

**STATE OF OHIO  
OHIO DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) PROGRAM  
STATE TITLE IV-A PLAN**

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**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services  
State Office Tower  
32nd Floor  
30 E. Broad St.  
Columbus, OH 43266-0423  
614.466.6282**

**Barbara E. Riley, Director  
The Honorable Bob Taft, Governor**

## Section I OVERVIEW OF OHIO'S TANF PROGRAMS

### General Overview

In 1997, the Ohio General Assembly enacted House Bill 408, landmark legislation that fundamentally changed the nature of welfare assistance in Ohio. House Bill 408 built on welfare reform provisions in the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which Congress enacted in 1996. The law eliminated the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program and replaced it with the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Ohio created from TANF two innovative programs : Ohio Works First (OWF) and Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC). In July 2001, the Ohio General Assembly created other TANF-funded programs and components of Title IV-A programs to provide benefits and services to TANF-eligible individuals, as established by the Ohio General Assembly or Executive Order issued by the Governor. With these programs, Ohio has transformed public assistance from a system focused on entitlement to one focused on employment, personal responsibility, and sustained self-sufficiency.

Within Ohio, a state-supervised/county-administered system, welfare reform has been implemented by the state and counties, with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) entering into an optional Fiscal Agreement with each Board of County Commissioners. State law delegates a significant amount of decision-making to counties, giving them the flexibility to create nonassistance programs that meet community needs. ODJFS provides technical assistance to the 88 County Departments of Job and Family Services and monitors performance measures.

The success of welfare reform in Ohio has been significant. This effort has dramatically decreased welfare dependence by investing in services, supports, resources and strategies that promote work. Since the implementation of the TANF program, Ohio's cash assistance caseload declined from 549,312 in August 1996 to 193,744 recipients by June 2004, a decline of 64.8%. At the same time, OWF and PRC have transformed public assistance from a system focused on entitlement to one focused on personal responsibility and sustained self-sufficiency. Likewise, services and programs have rapidly expanded to prevent dependency and support employment for those not on cash assistance.

Investments in workforce development services prepare recipients for employment, assist them in the labor market and sustain their attachment to the world of work. Investments in family stability services help build stronger families, foster the development of children and youth and address counter-productive behaviors. Investments in child care provide payments for child care services as well as support the costs of developing capacity, improving the quality of child care and helping parents find appropriate child care.

In State Fiscal Year 2004 Ohio used TANF funds to support the following PRC services to individuals:

<u>Service and Program</u>	<u>Estimated Number Served SFY 2004</u>
Employment, Training & Work Support	132,324
Diversion and Retention	161,280
Child Welfare and Protection	87,747
Non-Custodial Parents	3,265
Pregnancy Prevention	240,430

<u>Service and Program</u>	<u>Estimated Number Served SFY 2004</u>
Domestic Violence	2,544
Disaster Services	1,260
Youth Educational Supportive Services	62,808
Community and Economic Development	568
Help Me Grow	271,771

### **Overview of Ohio's TANF Programs**

Ohio is committed to serving our core population first: Ohio Works First families, those transitioning off of Ohio Works First into employment, and low income working families.

In Ohio, the following programs and services are supported through the TANF program. Coordination with other programs support families as they pursue self-sufficiency.

*Ohio Works First* - OWF is a state-supervised, county-administered program that serves every political subdivision in the State. OWF provides time-limited cash assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children, by furnishing parents or specified relatives with work, training, and other support services they need in order to attain permanent self-sufficiency while meeting the family's ongoing basic needs. Non-time-limited OWF cash assistance is also provided to child-only cases.

*Prevention, Retention and Contingency* - PRC is a county-administered, state-supervised program that serves every political subdivision in the State. The program is designed to provide benefits and services that are not considered assistance in accordance with 45 CFR 260.31. PRC provides ongoing services and nonrecurring short-term benefits designed to accomplish one of the four purposes of TANF by addressing supports needed by working families and by addressing the needs of families with barriers to self-sufficiency. The goal is always to provide the appropriate mix of cash and non-cash services that will enable the family to achieve self-sufficiency. Ohio chooses to provide services authorized by the Title IV-A Plan that was in effect on August 21, 1996. This plan authorizes Ohio to fund certain medical services and certain Child Welfare services with TANF dollars. The specific Title IV-A plan is in Appendix A.

*Separate State Program* - In Ohio, as in many states, drug and alcohol addiction plays an ever-increasing role in family dysfunction as well as economic and social dependency. In order to better address this underlying cause of dependency, Ohio has created a Separate State Program (SSP) to provide prevention and treatment services for youth and adults where drug and alcohol abuse threatens their ability to become economically self-sufficient and to care for children in their own homes.

*Other TANF-Funded Benefits and Services* - ODJFS administers other TANF-funded programs and components of Title IV-A programs, which provide benefits and services to TANF-eligible individuals, as established by the Ohio General Assembly or Executive Order issued by the Governor. The benefits and services provided under this section are not considered assistance as defined in 45 CFR §260.31(a) and are benefits and services that 45 CFR §260.31(b) excludes from the definition of assistance.

*Family Supports* - A very important component in moving people away from public assistance and toward self-sufficiency is the provision of adequate family supports. As families move into regular, meaningful employment, it is imperative that they are given the opportunity to access support services that help them maintain their jobs. Assistance with buying food, getting health coverage, paying for child care and

transportation are all family supports that assist families in their pursuit of success.

### **Overview of Funding**

ODJFS has structured Federal TANF funds and State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds in a manner consistent with federal and state law, as well as the efficient and effective operation of programs designed to serve the needs of families envisioned in the purposes of TANF. The structure of funding may include the following:

- Segregated TANF funds expended in the TANF program
- Segregated State MOE funds expended in the TANF program
- Commingled Federal TANF and State MOE funds expended in the TANF program
- Separate MOE funds expended on state programs operated outside the TANF program

To the extent allowable under federal law, the State may transfer funding from the TANF Block Grant to the Social Services Block Grant and the Child Care Development Fund.

