

Texas State Plan

For

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families



Renewal

Effective October 1, 2010

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Section 1: TANF State Plan Requirements

The information in this section lists the State Plan requirements for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program pursuant to Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, section 402. Information detailing the provisions of Texas' TANF program follows each State Plan requirement. Unless otherwise specifically indicated, the references to sections of law in this document are to Title IV-A of the Social Security Act.

Section 402(a)(1) Outline of family assistance program

(A) General provisions. A written document that outlines how the State intends to do the following:

(i) Conduct a program, designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner), that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient.

General Information

Texas operates a TANF block grant assistance program on a statewide basis in accordance with state law and state policy. The state intends to modify this state plan whenever such modification is deemed to be in the best interest of the State.

Notwithstanding the description of current eligibility determination processes in this plan and subject to necessary federal approvals, Texas plans to ensure coordination with other programs for recipients using an integrated enrollment and eligibility system to link recipients with the services necessary to achieve the performance requirements of TANF, to comply with TANF reporting requirements, and to ensure that the necessary interface with child support takes place.

Texas reserves the right to operate a diversion program that focuses on work. The program will include the ability to make TANF payments for any reasonable diversion activities. The TANF payments will allow a family to address specific needs without making them dependent on welfare. By providing an alternative to cash assistance, the state can divert those Texans who can remain self-reliant with immediate assistance.

Texas reserves the right to operate a program designed to strengthen families and encourage healthy marriages. Recognizing that a healthy marriage is a vital element of child and family well being and to society as a whole, Texas may wish to investigate, evaluate, develop, and implement public policy initiatives designed to empower couples with the skills necessary and form and nurture healthy marriages and additional activities to provide assistance to marriages in distress. Related initiatives may include, but not be limited to:

- Marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs, that may include parenting skills, abstinence awareness, financial management, conflict resolution, family violence prevention and job and career advancement for non-married pregnant women and non-married expectant fathers.
- Pre-marital education and marriage skills training for engaged couples and for couples interested in marriage.
- Activities provided by faith-based and secular providers including marriage enhancement, marriage skills training, and marriage mentoring programs designed for use before marriage or at any stage during marriage to strengthen healthy marriages and assist troubled marriages.
- Public advertising campaigns promoting the value of healthy marriage and related skills needed to enhance marital stability, health and wellness.
- Divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills and activities including marriage enhancement, marriage skills training, and marriage mentoring programs.

Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described above.

In 2007, the Texas Legislature passed House Bills 2683 and 2685. House Bill 2683 enables HHSC to administer a grant program to fund programs that support the development of healthy marriages and the strengthening of families. To the extent of federal law, HHSC may spend a minimum of one percent of the money received under the TANF block grant funds during each fiscal year; programs would serve participants by promoting the development of healthy marriages or the strengthening of families. This includes the Healthy Marriage Development Program (currently under Section 31.015, Human Resources Code) and the Healthy Marriages and Strong Families Grant Program (added by this bill, to be under Section 31.017 Human Resources Code).

House Bill 2685 seeks to encourage each person applying for a marriage license to attend and complete a premarital education course of at least eight hours during the year preceding the date of the license application. The bill also increases the marriage license fee from \$30 to \$60, and establishes guidelines for county clerks to waive the marriage license fee for couples who provide a completion certificate for the premarital education course. A contingency Appropriation for HB 2685 exists in Article IX, Section 19.18 of the General Appropriations Act. This contingency rider appropriates \$1,021,097 fiscal year 2009 in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Federal Funds to develop and maintain a website registry for trained marriage educators, and make related information available to the public.

Texas reserves the right to use TANF funds to provide services consistent with the four purposes of the TANF program stated in 45 C.F.R. Section 260.20 and as allowed under this State Plan or any amendments that are approved by federal authorities.

