

TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project (TSDTP)

Tri-Regional TANF Directors Meeting

Providence, Rhode Island

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Overview

- TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project (TSDTP) examines connections between TANF and SSI, and programs for TANF recipients with disabilities
- Collaboration between SSA, ACF (OPRE and OFA), and state and county TANF programs
- Learning laboratory to understand TANF-SSI link, TANF disability/employment services environment, and to pilot promising models and approaches

Background

- **Overlap in TANF and SSI populations (prior research)**
 - Disabilities common among TANF adults. High rates of mental illness in both populations (30% TANF and 37% SSI)
 - Employment among TANF adults with disabilities is low (18%) and very low (4%) for seriously disabled
 - Approximately 18% of TANF households include an SSI recipient
- **Challenges for two programs to work together:**
 - Differing missions, rules and incentives related to work and definitions of disability
 - Limited history of collaboration
 - Conflicting messages about work and disability in TANF and SSI, and difficulty navigating contrasting programs

TSDTP Phases

- **Phase 1:** Data analysis and program examination
 - Field visits; analysis of merged TANF-SSP/SSI data; technical assistance
- **Phase 2:** Pilot testing
 - Implementation monitoring and evaluation of pilots in three sites
- **Possible Phase 3:** National demonstration with rigorous evaluation depending on pilot results

Participating States/Localities

- Riverside, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Ocala region, FL; Muskegon County, MI; Hennepin and Ramsey counties, MN; New York state (data only)
- Focused on county-level operations, though state context is important
- Consulting with SSA field offices and state DDS in all sites

Program Observations

Are clients with disabilities a TANF priority?

Very different than the early day of welfare reform...

- **Key Factors:**

- Budget and staffing constraints within TANF
- Very tough labor market
- Continued pressure to meet work participation rates

- **Implications:**

- Incentive to work with the more employable
- Incentive to exempt or ignore the harder to employ
- Limited to smaller voluntary programs that are not marketed
- More emphasis on SSI advocacy, but acceptance rates reported to be low
- Clients with disabilities still face time-limits, with limited supports for transition

TANF programs with disability services emphasize barrier removal

- Employment not key goal, or only after treatment/services (e.g. mental health substance abuse) completed
- Participation in treatment not intensive, completion rates low
- Integrating services with employment is more promising but has rarely been used in TANF
- Individual Placement and Support (IPS) a “work first” approach that builds supports around competitive employment (being adapted and piloted in Ramsey County)

TANF/SSI Connection: Varied Approaches

- All sites provide some help to TANF recipients who apply for SSI
- Some contract with outside organizations for SSI advocacy services for initial applications, others do internally
- In all sites outside legal firms handle appeals on a selective basis
- Outside contractor staff may be more knowledgeable about SSI rules and navigating eligibility process, often proactive in getting documentation
- Outside organizations more likely to screen out obviously ineligible cases and achieve somewhat higher initial acceptance rates, but costs can be high and hard to justify based on outcomes

TANF/SSI Connection (cont)

- For applicants with mental health conditions, obtaining medical documentation especially difficult when they lack treatment history
- Several sites had trouble finding recipients with disabilities willing to apply for SSI despite more generous benefits and no time limits (possible reasons: stigma, child welfare concerns, lack of family services and supports)
- TANF connections with SSA field offices and DDS tend to occur at the individual case and worker level rather than through more systematic, coordinated efforts

TANF/SSI Connection (cont)

