



STATE OF MAINE

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) STATE PLAN

Effective January 1, 2021

**PREPARED BY:
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE FOR FAMILY INDEPENDENCE**

STATE OF MAINE
STATE PLAN FOR TITLE IV-A OF THE
SOCIAL SECURITY ACT
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

IV-A

STATE OF MAINE

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SECTION I: TANF State Plan Renewal**For the Period January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2023.**

This state plan was developed in accordance with section 402 of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)(Public Law 104-193) and reflects the changes in work requirements outlined in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA). The information submitted below restates the pertinent requirements of section 402, the regulations at 45 CFR Parts 261, 262, 263 and 265, and provides information that outlines the provisions of the State of Maine's program.

Maine submits this state plan to renew its status as an eligible state. The plan renewal is a continuation of the state plan initially submitted on October 1, 1996 and found to be complete on December 27, 1996 and approved funding under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as of November 1996.

Section II: TANF State Plan Requirements

The information in this section lists the State Plan requirements for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program pursuant to Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, section 402. Information detailing the provisions of Maine's TANF program follows each State Plan requirement. Unless otherwise specifically indicated, the references to sections of law in this document are to Title IV-A of the Social Security Act.

General Provisions (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(A))

Program Assistance and Services (42 U.S.C.602(a)(1)(A)(i))

Describe how the state will "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 the job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient."

TANF Program

- The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) calls its financial assistance program Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The jobs preparation program is called Additional Support for Training and Employment (ASPIRE). The programs work together to help families move from welfare to work. The eligibility criteria for TANF are set in Maine statute at M.R.S.A., Title 22, Ch. 1053-B, <http://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22ch1053-Bsec0.html>. The Department's current regulations are available at Ch. 331 Maine Public Assistance Manual, <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/144/144c331.docx>. TANF provides temporary financial assistance to needy, dependent children and their parents (or specified relatives) to meet their basic needs while being cared for in their homes.
- Simultaneously, ASPIRE provides case management and support services to help families prepare for, find, and keep employment; while the Division of Child Support Enforcement and Recovery (DSER) helps families establish paternity and secure financial and medical support.

In accordance with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), the State of Maine has developed its TANF State Plan based upon the four major purposes of TANF, which are to:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own home or in the home of a relative;
- End dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;

- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

All individuals have the right to apply for any assistance without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, gender orientation, religion, or disability. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, no qualified individual with a disability will, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services or be subjected to discrimination by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

Additionally, applicants and recipients are assured confidentiality, equitable and courteous treatment and may appeal decisions and have fair hearings should they disagree with any action taken affecting their benefit.

Eligibility Requirements for the Maine Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program:

An eligible family must meet age, relationship, citizenship, alien status, residency, Social Security Number compliance and cooperation requirements, as well as remain within the income and resource limits of the program. The eligible family must complete a TANF Orientation session and sign a Family Contract. Specific criteria are in the Maine Public Assistance Manual available at <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/144/144c331.docx>

TANF Program Application

All individuals have the right to file an application for TANF or Parents as Scholars (PaS) benefits. An application for TANF or PaS is considered an application for Medicaid. Eligibility for financial assistance and for Medicaid is determined separately. Benefits will be calculated from the date of application or from the date of statutory eligibility, whichever occurs later.

The applicant or their representative must complete and sign, under penalty of perjury, an application and be interviewed. Unless granted good cause, all mandatory ASPIRE applicants must complete an orientation within thirty (30) days of application and must sign a Family Contract. The Family Contract states the responsibilities of the parties to the agreement including, but not limited to, cooperation in child support enforcement and determination of paternity, the requirements of ASPIRE Program participation, and referral to parenting activities and health care services. The Family Contract is amended to include individual employability plans as filing unit members enter the ASPIRE program and when participation review occurs. Eligibility will be determined after both the initial interview and the orientation meeting are completed. A decision will be made within 30 days.

When circumstances beyond the control of an applicant or mandatory ASPIRE participant prevents them from completing an orientation within 30 days, the Department may grant good cause in accordance with the TANF-ASPIRE Rules located at 10-144 Ch. 607.

Non-Financial Eligibility Requirements

Age

The child must be an individual who has not attained 18 years of age; or has not attained 19 years of age and is a full-time student in a secondary school (or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training. Sec. 419(2).

Residence

All recipients must be living in Maine voluntarily with the intent to make Maine their home.

Citizenship

All TANF recipients must be U.S. citizens, or a "qualified alien" as defined in the provisions of §431 of the PRWORA, as amended (8 U.S.C. § 1641). All others are considered "non-qualified."

Social Security Number Compliance

All individuals applying for or receiving TANF or PaS must furnish the agency with a Social Security Number or proof of application for a Number and furnish the Number when received.

Relationship

In order to be eligible for TANF, a child must be living with a specified relative, in a home maintained by that relative; and both elements must be expected to continue at least 30 days beyond the date of application. A specified relative is a relative by blood (to the 5th degree), marriage, or adoption or an adult who has a legal relationship with the child. Legal relationship includes legal guardians and Indian custodians as defined in the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C. §1903 (6).

Unmarried parents under the age of 18 and their children living with them will be assisted only if residing with their parent, legal guardian or other adult relative, or in an adult supervised arrangement as identified in Section 408(a)(5) of the Social Security Act.

Temporary Absence

Temporary absence from the home of the child or specified relative for more than 45 days is allowed under certain circumstances, provided that the specified relative has full responsibility

for the supervision and guidance of the child and provided that any delegation of authority is temporary, voluntary and revocable. The child or specified relative must return home at the completion of the reason for separation, unless there is good cause for the person to be out of the home.