Application, Determination of Eligibility, and Furnishing TANF Cash Assistance

- Except in unusual circumstances, action on applications is taken within 45 days.
- Assistance to eligible applicants begins on the date of authorization of payment or 30 days from the date of the receipt of a signed and completed application, whichever is earlier.
- Assistance is not provided prior to complete determination of eligibility when facts support a presumption of eligibility.
- The State re-determines eligibility at least every 12 months.
- Upon notification by the IV-D agency of the amount of a support collection, the IV-A agency will use such amount to review eligibility of the assistance unit. The determination will be done during the month in which notice is received from the IV-D agency.
- Assistance is furnished in the form of cash issued by Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) or warrant. Warrants are issued only on an exception basis when benefits are requested through a manual process in state office fiscal division, One-Time TANF benefits, and One-Time Grandparent benefits.

Coverage and Conditions of Eligibility

- Domicile/Relationship: Living with specified relative in a place of residence maintained by one or more such relatives as his or their own home.

The following is a list of the relatives with whom a child may be living:

- Father or mother, including "step" relationship.
 - Grandfather or Grandmother, including "step" relationship, extended to degree of "great-great-great".
 - Brother or sister, including "step" relationship.
 - Uncle or Aunt, extended to degree of "great-great".
 - Niece or Nephew, extended to degree of "great-great".
 - First cousin, extended to degree of once removed.
- The State's criteria for establishing "day-to-day care" and "care and control" are:
 - Day-to-day care of a child occurs when there is actual day-to-day care for the child at home, such as feeding, dressing, transporting and other similar activities necessary for the growth and well being of the child.
 - Care and control of the child include financial support, planning and supervision of the child and the ability to make decisions on the child's treatment, duration and type.

- The definition of "temporarily absent" is when a person is out of the home temporarily:
 - attending school or training,
 - employed or seeking employment away from home,
 - hospitalized or receiving outpatient services,
 - in a privately funded, non-profit home for children,
 - separated from other family members and the family has no regular place of residence, or
 - on vacation.

As specified in section 408 (a) (10), Texas may allow eligibility in situations of a child's absence that does not exceed 180 consecutive days; denies a parent or caretaker relative who fails to timely report a child's absence.

- Deprivation of parental support or care.
 - Continued absence: Continued absence of a parent usually occurs in divorce, desertion, abandonment, incarceration, deportation, hospitalization or unwed parent situations.

However, the parent may be absent for any reason if the nature of the absence interrupts or terminates the parent's function as a provider of maintenance, physical care or guidance, and the duration of the absence precludes relying on the parent for the present support or care of the child. Deprivation based upon continued absence also may occur when these three factors are present simultaneously:

- a parent has been convicted of an offense and is under sentence of a court;
- the sentence requires (and the parent is performing) unpaid public work or unpaid community service during working hours; and
- the parent is permitted by the court to live at home while serving the sentence because of crowded jail conditions or for other reasons in the public interest.

The parent may be absent for military service, employment or any other reason so long as an evaluation of all the facts results in a reasonable conclusion that the absence is not of a temporary nature. Absence of less than thirty days is considered temporary unless facts indicate that the absence will continue past thirty days. Parental absence based solely on active duty in the uniformed services is not a basis for establishing deprivation because of continued absence.

- Incapacity: A child is deprived due to incapacity if the parent has a physical or mental disability supported by competent medical testimony, which is of such a debilitating nature that it precludes him from substantial gainful employment for a continuous period of at least 30 days. A certification of OASDI or SSI disability is sufficient proof of incapacity to establish TANF deprivation.

