

Montana TANF State Plan

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Effective Date: January 1, 2027, to December 31, 2029

DRAFT



DEPARTMENT OF
**PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

CONTENTS

MONTANA TANF STATE PLAN.....	0
.....	0
CONTENTS.....	1
PREFACE.....	0
MONTANA’S TANF PROGRAM	0
<i>FEDERAL, STATE, AND MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT-FUNDED PROGRAMS.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>TANF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>RESOURCE LIMITATIONS</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>INCOME STANDARDS - TANF CASH ASSISTANCE.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>INCOME TESTING AND DEEMING RULES – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>INCOME DISREGARDS – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>NONFINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>BENEFIT ISSUANCE</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>REDETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>EMPLOYABILITY/SERVICE PLAN – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>SANCTIONS – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>WORK ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>NON-DISPLACEMENT ON WORK SITE/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>TIME-LIMITED BENEFITS – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>SUPPORTIVE SERVICES.....</i>	<i>19</i>
REQUIREMENTS.....	19
<i>OUT-OF-WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES/TEEN PREGNANCIES.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>RESTRICTED USE/DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER RESTRICTIONS</i>	<i>26</i>

ACCESS TO USING OR WITHDRAWING ASSISTANCE WITH MINIMAL FEES OR CHARGES.....	27
SPECIAL PROVISIONS.....	27
MIGRATION FROM STATE TO STATE.....	27
ASSISTANCE TO NON-QUALIFIED ALIENS.....	28
ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL PROCESS.....	28
COMMUNITY SERVICE AFTER TWO MONTHS.....	28
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN ELDER CARE/LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES	28
EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATIONS.....	29
CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM.....	29
FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	29
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC COMMENT.....	29
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND APPLICATION METHODS FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS.....	29
PROCEDURES TO ENSURE AGAINST PROGRAM FRAUD AND ABUSE.....	30
OPTIONAL FAMILY VIOLENCE CERTIFICATION.....	30
CERTIFICATION OF SERVICES FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE.....	31
CERTIFIED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:	0
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE.....	1
SECTION 3 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 233.120 406(E).....	1
ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS.....	2
TREATMENT OF INCOME -ATTACHMENT 3-A.....	3

PREFACE

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is required to file a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) state plan in accordance with federal regulations. This plan establishes criteria for eligibility, benefit delivery, and fair treatment, including the right to a state administrative hearing for anyone adversely affected.

In administering the TANF program, Montana strictly prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, religion, creed, marital status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or genetic information.

MONTANA'S TANF PROGRAM

Per section 402(a)(1)(A)(i) of the Social Security Act, Montana will conduct programs designed to serve all political subdivisions across the state, though not necessarily in a uniform manner. These programs will provide assistance and services to needy families with children (or expecting children), offering parents job preparation, work activities, and supportive services to help them exit TANF cash assistance and achieve self-sufficiency.

Montana operates a statewide program that delivers temporary cash assistance to needy families, along with a mandatory work program for all participants deemed work-eligible. To be eligible for these services, Montana residents must meet the following criteria:

- The family unit must consist of one or two parents, or specified caretaker relatives;
- Care for a child under the age of 18 (or up to 19 if still attending secondary school, participating in Pathways Employment and Training, or enrolled in an approved Tribal Native Employment Works program) who is related within the fifth degree of kinship;
- Have countable family income and resources that fall below the current means-test threshold; and
- Be a U.S. citizen or a qualified alien.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT-FUNDED PROGRAMS

Federal, State, and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds are spent on assistance and non-assistance programs that comply with federal laws and regulations. These programs and services include:

TANF CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

TANF Cash is a state-administered program that serves every political subdivision in the State. Montana provides a time-limited, 60-month program that offers low-income single, two-parent, and caretaker relatives with minor children (or expecting) related within the fifth degree of kinship a monthly cash grant. Employment/training activities, educational opportunities, and other support needed to help the family become self-sufficient are provided for work-eligible individuals. Caretaker relatives, not in receipt of TANF Cash assistance, are not subject to time limits. TANF cash assistance is intended to meet TANF purposes one and two and is funded through federal and/or state Maintenance of Effort (MOE).

TANF POST-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

On January 1, 2008, Montana launched the Post-Employment Program (PEP) to provide transitional support to families leaving the TANF Cash Assistance program due to new or increased earned income. To qualify, families' earnings must exceed the Gross Monthly Income or Benefit Standard while remaining compliant with all other TANF criteria, including a resource limit of \$3,000 or less.

On August 1, 2016, Montana enhanced the program by extending coverage from three to twelve months. The upgraded program provides supportive services, child care assistance, and a gradually decreasing monthly benefit. Funded by State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) as ongoing TANF cash assistance, the program supports TANF Purposes one and two.

- Months 1-6, clients receive a \$100 per month post-employment payment.
- Months 7-12, clients receive a \$50 per month post-employment payment.
- A \$300 Work Pays Incentive is given in months one, seven, and twelve.

To determine eligibility for the TANF Post-Employment Program, 100% of the monthly gross countable earned and unearned income of the new wage earner or wage earner with increased income is disregarded.

CHILD SUPPORT SUPPLEMENTAL PAYMENT

Beginning July 1, 2005, families in receipt of TANF cash assistance are eligible to receive a Child Support Supplement Payment. The amount is based on current child support collected from a non-custodial parent, equal to the amount of current child support collected, up to but not exceeding the amount designated by the State's TANF Policy per TANF household. The Child Support Supplement Payment is considered a pass-through payment and is disregarded as income in the TANF budget.

TANF CASH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (E&T) SERVICES

Employment and Training (E&T) services are offered to work-eligible individuals enrolled in either the TANF Cash Assistance Program or the Post-Employment Program. Delivered through contracted service providers, these services are funded through a combination of federal grants and State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds to fulfill TANF Purpose two.

PATHWAYS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING.

Montana's statewide E&T program is titled Pathways. Funds are used to provide barrier-reduction services, education and training, or other work activities to assist TANF Cash families in becoming self-sufficient. Funding is provided through federal and/or MOE sources and varies based on the number of individuals enrolled and served in the program. Funds may be used for, but are not limited to, the following:

- Post-secondary education
- Specialized training
- Subsidized employment
- Financial literacy
- Matched savings and Individual Development Accounts (IDA)
- Service brokering
- Supportive services, and
- Other allowable services, provided on an as-needed basis, to help individuals and families achieve stability, employment readiness, and financial security.

BLACKFEET TRIBAL STATE WORK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

State Maintenance of Effort funding (FFY 2027 \$884,309) is provided to the Blackfeet tribe to expand the Tribal Native Employment Works (NEW) service population through the Blackfeet State Work Assistance Program (SWAP).

The SWAP program serves work-eligible individuals receiving State TANF cash assistance who:

- Reside within the exterior boundaries of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation or the communities of Cut Bank, Valier, and Dupuyer; and
- Are members of a household in which at least one member is enrolled in the Blackfeet Tribe.

