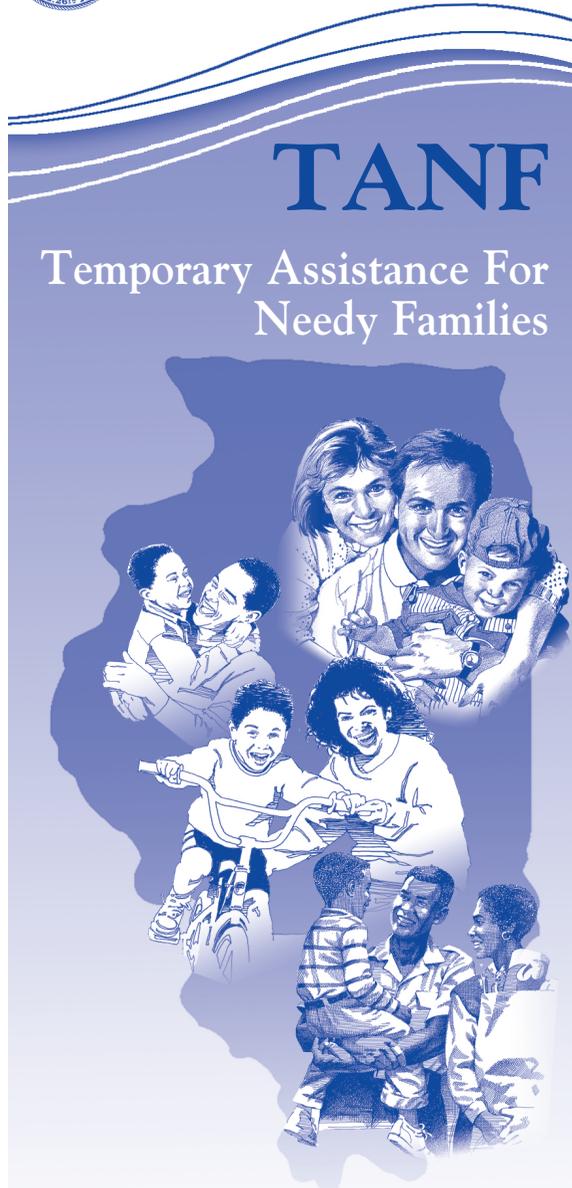
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IDHS 586 (R-09-19) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Printed by authority of the State of Illinois.
3,000 copies P.O.#20-0516



State of Illinois
Department of Human Services



Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) Program

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is run by the Illinois Department of Human Services. The program is for families with children and pregnant women who need temporary cash assistance. Those receiving TANF also receive medical assistance. Most TANF families also receive SNAP benefits to buy food.

Who Qualifies For TANF

To qualify for TANF, you must:

- Be pregnant or have a child under age 19 living with you. If the child is age 18, he/she must be a full-time high school student. A pregnant woman with no other children (and her spouse, if he lives with her) can get assistance;
- Live in Illinois (if you are homeless, you can still qualify); and
- Be a U.S. citizen or meet certain immigration requirements (ask your caseworker what they are). If your children qualify as citizens or immigrants but you do not, you may receive TANF just for your children.
- Develop a Responsibility and Services Plan (RSP).

You do not qualify for TANF if you have been convicted of certain felony offenses, violated your probation or parole, refuse to work or pursue child support enforcement, withhold information needed to determine eligibility, or have used up your five years of TANF benefits.

How To Apply

You can apply for TANF at your local Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Family Community Resource Center (FCRC). If you are homeless, go to the nearest FCRC. If you don't know where to go, you may call the automated helpline 24 hours a day at 1-800-843-6154 (voice) or (866) 324-5553 TTY/Nexttalk or 711 TTY Relay. You may speak to a representative between 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday (except state holidays). You can also apply online by going to www.dhs.state.il.us and selecting the "Apply Online" option. You have a choice of submitting your application electronically, or printing out a paper form to mail, fax, or take to your FCRC. The web site can tell you which FCRC serves your area.

You will be asked to come to the FCRC for an interview. At the interview a caseworker will ask you questions and enter your answers into a computer. The caseworker will then print out the application with your answers on it and have you sign it. The caseworker will ask to see proof of the information you give, such as the children's birth certificates (to show they are related to you), Social Security cards for everyone, paycheck stubs and proof of other income. There is a limit to how much money you can have and still qualify for TANF. The caseworker may also ask for proof of other things to show you qualify for assistance. If you need help getting this proof, your caseworker can help you if you ask.

IDHS will make a decision on your application and notify you in writing within 45 days.

If Your Application Is Denied

If the notice says your application is turned down and you think the decision is wrong, you can appeal and ask for a fair hearing. At the hearing, you can explain why you think your application should be approved. You must file your appeal in writing or by calling toll free 1-800-435-0774 (voice) or (866) 324-5553 TTY/Nextalk or 711 TTY Relay. For more information about your right to appeal, ask your caseworker or call the toll-free number on the back of this brochure.

If Your Application Is Approved

If your application is approved, you will receive monthly cash and medical benefits as long as you qualify for TANF. The amount of your cash benefits depends on the size of your family and the county where you live. If you also get money from another source, your benefits may be less than the full payment level.