- Unemployment: A child is deprived if both parents are in the home and one or both parents are unemployed or under-employed and a financial need exists.
- Death: A child is deprived if one or both parents are deceased.
- The determination that a child has been deprived of parental support or care is made in relation to the child's legal parent.
- The State agency's definition of an unemployed parent who is the principal earner includes a principal earner unemployed because of conduct or circumstances, which result or would result in disqualification for unemployment compensation under the State's unemployment compensation law.
- Assistance is provided to a needy and otherwise eligible 18-year-old child who is a full-time student in a secondary school, or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training, and who may reasonably be expected to complete the program before reaching age 19.
- To be eligible for TANF cash assistance in Texas, an unmarried minor parent must reside with a parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative as specified in Section 408 (a)(5). A minor parent may reside elsewhere and be eligible for cash assistance if good cause is established by one of the following reasons:
 - the parent(s), legal guardian, or other adult relative(s) are deceased or their whereabouts are unknown; or
 - the parent(s), legal guardian, or other adult relative will not allow the minor to live in the home; or
 - the State determines that the minor parent or her child is or has been subjected to serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation in the adult's home; or
 - the State otherwise determines that it is in the child's best interest to waive the requirement that the minor parent and her child live with a parent, legal guardian or adult relative (example: moving in with a parent or other adult would result in the minor parent having to quit a job).
- A child is not denied aid either initially or subsequently "because of the conditions of the home in which the child resides," or because the home is considered "unsuitable".
- Eligibility is limited by the additional State conditions or requirements, as described below:
 - TANF recipients may be required to participate in a work subsidy component in which their TANF and SNAP benefits are used to pay a subsidy to employers who agree to hire them.
 - Transferring resources - Households are ineligible if within three months before application or anytime after certification they transfer a countable resource for less than its fair market value to qualify for assistance.

- Texas requires by rule that adult TANF applicants who apply in person must attend a Workforce Orientation prior to TANF certification. The orientation is provided by the Texas Workforce Commission through a Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB), or by service providers under contract with the LWDB. Failure to attend the workforce orientation will result in the denial of the household's application.
- Texas requires that adult TANF applicants (including payees) sign a Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA). The PRA lists the TANF applicant's responsibilities. These are cooperation requirements such as with child support requirements, work participation, school attendance for minor parents and children, voluntary quit, compliance with Texas Health Steps and immunization schedules, attending parenting skills classes, and having no criminal alcohol or drug convictions. HHSC denies families whose adult members refuse to sign the PRA as well as TANF recipient families who subsequently fail to comply with PRA requirements.
- Assistance payments are made in the situations and under the conditions below:
 - Payments are made for the entire month to or for a family which, for any portion of the month, met all of the eligibility conditions, provided the family was eligible on the date payment was made (except if a caretaker relative participates in a strike, or if other income or resources cause ineligibility).
 - Initial payments are made on behalf of a child who goes to live with a relative specified in 45 CFR, Sections 260.20 and 263.20 within a period of 30 days from the receipt of the initial payment, provided that payments are not made for a concurrent period for the same child in the home of another relative or as TANF-Foster Care.
 - Payments are made for the entire month in the course of which a child lives in the home of a specified relative, provided payments are not made for a concurrent period for the same child in the home or another relative or as TANF-Foster Care.
 - Payments are made to persons acting for relatives specified in 45 CFR, Sections 260.20 and 263.20 in emergency situations that deprive a child of the care of the relative through whom he has been receiving aid, for a temporary period necessary to make and carry out plans for the child's continuing care and support.
- Definition of Strikers
 - The State defines the term "strike" in accordance with the federal definition at 29 USC Section 142(2).

- The State defines the term "participating in a strike" as an actual refusal in combination with others to provide services to one's employer.
- Texas denies eligibility to individuals who are fugitives from law enforcement (including probation and parole violators) as required by Section 408 (a) (9).
- In addition to the ongoing TANF cash assistance program, Texas authorizes the following policies:
 - Texas provides a One Time Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (OT-TANF) benefit. To qualify, families must meet all requirements for regular TANF cash assistance, as well as state rule criteria for demonstrating the need for emergency assistance and likely self-sufficiency within a short period of time. The one-time cash payment is issued in lieu of ongoing monthly TANF payments, and the family is prohibited for 12 months from again receiving TANF cash assistance.
 - Texas provides a supplemental One-Time only TANF payment not to exceed \$1000, to qualifying grandparents who are the primary caretakers for one or more grandchildren. The grandparent must be age 45 or older, have resources not to exceed TANF resource limits and have income not to exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Limit.
 - Texas provides an annual \$30 supplement for each TANF certified child. In Fiscal Year 2009, the annual \$30 supplement was increased to \$105 per child using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. For Fiscal Year 2010 and ongoing, the annual supplement reverts back to \$30 per child.
 - Texas allows the initiation of policies that fulfill the purposes of the TANF Program as outlined in 45 CFR Section 260.20, which are: (a) Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (b) End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage; (c) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (d) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Among the services provided for TANF cash assistance recipients and those at risk of requiring TANF cash assistance, Texas offers assistance in connecting those individuals with employment and community resources that will lead to self-sufficiency through employment. The specific services provided may include referrals to domestic violence shelters, job leads, Work In Texas, computer access for preparing resumes, job fairs, referral to clothes closets, providing information about local employment opportunities, educational