Eligible participants may choose to receive required TANF Cash employment and training services through either Pathways or Blackfeet SWAP. SWAP provides services outlined in the approved Blackfeet tribal NEW plan.

WORKING CARETAKER RELATIVE CHILD CARE

Established on August 1, 2007, under House Bill two of the 2007 Montana Legislative Session, the Working Caretaker Relative Child Care (WCRCC) program is funded through a combination of federal and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds. The program assists specified caretaker relatives—who receive child-only TANF cash assistance—by helping cover child care costs for the minor children in their care.

To qualify for the WCRCC program, the specified caretaker relative must meet the following criteria:

Receive a child-only TANF cash assistance benefit for a minor child or children related within the fifth degree of kinship;

- Be employed as defined by the state;
- Have household income at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level;
- Pay \$75 per month co-pay; and
- Complete and submit the WCRCC program application to the Office of Public Assistance.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

This program provides financial assistance on behalf of families with children under aged 21 when an unforeseen event causes or threatens to cause the destitution of the child and/or situations where child abuse and/or neglect of a child has occurred or may occur in the immediate future. This eligibility is the same as that set forth in the State Emergency Assistance Plan in effect as of August 21, 1996. Section three of Montana's AFDC State Plan, in effect August 21, 1996, is attached. Funded with federal TANF.

TANF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL BROCHURE

The TANF Information and Referral (I&R) brochure provides clients with connections to partner agencies, community organizations, and benefit programs that support the entire household. Under federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations, Categorical Eligibility applies when any household member receives or is authorized to receive a qualifying TANF-funded service. Because the TANF I&R brochure is intentionally designed to serve and educate all community members—including elderly, disabled, and childless individuals- distributing or providing access to the brochure confers expanded categorical SNAP eligibility on the entire household. The production and distribution of the brochure are cost-allocated between Federal TANF funds and State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) contributions.

SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAM (SSP)

Montana's Behavior Health and Developmental Disabilities Department operates a separate state program funded by State Maintenance of Effort. The SSP provides some mental health, family stabilization, and reunification services for youth. Funding depends on the number of eligible youths served. Eligibility includes:

- Youth 18 years of age or younger, without regard to emancipation, or if in secondary school, less than 19 years of age, and
- Have a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)
- Qualify for Healthy Montana Kids Plus (HMK Plus/Medicaid), Healthy Montana Kids (HMK) Extended Mental Health Benefit plan, or HMK authorized Therapeutic Group Home services
- Countable income of the youth's family does not exceed 185% of the Federal Poverty level
- The requested service is not covered by HMK Plus or HMK Extended Mental Health Benefit plan

TRIBAL TANF MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT (MOE)

MOE funding is provided to tribal TANF programs approved by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services after July 1, 1999, and choose to base their share of the federal TANF block grant on the same federal fiscal year 1994 service population.

Under Montana Code Annotated 53-4-210, a tribe or combination of tribes may use the MOE share for monthly cash benefits payments or supportive services costs. The following programs receive MOE general fund appropriations to support federally authorized TANF services.

- Fort Belknap Indian Community TANF program (\$256,156)
- Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF program (\$335,185)

TANF SECOND CHANCE HOMES

On July 1, 2024, Montana implemented Second Chance Home Services to provide therapeutic residential care for pregnant and parenting young women up to age 21. Designed for individuals with household incomes at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to abuse, neglect, or extenuating circumstances, the program waives resource limits while requiring participants to satisfy TANF non-financial eligibility criteria. Fully funded through federal TANF block grants, the program advances statutory TANF purposes one and three by stabilizing vulnerable families, enabling children to be cared for in their homes, and preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies through referrals to community partners. Services include:

- An adult-supervised, supportive living arrangement
- Pregnancy prevention referrals
- A requirement to finish high school or obtain a high school equivalency certificate
- Access to support services such as child care, health care, transportation, and family counseling
- Parenting, child development, and life skills classes
- Pre and post-natal education
- Educational opportunities, nutritional education, job training, and employment services
- Individual case management and mentoring

- Services to ensure a smooth transition to independent living

COMMUNITY RESPONSE PROGRAM (CRP)

The CRP program serves as a formal, voluntary support system for needy families who are screened out by child protective services following a report of alleged child maltreatment. The primary goal is to help families so children can remain safe in their homes or with relatives in stable, nurturing environments. CRP invites caregivers to participate voluntarily in:

- Service provision: Caregiver skill building, financial education, home visiting, and more.
- Service linkage and care coordination: External referrals for mental health services, early intervention, recovery support, housing and financial assistance, legal aid, and home visiting.

An additional goal is to provide a pathway for community referrals—from professionals such as teachers, school counselors, doctors, and faith-based leaders—on behalf of families facing obstacles whose situations do not require a report to Child and Family Services. The TANF program will provide \$836,193.38 in federal funding for the CRP over two years.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)

In Federal Fiscal Year 2027, the TANF program will allocate \$250,000 in federal funding to expand local Court Appointed Special Advocates/Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GAL) programs. Delivered by screened, trained, and qualified community volunteers, these services advocate for the best interests of children involved in abuse or neglect proceedings within the court system. CASA volunteers promote positive childhood experiences by offering guidance, encouragement, and empowerment. Fostering responsible decision-making while deterring risky behaviors such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and school dropout. This directly advances TANF Purpose three: preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies. TANF-funded CASA services are available to families with children aged 18 or younger (or up to age 19 if enrolled in high school or an equivalency program) who meet citizenship and qualified alien requirements. Children involved with the Child and Family Services Division are considered categorically eligible based on their circumstances.

TANF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS

Montana has established objective criteria for delivering benefits and determining eligibility to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all applicants (unless otherwise stated in the program descriptions above).

Eligible individuals include:

- Minor children (under age 18 or if age 18 but less than 19, attending secondary school full-time).
- Specified caretaker relatives with whom the minor child is living, such as a parent (natural or adoptive parent or stepparent related by marriage to the child's natural/adoptive parent), any relation by blood, marriage, or adoption who is within the fifth degree of kinship.
- The minor child's blood-related/adoptive minor siblings or minor stepsiblings living with him/her.
- Pregnant women in their last trimester who have no other eligible children.
- Refugees, victims of severe forms of trafficking, and other qualified aliens as defined in Title IV of Public Law 104-193 as amended. Aliens (unless exempted by federal law) who enter the United States on or after August 22, 1996, are barred from receiving assistance for their first five years in qualified alien status.

Individuals not eligible:

- A minor child or a specified caretaker relative, who is temporarily absent from the home for a period greater than 90 consecutive days, with the following exceptions:
 - The absent member is away from home for medical treatment and is otherwise eligible.
 - The child's absence is for the sole purpose of attending a boarding school, and the child is expected to return home at the end of the school term.
 - The absent adult is away from home for specific short-term training or employment.
 - Minor children who are receiving Title IV-E Foster Care payments and whose absence from home is not considered temporary.
- Individuals who violate a condition of his/her probation or parole imposed under state or federal law.