## Section II

### OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR OHIO'S TANF PROGRAMS

#### **Ohio Works First**

The OWF program is the primary program for providing cash assistance to needy families and requires participants to engage in work activities based on a Self-Sufficiency Contract when the assistance group contains an adult or minor head-of-household. A 'minor head-of-household' is defined as a minor child who is either: (1) married, at least six months pregnant and a member of an assistance group that does not include an adult; or (2) married, and a parent of a child included in the same assistance group that does not include an adult.

OWF encourages family self-sufficiency through employment while it meets temporary needs through the provision of cash assistance. When determining eligibility for OWF, the State will require that the assistance group contain a minor child who resides with a custodial parent, legal guardian, legal custodian or specified relative caring for the child (under Ohio law, guardians and custodians stand *in loco parentis*); or a woman who is at least six months pregnant. Additionally, all adult members or minor heads of household must sign and comply with a self-sufficiency contract. There is no resource limit/asset test in the OWF program.

#### *Initial Income Test*

The first step in determining whether a family is financially eligible to participate in OWF is the state's initial income test. The initial income test is a modified program eligibility test, similar to the initial eligibility test formerly prescribed by AFDC regulation. The earned income disregard is not applied at this initial income test.

The assistance group is ineligible to participate in OWF if the assistance group's gross income, less amounts disregarded by departmental rule, exceeds the amounts in the chart that follows. The income amounts that are disregarded in the initial income test are from income sources which the state has chosen to exclude from the definition of gross earned and gross unearned income (e.g., SSI, income excluded under the food stamp program regulations). In addition, for purposes of applying this initial income test, the actual dependent care costs (up to allowable maximums defined in the state's rule) paid by the assistance group for non-publicly funded dependent care for an incapacitated adult or a child who is a member of the assistance group are also disregarded. The remaining family gross monthly income is compared to the amounts designated for the family size in the chart that follows. Effective October 1, 2005, the initial eligibility standards will be annually indexed to fifty percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), in accordance with state law changes set forth in Ohio's biennial budget bill, Amended Substitute House Bill 66. Prior to 10/01/05, the initial eligibility standards were static numbers set forth in statute. The standards for assistance group sizes of one and two remain unchanged for 10/01/05 as the existing standards exceed 50% FPL for those assistance group sizes. The revised standards are included as indicated.

Assistance Group Size	Eff. 10/01/05 Gross income
1	\$423
2	\$537
3	\$671
4	\$807
5	\$943
6	\$1078
7	\$1214
8	\$1350
9	\$1486
10	\$1622
11	\$1758
12	\$1893
13	\$2029
14	\$2165
15	\$2301
16	\$2437
17	\$2573
18	\$2708
19	\$2844
20	\$2980
21	\$3116
22	\$3252
23	\$3388
24	\$3523

\* For each person in the assistance group that brings the assistance group to more than twenty-four

persons, add one hundred two dollars, effective 10/01/05, one hundred thirty six dollars to the amount of gross income for an assistance group of fifteen specified above.

#### *Continued Eligibility*

If the remainder of the family's gross monthly income does not exceed the amount designated for the family size in the initial income test chart, the family passes the initial income test. Once determined eligible to participate, the family's OWF cash benefits are determined by deducting \$250 and 1/2 the remainder from the family's gross monthly earned income as an earned income disregard and deducting any nonpublicly funded dependent care costs (up to allowable maximums). The family's unearned income is added to the remainder, and the total is compared to the OWF payment standard for the family size. The OWF payment is the difference derived from subtracting the family's countable income from the OWF payment standard for the family size.

A temporarily absent individual is considered to be in the home for eligibility purposes under OWF. The absence of a member of the assistance group is temporary if all the following conditions are met:

- The location of the absent individual is known;
- There is a definite plan for the return of the absent individual to the home;
- The absent individual shared the home with the assistance group prior to the onset of the absence.

A minor child or parent/specified relative who, without good cause, has been, or is expected to be, absent from the home for a period of forty-five consecutive days or longer does not meet the temporary absence requirement for OWF. Exceptions to this requirement are limited to the following good cause reasons:

- Hospitalization (includes inpatient drug and alcohol treatment);
- Detention in a juvenile home until a court commitment;
- Attendance at school;
- Vacationing;
- Trip made in connection with current or prospective employment;
- Shared parenting situations;
- Service in the military when it is the sole reason for absence;
- Removal of a child(ren) by the Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) if a reunification plan is in place and the parents are cooperating with it. Cash assistance for a child(ren) removed can continue to be provided for up to six payment months after the removal date.

#### *State and Federal Time Limits*

An assistance group in receipt of OWF that includes an adult or minor head-of-household is subject to state and federal time limits. There is an "Ohio 36-month initial limit" and a "federal 60-month lifetime limit." After 36 months, the assistance group is ineligible for further payments unless the county department of job and family services (CDJFS) approves an extension of benefits. There are three kinds of CDJFS-determined extensions: (1) "state hardship"; (2) "good cause"; and (3) "federal hardship." Both the state hardship and federal hardship extensions are subject to a 20% limit, i.e., a CDJFS may exempt up to twenty percent of the average monthly number of families receiving OWF

from the time limit on the grounds that they determine that the time limit is a hardship. An assistance group can receive a state hardship extension any time after the 36-month limit has been reached. An assistance group can only receive a good cause extension after a 24-month waiting period following the 36-month period. After that period, if good cause exists according to CDJFS policies, the assistance group may be eligible for up to an additional twenty-four months of cash assistance. After 60 months, the assistance group is ineligible for further payments unless the CDJFS approves a federal hardship extension. The 60-month limit counts the first 36 months plus all state hardship and good cause extension months. Both time limits count any months of TANF cash assistance received in another state. An assistance group approved for OWF as a result of an extension must meet all eligibility requirements and sign a new self-sufficiency contract. Based on a waiver inconsistency (Appendix B), State and Federal time limits began on 10/1/97, and will not be applied retrospectively to participants who received assistance and services before 10/1/97.