Child Support

Cooperation with the Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery (DSER) is required as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance.

Non-Payment Situations

Maine will deny assistance for 10 years to a person found by a hearings officer or Court to have made fraudulent statements or representation with respect to identification or place of residence in order to obtain specified types of assistance in two or more states.

Lifetime Time Limits on TANF Cash Assistance

TANF cash assistance is intended to be a temporary means of support while families work towards self-sufficiency. Federal TANF cash assistance beyond 60 months will be provided to no more than 20% of the total caseload, as permitted by TANF regulations. States may continue benefits to families using State only funding.

A family in Maine may not receive TANF assistance for longer than 60 months in a lifetime except in those cases in which the department has determined that the family qualifies for an exemption or an extension. All extensions are temporary.

The Time Limit Does Not Apply to:

- An adult living in Indian Territory or Trust lands;
- Pregnant or minor parents who are not the head of household;
- Receipt of non-cash assistance.

Extensions to the Time Limit:

- Domestic Violence;
- Disability;
- Caring for a Significantly Disabled Family Member;
- Participation in a Training or Education Program;
- Working Families;
- Pregnancy;
- Loss of Job;
- Occurrence of an Emergency Situation;

- Earnings Disregard.

Financial Eligibility

Consideration is given to the income and assets of all members of the filing unit as well as excluded stepparents, sponsors of aliens, sanctioned parents and parents or legal guardians of minor parents.

Income

Income includes earned and unearned income as well as potential income available to members of the filing unit. Gross and net income limits are set by rule.

Assets

Eligibility is limited to families whose available resources total less than \$2,000. The values of the home and a primary vehicle are excluded.

Earned Income Disregards

A Work-Related Disregard disregards a portion of the earned income when determining income eligibility and a cash benefit amount. The first \$108 and 50 percent of the remaining income, dependent care costs, and income of minor family members and dependent children in an assistance unit are disregarded.

A Step Disregard disregards a portion of earned income when determining a cash benefit amount. The Step disregard may be used for up to six months. Months used are not required to be consecutive.

- Step one disregards 100% of the earned income for the individual, for a maximum of three months.
- Step two disregards 75% of the earned income for the individual, for a maximum of three months.

An individual can utilize either the Work Related or Step disregard in a benefit month, but not both.

Temporary Census Bureau employment income is disregarded in its entirety when determining income eligibility and a cash benefit amount.

Prospective Budgeting

Eligibility and the benefit are determined for a specific benefit month based on the best estimate of all nonfinancial, asset, and financial criteria that exist and are expected to exist for that month. Benefits are determined prospectively.

Benefit Determination & Delivery

Payment standards are based on a Standard of Need (SON). To determine eligibility for cash assistance, the total of a family's countable earned income (after disregards) and unearned income is compared with the appropriate assistance payment standard for the unit. See Attachment A.

The benefit amount for the month of application is prorated based on the number of days remaining in the month after the application file date.

TANF benefits are delivered by means of an electronic benefit transfer system. Recipients may also choose to have their cash benefits directly deposited into their financial institution accounts or paid to a third-party vendor, such as a landlord.

See <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/144/144c331.docx> Maine Public Assistance Manual.

Work Requirements (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(ii))

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.

All parents and specified relatives who request and receive assistance are required to sign a Family Contract Amendment (FCA) and participate, unless temporarily exempt, in approved work-related activities. The number of hours a parent or specified relative must participate weekly varies depending on the family circumstances.

Single parent families shall participate for a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week for parents whose youngest child in the home is under the age of six (6), and for a minimum of thirty (30) hours per week for parents whose youngest child in the home is six (6) years of age or older, in one of the work activities described below to help the parent obtain stable full-time paid employment.

In families consisting of two parents, who are not exempt from TANF work requirements, and child care is not paid for, the parents must participate for a combined minimum of thirty-five (35) hours per week during the month, not fewer than thirty (30) hours per week of which are attributable to one or more of the following listed work activities. When child care is paid for the two parents must participate for a combined minimum of fifty (55) hours per week during the month, not fewer than fifty (50) hours per week of which are attributable to one or more of the following listed work activities.

Single parents whose children are five (5) years of age or older and two parent family members who are job ready must participate in individual or group job search, depending on their needs and resources of the local ASPIRE offices.

Maine provides written and/or oral notice of the availability of temporary good cause exemptions from work or work-related activities and from child support requirements to victims of domestic violence at each application and review of eligibility for TANF.

Work-Related Activities:

The following work-related activities are countable towards meeting participation requirements and are considered “core” activities. To fully meet participation requirements, one parent families must participate in core activities for a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week. Two parent families must participate in core activities for a minimum of thirty (30) or fifty (50) hours per week.

- Paid employment, including subsidized options such as apprenticeship or OJT (On the Job Training), with private and public employers, student work study, and self-employment.
- Vocational education training, which includes hours spent in class time required to achieve a credential required for sustainable work, including an Associate’s Degree or Bachelor’s degree. This also includes high school diploma or equivalency completion, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, college courses and degree attainment programs, short term training, adult education certificate courses, technical/trades courses or technical training that is employer sponsored. One hour of study time is included toward participation for every hour of classroom participation.
- Work Experience Placements, which includes working in a non-profit agency work site (community service) and in some cases in a private business in order to develop work skills and preparedness
- Job Search, which may include structured group classes or individual job search activities.
- Job Readiness, which includes activities and services that help an individual prepare for work. This may include treatment or individualized job development and work experience placement assistance.
- Providing Child Care Services to an individual who is participating in a community service program.

