



WHAT DO TANF ADMINISTRATORS THINK ARE THE IMPORTANT ISSUES?¹

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Highlights of Survey Responses

- Administrators in the majority of states express frustration over Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) verification requirements.
- Most states are experiencing caseload increases; some note increased demand for child care.
- About half of the 24 state administrators who responded note that the characteristics of those applying for TANF have changed including more two-parent families (3) and more with recent work experience (5).
- While the majority of states have not changed policies in response to higher unemployment, a few report expanding hardship criteria and streamlining processes to deal with larger TANF and SNAP caseloads.
- States plan to use ARRA funds for basic assistance (12), subsidized employment (10), and short-term assistance (8). Subsidized employment strategies include paid apprenticeships, time-limited subsidized jobs, and employer subsidies.
- In moving forward, states suggest changing TANF's funding formula (9), eliminating the separate two-parent participation rate (13), allowing more flexibility in countable work activities (15), and focusing more on the hard to employ (6). Many (9) would like to see a stronger focus on outcomes such as education and training and poverty reduction.

Complete Survey and Summary of Responses

States may be counted in multiple responses. Sample responses under the main response category provide examples of ideas expressed rather than consensus views.

Respondents: TANF administrators from 24 responding states (AZ, CT, DC, DE, FL, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, MN, MO, NM, PA, NC, ND, SC, TN, TX, UT, WV, WY)

¹ Web survey conducted in October 2009.

1. After the DRA passed in 2006, states were required to implement higher work participation rates and meet new standards for verification of work activities. Did you face any challenges in meeting the new requirements?

Response	Respondents
Countable activities too restrictive <i>Sample responses</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Especially in rural areas - Especially in bad economy - Difficult for the hard to employ - New TANF benefit for working SNAP recipients. 	9 (DC, KY, KS, MA, MO, SC, TN, WV, WY)
Verification challenging <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time consuming - Expensive - Questionable value - Required new systems 	13 (AZ, DE, CT, FL, IA, MD, MN, NM, ND, PA, SC, TN, UT)
Serving the hard to employ difficult <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have to “hide” them - New separate program created 	4 (DC, IN, ND, SC)
Two-parent rate difficult to meet <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moved these cases out of TANF 	4 (IA, KS, MA, TX)
No difficulties	1 (OK)
No answer	1 (IL)

2. Have caseloads increased in your state (please include those receiving basic assistance as well as those in special state programs and those receiving other TANF services) and, if so, by how much?

Response	Respondents
TANF increased from 7 to 50 percent <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase especially large in 2009 - Child care demand also increased - Diversion payments also increased 	16 (CT, DC, DE, FL, KS, MA, MD, MN, MO, NM, OK, PA, SC, TN, UT, WV)
Small or no change <i>Sample response:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -State not hit as hard as others by recession 	5 (KY, NC ND, TX, WY)
Decrease continued, but slower	1 (IN)

3. Have you had any difficulties continuing funding for all TANF-related services (such as child care and transportation)? Please explain.

Response	Respondents
Cuts in services <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curtailed transportation and other services - Reduced length of transitional child care - Difficulties funding case management services - Waiting list for child care 	6 (CT, DC, IN, NC, SC, TN)
Services continued using <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contingency funds - ARRA funds 	3 (IA, KS, MD)
Not a problem now, expect future difficulties	4 (IA, KY, MA, UT)
Not a problem	9 (AZ, FL, DE, ND, OK, PA, TX, WV, WY)
No answer	3 (IL, MN, NM)

4. Have the characteristics of those applying for TANF services changed in the past year? If so, how have they changed?

Response	Respondents
More with work experience	5 (DC, DE, SC, TN, IN)
More two-parent families	3 (IN, MD, WY)
Other <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More not job ready whose support systems deteriorated - Nonexempt caseload increasing - Slight increase in those without eligible children - Increase in return clients 	4 (CT, NM, OK, TX)
No change	8 (FL, KY, NC, PA, ND, IA, NC, WV)
No answer/information not available	5 (IL, KS, MA, MN, MO)