*Benefit Levels*

The maximum OWF benefit levels available to assistance groups are based on the assistance group size. Effective 10/01/2005, the OWF payments levels are increased up to ten percent, in accordance with the provisions set forth in Am. S.B. 66. The following chart provides the 10/01/05 payment standards:

Number in Assistance Group	Effective 10/01/05 Payment Standard
1	245
2	336
3	410
4	507
5	593
6	660
7	737
8	817
9	899
10	980
11	1059

12	1141
13	1221
14	1300
15	1382
16	\$1484
17	\$1586
18	\$1689
19	\$1791
20	\$1893
21	\$1995
22	\$2098
23	\$2200
24	\$2302
Add for each person above 24	\$102

*School Attendance for Teen Parents (LEAP Program)*

The Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program, a component of OWF, is Ohio's program to encourage teen parents to remain in school and obtain a high school diploma or high school equivalence diploma (HSED). This program is a continuation of the program previously operated under a waiver, with changes made to comply with federal regulations.

All teen parents (including pregnant teens) under the age of 18 or 18 and attending school are subject to LEAP program requirements. A \$62 attendance bonus is provided for any month that a teen maintains good attendance. A \$62 sanction is imposed for any month that a teen does not maintain good attendance. Certain teen parents who are not attending high school or the equivalent are required to participate in an alternative educational or training program. Failure of the teen parent to complete an assessment, enroll in school, attend school or an alternative educational or training program or withdrawal from school will result in the teen parent's ineligibility for OWF. Teen parents 18 years of age who are not attending school are required to participate in Work Activities.

Teen parents caring for children less than twelve weeks or those attending home school or Internet school are exempt from participation in the LEAP Program.

*Assessment/Appraisal*

The goal of OWF is that every family becomes self-sufficient. As soon as possible after an assistance group submits an application for OWF cash assistance, the CDJFS conducts an appraisal of each member of the

assistance group who is a minor head-of-household or an adult. The appraisal includes an evaluation of employment history, education, skills, abilities, interests, and work barriers in order to formulate an employment goal and a plan to achieve self-sufficiency for the individual and the family. The CDJFS also assesses the skills, prior work experience and employability of each participant who has attained 18 years of age, and has not completed high school or obtained a high school equivalency certificate, and is not attending secondary school.

### *Self-Sufficiency Contracts*

Under OWF and pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 608 (b)(2), each member of an assistance group who is a minor head-of-household or an adult must enter into a written agreement with the CDJFS that is known as a self-sufficiency contract (SSC). The SSC must be signed within thirty days of applying for assistance or undergoing an eligibility redetermination, and should be based on the mandatory appraisal that each CDJFS is required to perform of each assistance group applying for assistance. The SSC sets forth the rights and responsibilities of both the assistance group and the CDJFS. Each SSC will include (but not be limited to) the following items:

- The assistance group's plan to achieve self-sufficiency and personal responsibility through unsubsidized employment within the time limits specified for participation;
- Work assignments for each adult member or minor head-of-household in the assistance group -- this should include the type of assignment (federally-allowable work activities, developmental activities, and/or alternative work activities), what the specific assignment is, and the number of hours required. In the case of a two-parent family, one parent may complete the requirement for the assistance group;
- Responsibility of the caretaker member of the assistance group to cooperate in establishing the minor child's paternity and establishing, modifying, and enforcing a support order for the child;
- Other responsibilities that members of the assistance group must satisfy to participate in OWF;
- The consequences to the assistance group for failure or refusal without good cause to satisfy all the responsibilities inherent in the SSC;
- Assistance and services to be provided to the assistance group by the CDJFS, the Child Support Enforcement Agency, and the Public Children Services Agency;
- Other provisions designed to enable the assistance group to achieve self-sufficiency and personal responsibility;
- Procedures for assessing participant and CDJFS compliance with the terms of the SSC and whether the contract should be amended; and

- Procedures for amending the contract.

If a member of an assistance group fails or refuses to comply in full with a provision of their SSC without good cause as determined by the CDJFS, the CDJFS shall sanction the assistance group in accordance with the legislatively prescribed sanction policy.

ODJFS has developed a descriptive self-sufficiency contract model. Counties are not required to use the model, but must remain consistent with OWF provisions if they choose to adopt their own model.

### *Sanctions*

Each CDJFS establishes standards for the determination of good cause for failure or refusal to comply in full with the provisions of the Self-Sufficiency Contract. The first failure or refusal results in OWF ineligibility for the entire assistance group for one payment month, or until compliance, whichever is longer. The assistance group may also receive a reduction in food stamp benefits. The second failure or refusal causes OWF ineligibility for the entire assistance group for three payment months or until compliance, whichever is longer. The assistance group may also receive a reduction in food stamp benefits. The third or subsequent failure or refusal results in OWF ineligibility for the entire assistance group for six payment months or until compliance, whichever is longer. The assistance group may also receive a reduction in food stamp benefits. For a third or subsequent work activity failure, the adult who failed or refused to comply without good cause may also lose Medicaid coverage until he/she complies with the work-activity requirement. Other members of the assistance group remain eligible for Medicaid.

Ohio statute requires that after sanctioning an assistance group for failure to comply with a provision of the self-sufficiency contract, the CDJFS continue to work with the assistance group to provide the member of the assistance group who caused the sanction an opportunity to demonstrate a willingness to cease the failure or refusal. Assistance groups who are sanctioned may remain eligible for publicly-funded child care and support services.

### *General Work Provisions*

An OWF participant cannot be assigned to a Federal Work, Developmental or Alternative Work Activity with an employer when the employer removes or discharges another person for the purpose of substituting the participant in the person's place. This is true for any of the following circumstances where:

- The person is already employed as a regular, full-time or part-time employee; or
- The person has been employed full-time or part-time as a participant in a work activity, developmental activity or alternative work activity; or
- The person is, or has been, involved in a dispute between a labor organization and the employer; or;
- The person is on a layoff from the same or any substantially equivalent job.