Individuals may either meet their full participation requirement with all core activities listed above or they may participate in the following activities for their additional required hours. These activities are “non-core” activities.

- Additional education activities, which include adult education work for those over 20 who have not achieved a high diploma or equivalency.

- Education Directly Related to Employment- English for Speakers of Other Languages courses, and any other training or coursework that is meant to improve an individual's employability or employment advancement.

Individuals who participate in a work experience placement or community service program may not be required to participate for more than the maximum number of hours per week allowable by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). This hourly requirement is calculated by dividing the individual's total TANF and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit by minimum wage. If the resulting number is less than the minimum number of hours required by federal and/or state law, the individual may participate in non-core activities to meet their full participation requirement.

Temporary Exemptions from Participation for All Families

An individual may request to be exempt from participation with the ASPIRE Program. The allowable exemptions include:

- Caring for a child under one (1): A recipient who is the single custodial parent of a child under one year of age and is personally providing care for that child may choose an exemption that is limited to no more than 12 months per single custodial parent. If the custodial parent is under twenty (20) years old and has not completed high school or its equivalent they may not choose this exemption.
- Caring for a disabled family member: A parent or specified relative needed in the home to provide full time care for a disabled family member also living in the home may choose this exemption.
- Individuals who are either receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or who are a Vista volunteer under the Federal Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 are also not required to work with the ASPIRE Program. They may choose to voluntarily participate with the program and receive ASPIRE services.

Work Requirements (42 U.S.C.602(a)(1)(A)(iii))

Ensure that parents and caretaker relatives receiving assistance under the program engage in work activities in accordance with section 4072.

Non-Compliance with Work Requirements

When a mandatory ASPIRE participant has refused or failed without good cause to comply with the regulations of the ASPIRE Program, accept employment, or has terminated employment or reduced earnings, the following shall apply:

During the first ninety (90) days of noncompliance with work requirements, the amount of cash assistance to which an otherwise eligible family is entitled is reduced by the portion of the family's benefit attributable to the noncompliant parent.

After ninety (90) days of noncompliance or a subsequent instance of noncompliance, the Department terminates cash assistance to the entire family. The penalty becomes effective on the next benefit month after the adverse action period.

Confidentiality (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(A)(iv))

Take 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.

Federal and State rules provide for the basic rights and dignity of all applicants or recipients of financial services regarding their confidentiality.

Information about TANF applicants and recipients is maintained in a confidential manner and only released under certain circumstances. Information requested from outside the Office for Family Independence (OFI) shall be released by permission by the client or by subpoena. The release of information shall be limited to programs which establish eligibility and provide services through agencies subject to comparable standards of confidentiality.

Prevention and Reduction of Out-of-wedlock and Adolescent Pregnancies (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(A)(v))

Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies.

Maine's TANF program continues to collaborate with and support the efforts of other State agencies and local groups on issues pertinent to adolescent health and specifically to reduce teen pregnancy and unintended births. Those agencies include the Teen and Young Adult Health Program administered by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Maine uses TANF funding for a variety of programs that aim to prevent out of wedlock pregnancies. For example, Maine uses TANF to support programs that provide training and technical assistance to schools and community-based organizations who are delivering evidence-based programming to teenagers that includes topics such as pregnancy prevention, abstinence, and healthy relationships. Maine also uses TANF funds to support domestic violence and sexual assault providers who provide educational programming to children from pre-kindergarten through college. Topics include healthy relationships, and others that assist children to make positive relationship decisions and thus reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Maine directs TANF funds to support vulnerable youth who are more susceptible to out-of-wedlock and adolescent pregnancies, such as homeless youth. These programs provide for the youth's basic needs and provide the resources and support they need to improve their lives, and thus lower the incidence teenage pregnancies.

The Department's Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery has worked with Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to produce pamphlets placing emphasis on rights and responsibilities of both male and female parents.

Prevention of Statutory Rape and (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(A)(vi))

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 extended in scope to include men.

The State of Maine contracts with the Maine Coalition against Sexual Assault with the initiative of prevention and intervention of sexual violence and child sexual abuse. This includes statutory rape. The contract includes programs that offer prevention, intervention, and systems advocacy as well as a wide range of resources and training programs to inform sexual violence victims/survivors and their supporters, social service providers, educators, law enforcement, students and members of the public. Specific services that may prevent statutory rape include:

- The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) – Specially trained staff who assist sexual assault survivors as they decide whether to report an incident to the authorities. If they do, the advocate will help them to navigate the criminal justice system. The advocate works alongside with law enforcement, prosecutors and medical professionals to offer a coordinated response.
- Community Education and Outreach – Staff offer trainings on sexual violence awareness and identify the signs of sexual assault to local community organizations, businesses, and service providers. Providers will conduct training for any group, including providing training geared towards men. Trainings offered to parents, caregivers, and others serving children are for both men and women.
- Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) – CACs provide a coordinated response to children that have survived sexual assault. CACs allow law enforcement, advocates, medical professionals, and other providers to work together more efficiently, and ensures the child only has to tell their story once. CACs can work with the entire family, including the fathers when appropriate.
- School-Based Education – Sexual assault providers offer educational curriculum to children from pre-Kindergarten through college. Age appropriate curriculum teach children about personal space, healthy relationships, the meaning of consent, among other topics. School based programs serve both men and women. Components that are particularly helpful for men include understanding consent, gender stereotypes, and bystander intervention.