- Individuals fleeing to avoid being prosecuted for a felony or fleeing to avoid custody or confinement after conviction of a felony.
- All members of a household which includes an individual who has been convicted after August 22, 1996, of any offense which is classified as a felony in the jurisdiction where the offense occurred and which has an element the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance as defined in section 102(6) of the Controlled Substances Act [21 U.S.C. 802 (6)] unless the individual is complying with the conditions of supervision, is actively participating in treatment if required, or the sentence associated with the felony conviction has been discharged.
- Non-qualified aliens. Aliens (unless accepted by federal law) who enter the United States on or after August 22, 1996 are barred from receiving assistance for their first five years in a qualified alien status.
- Individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income under Title XVI of the Social Security Act.
- All members of a household that includes specified caretaker relatives who do not assign certain child support rights to the State, cooperate in establishing paternity, or obtain child support as required under Title IV-D.
- Teenage parents who are not living with a specified caretaker relative within the fifth degree of kinship and who are not approved to live independently or in an alternative adult supervised setting as defined by the State.
- Individuals found to have fraudulently misrepresented their residence to obtain assistance in two or more states.
- All members of a household that includes an adult who has received assistance for 60 months or more, unless the adult has applied for and been approved for Extended TANF Cash assistance benefits under special circumstances outlined by the state.
- All members of a household that includes individuals who fail or refuse to negotiate an Employability/Service plan.
- All members of a household include an individual who has been sanctioned for a second or subsequent time, and the sanction results in an ineligibility period.
- Individuals who are incarcerated, even if the individual is expected to return home within 90 days.
- An individual who is serving an intentional program violation.

- All members of a household include a specified caretaker relative who fails or refuses to comply without good cause with eligibility requirements, including providing information and verification necessary to determine eligibility.

RESOURCE LIMITATIONS

The TANF Cash and Post-Employment programs have a resource limit of \$3000. The family's resources are evaluated, and the equity value of countable resources, as defined by the State, cannot exceed \$3000.

INCOME STANDARDS - TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

Effective July 1, 2023, the income and benefit standards are established using the following criteria:

- Benefit Income Standard: Set at 30% of the 2023 federal poverty guidelines
- Gross Income Standard: Set at 185% of the net income standard
- Net Income Standard: Calculated by dividing the benefit standard by 78.5%
- Payment standard: Set at 35% of the 2023 federal poverty guidelines divided by 12

INCOME TESTING AND DEEMING RULES – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

Countable earned and unearned income is tested prospectively against the Gross Monthly Income (GMI) Standard and the Benefit Standard based on household size and circumstances:

- Initial GMI Test: If the family's income equals or exceeds the GMI standard, the family is ineligible. If they pass, specific income disregards are subtracted from the gross monthly income to determine countable monthly income.
- Benefit Standard Test: If the family's countable income equals or exceeds the Benefit Standard, they are ineligible.
- Grant Calculation: If the family's income is less than the Benefit Standard, the cash assistance grant is calculated by subtracting total countable income from the Payment Standard.

INCOME DEEMING

The income of certain individuals living in the home who are related to the minor child by marriage or parentage, but whose needs are not included in the grant, is deemed when determining eligibility (subject to specific disregards). These individuals include:

- The qualified alien's sponsor and the sponsor's spouse
- The spouse or the father of an unborn child. (For a pregnant woman in her last trimester who has no other eligible children in the home)
- The spouse of a caretaker relative whose needs are included in the assistance unit's grant, provided the spouse is not the natural or adoptive parent of the dependent child.

INCOME DISREGARDS – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

To qualify for TANF cash assistance, an applicant's or client's total gross income must first test below the Gross Monthly Income (GMI) standard before applying any deductions or disregards. Once gross income eligibility is established, earned income disregards are subtracted from each wage earner's countable earnings in the following order:

- Standard Work Expense Disregard: \$200 per month
- Percentage Disregard: Twenty-five percent (25%) of the remaining earned income balance
- Child Care Expense Disregard: Up to a maximum of \$200 per month per dependent child
- Legal Child Support Disregard: The obligated amount of legally binding child support paid for dependents residing outside the household

NONFINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY

- Minor child age limitations
- Minor child must live with a specified caretaker relative within the 5th degree of kinship
- Furnish a Social Security number or verification that one has been applied for
- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien
- Montana resident
- Cooperate with Child Support Enforcement
- Cooperate with SNAP, TANF, and/or Medicaid Program Compliance reviews

- All work-eligible TANF clients must negotiate and sign an Employability/Service Plan (E/SP)
- Provide verification that any individual in the household who has been convicted of a drug-related felony after August 22, 1996, is actively complying with conditions of supervision, actively participating in treatment, if required, or providing documentation that the sentence has been discharged
- The 60 month time clock has not been exhausted
- Teen parents live in an approved adult-supervised setting, unless he/she is approved to live independently

BENEFIT ISSUANCE

Monthly TANF Cash benefits, Child Support Supplemental Payments and Pathways supportive services are issued by state warrant, direct deposit, or electronic benefit transfer (EBT) payable to the minor child's caretaker relative unless the caretaker relative has clearly demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to use the payment to meet the basic needs of the minor child, as determined by a department employee of the division that provides protective services to children. Under these circumstances, the Department will designate a protective payee with the caretaker relative's assistance. The protective payee may not be anyone directly involved in determining and authorizing eligibility and/or benefits.

REDETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

Redetermination of TANF eligibility is completed as follows:

- Monthly, based on anticipated changes in the family's situation
- Promptly after a report is obtained that indicates changes in the family's circumstances that may affect the amount of the TANF Cash assistance payment or may make the family ineligible; and
- By conducting a face-to-face or phone review of all eligibility every twelve months

EMPLOYABILITY/SERVICE PLAN – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

To meet the requirements of Section 402(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Social Security Act, the State ensures that all work-eligible TANF recipients engage in approved work activities specified in Section 407.

Every work-eligible individual referred to the Pathways program—including caretaker relatives, teen parents, and minor children aged 16 or 17 who are not enrolled in secondary school or an equivalent training program—must develop an Employability/Service Plan (E/SP) (also referred to as an Individual Responsibility Plan).

The E/SP is designed to eliminate the barriers that led to the family's need for public assistance and to establish a clear pathway toward family stability, employability, and financial security. The E/SP includes:

- An outline of the activities negotiated to support the client's goals and may include the results of the Montana Bridge Assessment. Each E/SP is uniquely tailored to address the family's needs and the client's employment goals and responsibilities. By signing the E/SP, the client agrees to comply with all outlined activities, and the Pathways Client Advocate signs on behalf of the State to acknowledge its obligation to assist the individual in becoming self-supporting.
- Consideration of the client's disability or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) during the development process. The Pathways Client Advocate will provide reasonable accommodation when negotiating work activities to ensure meaningful participation and successful program compliance.

