The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Cash Assistance program provides temporary cash benefits and supportive services to the neediest of Arizona's children and their families. The program helps these families meet their basic needs for well-being and safety and serves as their bridge back to self-sufficiency. Eligibility is based on citizenship or qualified resident status, Arizona residency and limits on resources and monthly income.

In 2016, 45,706 Arizonans, or roughly 1% of all Arizonans, participated in TANF. Vulnerable Children living in impoverished circumstances through no fault of their own are the primary participants in TANF.

In 2016, 33,363 Participants were Children & 12,343 were Adults
18,987 Total Cases

Child poverty has a huge impact on the nation’s economy. Economists estimate that child poverty costs the nation $500 billion a year in lost productivity as well as spending on health care and the criminal justice system.

Families Participate in TANF for short episodes, but often use up more than half to three quarters of their lifetime limit during one episode.

More than half of all households whose cases were closed in 2014, had participated in TANF for 6 months or less

The average time participating in TANF for all households whose cases were closed in 2014, was:

9 months (in one episode, does not include multiple episodes.)
19% participated for more than 12 months

Arizona's 12 Month LIFETIME TANF Participation Limit Is Most Stringent in the Country
Lack of Skills and Education combined with a Lack of Good Paying, Stable Jobs and Opportunities to Improve Job Skills.

2% of Participants had an Associates degree or higher

Source: Data provided by Arizona Department of Economic Security

Job Loss • Low Paying Temporary or Part Time Job • No Time or Money to Devote to Improving Job Skills

Lack of Affordable Childcare • No Reliable Transportation to Get To and From Work • High Regional Unemployment Rate

Qualifying for TANF is NOT EASY!

• Monthly family income after adjustments may not exceed 36% of the 1992 federal poverty level, reduced by 20%. (Family of 2 = $220; family of 3 = $278.)

• Prepare for and accept a job

• Make sure children ages 6-15 attend school

• U.S. citizen or lawfully residing in the U.S.

• Valid Social Security Number.

• Arizona resident. *Not an exhaustive list

$278 a month for a family of three is the maximum benefit allowed

43rd Arizonans participating in TANF receive one of the lowest amounts of assistance in the country

- 48% No Other State Reduced TANF Benefits More Than Arizona Between 1996 and 2016 *adjusted for inflation

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, TANF Cash Benefits Have Fallen by More Than 20 Percent in Most States and Continue to Erode, By Megan Stanley, Ife Floyd and Misha Hill, October 17, 2016.
Because of the Meager Benefits, Time Consuming Qualifying Process and Highly Restrictive Lifetime Limits to Participation, Fewer and Fewer Arizona Families in Poverty are Participating in TANF

Source: CBPP analysis of poverty data from the Current Population Survey and TANF caseload data from Health and Human Services and (since 2006)

Families with Children Living in Poverty

TANF Cases

Source: CBPP analysis of poverty data from the Current Population Survey and TANF caseload data from Health and Human Services and (since 2006)

AZ Needs to Work Harder on "Welfare to Work"

TANF, sometimes referred to as “Welfare”, was created in 1996. It was the famed “welfare reform” that was supposed to help families go from “welfare to work”.

Arizona Diverts Most TANF Federal Block Grant Funding Away From Work Supports, Making it More Difficult for People to Go from “Welfare to Work”

ONLY 1.6% of TANF Block Grant Funds spent in Arizona went to Work Activities in 2015

That’s Down from 16% in 2001

0% was spent on Child Care

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, How States Have Spent Funds Under the TANF Block Grant, By Liz Schott, and Ife Floyd, January 5, 2017
In 2016

98%
of all TANF Participants Were Actively Job Searching or Improving Employment Skills

46% of all adults participating in TANF had an income in the previous year (2014)

The Most Frequent Reason for Adult TANF Participants Leaving TANF was: Earning an Income (2014)

The Privatized Jobs Program has been a Poor Performer:

Only 3 out of 10 Participants in the Jobs Program Got Jobs

Fewer than 2 in 10 Participants Were Still Employed after 90 Days