Prevent Access to Assistance in a Restricted location (42 U.S.C. 602 (a)(1)(A)(vii))

How the state intends to implement policies and procedures to prevent access to assistance through electronic benefit transfer transactions in an automated teller machine or point-of-sale device located in a place described in section 408(a)(12), including a plan to ensure that recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance.

Under penalty of an intentional program violation, state law restricts using the cash benefits on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards in:

- a retail establishment where 50% or more of the gross revenue of the establishment is derived from the sale of liquor;
- a gambling facility, except that use of the EBT system is permitted in any portion of the premises of a gambling facility that is set aside separately for the sale primarily of staple foods; or
- a retail establishment that provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment.

To further ensure the integrity of EBT card use, Maine also blocks TANF cash transactions at restricted locations, monitors EBT cash transactions to track misuse on a database, provides recipients with an acknowledgement form with information on appropriate use of TANF, discusses cash and EBT cards and the penalties for misuse at application and redetermination.

Low-income families will still be able to access benefits at grocery stores, restaurants, gas stations, and other establishments. Recipients are able to access their cash benefits at Automated Teller Machines (ATM) or Point of Sale (POS) machines in the same manner as other citizens can access their banked funds.

If a TANF recipient reports there is no place other than a restricted location to access their benefit, eligibility staff will work with the recipient to attempt to identify other locations for use by the recipient. This is done on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the recipient's specific circumstances. If an eligibility specialist determines that a recipient does not have adequate access to TANF cash benefits, options such as issuing the cash benefit via deposit into the recipient's bank account or to a third-party payee will be explored.

Ensure Access to Benefits (42 U.S.C. 602 (a)(1)(A)(viii))

Explanation of how the state plans to ensure that recipients of assistance have access to using or withdrawing assistance with minimal fees or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available.

Recipients of TANF assistance have adequate access to using or withdrawing their benefits with minimal fees or charges, including the opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges outside of these restrictions. TANF recipients have two free ATM withdrawals each month at

ATMs which do not surcharge. If a TANF recipient reports he or she is unable to access an ATM that does not surcharge, the Department will work with that recipient to locate an acceptable alternative.

Information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving TANF assistance is made publicly available.

Recipients of TANF cash assistance receive information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic funds transfer in a brochure that accompanies the EBT card, in the TANF Handbook given to each new TANF applicant and via the Pine Tree Card website at www.pinetreecard.com.

SECTION III: Special Provisions (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(B))

Residence (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(B)(i))

The document shall indicate 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.

Families moving to Maine from another state are not treated differently than other families.

Citizens and Non-citizens (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(B)(ii))

The document shall indicate 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.

As described above, TANF recipients in Maine must be U.S. citizens or qualified aliens under PRWORA. Additionally, Maine uses separate State funds to provide assistance to “non-qualified aliens.” To be eligible, families must meet one of the following conditions:

- Was receiving such assistance on December 1, 2012 or had an application pending for such assistance on that date.
- Is elderly or disabled;
- Is a victim of domestic violence;
- Experiencing other hardship, such as time necessary to obtain proper work documentation.

See 22 M.R.S. § 3762.

Administrative Reviews (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(B)(iii))

The document shall set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and 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.

Maine 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. If the client is unhappy with the decision, he or she may request reconsideration or appeal to the courts.

Work Requirements (42 U.S.C.602(a)(1)(B)(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 607(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 607(c), to participate in community service employment, with minimum hours per week, and tasks to be determined by the State.

Maine requires mandatory ASPIRE recipients to engage in work activities beginning A.(i) and A(ii), above addresses Maine's requirements for a parent or specified relative receiving assistance under the program to engage in work.

Elder Care (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(B)(v))

Title VI, Subtitle H, Sections 6701-6703 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010(PPACA) contains the "Elder Justice Act of 2009." Section 6703(a)(2) of the PPACA amends section 402(a)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)(B)) to add the following new clause to the state plan requirements.

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 1397j) of this title); 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.***

Maine has opted out of this provision.

SECTION IV: TANF Funded Programs

Maine supports the following programs with federal TANF block grant funds, to provide benefits and services to families in Maine.

Programs for TANF Cash Assistance Recipients

The following programs provide ongoing assistance to families receiving TANF cash aid. The services are designed to support the family in meeting basic needs and gaining the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce and increase self-reliance. Program benefits include financial assistance, employment and training, and employment supports.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

The TANF program provides cash benefit assistance for needy families designed to strengthen families and promote job preparation and work.

Parents as Scholars Program (PaS)

PaS is a student financial aid program for up to 2,000 families based on need as authorized by statute. Students must have dependent children and be matriculating in post-secondary undergraduate two-year and four-year degree-granting education programs. Benefits include a cash benefit and support services equal to that of TANF recipients. Financial eligibility and benefit calculation is identical to TANF. This program is only funded by TANF for the first 12 months.

ASPIRE Program

ASPIRE is the State's TANF employment and training program. As a condition of eligibility for TANF, each applicant/recipient who is not exempt must participate in the ASPIRE Program. ASPIRE provides TANF recipients with employment-related activities and support services such as child care, transportation, and other expenses necessary for education, training or employment.