5. Have you changed any policies or practices in response to higher unemployment? Please explain any changes.

Response	Respondents
Create/expand temporary or subsidized employment programs	3 (DE, FL, TN)
Other changes <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand hardship criteria to include employability factors - Exclude wages paid to youth from income - Internal staff training for training sites due to decreases in unsubsidized employment - Modify emergency need policies - Streamline processes to deal with higher caseload 	5 (AZ, CT, MA, MN, MO)
Under review	1 (WV)
No change	14 (DC, IA, IN, KS, KY, MD, NC, ND, OK, PA, SC, TX, UT, WY)
No answer	1 (IL)

6. Has your state applied for the funds provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)? If so, how will those funds be used (e.g., will they go to more cash assistance, subsidized jobs, emergency assistance, etc.)?

Response (examples)	Respondents
Basic assistance	13 (CT, DE, FL, IA, KS, KY, MA, MN, NM, OK, SC, UT, WV)
Temporary/subsidized employment	10 (DC, DE, MD, FL, IL, OK, NC, ND, NM, TN)
Short-term assistance <i>Sample responses:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rent payments - Homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing - Post-work incentive program - Emergency assistance - Diversion payments 	9 (DC, DE, MA, MD, MN, NM, UT, PA, TX)
None or “may apply.”	4 (CT, IN, MO, WY)

7. What do you think are the most important issues that should be addressed by policymakers when they discuss TANF reauthorization in 2010?

Response	Respondents
<p>Funding</p> <p><i>Sample responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Base formula on poverty - Adjust for cost of living - Separate emergency assistance - Continuation/expansion of emergency funding - Include supplemental funding in block grant - Changes in maintenance of effort eligibility 	9 (FL, IA, KS, MO, NC, ND, SC, OK, UT)
Eliminate separate two-parent participation rate	12 (FL, IA, IN, KS, KY, MO, SC, TN, TX, MD, UT, WV)
<p>Flexibility in countable activities</p> <p><i>Sample responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow for more education (e.g., GED/college) - Greater time allowed for training/job readiness - Eliminate time limit on treatment services in the work participation rate - Flexibility to create programs to meet needs - Count all activities toward self-sufficiency/family stability - Fewer work opportunities in recession. 	16 (AZ, DE, FL, KS, MA, MD, MN, MO, NM, OK, PA, SC, TN, TX, UT, WV)
Allow partial credits in work requirement	5 (CT, DE, KS, PA, TN)
<p>Change who counts toward the work participation rate</p> <p><i>Sample responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exclude teen parents meeting school attendance - exclude victims of domestic violence - exclude incapacitated individuals - exclude pending disability applicants 	5 (KY, MD, MO, PA, WY)
<p>Consider measures/ways to better reflect TANF program services/impacts</p> <p><i>Sample responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add additional performance measures, not just the work participation rate - Measures reflecting services to clients not job ready - Better reflection of quality of services offered - Focus TANF goals on poverty reduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stronger focus on outcomes versus process 	9 (IL, IN, KS, MD, MO, PA, SC, TN, TX)
<p>Increase focus on the hard to employ</p> <p><i>Sample responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts on long-term/not job-ready clients - Increase time-limit exemptions - Allow for more exceptions to the work participation rate 	6 (DE, IN, TN, TX, WV, WY)
Increase state flexibility	3 (IA, MD, WV)
Simplify work-requirement documentation	3 (IL, MN, UT)
Improve coordination of funding and services.	1 (MA)

Sample Responses to Question 7 (Paraphrased)

- The work participation rate requirements are not connected to how well we provide services; there should be more than one indicator of success.
- More education and training is needed, especially for teen parents.
- Most clients require more than 6 to 12 weeks of job-readiness training.
- Substance abuse treatment, domestic violence counseling, and rehabilitation should not have a time limit.
- TANF goals should focus on poverty reduction through a combination of strategies to move families into stable, sustainable jobs with good wages and benefits.
- TANF recipients are competing with an unemployed workforce with more education and more skills.
- The federal government should allow states greater flexibility to develop and encourage participation in programs that reflect needs of TANF families and assist in achievement of family stability.
- Federal agencies should better coordinate funding and services to low-income families to eliminate program inefficiencies and redundancies.