An employer cannot hire a participant to circumvent hiring a full-time employee. Each CDJFS shall have a grievance process to resolve complaints by employers and participants.

### *Exemptions From Work Activities*

There are limited exemptions from work requirements. Child-only cases are exempt and Ohio has taken the state option, which exempts a single-parent who is caring for a child under age one from the federal work participation requirements. This option has been passed to the counties, who may choose whether to accept the option. Single-parent families with a child under age one that are exempt from the federal work participation requirement are required under state law to participate in Developmental Activities.

Based on the results of an employability assessment, an individual may be exempt from participating in some or all of the hours required for Federal Work or Developmental Activities. Individuals that are exempt from participation in all of the hours required for Federal Work or Developmental Activities are required under state law to participate in Alternative Activities.

### *Work Activities*

Each member of the assistance group who is a minor head-of-household or adult is required to participate in federally allowable work assignments and/or Developmental Activities, or Alternative Work Activities.

### Federally-Allowable Work Assignments

The following work activities are prescribed under Federal law. They are defined as follows:

- Employment - employment where an individual receives compensation for services performed. This includes activities that the CDJFS deems to be legitimately entrepreneurial including micro-enterprise self-employment programs.
- Work Experience Program (WEP) - a program in which individuals work without pay at a job site in a public, private-non-profit or private-for-profit organization in order to gain work experience and training. It may include activities ensuring that participants become familiar with workplace expectations and exhibit work behavior and attitudes necessary to compete successfully in the labor market. WEP may include specific hands-on-training. WEP may include child care service activities in which a participant provides child care for another participant's child who is a member of another assistance group. WEP may include Community Service activities including a program under which a participant of OWF who is responsible for a minor child enrolled in grade twelve or lower is involved in the minor child's education on a regular basis. An individual who is assigned to be involved with the minor child's education is required to attend academic home enrichment classes that provide instruction for parents in creating a home environment that prepares and enables children to learn at school and must participate in a work assignment at the school that the child attends.
- Subsidized Employment Program (SEP) - a program in which individuals work with pay at job sites

in public, private-non-profit or private-for-profit organizations in order to gain specific occupational training. In return for hiring the individual, a subsidy is provided to the employer for a specified period of time.

- On-The-Job Training (OJT) - a program which combines classroom instruction and paid or unpaid work experience to improve individuals' skill development and assist them in obtaining, retaining, or improving employment.
- Job Search and Job-Readiness Activities - programs which assist individuals in acquiring the life skills that are used in obtaining, retaining or improving employment; and those activities to seek and secure employment as directed and approved by the CDJFS.
- Vocational Education - a program of education and training with a goal of enabling individuals to obtain employment. Vocational education includes college, technical, vocational, or other course work leading toward a degree, certificate or license. Study time may be included in this activity.
- Job Skills Training - a program designed to increase individuals' employability potential. It may include college, technical, vocational, or other course work. It may include activities ensuring that participants become familiar with workplace expectations and exhibit work behavior and attitudes necessary to compete successfully in the labor market. Various types of structured programs would qualify, such as rehabilitation services, counseling, personal development and pre-employment classes. Study time may be included as part of this activity.
- Education Related to Employment - any educational program provided to individuals who do not have a high school diploma or GED. Study time may be included as part of this activity.
- Basic Education Activities - a program provided to individuals who do not possess basic literacy skills whether or not they have obtained a high school diploma or equivalent. Basic education may include high school or equivalent education and adult basic and literacy education. Study time may be included as part of this activity.

#### Developmental Activities

Developmental Activities are a special feature of the OWF program. For many assistance groups, Developmental Activities serve as a supplement to the Federal Work Activities, and are performed in hours required above and beyond the work hours that are required to satisfy the work participation requirements in P.L. 104-193. For other assistance groups, such as single-parents with children under age one who are exempt from the federal work requirement, Developmental Activities are assigned.

Developmental Activities are appropriate in the following three types of situations:

- 1) Single parent with a child under age one and not assigned to participate in a Federal Work Activity.
- 2) Single parent with child under age 6 who is participating 20 hours per week in a Federal Work Activity.
- 3) A parent who is participating in a Federal Work Activity but who needs an additional assignment to remove one or more barriers to fully participating in a Federal Work Activity or getting or keeping a job.

In establishing Developmental Activities, county departments are not limited by the restrictions that Title IV-A imposes on work activities. Developmental Activities may be the same as, similar to, or different from Federal Work Activities and Alternative Work Activities. Developmental Activities can be any type of activity that moves the family toward self-sufficiency. Because Developmental Activities are not limited to Federal Work Activities, participants assigned to these activities will not necessarily be counted in the numerator of the participation rate calculation. Examples of Developmental Activities include parenting classes, mental health counseling, or vocational rehabilitation services.

#### Alternative Work Activities

In cases where traditional work activities are unsuitable, and individuals are unable to participate in Federal Work Activities, individuals are placed in Alternative Work Activities appropriate to their specific circumstances and needs.

Participants placed in Alternative Work assignments are assigned to activities that may include, but are not limited to: 1) parenting classes and life-skills training; 2) participating in certified alcohol or drug addiction programs; 3) in the case of a homeless assistance group, finding a home; 3) in the case of a minor head-of-household or an adult with a disability, active work in an individual written rehabilitation plan with the Rehabilitation Services Commission; 4) in the case of a minor head-of-household or adult who has been the victim of domestic violence, residing in a domestic violence shelter, receiving counseling or treatment related to the domestic violence, or participating in criminal justice proceedings against the domestic violence offender.

Like Developmental Activities, Alternative Work Activities may be any activity that moves the family toward self-sufficiency. No more than twenty percent of adults and minor heads-of-households participating in OWF may be assigned to Alternative Work Activities. The CDJFS shall establish standards for determining whether an adult or minor head-of-household has a temporary or permanent barrier to participating in Federal Work Activities.