SANCTIONS – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

The Pathways E&T program offers comprehensive screenings and reviews the Montana Family Bridge assessment and goals with each client. This process helps identify why a client is unable to participate in their negotiated activities and addresses any barriers to participation, ensuring clients receive every opportunity to comply before a sanction is imposed.

Effective January 1, 2008, Montana implemented a progressive sanction policy for failing to comply with an E/SP, structured as follows:

- First Non-Compliance: Results in the loss of an amount equal to the sanctioned individual's portion of cash assistance for one month (referred to as a month of penalty)
- Second Non-Compliance: Results in total household ineligibility for a period of one month (referred to as an ineligibility period)
- Third Non-Compliance: Results in total household ineligibility for a period of three months (referred to as an ineligibility period)

- Fourth or Subsequent Non-Compliance: Results in total household ineligibility for a period of six months (referred to as an ineligibility period)

EXCEPTION:

Under Section 407(e)(2) of the Social Security Act, Montana will not reduce or terminate assistance based on a refusal to engage in work if the individual is a single custodial parent caring for a child under the age of six, and the individual has a demonstrated inability—as determined by the State—to obtain needed child care.

A single-parent TANF household unable to locate long-term child care through no fault of their own will not face reduced or terminated benefits if one of the following conditions is met:

VERIFICATION OF CHILD CARE ISSUES:

A signed statement from a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Contractor confirming a lack of appropriate long-term child care, the unsuitability of informal child care, or that child care is unaffordable, as defined below:

- Appropriate Child Care: Care provided by relatives meeting 45 CFR §98.2 requirements (Relative Care Exempt, facilities licensed or registered with the Early Childhood and Family Services Division (ECFSD) Child Care Licensing Program, or care operated and monitored by U.S. military services.
- Unsuitable Informal Child Care: Any informal arrangement that fails to meet the definition of appropriate child care.
- Affordable Child Care: Arrangements falling within the maximum rates established by ECFSD. Parents choosing care through a Best Beginnings Scholarship Services Contractor receive reduced co-payments via a TANF Best Beginnings Child Care scholarship.
- Reasonable Distance: Human and Community Services Division grants Pathways the authority to define "reasonable distance" based on the family's specific geography and local transportation systems.

The sanction ineligibility period follows household members even if they move to a new household and apply for benefits there, except under the following exceptions:

- Children are removed from the sanctioned household by Child and Family Services and are determined eligible for child-only TANF in another household.

- Children are determined to be eligible for child-only TANF in another household (excluding another parent's household).

IMPACT ON TIME CLOCKS AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS DURING SANCTIONS

- 60 Month Time Clock:
 - During the first non-compliance penalty period, the time clock continues to tick for the sanctioned individual (if applicable).
 - During a second or subsequent non-compliance, the time clock does not tick for any family member because no benefits are issued.
- Requirements During a First Non-Compliance Penalty Period:
 - Work-Eligible Individuals: Must negotiate an E/SP and agree to participate in allowable work activities during the penalty month. Failure to do so results in case closure, as E/SP negotiation is an eligibility requirement.
 - Non-Work-Eligible Individuals: Are not required to negotiate an E/SP or participate in work activities during the penalty month. However, they must negotiate an E/SP for the following month by the 25th of the current month, or the case will be closed for failing an eligibility requirement.
- Post-Employment Program Exception: The standard non-compliance sanction process does not apply to individuals receiving TANF cash assistance through the Post-Employment Program. Instead, the entire household becomes ineligible for TANF cash assistance upon non-compliance.

WORK ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

TANF cash assistance recipients determined to be work-eligible and referred to Pathways are required to participate fully in the program. Pathways Client Advocates assist clients in identifying their needs and building on their strengths while supporting them in meeting their goals toward self-sufficiency.

Work activities are established through collaboration with the client, informed by the Montana Family Bridge assessment results and the client's goals and interests. When negotiating and designing work activities, client advocates will take into consideration:

- A client's disability or Limited English Proficiency; and
- The availability of child care.

Advocates will provide reasonable accommodation based on the client's abilities and the availability of child care. Additionally, a temporary breakdown in child care arrangements may constitute good cause for non-compliance with participation in negotiated work activities.

Participation hours for TANF cash assistance work activities are established in Title I of Public Law 104-193, Section 407(a)(1) and (2). Montana will disregard individuals participating in a Tribal NEW (Native Employment Works) program from the state's work participation rate calculation. Other tribal clients not participating in a Tribal NEW program will continue to count toward the state's participation rate.

Allowable TANF Cash assistance work activities are based on federal activities allowed at 45 CFR 261.30 with the limitations and special provisions listed in 45 CFR 261.31 through 45 CFR 261.35 and on the TANF Reauthorization Regulations contained in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Montana's allowable work activities are:

EMPLOYMENT (UNSUBSIDIZED OR SUBSIDIZED)

Unsubsidized employment activity means full or part-time employment or self-employment in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program. Subsidized employment is defined as employment for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all the wages and costs of employment of a recipient.

WORK EXPERIENCE (WEX)

The work experience activity means placement in a formal job site training experience that provides an individual with an opportunity to acquire the general skills, training, knowledge, and work habits necessary to obtain employment. All work experience placements have a detailed training plan. The main purpose of work experience is to improve the employability of those who cannot find unsubsidized employment.

JOB SEARCH AND JOB READINESS ASSISTANCE

The Job Search/Job Readiness activity means the act of seeking or obtaining employment, preparation to seek or obtain employment, including life skills training, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities. Such treatment or therapy must be determined to be necessary and certified by a qualified medical or mental health professional.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Community Service activity includes structured programs and embedded activities in which the client performs work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL TRAINING

The Vocational Educational Training activity refers to organized educational programs, up to a Baccalaureate or advanced degree, that are directly related to preparing individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations requiring training.

Effective August 1, 2011, Senate Bill 385 established Montana's revised Parents As Scholars (PAS) program. PAS allows up to 25 eligible TANF clients to participate in Vocational Education Training or High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation beyond standard federal limits (such as the 12-month cap on vocational training and primary/secondary limitations for HI SET studies).

Because these activities exceed federal work activity allowances, Montana acknowledges that PAS participants do not count toward federal Work Participation Rate requirements and are reported accordingly.

JOB SKILLS TRAINING (DIRECTLY RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT)

The Job Skills Training activity means training or education for job skills required by an employer to provide an individual with the ability to obtain employment or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace.

EDUCATION DIRECTLY RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT

In the case of a client who has not received a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency, this refers to education related to a specific occupation, job, or job offer. This may include education leading to a high school equivalency diploma, adult basic education, and English as a Second Language.

SATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL OR IN A COURSE OF STUDY LEADING TO A CERTIFICATE OF GENERAL EQUIVALENCE

In the case of a client who has not received a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency, it means regular attendance, in accordance with the

requirements of the secondary school or course of study at a secondary school, or in a course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalency.