TANF Earnings Food Benefit (TEFB)

This is a food benefit program for families with minor children who have had their food assistance benefit reduced below \$50 and are in receipt of a TANF benefit determined using the Step Disregard. This benefit is issued as a food assistance benefit, not a cash benefit, and may be used only as permitted by Maine's Food Supplement Program (10-144 C.M.R. Ch. 301). The combined food assistance benefit will not exceed \$50 per month.

Other TANF Programs and Services for Needy Families

The following programs provide financial assistance and/or services to low income families.

Emergency Assistance (EA)

EA is a limited program originally authorized under prior law. Payment of services through the EA program is limited to children and their families who are threatened by destitution or homelessness because of emergency situations. The program does not cover all emergencies. The income limit must be below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or families must receive TANF or PaS, State Supplemental Insurance (SSI) or Food Supplement. Payments are made to

vendors. EA may be used by a family once in a twelve-month period. The amount of the EA payment is capped depending on the type of emergency payment is made for.

Alternative Aid (AA) – Non-recurrent short-term benefits

Alternative Aid is a diversion program to assist applicants who seek short-term help to obtain or retain employment. The intent of the program is to help families remain self-supporting by providing voucher payments worth up to three months of the TANF benefits for which they are eligible. AA may be used once in a 12-month period. All payments are made directly to the vendor. Eligibility for the program is the same as for TANF cash assistance except AA is based on 133% of FPL.

Transitional Services

Transitional services are available to support the post-TANF client in retaining employment. These services include transportation for up to 18 months and child care until the youngest child in the family turns 13. The income limit is 250% of FPL.

State Refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Earned Income Tax Credit or EITC is a federal income tax credit for low-wage workers who meet certain eligibility requirements. Maine's EITC, which is refundable, is calculated as a percentage of the federal EITC. Expenditures are only claimed for individuals who have children under 18 and are below 200% of FPL.

Family Development Accounts (FDA)

This program provides asset-building services for TANF eligible families. Participants save money in a Family Development Account towards a pre-approved financial goal and purpose. Money can be withdrawn from the account only to meet one of the program asset goals, such as homeownership or career development, except in the case of an emergency.

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Supplement

Federal HEAP provides energy assistance to low income families to assist with their heating and cooling energy costs. The HEAP supplement provides additional funding to households with children under 18 who are at or below 170% FPL.

Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) Program

The HOPE Program provides support to eligible parents and caretaker relatives of minor children who are pursuing training or education beyond high school and whose income is at or below 185% of the FPL. HOPE helps cover costs related to school and also provides all program participants with Student Navigators to offer wrap-around support. The goal of HOPE is to help Maine families increase their earning capacity through skills-based training and post-secondary education. HOPE participants cannot be receiving TANF or PaS.

Working Cars for Working Families

The Working Cars for Working Families program provides access to reliable, affordable transportation needed to obtain or retain sustainable employment. Families receiving TANF or

PaS benefits and families who are eligible to receive Alternative Aid are potentially eligible for this program.

TANF Initiative Programs

The following programs meet one of the four purposes of TANF. These programs provide benefits in the form of services to Maine families. These services involve a wide variety of community partners such as other governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and others.

Head Start

Head Start operates throughout the state of Maine to provide school readiness services to children from four to five. Early Head Start provides services for families with children from birth to three to promote child development, self-sufficiency, and support parental roles. Head Start prepares children to be successful as they move into elementary school and beyond.

Child Welfare – Supported Visitation

The Supportive Visitation program is offered by DHHS to maintain the parent-child relationship between birth parents and their children. The purpose of supportive visitation is to provide non-custodial parents access to their children in a safe, conflict-free environment. The supportive visitation programs develop a child visit plan and supports parents in maintaining a close relationship with their child. This program is available to parents whose children have been removed from their custody and are trying to reunify.

Child Welfare – Home Visiting

The Home Visiting program is offered on a voluntary basis to parents, families with children from birth to three (3) years old and pregnant women. Services include prevention-focused parental education and support. The program uses an evidence-based model. Services include child care tips, sharing best practices, and connecting parents to resources.

Child Welfare – Direct Benefits

Maine provides funding to help children remain safely in their homes, and to reunify children who have been removed into state custody with their families. Funding can be used for a variety of needs related to maintain and promote the child's wellbeing.

Child Welfare – Transportation

The Child Welfare Transportation program provides transportation services to those involved with the child welfare system who have no other reasonable means of transportation to access necessary services. In order to be eligible, a participant must be referred by DHHS or a federally recognized tribe. Only transportation to and from TANF eligible services is claimed.

Alternative Response Program (ARP)

ARP provides services to child abuse and neglect cases that DHHS has determined to be of low to moderate risk. ARP connects families to formal and informal supports, identifies family strengths and assesses needs. Services are tailored to the needs of the family to ensure that children live

safely in their homes. This program is available to all Maine residents with children, however, expenditures are only claimed for families who are under 250% of FPL.

Scholarships

TANF funds are provided to a non-profit which uses the funds to assist economically disadvantaged youth successfully transition to postsecondary education. Scholarships can be used for a variety of postsecondary opportunities including two- and four-year colleges, career and technical schools, trade based and vocational training, and other career related certification and licensing pathways. The scholarship must be used for tuition.

Pathways to Opportunities (PTO)

PTO assists homeless young adults with housing and support services to stabilize their basic needs and explore educational and/or employment opportunities necessary to increase their self-sufficiency and allow them to take control of their future. In order to participate, youth must be under 25 years old and below 200% of FPL. TANF is only used to fund career navigators, who provide educational and career support and case management to increase stability.