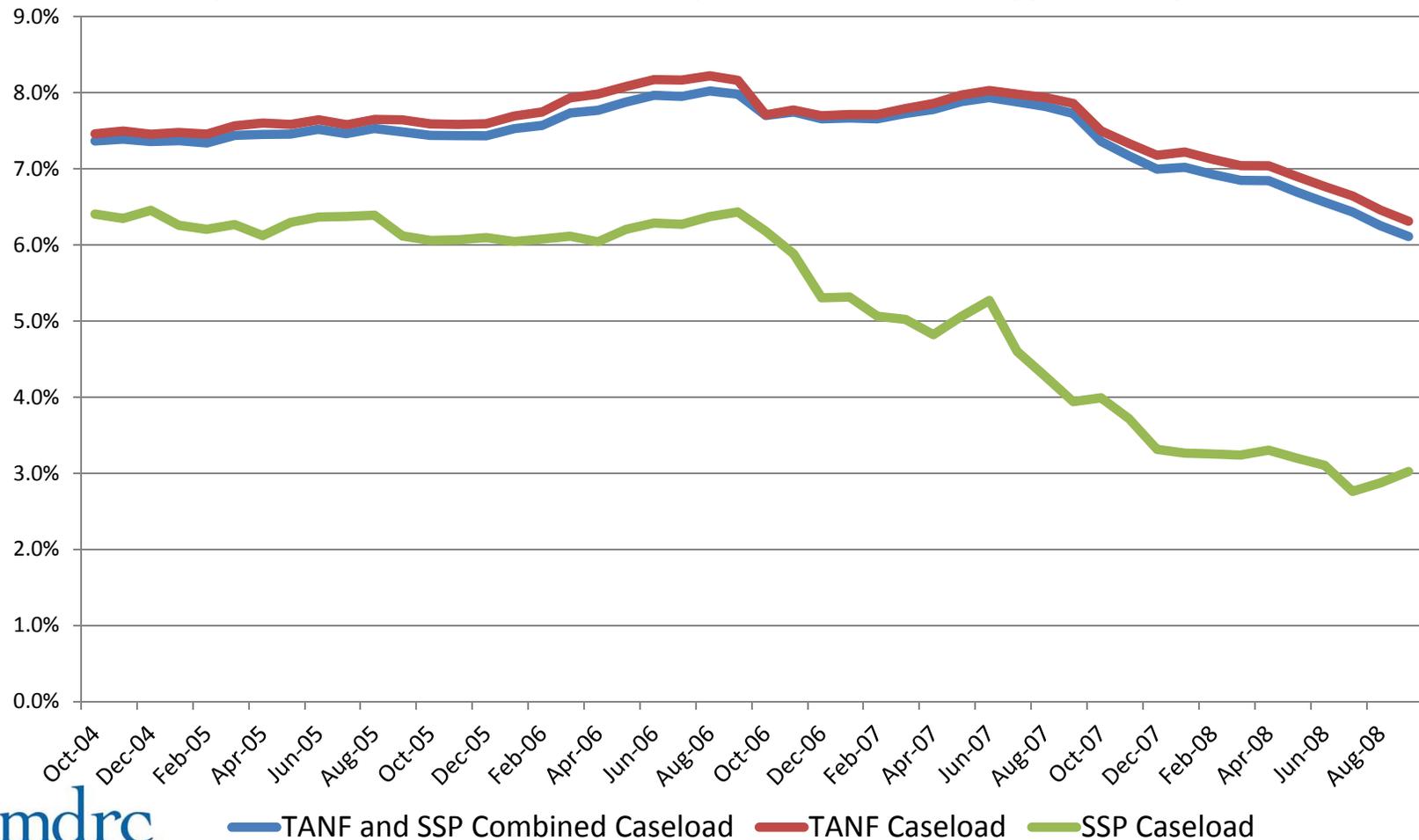
- TANF SSI advocacy staff need training on screening and assessment of potential applicants and accessing medical documentation (e.g. SOAR)
- TANF employment and eligibility staff could benefit from targeted training on SSI rules and process
- Simple communication links between TANF and SSA field offices would be helpful (e.g. designated contact staff, forum for addressing frequent problems)
- More ambitious inter-agency efforts (e.g. those for homeless adults in large cities) may only make sense if TANF applicant pool is large and if tangible benefits for both agencies