FAMILY STABILITY ACTIVITIES (FSA)

Assist families in overcoming barriers that may prevent them from achieving stability, employment, and financial security. This activity is used to help stabilize families so they can meaningfully participate in work activities. Montana recognizes that clients engaged in family stability activities are not considered to meet the work participation rate due to federal restrictions on these activities and are reported accordingly.

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Can be used in conjunction with the above allowable work activities, except FSA and On-the-Job training (OJT). Montana does not utilize OJT as an allowable work activity. The assessment activity provides an individual with the opportunity to evaluate and develop the skills needed to obtain employment.

NON-DISPLACEMENT ON WORK SITE/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Non-displacement at Work Experience and/or Subsidized Employment work sites is established (before placement) through the negotiation of an agreement between the State's contractor and the employer.

A grievance procedure is in place to resolve complaints alleging violations of the displacement rule, and worksite employers are informed of it during the negotiation of the site agreement.

TIME-LIMITED BENEFITS – TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

GENERAL LIFETIME LIMIT

A family may not receive TANF cash assistance for more than 60 months in an adult's lifetime (45 CFR § 264.1). Montana's electronic eligibility determination system, the Combined Healthcare Information and Montana Eligibility System (CHIMES), maintains time clocks for all adults receiving cash assistance. CHIMES will not authorize cash assistance beyond an adult's 60-month limit unless an extension has been granted. Households may apply for an extension to the 60-month limit as permitted under 45 CFR § 264.1(c).

CALCULATION AND EXEMPTIONS

CHIMES tracks the 60 month federal limit, reflecting every non-excluded month of cash assistance received by an adult in Montana beginning February 1, 1997 (the TANF State Plan effective date), and from other states beginning between October 1, 1996, and July 1, 1997, depending on the respective state's TANF State Plan effective date. Federal TANF exclusions stop this clock.

INDIVIDUALS NOT SUBJECT TO THE TANF 60-MONTH FEDERAL TIME LIMITS INCLUDE:

- Minor children under the age of 18, or up to age 19 if attending school full-time and living with a specified caretaker relative
- Teen parents who are not the head of household
- Unmarried adult parents who are not the head of household
- Disqualified parents
- Individuals not required to comply with an E/SP

RESERVATION-BASED TIME LIMIT EXCLUSION

When determining the number of months an adult has received cash assistance, the State excludes any month in which the adult lives within the exterior boundaries of an Indian reservation if at least 50% of the adults residing there were unemployed during that month. Joblessness is evaluated using standards jointly established by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the respective tribe, based on the most reliable federal data available for that month.

TANF CASH HARDSHIP EXEMPTIONS

Montana may extend TANF cash assistance payments beyond the federal 60 month limit for up to an additional 24 months. To qualify, households must apply for Extended Benefits, remain otherwise eligible for TANF cash assistance, and have at least one adult receiving (or eligible to receive) benefits who is required to participate in Employment and Training and meets one of the following extension criteria:

- Physical and/or mental incapacity
- Physical and/or mental incapacity of another household member
- Current domestic violence
- Physical and/or mental incapacity resulting from domestic violence

FEDERAL CAP NOTE:

Pursuant to 45 CFR § 264.1, Montana will not extend federally funded TANF cash assistance beyond the five-year limit for more than 20% of the average monthly number of families receiving assistance during the federal fiscal year.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Funds are available to cover expenses incurred or expected to be incurred by a work-eligible TANF cash assistance recipient to comply with their Employability/Service Plan (E/SP) activities.

Each request is evaluated on a case-by-case basis depending on the specific situation and need for assistance. In all instances, care is taken to prevent client dependency on these funds. To qualify, clients must meet the following criteria:

- Be eligible for and actively receiving TANF cash assistance; and
- Be actively participating (and not under sanction) in Pathways or an eligible Tribal Native Employment Works (NEW) program

REQUIREMENTS

OUT-OF-WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES/TEEN PREGNANCIES

Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies, and establish numerical goals for reducing the illegitimacy ratio of the State (as defined in section 403(a)(2)(C)(iii)) for calendar years 1996 through 2005.

MONTANA PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY EDUCATION PROGRAM (MT PREP)

Through its Adolescent Health Section, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Early Childhood and Family Support Division received \$250,000 in federal funds through fiscal year 2028.

The primary goal of MT PREP is to educate adolescents on both abstinence and contraception to prevent unintended pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Infections, including HIV and AIDS, helping Montana teens lead healthy, productive lives. In alignment with federal statutory requirements, the program equips adolescents with

vital education on state statutory rape laws and teaches skills on how to avoid making or receiving unwanted sexual advances. Grantees distribute these funds among five contractors in Montana, such as county and tribal health departments, that serve at-risk teens by providing middle and high school students with evidence-based curricula proven to build refusal skills and modify risk-taking behaviors.

Key grant activities include distributing funds to six contractors across Montana, such as county health departments, community service centers, and other agencies serving at-risk teens. Participating agencies achieve this by providing middle and high school students with the following evidence-based curricula proven to teach refusal skills and modify risk-taking behaviors:

DRAW THE LINE/RESPECT THE LINE

Curriculum helps middle-school students develop personal sexual limits and practice the skills needed to maintain those limits when challenged. Healthy sexual limits will keep youth safer from HIV, other STIs, and unplanned pregnancy.

MAKING PROUD CHOICES

Curriculum is designed for high school students and takes an active approach to preventing teenage pregnancy and protecting against HIV and other STIs by motivating students to change high-risk behaviors. Lessons include critical discussions on state-specific laws regarding the legal age of consent and the legal consequences of statutory rape.

MONTANA TITLE V/SEXUAL RISK AVOIDANCE EDUCATION (MT SRAE)

State Sexual Risk Avoidance Education is a two-year grant period. The Adolescent Health Section has received \$143,713 through the fiscal year 2027. The purpose of the Title V/SRAE Program is to provide education to youth aged 10 to 19 years old that normalizes the optimal health behavior of avoiding non-marital sexual activity. The program is designed to teach youth personal responsibility, self-regulation, goal setting, healthy decision-making, a focus on the future, and the prevention of youth risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol usage without normalizing teen sexual activity. Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework is part of the strategies used to help youth engage in healthy relationships and set goals that lead to self-sufficiency and marriage before engaging in sexual activity. Linking youth to services and resources is

also a key component. AHS is always recruiting additional contractors, and currently, two county health departments are implementing the curriculum.

POWER UP SPEAK OUT!

Is a Montana-based curriculum that encourages middle school students to think critically about healthy relationships, power dynamics, boundaries, and consent.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Conduct a program, designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded in scope to include men.

MONTANA SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND VICTIMS SERVICES PROGRAM

The mission of the Montana Sexual Violence Prevention and Victims Services Program (SVPVS) is to reduce the statewide incidence of sexual violence through primary prevention efforts focused on influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of those most at risk of perpetrating.

For fiscal year 2026, Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services, Early Childhood and Family Services Division received \$259,836 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The program currently partners with approximately five contractors, including higher education institutions, sexual violence and domestic violence service providers, and a marketing firm supporting a statewide social norms campaign.

