

## Pennsylvania must raise the TANF cash grants to protect the most vulnerable among us from sliding into deep poverty

### What is TANF?

TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) is a monthly cash assistance grant administered by the PA Department of Public Welfare to eligible low-income PA families. The funding for the program is a combination of matching money from both the Federal and State government.

### Who is eligible for TANF?

- Dependent children and their parents or blood relatives who live with them
- Pregnant women

To be eligible a family must meet the income guidelines for the program and be caring for a related child under the age of 18, under the age of 19 if the child is in school or for dependents with special needs.

### The maximum monthly TANF benefit amounts

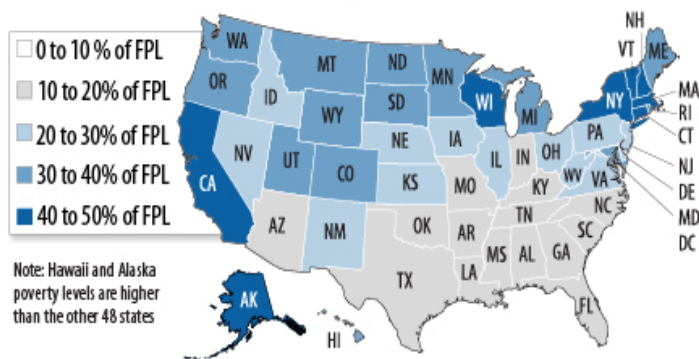
| Family Size | TANF Payment |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1           | \$205        |
| 2           | \$316        |
| 3           | \$403        |
| 4           | \$497        |
| 5           | \$589        |

*\*The benefit amount increases by \$83 for each additional member*

### The Problem

TANF grants to families in Pennsylvania have not been increased since January 1, 1990! The current grant amount is nowhere near enough to help families cover basic necessities such as rent, clothing, utilities, school supplies, and transportation costs for school and work. **TANF grants have lost 79% of their buying power since 1990.** A monthly grant of \$403 for a family with two children is now only worth \$225 in 1990 dollars. If welfare grants had kept pace with inflation, that same grant would now be \$721.

### Maximum TANF Benefits Leave Families Well Below Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (For Family of Three)



Source: Calculated from 2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines and CBPP-compiled data on July 2011 benefit levels.

[Center on Budget and Policy Priorities | cbpp.org](http://Center on Budget and Policy Priorities | cbpp.org)

Since 1990 the costs for essential household goods have increased significantly. In particular, the price for rent has increased 23 percent, the costs of home heating 39 percent, and gas prices have more than doubled. In 1990, the monthly grant in Pennsylvania was equal to about 46 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Now the grant is equal to about 22-26 percent depending on where you live in PA.



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**The Reality**

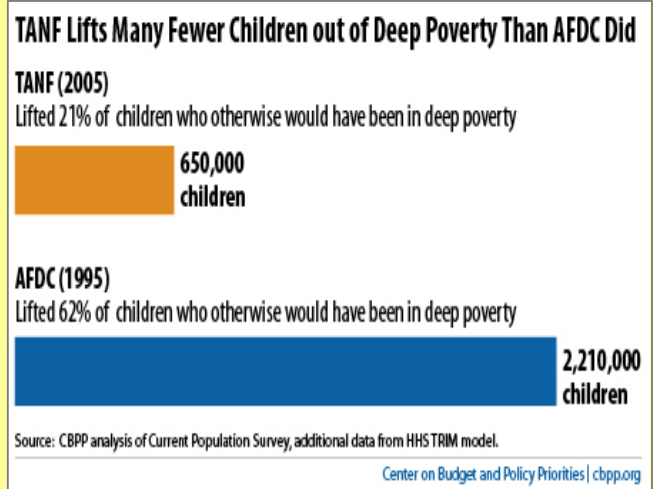
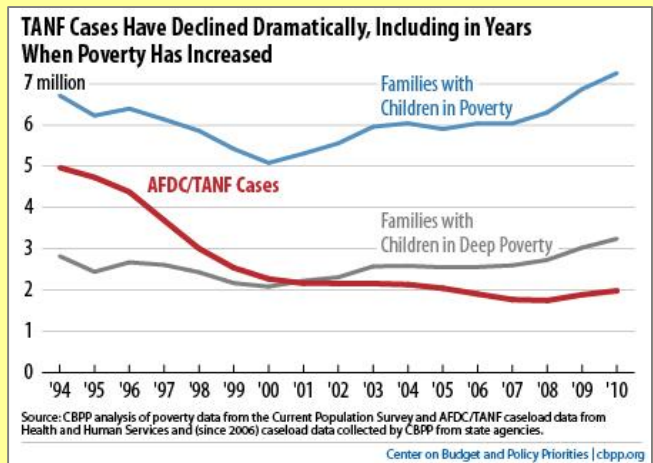
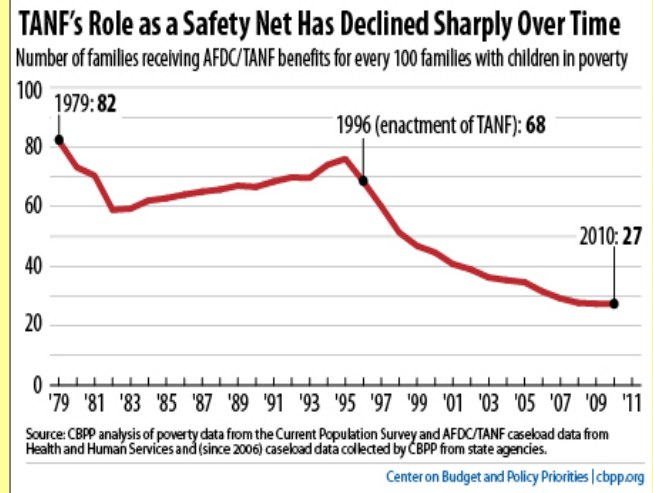
Over the years, TANF has become less effective both in assisting working families affected by economic downturns and in helping very low-income families in crisis. The result is a weakening safety net that is falling short of its promise to help families become self-sufficient and to protect families with children who are unable to work.

Pennsylvania has seen a decline in caseloads since welfare was reformed in 1996. Since then, **the caseloads have been cut by 59%, almost to an all-time low!** Currently, less than 74,000 families are receiving TANF in Pennsylvania, including families who are considered disabled and unable to work as well as more than 21,000 children under the age of 18 (being cared for by a relative). These families desperately rely on these benefits to help meet their basic needs.

**The solution**

Increasing the cash benefit amount would give essential help to our most vulnerable children and families! While the TANF caseloads have decreased in Pennsylvania, poverty remains high at 13.8% for Pennsylvanians and 19.2% for children. Most families who are constantly worrying about how they will afford housing, utilities, food, or clothing have a difficult time focusing on what they need to do to become self-sufficient. An increase in the temporary grant will enable families to focus on getting a job instead of worrying about the expenses of daily living. It is also extremely difficult to look for a job if you don't have a phone or utilities.

**Let's give vulnerable Pennsylvania families a hand up and support legislation that increases the TANF cash grant!**



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