

Improving Program Performance by Strengthening TANF Responsiveness

**Presentation at the ACF Regional TANF Directors Meeting
Denver, CO**

September 18, 2014

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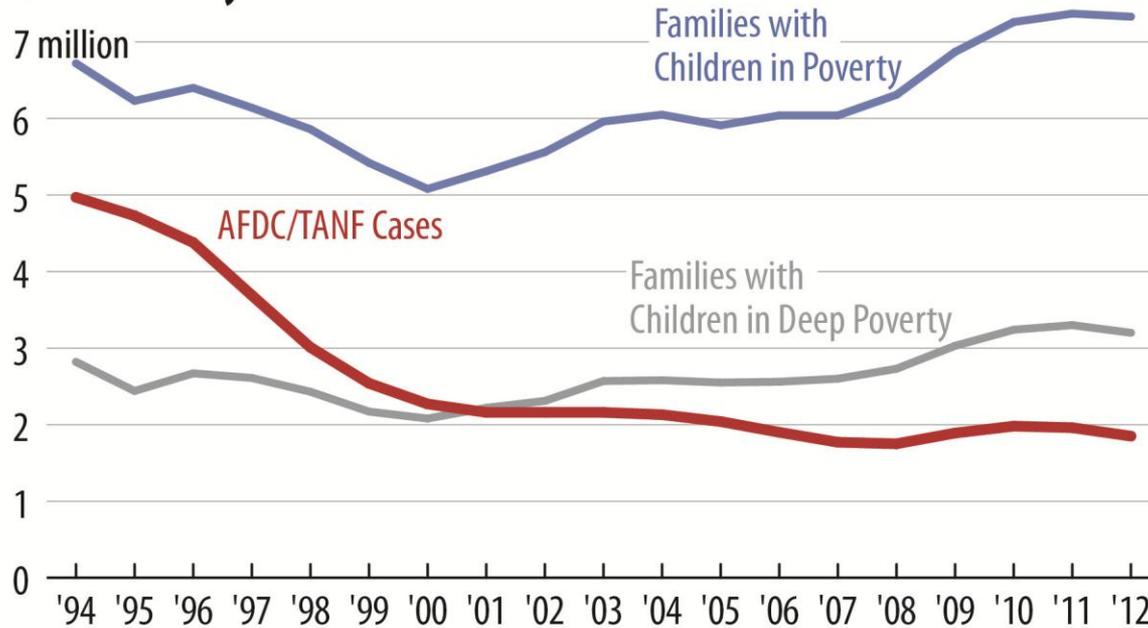
Workshop Goals

- **By the end of the session, participants will have:**
 - **Discussed how TANF program performance fits into the overall safety net for low-income families.**
 - **Examined the responsiveness of TANF work programs are for participants and nonparticipants (including those who are eligible for TANF, but not receiving it).**
 - **Explored the unique intersection of what a strong, responsive TANF program might look like and how states might implement some of program components.**
 - **Considered strategies for monitoring performance and testing the “success” of policy/program changes.**

Trends in the TANF Safety Net

Fewer TANF Families, Despite Increasing Need

TANF Cases Have Declined Dramatically, Including in Years When Poverty Has Increased

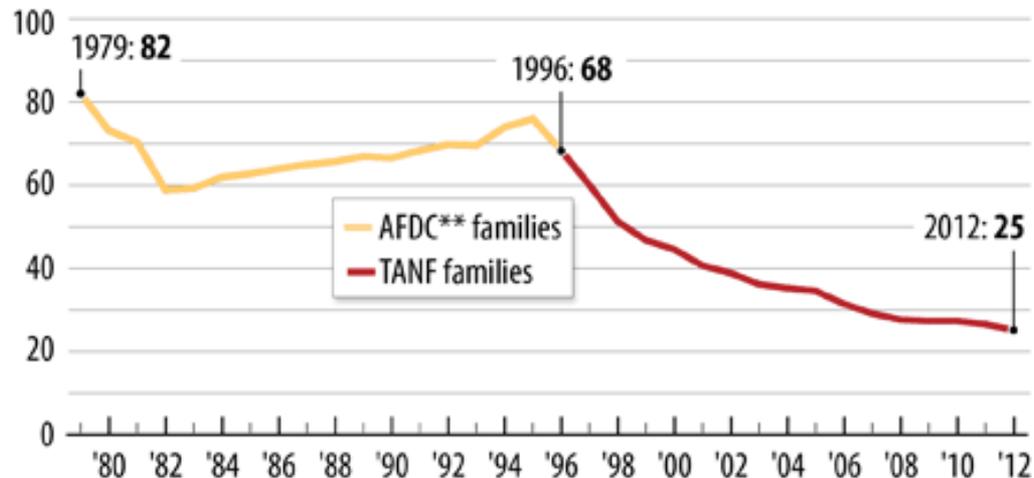


Source: CBPP analysis of poverty data from the Current Population Survey and AFDC/TANF caseload data from Health and Human Services and (since 2006) caseload data collected by CBPP from state agencies.

