



Oregon Department of Human Services Report to the 2021 Legislative Assembly Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Background:

ORS 412.079 requires the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) to submit a biennial report to the Legislature regarding the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. This report provides details about the TANF time limits that are imposed by both federal and state law, data on how long families are accessing the program and what their earnings are once leaving the program. This following data provides a snapshot of how long Oregon families living in poverty were served by the program and their earnings upon exiting the program.

Average Time a Household Received Cash Assistance by Family Size:

The TANF program provides cash assistance and services to single- and two parent households, including households in which one or both parents receive Social Security benefits of Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) or Social Security Income (SSI), and households in which the primary caretaker is a relative other than the child's parent. General Fund moneys are also used to provide cash assistance for families in which one or both parents are applying for Social Security benefits.

The chart below reflects the average months on TANF by benefit group size for those receiving TANF as of August 2020.

Average Federal Months on TANF			
Benefit Group Size	Total Number of Cases	Average Number of Federal Months	Median Number of Federal Months
1	328	45.45	38
2	5,439	31.50	24
3	3,332	34.08	27
4	1,626	37.16	32
5	702	36.12	29
6	223	42.48	35
7	92	34.82	28
8	29	42.03	41
9	12	32.00	49
10	1	8.00	8

11	2	81.50	82
13	0	0.00	0
All Family Sizes	11,786	33.96	29

Average Countable Months an Individual Received Cash Assistance by Family Size Based on Oregon's Time Limit:

Federal law prohibits providing assistance to a family that includes an adult in the need group who has received cash assistance under any state program with funds provided by the Federal government, for more than 60 months (whether or not consecutive). TANF time limits do not apply to families in which the only recipients are children. Examples include: an adult who is not receiving TANF because he or she is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI); or an adult who is not in the need group because he or she is a relative caregiver who is not the child's parent; or when the adult is not in the need group for another allowable reason.

In 2003, federal legislation established a benefit for adults to receive cash TANF cash assistance. States are allowed exempt up to 20 percent of their TANF cash assistance caseload from time limits based on hardship as defined by the state. House Bill 2469 (2007) established a state 60-month time limit for adults receiving TANF cash assistance.

HB 2469 (2007) also defined the state exemptions to TANF time limits. Those exemptions are listed in ORS 412.079 (2). In addition, the department established an economic hardship exemption which applied to all adults during periods when Oregon's unemployment rate is equal to or exceeds 7 percent. This exemption began in July 2008 and ended in May 2012. Oregon's time limit suspends counting of time on TANF whenever a hardship exemption applies. The time limit applies only to adults and teen parents who are the head of household. Children may continue receiving TANF for themselves even after the adult or teen parent exceeds the 60-month time limit and does not meet an exemption, so long as the adult continues to adhere to program requirements.

Effective May 2012, there were two main amendments to ORS 412.079 made through Senate Bill 1579, one of which clarified that a person cannot receive TANF beyond 60 months in this or another state. The other amendment made time limits applicable to adults in two-parent households in the same way they apply to single parent households (and regardless of the source used to fund the two-parent program).

The table below displays the average countable months on TANF based on state time limit criteria. This information includes the average countable months for families receiving TANF on-going cash assistance in August 2020 by benefit group size.

Benefit groups are the people whose basic and special needs are used in determining eligibility and who meet all eligibility requirements.

Average Countable Months on TANF Based on Oregon's Time Limit			
Benefit Group Size	Total Number of Cases	Average Number of State Months	Median Number of State Months
1	328	33.77	33
2	5,439	26.03	22

3	3,332	28.02	25
4	1,626	29.72	27
5	702	29.01	26
6	223	33.41	32
7	92	29.05	28
8	29	31.97	29
9	12	32.00	31
10	1	8.00	8
11	2	57.50	58
13	0	0.00	0
All Family Sizes	11,786	27.68	24

The reason for the low average countable months above is not only based on hardship criteria but also stems from the economic hardship exemption which applied to all families between July 2008 and April 2012.

Wages and Benefits after Becoming Employed:

The average starting full-time (30 or more hours per week) wage reported by TANF clients during the 2019 state fiscal year ending June 2020 was \$14.24 per hour. Under the new raised exit limit policies, a typical TANF family of three (one adult, two children) would no longer qualify for cash assistance:

- In areas with the Metro minimum wage of \$13.25 if the adult worked for more than 17 hours per week;
- In areas with the Standard minimum wage of \$12.00 if the adult worked for more than 19 hours per week;
- In areas with the Rural minimum wage of \$11.50 if the adult worked for more than 20 hours per week.

Rate of Return to Cash Assistance:

For the state fiscal year ending June 2020, 83.6% of the families who left TANF cash assistance due to employment were not receiving aid 18 months later. While 60.57% of these families did not return to cash assistance at all during the entire 18 month period, 23.04% returned for some period of time, but exited the program again by the end of the 18 month period. The remaining 16.4% of families who left cash assistance due to employment returned to cash assistance and were still receiving cash assistance at the end of the 18 month period.

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