#### *Work After Two Years*

Each CDJFS must immediately assess and assign at least one adult or minor head-of-household in each family to a Federal Work, Developmental or Alternative Work Activity at the time of, or as soon as possible after, application for OWF. ODJFS and each CDJFS understands that, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. Section 602 (a)(1)(A)(ii), each family must be participating in some type of a work activity after receiving cash assistance for 24 months. Since Ohio requires individuals to be appraised and assigned to a work activity at the time of or as soon as possible after OWF application, all families should receive an assignment by the time the 24 month period is reached.

#### *Community Service After Two Months*

Ohio has opted out of the provision, which requires a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under OWF to participate in community service after two months if the parent or caretaker is not engaged in or exempt from work activities (Appendix C). The Community Service Activity is not necessary to offer in Ohio because all adults and minor heads of household are assessed and assigned to Federal Work, Developmental, or Alternative Work Activities at the time of application for assistance.

#### *Number of Hours Required to Work*

Single-parent assistance groups are required to participate in a Federal Work or Developmental Activity for at least 30 hours per week. Single-parent families with a child age 6 or over are required to participate at least 30 hours in a Federal Work Activity. Single-parent families with a child under the age of six are required to participate at least 30 hours in an activity, 20 of which must be in a Federal Work Activity and the remaining ten hours must be in a Federal Work Activity or a Developmental Activity.

Two-parent assistance groups are required to participate in a Federal Work Activity for at least 35 hours per week if the family is not receiving federally funded child care and 55 hours per week if the family is receiving federally funded child care. One parent may complete the requirement for the assistance group.

Single-parent families with a child under the age of one are required to participate in a Developmental Activity for the number of hours required by the county. The county has the option of assigning a parent with a child under the age of one to a Federal Work Activity and including that family in the federal participation rate calculation.

Based on the results of an employability assessment, an individual may be exempted from some or all of the hours required for Federal Work or Developmental Activities due to family or individual barriers to participation. Individuals who are exempted from participating in all of the hours required for Federal Work or Developmental Activities must participate in an Alternative Activity for the number of hours required to complete that activity.

#### *Ombudsperson*

Ohio statute requires each CDJFS to have at least one OWF ombudsperson. The OWF ombudsperson acts as a liaison between the OWF applicant/participant and the CDJFS.

#### *Work Participation Rates*

Ohio will comply with provisions related to work participation rates outlined in 42 U.S.C. section 607.

#### *Domestic Violence Option*

Ohio has elected not to take the domestic violence option at this time.

#### *Application of Waivers*

Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. section 615, Ohio will rely on one waiver that was previously approved; Ohio implemented its time limit waiver provision in July 1996 (TANF was implemented in 10/96) and the policies were continually applied through 9/30/97. Beginning 10/1/97, Ohio aligned its time limit policies with the requirements of 42 U.S.C. 608(a)(7). In addition, Ohio previously operated the LEAP program under an approved waiver that expired in June 2003. In accordance with 45 CFR section 260.75, Ohio submitted the required certification from Governor Bob Taft relating to waiver inconsistencies (see Appendix B).

### **Prevention, Retention & Contingency**

#### *Services*

The PRC program provides benefits and services to needy families and low-income working families who are in need of help with essential supports to move out of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency. The program is designed to provide benefits and services that are not considered assistance in accordance with 45 CFR 260.31. The PRC program provides a broad variety of services and short-term benefits to needy families that are designed to accomplish one of the four purposes of TANF.

In addition, Ohio chooses to provide services authorized by the Title IV-A Plan that was in effect on August 21, 1996. This plan authorizes Ohio to fund certain medical and certain Child Welfare services with TANF dollars. The specific Title IV-A Plan is in Appendix A.

Prevention services are designed to be provided to a PRC assistance group (the PRC assistance group is not necessarily the same as an assistance group as defined in OWF) to divert them from ongoing cash assistance and help them reach self-sufficiency by helping them through the presenting crisis. Retention services are provided to the PRC assistance group to allow an employed member to maintain employment, and thereby achieve or continue self-sufficiency. Contingency services are provided to the PRC assistance group to meet an emergent need which, if not met, threatens the safety, health or well-being of one or more PRC assistance group members.

Among the TANF-allowable services that may be provided to TANF-eligibles are: services for unruly and misdemeanor youth; information and referral services to kinship caregivers concerning access to legal services, child care, respite care and financial assistance, adult literacy and child reading services; workforce development and supportive services; microenterprise development and other entrepreneurship activities; youth job training; job creation and retention services; teen pregnancy prevention services; out-of-wedlock pregnancy prevention services; school readiness services such as, counseling and placement, parent education and parent-child activities, peer support groups, and home visits; disaster relief; transportation services; domestic violence services; after-school programs; family preservation and reunification services; mediation services; employer recruitment; early childhood developmental and intervention services; Individual

Development Account (IDA) match; and post-secondary education and job training.

*PRC Administration*

Each County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS) is required to adopt a written statement of policies governing the PRC program for the county. The statement of policies must be adopted not later than October 1, 2003 and must be updated at least every two years thereafter. A county department may amend its statement of policies at anytime.

In adopting a statement of policies for the county's PRC program, each CDJFS must establish or specify all of the following:

- Benefits and services to be provided under the program that are allowable uses of federal IV-A funds under 42 U.S.C. 601 and 604(a), except that they may not be "assistance" as defined in 45 C.F.R. 260.31(a) but rather benefits and services that 45 C.F.R. 260(b) excludes from the definition of assistance;
- Restrictions on the amount, duration, and frequency of the benefits and services;
- Eligibility requirements for the benefits and services;
- Fair and equitable procedures for both of the following:
  - The certification of eligibility for the benefits and services that do not have a financial need eligibility requirement;
  - The determination and verification of eligibility for the benefits and services that have a financial need eligibility requirement.
- Objective criteria for the delivery of the benefits and services;
- Administrative requirements; and,
- Other matters the county department determines are necessary.