Program funds are utilized for the following initiatives:

- Educational Seminars: Conducting community and public education sessions
- Professional Training Programs: Providing specialized training for professionals, including local law enforcement, the educational staff, and counselors, on critical topics, including statutory rape legal definitions and reporting laws
- Informational Materials: Developing and distributing educational resources
- Campus-Based Prevention: Implementing education and training programs for students and campus personnel to reduce sexual violence at colleges and universities

- Evaluation Efforts: Conducting rigorous evaluations of primary prevention strategies
- Public Awareness & Rural Outreach: Expanding sexual violence prevention education, including raising awareness in rural communities across the state through a Healthy Relationships Campaign

STOP (SERVICES-TRAINING-OFFICERS-PROSECUTORS) VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA)

Each year, the Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC) releases a grant funding opportunity through the Office on Violence Against Women's STOP VAWA program. STOP VAWA funding supports several core purpose areas, including:

JUSTICE SYSTEM TRAINING

Training law enforcement, judges, court personnel, and prosecutors to effectively identify and respond to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and statutory rape, including the appropriate use of specific non-immigrant visa statuses (U and T visas).

SPECIALIZED UNITS

Developing, training, or expanding dedicated law enforcement, judicial, and prosecutorial units that specifically target violent crimes against women.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Developing, enhancing, or strengthening prevention and educational initiatives to address gender-based violence across multiple educational settings.

Funding is prioritized at the following minimum percentage of the total Federal Allocation:

- Law Enforcement 25%
- Prosecution 25%
- Victim Services 30%
- (at least 10% of which must support programs that provide culturally specific and culturally competent services designed to meet the needs of specific racial and ethnic minority groups)
- State and Local Courts 5%

RAPE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

The Rape Prevention and Education program operates through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Montana receives \$259,836 annually as part of a 5 year grant cycle, running from February 1, 2024, to January 31, 2029, to fund primary prevention strategies to reduce rates of sexual violence across the state, with a strong focus on health equity. Key strategies funded under this initiative include:

PROMOTE SOCIAL NORMS THAT PROTECT AGAINST VIOLENCE

Supporting campus wide Bystander Intervention Campaigns across Montana College Campuses.

Campus bystander campaigns aim to:

- Prevent Interpersonal Violence: Stop sexual assault, relationship abuse, hazing, stalking, and harassment before or as they unfold.
- Overcome the "Bystander Effect": Counter the psychological tendency where people freeze or assume someone else will help in a crowd.
- Shift Campus Culture: Establish social norms where harmful comments, non-consensual behavior, and discrimination are actively challenged by peers.

MEN AS ALLIES ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Implementing Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM), an evidence-based primary violence prevention program developed by Futures Without Violence. CBIM equips athletic coaches to teach male student-athletes healthy relationship skills, mental well-being practices, and the foundational principle that non-violence is true strength.

Delivered across 12 weekly interactive modules, the curriculum guides young men through core subjects, including:

- Leadership, integrity, and personal accountability
- Healthy dating and relationship dynamics
- Sexual assault and harassment prevention
- Statutory rape and teen pregnancy prevention

Although originally designed for high school settings, the curriculum has been successfully adapted for college coaches to use with their student-athletes as part of the state's Health Relationship/Affirmative Consent on College Campuses initiative.

TEACH SKILLS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

Statewide Healthy Relationship Campaign teaches healthy, safe dating and relationship skills to adolescents.

Core objectives of Montana campaigns may include:

- Promote Healthy Relationship Skills Early: Teaching middle school, high school, and college students how to establish boundaries, communicate openly, and practice mutual respect.
- Empower Active Bystanders: Training students and community members using evidence-informed curricula (such as Step UP!) to step in when witnessing high-risk situations or red-flag behavior.
- Establish Protective Campus Environments: Supporting campus policy reviews, climate surveys, and peer-led wellness groups (such as P.A.T.H. at UM Western) to make campus cultures safer and more inclusive.
- Target Vulnerable Populations: Reaching higher-risk groups—including LGBTQ+ youth and economically vulnerable women—with resources for safety, financial literacy, and relationship health.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EMPOWER AND SUPPORT GIRLS AND WOMEN.

Strengthening economic supports for women and families.

CREATE PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Improving safety and monitoring on college campuses, addressing community-level risks through environmental approaches.

Most of the above activities take place on college campuses and focus on adolescence in middle and high schools. These activities include campus campaigns that provide students with educational materials.

STATEWIDE EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND COLLABORATION

Montana participates in ongoing statewide initiatives to deliver comprehensive education and training on domestic violence, sexual assault, and statutory rape. These programs reach key community sectors, including law enforcement officials, educators, and counseling services, while expanding teen pregnancy prevention efforts to engage men actively.

To maximize reach and impact, state and local agencies share critical resources and information. Key partners include:

- Early Childhood and Family Support Division (ECFSD)
- Montana Department of Justice
- Montana Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence (MCADSV)
- Montana Board of Crime Control

PUBLIC RESOURCES AND DIGITAL OUTREACH

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division (ECFSD) Sexual Violence Prevention and Victim Services website provides the public and professionals, such as law enforcement, educators, counselors, attorneys, and medical personnel, with tools like bystander intervention training, affirmative consent guides, and direct links to the CDC and MCADSV.

SPECIALIZED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Montana also ensures hands-on professional development through targeted programs:

- Law Enforcement: The Montana Law Enforcement Academy hosts three Basic courses annually. Each features a dedicated four-hour instructional module on sexual assault and statutory rape.
- Prosecutors: The state sponsors an annual statewide sexual assault prosecutor conference to enhance legal expertise in handling sex-crime cases and statutory rape.

RESTRICTED USE/DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

In compliance with federal and state mandates, the State takes reasonable steps to restrict the use and disclosure of information regarding individuals and families receiving assistance through federally funded programs.

Montana consistently restricts participant information for TANF Cash assistance, employment and training services, and other TANF-funded services in accordance with the law. The Department and its contractors use a designated release form to ensure the proper handling of confidential information.

PERMITTED USES OF RECIPIENT INFORMATION

Client information may be shared or utilized exclusively under the following specific circumstances:

- **Reporting Child Abuse:** Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities (MCA § 41-3-205)
- **Child Support:** Conducting official child support enforcement activities
- **Program Administration:** Establishing eligibility and administering federal or federally assisted need-based programs (including audits, investigations, and prosecutions)
- **Law Enforcement Requests:** Releasing a client's address to a federal, state, or local law enforcement officer who presents a written request for individuals who:
 - Are fleeing to avoid prosecution, custody, or confinement for a felony
 - Are violating a condition of parole or probation
 - Possess information necessary for an officer to conduct official duties
 - **Imminent Harm Prevention:** Notifying appropriate authorities or individuals if an applicant or client makes threats of self-harm or harm to others, to prevent or lessen the threat

SYSTEM SECURITY AND EXCEPTION HANDLING

Access to the Department's electronic eligibility system is governed by strict security measures to ensure that only employees directly involved in public assistance administration can view recipient data.

ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER RESTRICTIONS

The State of Montana has implemented policies and procedures as necessary to prevent access to assistance provided under the State program, funded under this part, through any electronic fund transaction in an automated teller machine or point-of-sale device located in a place described in section 408(a) (12), including a plan to ensure that recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance.

Effective February 1, 2014, the State of Montana has updated its policy to restrict use of and access to TANF cash benefits in an Electronic Benefit Transaction (EBT) at casinos, gaming establishments, liquor stores, and retail establishments that provide adult-oriented entertainment.

Effective January 15, 2014, Montana took steps that include:

- Informing TANF Electronic Benefits Transaction (EBT) card holders in writing of the policy changes, informing them that it is against federal law for benefits to be accessed at any of the above locations;
- Clients who choose EBT as the method of payment are informed of the EBT location usage restrictions during their interview and must sign a form indicating the type of payment method (EBT, Direct Deposit, or Warrant), which includes the EBT restrictions;
- Posters are displayed statewide at the Office of Public Assistance locations and at TANF Employment and Training offices, informing clients of the restricted usage in the above locations;
- Effective July 1, 2014, Montana began imposing penalties on recipients who are found to have violated the EBT restriction policy on three or more occasions. Clients subject to penalties are restricted from receiving TANF funds on an EBT card for six months. Instead, they have the option to receive TANF cash benefits either by direct deposit or by paper warrant.

ACCESS TO USING OR WITHDRAWING ASSISTANCE WITH MINIMAL FEES OR CHARGES.

To ensure recipients have adequate access to their cash assistance, recipients have the option to receive TANF benefits via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), direct deposit into the client's bank account, or receive TANF benefits via paper check. TANF recipients may access cash benefits through point-of-sale (POS) devices at some retailers and at participating Automated Teller Machines (ATM's). TANF recipients are not charged for a POS cash purchase or purchase with cash back. TANF recipients who choose to use an ATM to access their cash benefits do not incur any bank surcharges if using a Quest-branded ATM. TANF recipients receive information regarding the fees and surcharges related to accessing TANF cash benefits in the "EBT Brochure."

SPECIAL PROVISIONS

MIGRATION FROM STATE TO STATE

Montana will not treat U.S.-Domiciled families moving into the State differently from families currently residing in the State who wish to apply for assistance.

ASSISTANCE TO NON-QUALIFIED ALIENS

Montana does not intend to provide TANF assistance or services to individuals who are not U.S. citizens unless they meet the federal criteria for qualified aliens. Specifically, the state provides TANF to non-citizens using the same eligibility criteria as U.S. citizens, provided the individual meets the definition of a "qualified alien" under Section 431(b) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) and is exempt from, or has satisfied, the five-year bar outlined in Section 412(b) of PRWORA. Montana reserves the right to provide TANF assistance to nonexempt individuals who entered the country on or after August 22, 1996, once their federal five-year bar on assistance expires. Additionally, when determining TANF eligibility, Montana considers the income and resources of alien sponsors, as required by § 421 of PRWORA.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL PROCESS.

Montana will continue to provide the opportunity for clients who have been adversely affected to be heard in an administrative appeal process. A client who wishes to appeal may file a request for an administrative hearing before a state Fair Hearing Officer. Following final action, an individual may seek judicial review of this decision.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AFTER TWO MONTHS

Montana has opted not to require a parent or caretaker relative who has received TANF cash assistance for two months to participate in community service employment. These individuals will continue to participate and comply with negotiated Employability/Service Plan activities.

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN ELDER CARE/LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

To assist individuals in training for and seeking employment in the elder care workforce, Montana will approve the following as allowable work activities: work experience (WEX) placements in facilities that provide elder care; education and training for employment opportunities in the elder care workforce, as well as employment in the elder care workforce arena. These types of activities will assist individuals in training for, seeking, and maintaining employment in the eldercare workforce, including direct care in long-term care facilities and other eldercare-related occupations.

EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATIONS

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The State will operate a Child Support Enforcement program under the State Plan approved under Part D.

FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The State will operate a Foster Care and Adoption Assistance program under the state plan approved under Part E. It will take such actions as necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The Department of Public Health and Human Services will administer and supervise the program in all political subdivisions of the State and ensure that local governments and private sector organizations have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State and have had at least 45 days to submit comments so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations.

Montana's TANF State Plan was posted for public comments on October 8, 2026, through November 22, 2026.

EQUITABLE ACCESS AND APPLICATION METHODS FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS

The State will provide each member of an Indian tribe who is domiciled in the State and not eligible for assistance under a Tribal Assistance Plan approved under Section 412 the opportunity to apply for assistance under the State program funded under this part through a local office of public assistance. Application is made by one of the following methods:

Completing Form HCS-250, "Application for Assistance," and submitting it to the Office of Public Assistance (OPA) in person, by fax, or by mail;

Submitting an online application through www.apply.mt.gov; or

Completing a Statement of Facts (SOF) interview by calling the Public Assistance Help Line (PAHL) at 888-706-1535.

PROCEDURES TO ENSURE AGAINST PROGRAM FRAUD AND ABUSE

The State has established standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for administering and supervising the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage.

OPTIONAL FAMILY VIOLENCE CERTIFICATION

Montana has adopted the Family Violence Option as stated below:

SCREENING

All work-eligible clients are screened for the occurrence of domestic violence through a self-identification questionnaire and self-assessment. When domestic violence is identified, a referral is made to the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence or other appropriate counselor/entity dealing with domestic violence/family safety and stabilization issues.

- It is the client's responsibility to meet with the Coalition counselor/other entity that will assess the situation and either make a referral to other appropriate resources or continue to serve the client.
- In identified domestic violence situations, only that information necessary to refer to services and to determine eligibility for benefits or exemptions is required at the time of disclosure, and any custodial parent information is suppressed when contact with the non-custodial parent(s) is necessary to meet child support enforcement requirements.
- The state may exempt a family from the application of subparagraph (A) of Section 408 (a)(7) by reason of hardship or if the family includes an individual who has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty as defined in (iii) of this subparagraph.
- Currently, work-eligible clients are screened for incidents of domestic violence, and no individuals are exempted from work participation activities as Montana uses a universal engagement model.

- An individual may be approved for extended benefits based on their involvement in a current domestic violence situation and/or suffering from a temporary or permanent mental or physical illness or incapacity because of domestic violence.

CERTIFICATION OF SERVICES FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

The Governor of Montana, through his signature, certifies that the State is providing information to victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. All applicants and recipients will be informed through the application process that services for family violence are available and how to receive those services, as well as being informed of the family violence option.