TANF Serves Small Share of Poor Families

TANF's* Role as a Safety Net Has Declined Sharply Over Time

Number of families receiving AFDC/TANF benefits for every 100 families with children in poverty



*Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

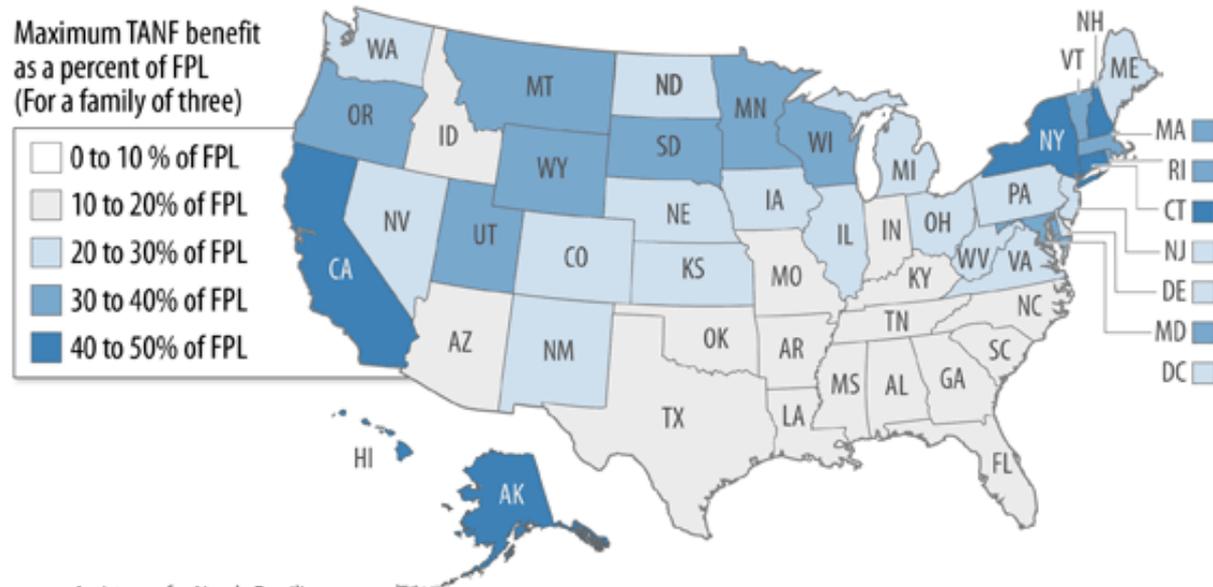
**Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Source: CBPP analysis of poverty data from the Current Population Survey and AFDC/TANF caseload data from Health and Human Services and (since 2006) caseload data collected by CBPP from state agencies.

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TANF Families Remain Extremely Poor

Maximum TANF* Benefits Leave Families Well Below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)



*Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

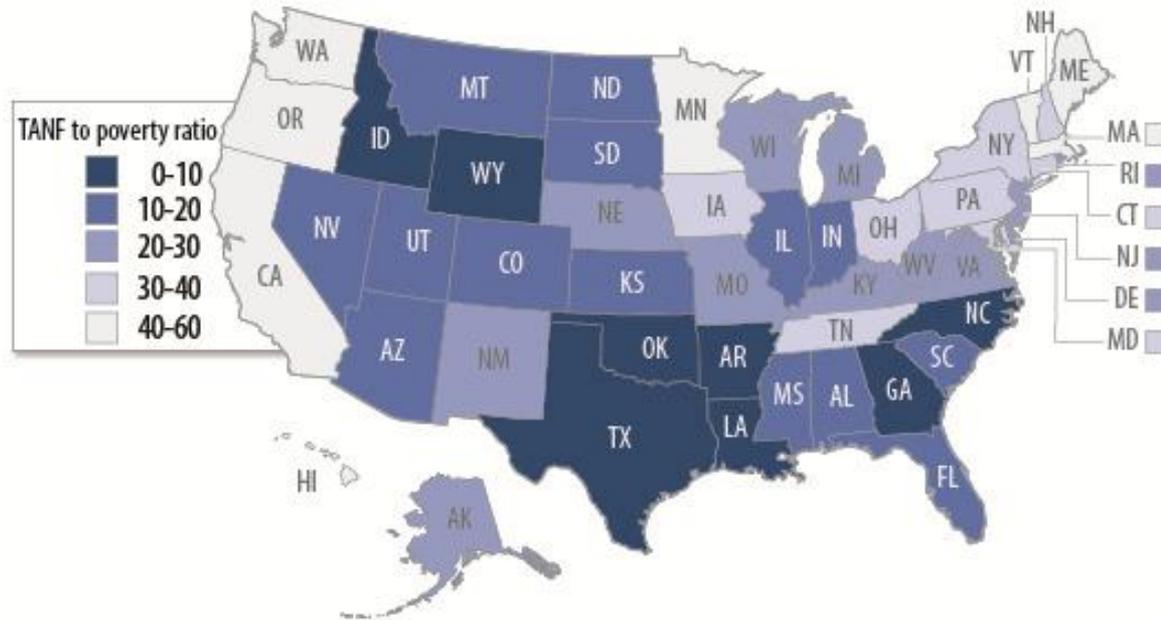
Note: Hawaii and Alaska FPLs are higher than the other 48 states.