Each CDJFS must ensure that the statement of policies is consistent with Title IV-A, federal regulations, state law, the Title IV-A state plan submitted to the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, and amendments to the plan.

In addition, each CDJFS must provide the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) with a written copy of the statement of policies and any amendments to the statement not later than ten calendar days after the statement or amendment's effective date. The receipt of these plans does not constitute an approval or disapproval of the policies and practices outlined by the counties and does not

represent the concurrence of the State with any claims by the County.

Each county's Prevention, Retention, & Contingency Plan can be accessed at:

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/owf/prc/>

### **Separate State Program**

*Alcohol/Drug Treatment Program* - In Ohio, as in many states, drug and alcohol addiction plays an ever increasing role in family dysfunction as well as economic and social dependency. In order to better address this underlying cause of dependency, Ohio has created a Separate State Program to provide for prevention and treatment services for youth and adults where drug and alcohol abuse threatens their ability to become economically self-sufficient and to care for children in their own home.

Services will be provided to members of needy families with dependent children under 200% of poverty. The Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addition Services (ODADAS) administers this program in accordance with an interagency agreement between ODADAS and ODJFS. ODADAS will work closely with the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Boards, Alcohol, and Drug Addiction Services Boards, County Departments of Job and Family Services, Public Children Services Agencies and local providers to identify the service needs of the target population and develop service interventions appropriate to those needs.

### **Other TANF-Funded Benefits and Services**

ODJFS administers other TANF-funded programs and components of Title IV-A programs, which provide the following benefits and services to TANF-eligible individuals, as established by the Ohio General Assembly or Executive Order issued by the Governor. The benefits and services provided under this section are not considered assistance as defined in 45 CFR 260.31(a) and are benefits and services that 45 CFR 260.31(b) excludes from the definition of assistance.

### ***Early Learning Initiative***

Effective July 1, 2005 Ohio is implementing an early care and education program for the children of low income working families with income lower than 195% of the Federal Poverty Level. The Early Learning Initiative (ELI) is designed to provide full-day, full-year child care and school readiness services for preschool children in families who receive Ohio Works First cash assistance or families who are employed.

ELI is a collaborative effort between ODJFS and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). County departments of job and family services (CDJFS) will be responsible for determining family eligibility for ELI programs. ODJFS will be responsible for contracting with ELI agencies, for reimbursing ELI agencies and for monitoring compliance with children's attendance and ELI agency billing requirements.

### ***Children's Hunger Alliance***

ODJFS will contract with the Children's Hunger Alliance to conduct outreach activities to meet the nutritional needs of TANF eligible families whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level. These program services will support their transition from assistance or maintain their continued employment without

reliance on cash assistance.

### ***Ohio Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs***

ODJFS will contract with the Ohio Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs to provide after-school programs that protect at-risk children and enable youth to become responsible adults. Program services include nutritional meals, snacks, education, youth development, and career development services for children of TANF eligible families whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level.

### ***Project Grad***

ODJFS will contract with Knowledge Works to implement “Ohio Project Grad” which is designed to improve school attendance, academic success and reduce the dropout rate of inner-city students. The program addresses the academic and social needs of school age children of TANF eligible families whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level.

### ***Talbert House***

In accordance with Am. Sub. H.B. 66, legislation provided funding to provide TANF-eligible non-medical substance abuse or alcohol abuse services to Talbert House, a provider in Hamilton county. These services will be included in the Hamilton County PRC plan.

### ***Accountability and Credibility Together***

In accordance with Am. Sub. H.B. 66, legislation provides funding to Accountability and Credibility Together, a provider in Butler county, to continue its welfare diversion programs for TANF-eligible individuals. These services will be included in the Butler county PRC plan.

### ***Strengthening Families Initiatives***

The Ohio Strengthening Families Initiative (OSFI) will be administered by the Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Using a competitive process, the Governor’s Office will grant up to \$11 million per year of Ohio’s TANF block grant funds to faith-based and community-based organizations to employ research-based strategies to reduce Ohio’s out-of-wedlock birth rate and to encourage and support healthy marriages. The long-term goal of this initiative is to improve child well-being and reduce childhood poverty. These services will be available to families whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level. This initiative will focus on the following components:

- *Ex-offender re-entry and their families*  
This initiative strengthens the families of ex-offender families to improve child outcomes, to promote responsible parenting, to promote economic well being, to reduce recidivism and to reduce the rate of children of incarcerated parents that go to prison.
- *At-risk youth*  
This initiative will build youth life skills to reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancy of youth who may be at risk. This initiative will assist families in supporting at-risk youth who are returning home from placements or who need services to avoid placements in correctional facilities or foster care. This

effort will reduce the percentage of these children who go to prison, improve the percentage that complete educations, and improve employment rates.

- *Strengthening Families*

This initiative will involve faith-based and community organizations to develop and implement strategies that reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies and increase marriage success.

### ***TANF Food Boxes***

ODJFS is in the process of entering into a grant agreement with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks to provide TANF food boxes to families who receive disaster-related PRC funds from a County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS) in the event that the county is under a disaster declaration issued by the Governor.

The food boxes contain non-perishable food and personal items, such as toilet paper, paper towels and laundry detergent and personal hygiene items. The food boxes will be distributed to families who receive disaster-related PRC funds from the CDJFS through January 2006. The remaining food boxes will be distributed to needy families at selected CDJFS locations until the supply is exhausted.

### ***Hurricane Evacuee Programs***

Pursuant to Executive Order 2005-17T, ODJFS has established the Hurricane Evacuee Programs to address the immediate needs of dislocated families affected by the hurricane who have relocated to Ohio. There are two TANF-funded programs established for the evacuees; the TANF Evacuee Cash Program and the TANF Evacuee Support Services Program.

#### ***TANF Evacuee Cash Program***

The TANF Evacuee Cash Program provides a one-time non-assistance cash payment of \$1500 to each eligible evacuee family unit. Evacuee family units are eligible for the TANF Evacuee Cash Program if: they are from the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina; they have available income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level; and they are a family unit which is defined as a minor child(ren) living with a parent, specified relative, legal guardian or legal custodian; or they are a pregnant individual. The application period runs through 12/31/2005.