Section 402(a)(8) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 602(a)(8)) requires certification that the state will provide:

A. In general

A certification by the chief executive officer of the State that the State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to-

- i. Ensure that applicants and potential applicants for assistance under the State program funded under this part are notified of assistance made available by the State to victims of sexual harassment and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;
- ii. Ensure that case workers and other agency personnel responsible for administering the State program funded under this part are trained in-
 - I. The nature and dynamics of sexual harassment and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking;
 - II. State standards and procedures relating to the prevention of, and assistance for, individuals who are victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; and
 - III. Methods of ascertaining and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information and documentation related to applicants for assistance and their

children who have provided notice about their experiences of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; and

- iii. Ensure that, if a State has elected to establish and enforce standards and procedures regarding the screening for, and identification of, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking pursuant to paragraph (7)-
 - I. The State program funded under this part provides information about the options under this part to current and potential beneficiaries; and
 - II. Case workers and other agency personnel responsible for administering the State program funded under this part are provided training on State standards and procedures pursuant to paragraph (7).

NOTICE AND WRITTEN MATERIALS

Written materials provided to applicants and recipients include guidance on:

- Accessing emergency assistance and support services.
- Privacy and confidentiality protections maintained by the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).
- Establishing good cause exemptions from child support cooperation requirements.
- Qualifying for extended TANF benefits.

DIRECT REFERRALS

Callers to the Public Assistance Help Line are offered a direct warm transfer to the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence or an affiliated domestic violence, safety, and stabilization organization.

STAFF TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility and Employment & Training staff with direct participant contact must complete mandatory training on domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment. Training covers:

- Governing policies, processes, and administrative rules.
- Procedures for implementing the Family Violence Option under paragraph (7).
- Impact of TANF program requirements on victims of family violence.

**CERTIFIED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE STATE
OF MONTANA:**

Greg Gianforte
Governor, State of Montana

Date

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

AFDC 1996 State Plan – to allow TANF expenditures for services authorized solely under prior law

**SECTION 3 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES
WITH CHILDREN 233.120 406(e)**

- A. Emergency assistance to needy families with children with children under the age of 21 is provided in accordance with 45 CFR 233.120.

☐ No (Paragraphs B.- D. of this Section do not apply.)

☒ Yes, as specified below:

- B. Families of migrant workers are covered.

☐ No

☒ Yes, on a statewide basis.

☐ Yes, but only in the following areas of the State:

- C. Other eligibility requirements are in effect.

☒ No

☐ Yes, as specified below:

- D. The kinds of emergency situations which are covered by this program and the kind of assistance and services provided to meet the emergency situations are detailed in Attachment 3-A.

ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS

A family is eligible for this program in Montana if all the following conditions are met:

1. An application is filed by the parent of the child in need when the parent(s) is/are absent or unwilling to apply on behalf of the child. Another adult relative, the state agency, or its contractor acting on behalf of the child may file the application.
 - a. The FA-250, "Application for Assistance" or DFS/SRS-FA-020, "Emergency Assistance Request" is to be used by the Title IV-A agency (DPHHS).
2. An emergency, as defined below, exists in the family, and the emergency did not arise out of a parent's refusal without good cause to accept employment or training for employment.
3. The child, if (or within 6 months before the month of application, has been living with a specified relative in a place of residence maintained as the child's home.
4. All accessible liquid resources have been or can be applied to the emergency need. In the case of another adult relative or the state agency or its contractor making an application for the child, the child's income alone is considered in the above test.
5. Non-residents of Montana, transients, and migrant workers with families may make application, and assistance will be given in the same manner as residents.
6. Authorization is limited to one period of 30 consecutive days in any twelve consecutive months. Assistance given for situations involving abuse and/or neglect of the child is limited to a maximum duration of 364 days or less and must be authorized within the 30-day period.

TREATMENT OF INCOME -ATTACHMENT 3-A**A. KINDS OF EMERGENCIES COVERED 233.120**

1. Emergency assistance (EA) may be provided when an unforeseen event causes or threatens to cause the destitution of a child.
 - a. An unforeseen event is one in which the applicant could not anticipate that the event would occur and was not able to avoid its outcome. EA is not provided to pay for any basic need or service that an applicant has chosen not to pay with currently available means.
 - b. If actual or projected expenditures total \$1,000 or more, review by Child and Family Services Division staff prior to approval is required.
2. Situations involving abuse and/or neglect of the child may be covered.
 - a. These situations may require the removal of the child from the home, placing a social worker in the home to prevent the need for the child's removal, expediting the early return of the child to the home, or preventing the need for protective services.
 - b. Assistance for these kinds of emergencies is limited to a maximum duration of 364 days or less as necessary and must be authorized within the 30-day period.
3. Households receiving Title XIX Medicaid are not eligible for medical assistance under Title IV-A Emergency Assistance.

B. KINDS OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO MEET EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:

1. Basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter (rent or temporary lodging), utilities, household supplies, and personal care items; temporary transportation; replacement of necessary appliances such as refrigerators; or replacement of necessary household furnishings such as beds and bedding.
2. Family support including social services delivered in the family home to those families whose children have been abused or neglected or are in immediate danger of becoming abused or neglected. This family support is intended to eliminate the need for protective services; prevent the need for placement; or expedite the early return of the child to the family home.
3. Substitute care to youth who are removed from or are without the care and supervision of their parents or guardians provided on a temporary basis while striving to reunite the child(ren) with their family as soon as

possible. Substitute care is full-time care of a youth in a residential setting for the purpose of providing:

- a. Food
 - b. Shelter
 - c. Security
 - d. Safety
 - e. Guidance
 - f. Direction
 - g. In-patient physiological services
 - h. Treatment
4. Emergency assistance is not allowed to pay for the following:
 - a. Legal fees
 - b. Property taxes
 - c. Insurance – home, auto, life
 - d. Burials
 - e. Reimbursements
 - f. Rental/utility deposits
 - g. Mortgage payments
 - h. Medical services
 - a. Exception: prior approval of Child and Family Services Division, Public Assistance Bureau Central Office Staff
 - i. Medical past due bills
 - j. Purchase of vehicle
 - k. Any travel that would qualify under Medicaid Travel, AFDC Transition To Work Allowance, or JOBS Supportive Services

C. KINDS OF SERVICE PROVIDED TO MEET EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

1. Medical Services:
 - a. Medical services must be approved by Child and Family Services Division, Public Assistance Bureau Central Office Staff
2. Family Support deemed appropriate by DPHHS such as:
 - a. Home-based services
 - b. Family-based services
 - c. homemaker services
 - d. Day care
 - e. Counseling
 - f. Psychological or other evaluations of families

- g. Therapy
 - h. Training
 - i. Community-based services
- 3. Substitute care services deemed appropriate by DPHHS:
 - a. Shelter care
 - b. Family foster care
 - c. Group home care
 - d. Transition centers
- 4. Social services on an "as needed" basis.
 - a. Information, referral to other agencies, counseling, securing family shelter, legal services, homemaker service, and other service needs that arise from the emergency situation.
- 5. In addition, DPHHS staff will engage in activities incidental to and necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the identified services involving abuse or neglect of the child.