Source: Calculated from 2014 HHS Poverty Guidelines and CBPP-compiled data on July 2014 benefit levels.

TANF Safety Net Varies Across States

TANF Provides a Safety Net to a Small Share of Poor Families

Number of families receiving TANF benefits
for every 100 families in poverty with children, by state (2012)



Source: CBPP analysis of poverty data from Current Population Survey and TANF caseload data from Health and Human Services (since 2006) caseload data collected by CBPP from state agencies.

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TANF Lifts Few Families Above *half* of the FPL

TANF* Lifts Many Fewer Children out of Deep Poverty** Than AFDC Did

TANF (2010)

Lifted 24% of children who otherwise would have been in deep poverty



AFDC*** (1995)

Lifted 62% of children who otherwise would have been in deep poverty



*Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

**Deep poverty = income less than 50 percent of the federal poverty line

***Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Source: CBPP analysis of Current Population Survey, additional data from HHS TRIM model.

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Elements of a Work-Focused Safety Net Program

Work-Focused Safety Net Program

- Relates to the needs, conditions of the labor market
 - Preparing people for available jobs and providing skills and training employers need
 - Recognizes need for and supports multiple pathways to work (NOT one-size-fits-all)
 - Varying education, experience, capacity and interest levels require customized employment pathways
 - Provides assistance that improves employment and earning outcomes, leads to self-sufficiency
 - Also services that support work
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Work-Focused Safety Net Program (cont.)

- Recognize the diversity of the caseload
 - Steady work with significant hours may not be realistic goal for all
 - Set expectations consistent with ability to succeed
 - Do not exclude the most vulnerable families through work requirements they cannot meet
 - Provides adequate cash assistance when people are unable to work
 - Individual or labor market inability
 - Considers impact of policies on children
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Thought questions:

- (1) How would you describe your program now? What works? What doesn't?**
- (2) What changes might improve your program?**

TANF Program Environment

Changing Demands

- **Decrease in federal funding to support TANF programs**
 - Declining value and reallocation of the TANF block grant
 - Discontinuation of federal supplemental grants
 - End of American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds
- **Increase in the demand for public assistance programs**
- **High unemployment, fewer full-time jobs**

Responses by States and Localities

- **Explicit efforts to reduce program costs**
 - Reductions in state and local administrative and program staffing
 - Reduction in the amount of the cash grant
 - Decreased availability of work and personal supports
- **Limit TANF caseload growth**
- **Modified contracts with local employment service providers**
- **Rethinking TANF practices and performance measures**

Customizing Employment Services

Customizing Employment Services

- **Getting and keeping a job is a process**
- **Different clients require different approaches to service delivery, “start where the client is at”**
- **“Success” may measured in a variety of ways**
 - **Educational attainment/credentialing**
 - **Job placement**
 - **Wages**
 - **Retention**
 - **Progress toward work**

Customizing Employment Services (cont.)