TANF/SSI Data Analysis

Preliminary Findings

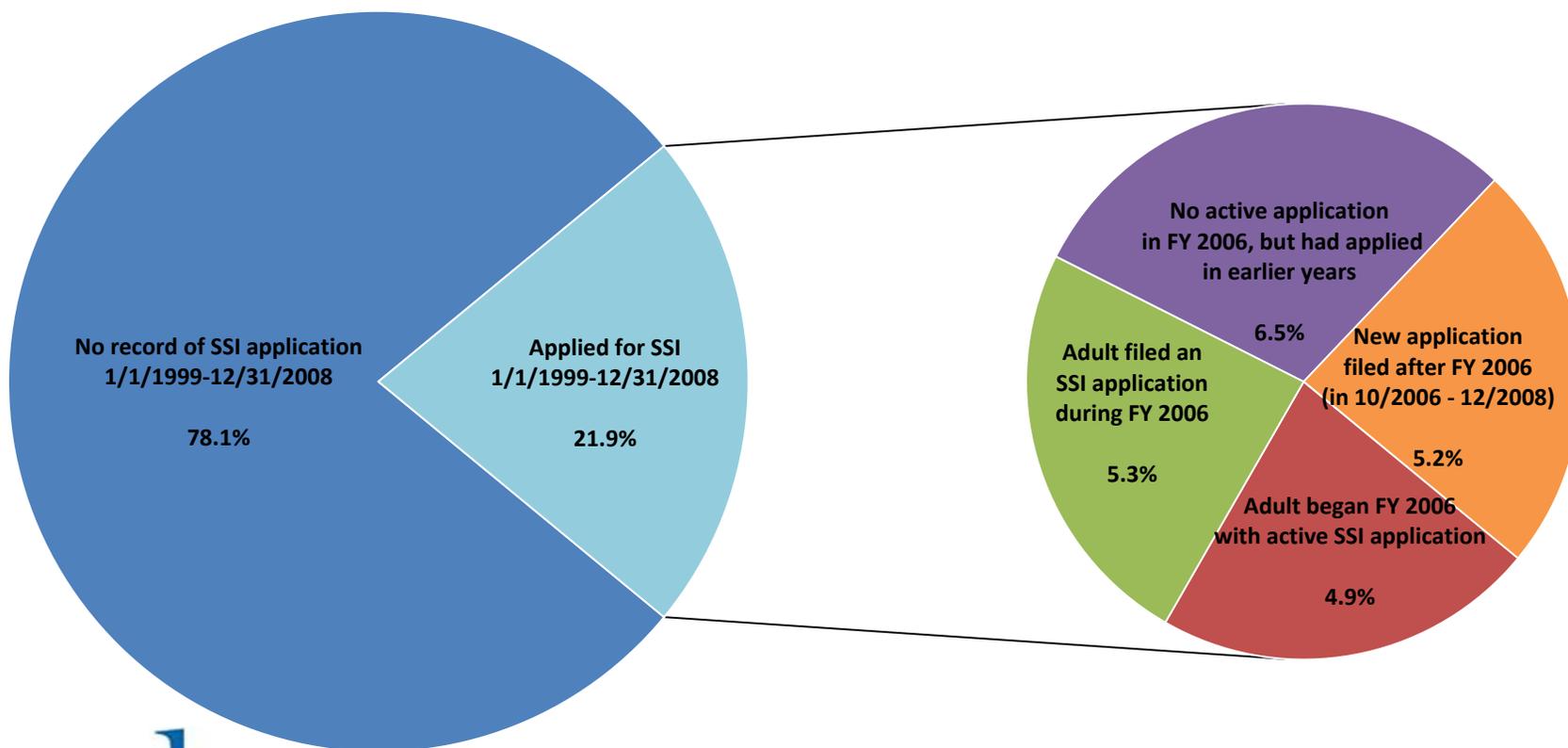
Percentage of TANF recipients in given month with active SSI application between 6-8%. Figure relatively constant for TANF recipients, while percentage of adult SSP recipients with active SSI applications has declined over time.

