

Ohio Department of Job and
Family Services (ODJFS)

Overview of the TANF Web Reporting Tool



*What is Ohio's TANF Web Reporting Tool
and why is it important?*

•
•
•
•
•
•

Overview of the TANF Web Reporting Tool

What is Ohio's TANF Web Reporting Tool and why is it important?

What Is the purpose of the TANF Web Reporting Tool?

The purpose of the TANF Web Reporting Tool is to standardize collection of Prevention, Retention & Contingency (PRC) soft-service delivery and expenditure information. It is a web-based application that enables providers and county and state staffs to work together to collect, analyze, and report information. PRC hard service delivery and expenditure data is down-loaded once per month to the WRT from the mainframe system, CRIS-E. This enables users to only view hard services information within the reporting function of the WRT. The TANF Web Reporting Tool is important because it enables Ohio to meet federal TANF reporting requirements, to respond to legislative inquiries regarding PRC program characteristics, and to allow counties access to program specific information, both internally and relative to other counties. The TANF Web Reporting Tool is a critical component of Ohio's overarching TANF reporting system.

Prevention, Retention & Contingency

The PRC program in Ohio's 88 counties gives great flexibility to county agencies in the design and implementation of a service delivery system that addresses the needs of the people they serve. The PRC program is a definitive component of TANF in the state of Ohio because it focuses specifically on providing families with services they need to stay off public assistance and strive for greater self-sufficiency. Under the old approach to welfare, Ohio's counties were limited in the extent to which they could provide the most needed support to their clients. The new system is proactive, looking ahead in order to *prevent* long-term dependency and assist families to *retain* their self-sufficiency. The PRC program continues to provide for *contingent* needs, helping families with one-time urgent problems that could, if left unattended, result in families needing public assistance.

Ohio's PRC Reporting System

Different Systems for Different Types of Services

Ohio's PRC reporting system is designed to capture county data regarding services, populations served and expenditures for all PRC services. Ohio's PRC reporting system consists of two reporting mechanisms based on two primary categories of "hard" and "soft" services:

"Hard" services are benefits having cash value (e.g., rent payments, refrigerator, etc.) provided to families as PRC services. These services are reported through the Client Registry System - Enhanced (CRIS-E) at the time of service provision. CRIS-E is the statewide public assistance system that supports the major programs of TANF, Food Stamps, and Medicaid.

CRIS-E is designed to allow workers to collect data and determine eligibility for the above programs. CRIS-E provides for central issuance of cash and medical benefits, supports the county issuance of Food Stamps, provides reports to state and federal agencies, and provides support to various levels of management within the counties, state Department of Job and Family Services, and other state agencies and offices. Once per month PRC hard services data is downloaded into the TANF WRT. Users can only view hard services in the TANF WRT in the reporting function of the Tool.

“Soft” services are PRC services without cash value to the recipient (e.g., job training, Help Me Grow, after school programs, etc.). Data on these services are collected through the TANF Web Reporting Tool (TANF WRT). All of Ohio’s counties and some service providers, at the discretion of each county, use the TANF WRT to capture data on soft services by service category, subcategory, numbers of individuals served, and estimated service costs on a monthly basis. The Ohio Department of Job & Family Services uses the TANF Web Reporting Tool to analyze and report PRC data.

Why is the TANF Web Reporting Tool Important?

As noted above, the TANF Web Reporting Tool is important because it enables Ohio to meet federal TANF reporting requirements, to respond to legislative inquiries regarding PRC program characteristics, and to allow counties access to program specific information, both internally and relative to other counties. The TANF Web Reporting Tool is a critical component of Ohio’s overarching TANF reporting system.

The Four Purposes of TANF

All PRC expenditures must address one of the four purposes of the federal TANF block grant program in order to meet federal reporting requirements. The four purposes of TANF are:

1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
2. End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.
3. Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numeric goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies.
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

TANF Web Reporting Tool Features

TANF Web Reporting Tool Categories and Subcategories

The TANF WRT provides Ohio’s counties the ability to capture data on soft services within categories and subcategories that address one or more of the four purposes of TANF in order to help meet federal reporting requirements. Hard service data is downloaded from CRIS-E monthly into the reporting function of the WRT. The categories and subcategories of both hard and soft services are kept current within the actual Web Reporting Tool to include definitions of the subcategories.

The Reporting Workflow

The TANF WRT allows many different types of users to participate in pieces of the reporting workflow. The TANF WRT has three unique user “desktops,” each of which has been tailored

to meet a different set of users' needs. The following paragraphs include a brief summary of the key features of the provider, county, and state user desktops.

The **provider desktop** allows service providers to register themselves with one or more County Department of Job & Family Services (CDJFS). Once a request for registration has been approved by a CDJFS, a service provider has the ability to enter data about the "soft" services that they are contracted to provide. The entries can then be submitted for CDJFS review and approval (and updated to reflect CDJFS comments should they be disapproved). The purpose of the provider desktop is to help counties standardize the information that they collect from providers, as well as enable counties to request (or potentially require) providers to complete the monthly data entry requirements (as opposed to county staff).

Like the provider desktop, the **county user desktop** allows CDJFS staff to enter and review service information. In addition, the county users with the appropriate security profile have the ability to register providers, return entries to providers (e.g., if they contain incorrect information) and to submit entries to ODJFS.

All county users, including a diverse set of line staff, managers, and CDJFS Directors, have access to powerful, but user-friendly, online reports. The reports allow county users to analyze the information entered by providers and counties by filtering summary data by service provider, time (i.e., reporting periods), geography (i.e., state, regional, county), and entry status (e.g., entered by a provider, entered by a county, submitted to ODJFS). The reports allow county users to analyze their own data internally as well as in comparison to other counties. The reports provide multiple views of the data including summarizing estimated expenditures, populations served, and units of service provided by county, category, and by subcategory.

State users, which include ODJFS line staff and managers at both regional and state headquarters, have access to the same online reports as county users through the **state user desktop**. A limited set of state users also has the ability to register and administer county and state users, generate notifications, and manage reference data (e.g. open and close reporting periods, add or modify categories, subcategories, population types, service units, etc.). The purpose of the state user desktop is to allow state users to proactively monitor the progress of Ohio's 88 counties and to analyze the information submitted by the counties. This dual focus on functionality that supports implementation as well as access to a common set of information for all county and state users directly contributed to the successful statewide implementation of the TANF WRT.

TANF Web Reporting Tool Technical Overview

The TANF WRT employs ODJFS' standard technical architecture for Internet-based applications. The TANF WRT is a browser-independent, ultra-thin client application. The business logic was written in JAVA using IBM's WSAD and is executed on a server configured with IBM's AIX operating system and the WebSphere Application Server (WAS 5.0). The database that stores TANF WRT data entries and reference data is IBM's DB2 for OS/390 running on a state mainframe computer.

Welfare Reform and the TANF Web Reporting Tool

Ohio's PRC program has been and continues to be a key component of welfare reform implementation. TANF funds invested at the local level are designed to prevent dependency by focusing on outcomes. Ohio's 88 counties have been given more flexibility than ever in designing and implementing a service delivery system that addresses the needs of the people in their communities.

Additional information about PRC can be found at the following location:
<http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs>

Additional information about the TANF Web Reporting Tool can be found in Section 5610 of the ODJFS Administrative Procedure Manual and at the following location:

- <https://tanfreporting.ohio.gov>

Additional contact information can be located on the TANF WRT website listed above.