- Implementing a customized, employment-focused approach may influence:
 - Assessment
 - Work and program requirements
 - Case management and planning
 - Work-focused activities
 - Personal and work supports
 - Monitoring and tracking
 - Performance measures and program outcomes
- Collaborative partnerships can expand existing services

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Review of Workshop Goals

- **By the end of the session, participants will have:**
 - **Discussed how TANF program performance fits into the overall safety net for low-income families. (Session 1)**
 - **Examined the responsiveness of TANF work programs are for participants and nonparticipants (including those who are eligible for TANF, but not receiving it). (Session 1)**
 - **Explored the unique intersection of what a strong, responsive TANF program might look like and how states might implement some of program components. (Session 2)**
 - **Considered strategies for monitoring performance and testing the “success” of policy/program changes. (Session 2)**

Stages of Change

- **Pre-contemplation – No recognition of need for or interest in change**
- **Contemplation – Thinking about changing**
- **Preparation – Planning for change**
- **Action – Adopting new habits**
- **Maintenance – Ongoing practice of new, stronger services**

Identifying Promising Practices

- **What promising practices does your state implement for TANF clients who are: (1) work-ready, and (2) work progressing**
- **Highlight promising practices in the areas of:**
 - **Assessment**
 - **Case management and planning**
 - **Work activities**
 - **Personal and work supports**
 - **Performance measures and program outcomes**

Promising Practices

- **Integrate a strong program message about the benefits of family self-sufficiency and stability**
- **Make strategic investments in services and supports**
- **Customize case management and service delivery**
- **Emphasize and incentivize goal-directed behaviors in progressing toward work**
- **Build strong TANF/employment networks (e.g., government agencies, community partners, employers, specialized service providers)**
- **Broadly define employment-focused outcomes**

What one or two program changes would you like to implement to create a more responsive TANF program?