#### ***TANF Evacuee Support Services Program***

The TANF Evacuee Support Services Program was created so that CDJFS can provide other TANF-allowable services to TANF-eligible evacuee families at or below 200% FPL. These services are limited to soft services which are defined as services without cash value to the recipient, such as job training, education, training, etc. The application period runs through 3/31/2006.

### ***Title IV-A Funded Home Energy Assistance Program***

Upon receipt of an Executive Order, ODJFS will enter into an interagency agreement with the Ohio Department of Development to transfer TANF funds to supplement the Home Energy Assistance

Program. This program will be available to assist families in paying heating bills this winter. Families whose income falls at or under 150% of the federal poverty level may qualify for an average of \$430 per household to help pay heating bills this winter. Families whose income falls between 151% to 175% of the federal poverty level may qualify for an average of \$391 to be applied toward their heating bill.

***Child Care Subsidy Program*** - In Ohio, TANF funds may specifically be used to support Ohio's state child care subsidy program in the provision of services to:

- OWF families, and;
- Low-income employed families with incomes that are at or below the state established income ceiling at the time of application for child care subsidy services and at each redetermination for such services. While the state has the authority to adjust income ceilings in order to manage child care expenditures, per state statute, the ceilings can never exceed 200% of the federal poverty level for the child care subsidy program.

***Adoption Services*** - Federal TANF funds will be used to recruit, promote and support the formation and maintenance of two-parent adoptive families under purpose 4 (segregated Federal TANF funds) and for needy single-parent adoptive families (at or below 120% of the state median income scaled by family size, including the child(ren) to be adopted). Post finalization case management services will be provided to ensure the success of these placements and to prevent disruption of the families.

### **Additional Provisions**

#### ***Fair & Equitable Treatment***

Ohio will determine eligibility and deliver benefits in a manner consistent with 42 U.S.C. section 602(a)(1)(B)(iii). All applicants and participants will be treated in a fair and equitable manner, including those who move to Ohio from another state, those participants who have been adversely affected and claim hearing rights, and, to the extent allowable under Federal law, legal aliens who are not United States citizens.

An appellant who appeals under Federal or State law a decision or order of a job and family services agency, shall be granted a state hearing by ODJFS at the appellant's request. A state hearing decision is binding upon the agency and department, unless reversed or modified on appeal to the director of the department of job and family services or a court of common pleas. An appellant who disagrees with a state hearing decision may make an administrative appeal to the director of the department of job and family services, who shall review it and may affirm, modify, remand, or reverse the state hearing decision.

#### ***Inalienability and Exempt from Execution***

Ohio Works First and benefits and services provided under the Prevention, Retention and Contingency program are inalienable whether by way of assignment, charge or otherwise and exempt from execution, attachment, garnishment, and other like process.

### *Applicability of other Federal Laws*

Under Section 408(d) of the Social Security Act, the following provisions of law apply to any program or activity funded with TANF funds: (1) The Age Discrimination Act of 1975; (2) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; (3) The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and (4) Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The limitation on federal regulatory and enforcement authority at section 417 of the Act does not limit the effect of other federal laws, including federal employment laws (such as the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and unemployment insurance (UI) and nondiscrimination laws. These laws apply to TANF beneficiaries in the same manner as they apply to other workers.

### *Confidentiality Provisions*

Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. section 602(a)(1)(A)(iv), ODJFS will take steps to ensure the confidentiality of all information collected in Ohio's TANF-funded programs. Under the guidelines established that govern Ohio's TANF plan, no person or government entity shall solicit, disclose, receive, use or knowingly permit or participate in the use of any information regarding a TANF client for any purpose not directly connected with the administration of the TANF program except that to the extent permitted under Federal law, the State will:

- Release information regarding a TANF recipient for purposes directly connected to the administration of the TANF program to a government entity responsible for administering TANF;
- To the extent permitted by federal law, ODJFS and county departments of job and family services agencies shall provide TANF information, except information directly related to the receipt of medical assistance or medical services, for purposes of investigations, prosecutions, and criminal and civil proceedings that are within the scope of the law enforcement agencies' official duties.;
- Provide, for purposes directly connected to the administration of a program that assists needy individuals with the costs of public utility services, information regarding a recipient of TANF to an entity administering the public utility services program;
- Provide information to the following persons: the recipient, an authorized representative, a legal guardian of the recipient, and the attorney of the recipient, if the attorney has the recipient's written authorization;
- Provide information only in accordance with the written authorization.

To the extent permitted under federal law, the State may do both of the following:

- Release information about a TANF recipient if the recipient or the recipient's guardian gives voluntary, written authorization;

- Release information regarding a TANF recipient to a state, federal, or federally assisted program that provides cash or in-kind assistance or services directly to individuals based on need or for the purpose of protecting children to a government entity responsible for administering a children's protective services program.

#### *Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies*

The goal of reducing out-of-wedlock births is largely county-focused through a county's PRC plan. Specific county goals are listed within Appendix D.

#### *Statutory Rape*

Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. section 602(a)(1)(A)(vi), as part of ODJFS' TANF program, the State plans to contract with an outside vendor to devise and operate a public outreach program related to statutory rape. The program will target law enforcement officials, educational institutions, and relevant counseling agencies, and will encourage these groups and individuals to include men in teen pregnancy prevention programs, to the extent that statutory rape is a contributing factor to teen pregnancy.

#### *Treatment of Individuals Moving From Other States*

For the purposes of benefits and services offered under Ohio's TANF-funded programs, Ohio will treat individuals who have moved from other states within the last twelve months no differently from residents who have resided in the state for more than twelve months.

#### *Treatment of Aliens*

ODJFS provides OWF cash assistance and other TANF-funded services and benefits to qualified aliens to the extent allowable under Federal law, and in the same manner as they are provided to residents of Ohio.