Proportion of Adult TANF and SSP Recipients with Active SSI Application by Month



Notes: Sample limited to states reporting their TANF/SSP universe in each year from Federal Fiscal Year 2005 to 2008. Source: Social Security Administration Disability Research File Fiscal Year 2009; Office of Family Assistance TANF and Separate State Program Monthly State Caseload Data Fiscal Years 2005-2008

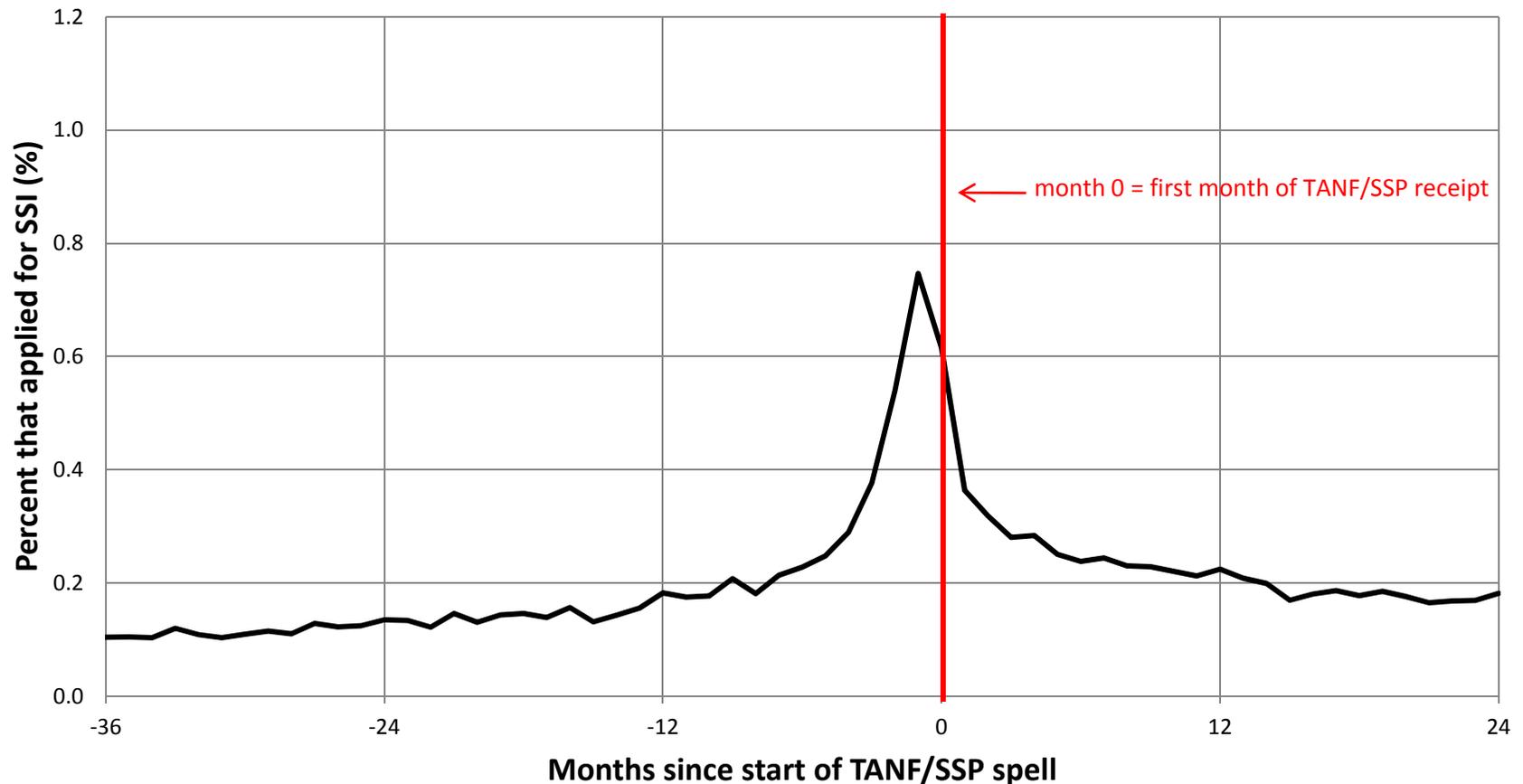
SSI applications among adult TANF/SSP recipients in FY 2006 in full-reporting states



Sample: TANF/SSP recipients in FY 2006 in full-reporting states (n = 648,995).

Initial SSI applications peak nearly simultaneously with first month of TANF/SSP receipt

Timing of initial SSI applications relative to first month of TANF/SSP receipt



Sample: New TANF/SSP recipients in FY 2006 (received TANF/SSP in FY 2006, but not during FY 2005) in full-reporting states (n=246,375).