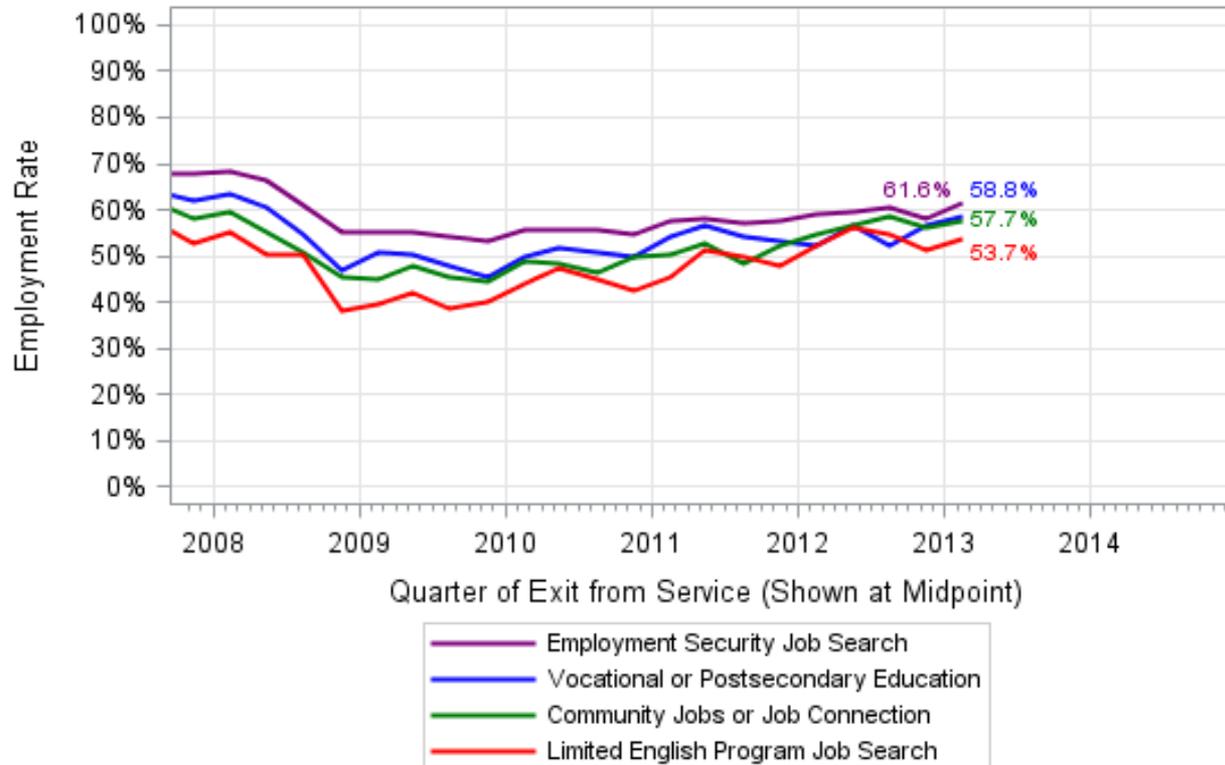
Monitoring Program Performance

WA WorkFirst Performance Chartbook

- WA state publishes monthly data-driven chartbook
 - Over 100 pages, over 50 measures
 - Appears to all be administrative data or matches
 - Employment outcome measures include:
 - Rates of employment after various types of services (e.g., job search, vocational education)
 - Quarterly and hourly wage data after completing various types of services
 - Sufficient employment to qualify for UI after services
 - <http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/performance/measures.asp>
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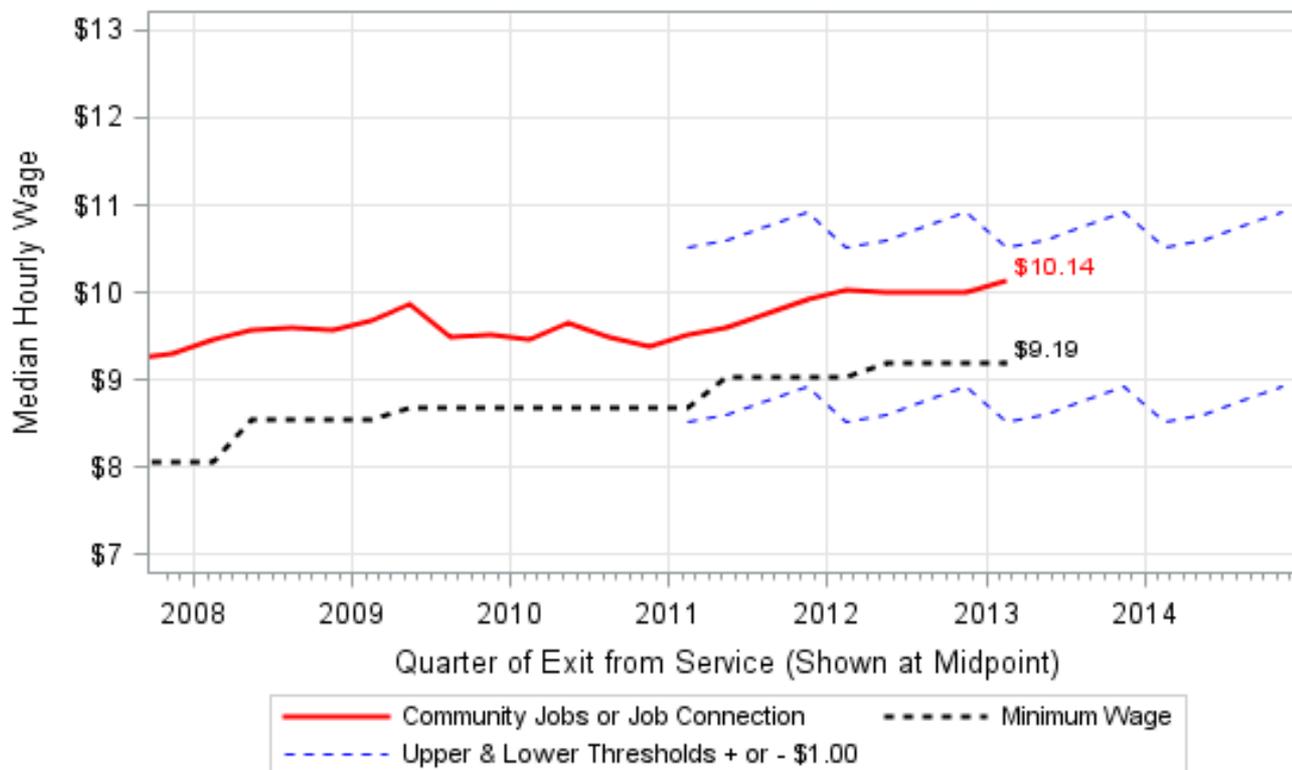
Example: Tracking employment rates after exiting various services

Employment Rates in Quarter One, Two, or Three After Selected Services for WorkFirst Adults



Example: Tracking hourly wage after subsidized employment exit

Median Hourly Wage in Quarter Three After Exiting
Commerce Community Jobs or Job Connection



Connecticut DOL At-A-Squint

- Monthly Jobs First Employment Services data (TANF cash assistance families) includes:
 - Employment barriers by type and number
 - Types of activities participating in (# and %)
 - Employment rates
 - Hourly wage levels – by \$ and against benchmarks (e.g. FPL)
 - <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/weltowrk/Squint/2014/Squint%20Jul%202014.pdf>
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Evaluating Program/Policy Changes

Recommendations

- **Start by identifying the intended outcomes and activities implemented to achieve them**
- **Decide the type of evaluation that is feasible**
 - **Implementation evaluation: How did the program operate?**
 - **Impact evaluation: Did the program make a difference?**
- **Ideally, use both implementation and impact evaluation to test and understand program success**
- **Emergence of “Opportunistic Experiments” or rapid-cycle evaluation**

Success!



For More Information

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