Youth Homelessness Programs

Youth Homelessness Programs assist youth up to age 21 with a variety of services including supplies, meals, shelter, and case management. The programs aim to help the youth meet their immediate material needs and receive the services they need to move out of homelessness and move towards self-sufficiency. TANF funds are used for three services: Outreach, Drop-In, and Shelter. Outreach caseworkers meet youth in the community and provide case management and material supports if there is an immediate need. This service aims to locate homeless youth and help them access the services they need. Drop-In programs give the youth a safe place to go during the day and provide case management as well as material supports. Shelters provide youth facing an immediate lack of housing a safe place to sleep for up to 30 days at a time, at which point the participant must leave the shelter for one day before re-entering. Shelter service is only claimed for the first 120 days.

Improving Outcomes for Youth

Improving Outcomes for Youth encompasses several programs providing children up to 24 years of age with services to support their education and growth and improve their prospects for future success. TANF funded programs and services include: afterschool programs; career exploration and mentorship; suspension diversion for at risk youth; work readiness and academic achievement; financial literacy; social-emotional skill building; high risk behavior prevention; mentorship; and funding and support of post-secondary education.

Family Unification Program (FUP)

The Family Unification Program is a Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) demonstration pilot. It provides housing vouchers and support to two groups of participants: families who are in danger of losing the custody of their children or not being reunified with their children and youth who have aged out of foster care and become homeless. TANF funds are only

used to support the youth who have aged out of foster care. Youth must be between 18 and 24 when they apply, and can receive the housing voucher, which is funded by HUD, for up to 36 months. TANF funds are used to support an 18-month independent living training program, which prepares youth to successfully live on their own.

Domestic Violence Services

TANF funds are used to support four domestic violence services: Helpline, Domestic Violence - Child Protective Services (DV-CPS) Liaison, School-Based Education, and Support Groups. The Domestic Violence Helpline provides survivors with services, support, and referrals to community resources. In addition, it is used to screen survivors for additional services, such as domestic violence shelter and support groups. The DV-CPS Liaison works alongside child protective services to provide support to families who have experienced domestic violence. School-Based Education provides classroom education in schools from elementary through college. The curriculum includes themes such as safe and healthy relationships, recognizing domestic violence, and teen dating abuse. Support Groups provide peer support to domestic violence survivors. All support groups are led by a trained facilitator and include safety planning assistance and encouragement from fellow survivors.

Sexual Assault Services

TANF funds are used to support three sexual assault services: Helpline, School-Based Education, and Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). The Sexual Assault Helpline provides survivors with services, support, and referrals to community resources. In addition, it is used to screen survivors for additional services, such as the Children's Advocacy Center. School-Based Education provides classroom education in schools from elementary through college. The curriculum includes themes such as safe and healthy relationships, recognizing sexual assault, and personal space. The CAC includes a multi-disciplinary team which provides a coordinated response to assist child survivors of sexual assault. The CAC ensures the child does not need to repeat his or her story to several responders.

Whole Family Economic Security Initiatives

TANF funds are provided to community action agencies and other community-based organizations to assist parents of minor children in their pursuit for stable employment or education intended to lead to employment. Eligible families must be below 200% of FPL (22 M.R.S §3769-G).

SECTION V: State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Funded Programs

Separate State Programs provide support to Maine's needy families. Funds expended on programs in this section are counted as state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds.

Maintenance of Effort -- Maine will continue its maintenance of effort based on FFY 1994 expenditures at the level of at least 80 percent unless federal work participation rates are met, in which case Maine will reduce its MOE expenditures to 75 percent. In order to meet its annual MOE obligation, Maine may count any qualifying expenditures that are allowed under federal statute and regulation. Qualifying MOE expenditures are any expenditure made on behalf of TANF-eligible families.

Programs for TANF Cash Assistance Recipients

The following programs provide ongoing assistance to families receiving TANF cash aid. See Section II, pgs. 2-7 for TANF eligibility requirements. The services are designed to support the family in meeting basic needs and gaining the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce and increase self-reliance. Program benefits include financial assistance, employment and training, and employment supports.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

See TANF Funded Programs.

Parents as Scholars (PaS)

See TANF Funded Programs. This program is state funded only after the first 12 months of participation.

ASPIRE Support Services

See TANF Funded Programs. This program is state funded only for participants in State funded programs.

Child Support Pass Through/Supplemental TANF

Up to \$50 of current child support collected for a TANF family is 'passed through' to the family. When more than \$50 in current or arrearage is collected the family may receive a supplemental TANF or PaS payment. The pass-through amount is disregarded for eligibility purposes and is counted as TANF State MOE.

TANF Earnings Food Benefit (TEFB)

See TANF Funded Programs.

Cash Assistance for Non-Citizen Families

The state funded Non-Citizen Families Program provides benefits equivalent to the TANF program to legal aliens who would be eligible for TANF but for § 431 of PRWORA as amended (8 U.S.C. § 1641). See Section II, above, for alienage-specific eligibility criteria.

The eligibility requirements are the same as for the TANF Program. See this State Plan, Section II, pages 2-7 for TANF eligibility requirements. The non-citizen family receives monthly benefits equal to a TANF family's benefits.

Students

State funded Student Families Program provides benefits to students and their parents ages 18, 19, and 20 who were eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Program benefits. Eligibility for this program is the same as for TANF. See this State Plan, Section II, pages 2-7 for TANF eligibility requirements. The family receives a benefit equal to a TANF Family's benefit. A family that becomes ineligible for this program because of increased child support, increased hours of, or increased income from employment is eligible for transitional support services.