Adult TANF/SSP recipients who applied for SSI represented small portion of SSI applicants in FY 2006

- In full-reporting states, of approximately 899,700 individuals with active SSI application in FY 2006, 7 percent (approximately 62,600) received TANF/SSP at least 1 month that year

From the TANF perspective

(comparing TANF/SSP recipients who applied for SSI with those who did not apply for SSI):

In full-reporting states, TANF/SSP recipients who applied for SSI were:

- Older (36 vs. 29 years old)
- Had older children (youngest child 7.5 vs. 4.3 years old)
- More likely to be white (59 vs. 47 percent)
- More likely to be no longer married (35 vs. 21 percent)
- Males more likely than female counterparts to apply (21 vs. 14 percent)
- More similar on other measures: family type, household size, number of children, education level, citizenship status

From the SSI perspective

(comparing adult SSI applicants who were TANF/SSP recipients and those who were not TANF/SSP recipients)

SSI applicants who were TANF/SSP recipients were:

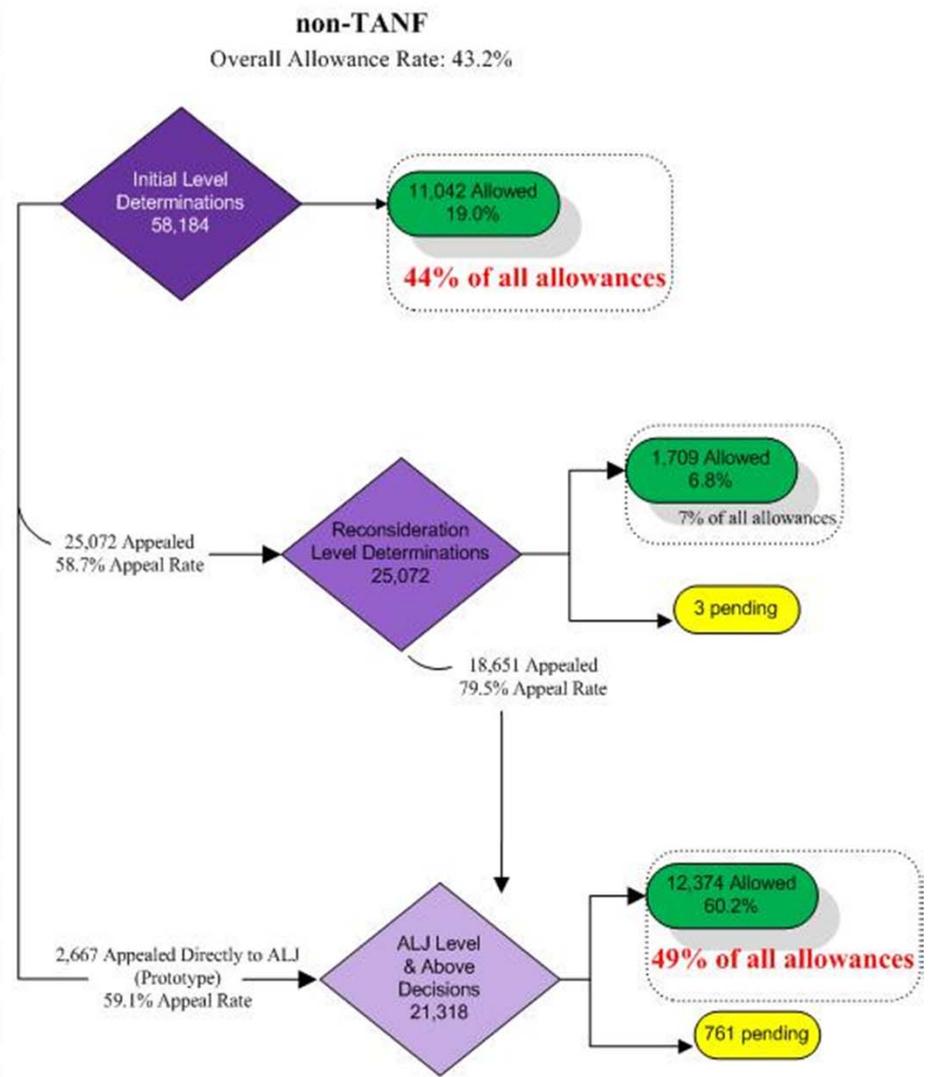
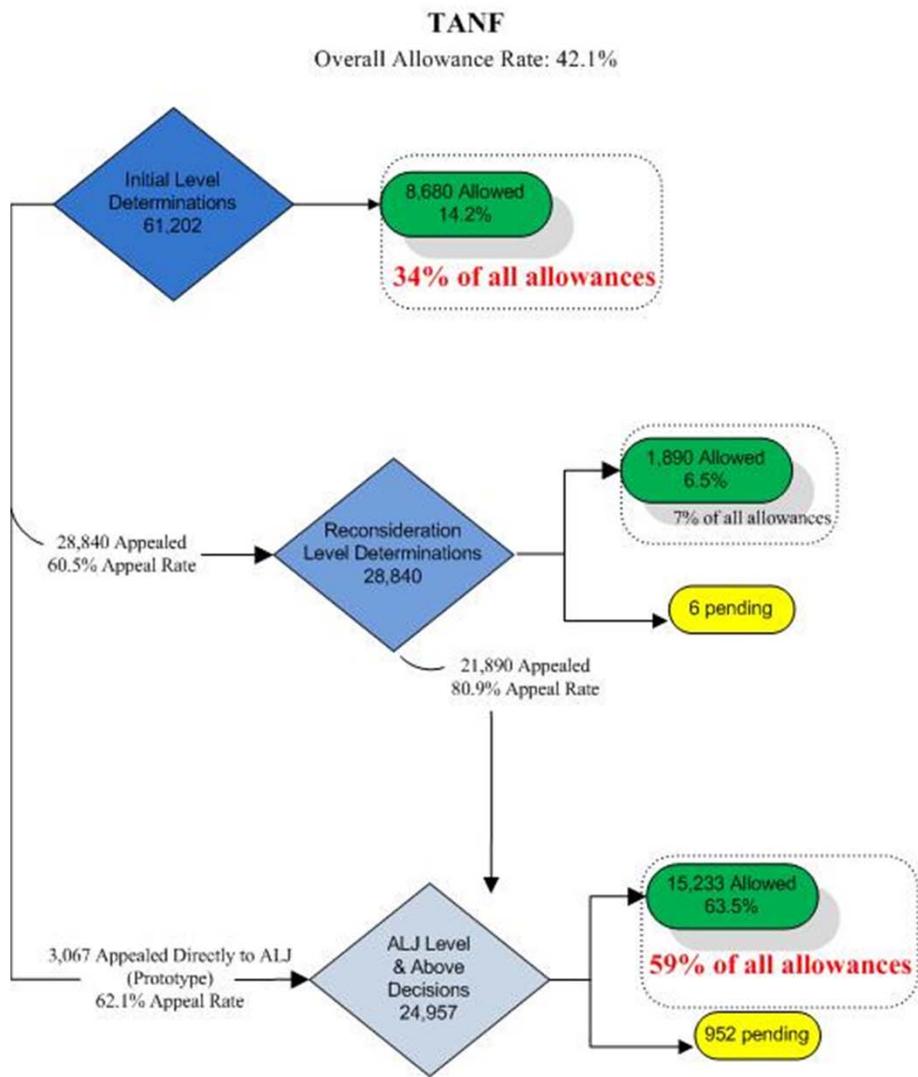
- Younger (36 vs. 43 years old)
- Less likely to be white (59 percent vs. 67 percent)
- More likely to be female (78 percent vs. 49 percent)
- More likely to meet non-medical SSI eligibility rules (95 vs. 82 percent)
- Not surprising, given TANF means-test

From the SSI perspective (cont)

Among SSI applicants, TANF recipients were:

- Somewhat more likely to be denied, and less likely to be awarded, at initial level
- Among TANF/SSP recipients who were awarded, 38 percent were made at initial level, and 62 percent after appeal
- Among non-recipients, awards evenly split between initial level and after appeal

Disability Claims and Appeals for FY 2005 SSI Applicants by TANF Status (26 States)



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