Your cash benefits will be issued electronically through an Illinois Link card or deposited directly into your bank account. In some situations, a check may be mailed to you at your home.

You will also receive a medical card that lets you take part in the Healthcare and Family Services' Medical Assistance program. You can use the medical card to pay for most medical services, as long as the provider accepts the card. If you are eligible, your first medical card may cover your family's medical expenses for up to three months before the month you applied.

Family planning services are covered by the medical card. Ask your doctor about ways to plan how many children you want and when you want to have them.

If you and your children are not eligible for cash benefits, you may still qualify for medical assistance. Ask your caseworker or call the toll-free number on the back of this brochure for more information.

Lifetime Limit of 60 Months (Five Years) of Cash Benefits

Adults age 18 and older and their children can get cash benefits for only 60 months. This includes months that you got TANF cash benefits in another state. This is your lifetime limit. You can never start over.

We will not count a month if you reported earnings for that month and you work an average of 30 hours or more per week. If you are a two-parent family, you must work 35 hours per week. Working is one way you can get cash benefits that do not use up your time. For one-parent families, we will not count any month during which you are a full-time student in college with at least a 2.5 grade point average (on a 4.0 scale). Also, a month doesn't count if we have approved you to care for (1) your child under 18 or spouse due to their medical condition or (2) your disabled child under 21 who has a Home and Community-based Care Program waiver for medically fragile/technology-dependent children under age 21 or (3) if we have approved you for a family violence exclusion.

When you reach your 60-month limit, you and your children cannot get any more cash benefits. You can still get medical assistance and SNAP benefits. If you care for children for whom you are not the parent, you can still get cash for just the children after your time runs out.

If you are not in the cash case and you only get cash benefits for a child(ren), you can get the benefits until he/she is 19 (or 18 and not in school). If you are the child(ren)'s parent, you cannot choose to be left out of the cash case to avoid the time limit.

Exceptions To The 60-Month Limit

Your family might be able to receive more than 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 and 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 who is approved for a Home and Community-based Care Waiver for medically fragile/technology-dependent children under age 21.

If you think you may qualify and want to apply for an exception, you must file a written request.

Work Requirement

If you are a single parent who is able to work and your youngest child is under age 6, you must work or participate in a work activity for at least 20 hours per week. If you are a single parent who is able to work and your youngest child is age 6 or older, you must work or participate in a work activity for at least 30 hours per week. Two-parent families are required to work 35 hours per week. If you work, you must report your earnings every six months. Your cash benefits are reduced only \$1 for every \$4 you earn, and the department helps pay for necessary child care.

Work and training activities include: unpaid work experience, on-the-job training, job search, community service programs, vocational education, subsidized employment, work-study, VISTA and Job Corps. Activities that address barriers to employment include treatment programs for domestic or sexual violence, substance abuse, and mental health disorders. For parents under age 20, attending high school or GED classes counts as a work activity. An adult that does not currently have a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate can participate in an Adult GED Program that will count as a core activity work requirement.

Work Exemptions

You do not have to work or be in a work activity if you are age 60 or older, or you care for a child under age one, or you receive TANF only for a child and you are not the child's parent. If you are a parent under age 20 and don't have a high school diploma or GED, you cannot be exempt to care for a child under age one.

You Will Lose Your Cash Benefits If You Don't Cooperate With Your Plan Without a Good Reason

You must do the things in your plan to receive your cash benefits. This includes three main requirements: giving the required information about your children's absent parent and doing what is needed to get child support, making sure your children go to school, and working or participating in a work, training, or other self-sufficiency activity. If you fail to do any of these things without a good reason, you will be sanctioned.

- When you are sanctioned, your cash benefits will be reduced by 7.5%. If you cooperate, they will be restored right away.

When you fail to cooperate with Child Support Enforcement, your name will be taken off your medical card, and you will not get medical assistance until you cooperate, unless you are pregnant.

Other Things You Must Do To Stay Eligible

Tell your caseworker when you get a job.

Tell your caseworker when you move. If you are homeless, tell us how we can reach you. If your caseworker cannot find you, your benefits will stop.

Keep all your appointments with department staff. If you cannot keep an appointment for a good reason, be sure to contact your caseworker right away.

Report all changes in your family situation to your caseworker. A change may affect how much your benefits should be. If you get more benefits than you should, you will have to pay them back or they will be deducted from your future monthly benefits.

Tell your caseworker if you think you received the wrong amount of benefits.

Return the report forms we send you. If you are working, you will be asked to send proof of your earnings with the report form.

Additional Help

If you need child care, ask your caseworker how to apply for help in locating a qualified provider and paying for the care. If you have a crisis situation or become homeless, talk to your caseworker. Ask for a Crisis Assistance application. The department may be able to help you meet your needs during this difficult time.

Whether or not you qualify for TANF, you may be eligible for SNAP benefits. You can use SNAP to buy food for your family. If your family is in immediate need of food, your SNAP application may be processed right away. You could receive your SNAP benefits within a few days.