Other TANF Programs for Needy Families

The following programs provide financial assistance and/or services to low income families.

TANF Worker Supplement Benefit (WSB)

This is a food benefit program for families with minor children who receive food supplement benefits, to help them become self-sufficient. eligibility requirements outlined in this State Plan, Section II, page 2, Age, Residence, Citizenship, Social Security Number Compliance and Relationship. The recipient family must meet a work requirement to be eligible. Eligibility requirements are located here: <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/144/144c331.docx> .

Transitional Services

See TANF funded programs (Section IV, p. 15)

State Funded SNAP

Maine's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides monthly food assistance to non-citizen families that would be eligible for assistance under the federal Food Stamp Act of 1977 but for §401, §402 and §403 of PRWORA. Eligibility requirements are located here:

<https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/144/144c301.docx> . In order to be eligible, families must meet one of the following conditions:

- Have been receiving food assistance from the State of Maine as of July 1, 2011
- Be elderly or disabled;
- Be a victim of domestic violence;
- Be experiencing other hardship, such as time necessary to obtain proper work documentation;

The program is meant to be short term and temporary. Expenditures are only claimed for the first four months of benefit receipt.

Dependent Care Tax Credit

This credit is available to those who are TANF eligible and eligible for the federal child and dependent care credit. Generally, an individual who pays someone to care for a dependent or a child who is under age 13 is allowed a credit. Maine only claims expenditures for households with a child under 18. The Maine credit is equal to 25% of the federal credit. The Maine credit is doubled (50% of the federal credit) if a quality child care facility is used. Quality child care facilities are certified through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. Expenditures are only claimed for families below 200% FPL.

General Assistance (GA) – Non-recurrent short-term benefits

General Assistance provides immediate aid of persons who are unable to provide the basic necessities essential to maintain themselves and their families. The GA Program is funded with State general fund dollars. This program deals with specific crisis situations such as to prevent imminent homelessness and is not intended to meet recurrent or ongoing needs. Eligibility for benefits is authorized one month at a time. Expenditures are only claimed if the participant is in the first four months of benefits or if the participant is receiving TANF in the same month as GA. Expenditures within the first four months are claimed as TANF non-assistance, and expenditures after four months are claimed as TANF assistance. Expenditures are only claimed for families below 250% FPL.

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)

The state may count toward TANF MOE its expenditures for childcare that also satisfy the MOE or matching requirements of Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), up to the CCDBG MOE level. These payments are related to childcare services provided to families who are at risk of becoming dependent on TANF. Childcare costs are reimbursed up to established maximums, based on the family's gross income, the age of the child, and type of child care provider. The income limit is 85% of the state median income.

TANF Initiative Programs

The following programs meet one of the four purposes of TANF. These programs provide benefits in the form of services to Maine families. These services involve a wide variety of community partners such as other governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and others.

Head Start

See TANF funded programs. Expenditures are only claimed for families below 100% FPL or eligible for public assistance.

Child Protective Services (CPS)– Investigations

Maine Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) receives reports of suspected child abuse or neglect and investigates to determine if the report meets the statutory definition of child abuse or neglect. For reports where abuse or neglect is affirmatively identified, the case is assigned to a child protective service caseworker who identifies whether the children are safe in the home, and if not, what actions must be taken to ensure the child's safety. Expenditures are only claimed for families below 250% FPL.

2-1-1 Maine

2-1-1 operates a call center throughout Maine that connects individuals and families in need with community resources. The call centers are funded by several United Ways. Expenditures are only claimed for calls in which the consumer seeks information about programs that meet a TANF purpose. This program is claimed as an administrative expense.

Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services

The Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services represents Maine citizens who are entitled to legal counsel at the State's expense. Assigned counsel represents parents in cases where the state has alleged abuse or neglect of children and seeks to remove the children from the home or otherwise intervene on behalf of the child. Counsel investigate the state's claims and works with the parents to restore custody of their children. Services are only offered to families under 150% FPL.

Good Shepherd Food Bank

The Good Shepherd Food Bank provides hunger relief to Maine families by distributing emergency food. The agency collects, stores, repacks, and distributes millions of pounds of food for distribution to local partners. Food is either donated by grocery stores, farmers, and food manufacturers, purchased in bulk at a low cost, or donated at food drives. Expenditures are only claimed for recipients under 185% FPL.

Maine Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs

Maine Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs provides after-school programming to youth between the ages of 5 and 18. The curriculum promotes healthy lifestyles, youth development, and career skills for participants. Youth are required to participate at least twice per week. Expenditures are only claimed for families at or below 250% FPL.

Jobs For Maine Graduates (JMG)

Through the Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) core programs, high-school and middle-school students discover their individual talents, develop skills, and seize opportunities to achieve their personal potential. JMG has met this challenge by providing school-to-career pathways starting in the sixth grade and ending in successful transitions to post-secondary education. JMG partners with public schools and all programs are offered as a for-credit course. Hosted at public schools, administered by JMG, and actively engaging the participation of businesses, JMG offers a venue for students to interact with employers and community-based organizations. Youth are screened for income eligibility based on their eligibility for the Free and Reduced Lunch program and other factors that make them at-risk for dropping out of school. Expenditures for non-eligible families are not claimed.

Section VI: TANF State Plan Certifications

Maine will operate a program to provide 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 state program is known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

The Executive Officer of the State of Maine is Governor Janet T. Mills.