- Each member of the eligible assistance group must be a citizen or qualified alien.
- Non-citizens who enter the U.S. Prior to August 22, 1996, and are in a qualified alien status, qualified aliens who are exempted from the 5-year bar as provided for in section 403 (b) of PRWORA, as amended [8 U.S.C. 1613(b)], and those qualified aliens for whom the 5-year bar has expired are eligible for benefits and services to the same extent as citizens and must meet all of the same eligibility requirements.
- Qualified aliens who enter the U.S. on or after August 22, 1996, are not eligible for cash assistance for a period of 5 years except for those qualified aliens exempted from the 5-year bar, based upon Title IV, Section 403 of the PRWORA as amended (8 USC 1613).
- Victims of severe forms of trafficking, and family members of victims of severe forms of trafficking as defined in subsections 7105(b)(1), and 7105(b)(1)(A) of Chapter 78, 22 U.S.C., respectively are eligible for benefits and services to the same extent as an alien admitted to the U.S. as a refugee

under 8 U.S.C. 1157.

## **Family Supports**

The following support services are offered to individuals to help them maintain their jobs:

- **Medicaid Eligibility.** To the extent allowed by law, Medicaid eligibility is aligned with eligibility for the Ohio Works First program, so that all participants have access to quality health care. Upon leaving OWF, former participants may have up to one year of extended Medicaid eligibility to help them make the transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency. Additionally, many families who are diverted or sanctioned from public assistance may still be eligible for Medicaid through the Ohio Healthy Start and Healthy Families programs.
- **Transportation.** OWF work participants must have access to employment opportunities in order to successfully enter and remain in the labor force. For this reason, state law requires each board of county commissioners to develop a written transportation plan that establishes policies regarding the transportation needs of low income residents of the county seeking or striving to retain employment. In developing the transportation plan, the board is required to consult with various entities within the county including the county department of job and family services.
- **Child Care Assistance.** Reliable child care is essential for families to obtain and retain long-term employment. In addition, families participating in employment and training programs require child care assistance. For these reasons, OWF participants with children under 13 years old are eligible for subsidized child care, with the subsidies varying according to the income of the assistance group. Child care is guaranteed to OWF participants and to families who leave OWF for employment for up to one year, or until their income exceeds 150% of the federal poverty level. All families with incomes up to the state established income ceiling may be eligible for non-guaranteed child care assistance. The state child care subsidy program is funded with Ohio General Revenue, CCDF, TANF and SSBG funds.
- **Food Stamps.** Participating OWF assistance groups are considered categorically eligible for participation in the Ohio Food Stamp program. Additionally, individuals leaving OWF may continue to be eligible if their income remains below 130% of the poverty level and they meet all other eligibility criteria of the Food Stamp program. Ohio expanded categorical eligibility to cover the four purposes of the TANF block grant in accordance with 7 CFR 273.2(j)(2)(i)(C).
- **Service Integration.** County Departments of Job and Family Services are proactively involved in local service integration to serve TANF eligible families. Each county is required by Ohio Statute to have a Family Services Planning Committee to provide County Commissioners advice on implementation, administration, and evaluation of social service programs in the county. In addition, each county is encouraged to engage in a community planning process. These efforts are designed to help counties determine the needs in the county and to develop goals and strategies necessary to serve those needs and meet those

goals. These efforts are intended to link public and private service providers with needs of low income families and employers.

## **Section III GOVERNANCE**

### **State-County Relationship**

#### *Fiscal Agreements*

With the provision of TANF-funded services (i.e., OWF and PRC) in Ohio, each Board of County Commissioners is provided TANF allocations that must be used in accordance with state administrative rules. State administrative rules require counties follow all applicable federal and state law including, but not limited to, federal regulations and OMB circulars.

The purpose of the state administrative rules is to establish requirements governing reporting, cash management, audits, allowable use of funds, and other requirements to provide accountability for the use of financial assistance awarded by ODJFS.

#### *Community Plans*

Each Board of County Commissioners must establish a County Family Services Planning Committee to address the service needs of the county and make recommendations to the County Commissioners. The Planning Committee is encouraged to develop a County Community Plan designed to identify the county's goals and objectives under the OWF and PRC programs, and the strategies the county will utilize in achieving desired outcomes. While the plan is the end product and ultimately becomes the county's road map, it is the planning process that produces the greatest benefits for the community. The involvement of community stakeholders may maximize the utilization of resources and lead to consensus on strategies outlined in the plan.

### **Separate State Program and Other TANF-Funded Benefits and Services**

Ohio's Separate State Program and other TANF-funded benefits and services are administered in accordance with respective interagency agreements or contracts. A more detailed discussion of these is provided in Section II.

### **Draw Down of Federal Funds**

U.S.C. 42 Section 603(a)(1)(A), as amended provides that each eligible State shall be entitled to receive for each of the fiscal years 1996 through 2003, a grant in the amount equal to the State family assistance grant as defined in section 603(a)(1)(B). The "TANF Extension Act of 2005" H.R. 3021 reauthorizes the TANF block grant through September 30, 2005.

#### 1. Payments to Agency Administering the TANF Program

Payments for the TANF program will be made to the organization managing the AFDC/JOBS programs as of August 22, 1996, unless the State indicates that the TANF administering agency has changed. If a

change is made, describe the name, address and EIN of the new organization.

II State Payments for TANF Program

Section 605 requires that grants be paid to States in quarterly installments, based on State estimates. The State's estimate for each quarter of the fiscal year by percentage is:

**For FY 2000 and Future Years**

<u>1<sup>st</sup></u> <u>Quarter</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u> <u>Quarter</u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u> <u>Quarter</u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u> <u>Quarter</u>
25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%

## **APPENDIX**

- A. Title IV-A State Plan in effect on August 21, 1996
- B. Governor Taft's Letter and Certifications regarding Waiver Inconsistencies
- C. Letter Exercising Option to Disregard Requirement to Place TANF Participants in Community Service after Two Months of Receiving Benefits
- D. Teen Births Chart (Revised 10/04)