In administering and operating a program which provides TANF under the Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, the State:

- 1) *Maine's TANF Program 42 U.S.C. 602(a)(1)***
Certifies that the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Family Independence, is the State agency that will supervise the administration of the program.
- 2) *Child Support (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(2))***
Will operate a child support enforcement program under the State plan approved under part D;
- 3) *Foster Care and Adoption Assistance (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(3))***
Will operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State plan approved under part E, and certify that the State will take all necessary actions to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State plan under title XIX;
- 4) *Administration (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(4))***
Assures that local governments and private sector organizations:

 - A. Have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; and***
 - B. Have had at least forty-five (45) days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services;***
- 5) *Equitable Access (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(5))***
Will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under Section 612, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government;

6) Program Fraud and Abuse (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(6))

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;

7) Domestic Violence (42. U.S.C. 602(a)(7))

Optional Certification

Maine has opted out of this provision. However, Maine has implemented comparable State policy to address issues of family violence for TANF recipients. The definition of domestic violence for the purpose of good cause is the inability to participate due to physical injuries or the psychological effects of activities related to abuse; because the abuser actively interferes with the individual's participation' because the location puts the individual at risk; or other good case related to domestic violence.

8) Plan Amendments (42 U.S.C. 602(b))

Within thirty (30) days after the State amends a plan submitted pursuant to subsection (a), the State shall notify the Secretary of the amendment; and

9) Public Availability of Plan Summary (42 U.S.C. 602(c))

Shall make available to the public a summary of any plan or plan amendment section.

Certified by the Chief Executive Officer of the State of Maine:

January 8, 2021
Date


Governor Janet T. Mills

Attachment A: Eligibility Guidelines

TANF and PaS Standard of Need and Maximum Payment Chart:

Maximum Benefit and Standard of Need

HH Size	Grant Type		FFY 2017	FFY 2018	FFY 2019	FFY 2020		FFY 2021
			Oct 16 - Sep 17	Oct 17 - Sep 18	Oct 18 - Sep 19	Oct 19 - May 20	Jun 20 - Sep 20	Oct 20 - Sep 21
1	Adult Included	SON	\$294	\$340	\$346	\$354	\$353	\$358
		Max Grant	\$230	\$276	\$282	\$290	\$289	\$294
	Child Only	SON	\$174	\$201	\$204	\$209	\$209	\$212
		Max Grant	\$138	\$165	\$168	\$173	\$173	\$176
2	Adult Included	SON	\$463	\$535	\$544	\$556	\$556	\$563
		Max Grant	\$363	\$435	\$444	\$456	\$456	\$463
	Child Only	SON	\$332	\$384	\$390	\$399	\$399	\$404
		Max Grant	\$262	\$314	\$320	\$329	\$329	\$334
3	Adult Included	SON	\$620	\$717	\$729	\$746	\$745	\$755
		Max Grant	\$485	\$582	\$594	\$611	\$610	\$620
	Child Only	SON	\$491	\$568	\$577	\$590	\$590	\$598
		Max Grant	\$386	\$463	\$472	\$485	\$485	\$493
4	Adult Included	SON	\$780	\$902	\$917	\$938	\$938	\$950
		Max Grant	\$611	\$733	\$748	\$769	\$769	\$781
	Child Only	SON	\$649	\$750	\$891	\$908	\$779	\$790
		Max Grant	\$508	\$609	\$621	\$638	\$638	\$649
5	Adult Included	SON	\$938	\$1,084	\$1,102	\$1,127	\$1,127	\$1,141
		Max Grant	\$733	\$879	\$897	\$922	\$922	\$936
	Child Only	SON	\$809	\$935	\$950	\$972	\$972	\$985
		Max Grant	\$634	\$760	\$775	\$797	\$797	\$810
6	Adult Included	SON	\$1,096	\$1,267	\$1,288	\$1,317	\$1,317	\$1,334
		Max Grant	\$856	\$1,027	\$1,048	\$1,077	\$1,077	\$1,094
	Child Only	SON	\$967	\$1,118	\$1,136	\$1,162	\$1,162	\$1,177
		Max Grant	\$756	\$907	\$925	\$951	\$951	\$966
7	Adult Included	SON	\$1,255	\$1,451	\$1,475	\$1,509	\$1,508	\$1,528
		Max Grant	\$981	\$1,177	\$1,201	\$1,235	\$1,234	\$1,254
	Child Only	SON	\$1,125	\$1,301	\$1,322	\$1,352	\$1,352	\$1,370
		Max Grant	\$880	\$1,056	\$1,077	\$1,107	\$1,107	\$1,125
8	Adult Included	SON	\$1,414	\$1,635	\$1,662	\$1,700	\$1,699	\$1,722
		Max Grant	\$1,105	\$1,326	\$1,353	\$1,391	\$1,390	\$1,413
	Child Only	SON	\$1,284	\$1,484	\$1,508	\$1,542	\$1,542	\$1,562
		Max Grant	\$1,004	\$1,204	\$1,228	\$1,262	\$1,262	\$1,282
Add Member	Adult Included	SON	\$159	\$184	\$189	\$193	\$190	\$192
		Max Grant	\$124	\$148	\$154	\$158	\$155	\$157
	Child Only	SON	\$159	\$184	\$189	\$193	\$190	\$192
		Max Grant	\$124	\$148	\$154	\$158	\$155	\$157

For Special Need Housing Households, add \$300 to each figure.