assistance, adult education, referral to other community and faith-based resources, parenting skills training, and similar services.

- Texas includes all two-parent families in a state funded cash assistance program. Eligibility criteria are substantively identical to the TANF program. In accordance with the Human Resource Code Section 34.003(b) and 31.014, all individuals must register with the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC's) employment services program or participate in TWC's "Choices" program. The state expenditures of the two-parent state funded cash assistance program is not claimed as TANF Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and the recipients are not counted in the state's assistance caseload effective October 1, 2007.

Eligibility Criteria

Need Standard or Standard of Assistance

- Extent to which Standard of Assistance has been consolidated - The State agency has developed a fully consolidated standard of assistance. All needs are included in a flat amount per family size. In the process of developing the consolidated standard, grants were averaged for each family size.
- Special Needs - The State standard of assistance does not contain other recognized needs or special circumstance items.
- Area differentials - In the standard of assistance, area differentials do not exist. The same standard of assistance is applicable throughout the State
- Grant Levels/Standard and Maximum Need Amounts
 - Texas annually adjusts grant amounts. The money amounts for the standard of assistance were increased most recently on March 1, 1994.
 - Texas adopted a single figure needs standard on March 1, 1973.
 - In establishing need, the presence in the home of other needy individuals who are not eligible in their own right but who are considered essential to the well being of the child recipient is not recognized.
 - The grant amount for the ongoing TANF cash assistance program is approximately 17% of the Federal Poverty Income Limit, Texas reviews grant amounts annually to ensure that they are at least at 17% FPIL and makes adjustments to these amounts every October 1.

Family Size	TANF Budgetary Allowances* (October 1, 2011)								
	Non-Caretaker Cases			Caretaker Cases Without Second Parent			Caretaker Cases With Second Parent		
	Bud Needs (100%)	Rec Needs (25%)	Max Grant	Bud Needs (100%)	Rec Needs (25%)	Max Grant	Bud Needs (100%)	Rec Needs (25%)	Max Grant
1	256	64	90	313	78	110	---	---	---
2	369	92	130	650	163	228	498	125	175
3	518	130	182	751	188	263	824	206	289
4	617	154	216	903	226	316	925	231	324
5	793	198	278	1003	251	351	1073	268	376
6	856	214	300	1153	288	404	1176	294	412
7	1068	267	374	1252	313	438	1319	330	462
8	1173	293	411	1425	356	499	1422	356	498
9	1346	337	471	1528	382	535	1595	399	558
10	1450	363	508	1701	425	596	1698	425	594
11	1623	406	568	1804	451	632	1871	468	655
12	1726	432	604	1977	494	692	1975	494	691
13	1899	475	665	2080	520	728	2147	537	752
14	2003	501	701	2253	563	789	2251	563	788
15	2174	544	761	2356	589	825	2423	606	848
Per each additional member	173	43	61	173	43	61	173	43	61

*Although Texas adjusts the maximum grant amounts annually, the budgetary and recognizable needs amounts have not changed since March 1, 1994.

Income and Resources

- The amount of real and personal property that can be reserved for each assistance unit is not in excess of \$1,000 equity value excluding:
 - Automobiles with fair market values not exceeding \$4,650.
 - Income producing vehicles.
 - Bona fide funeral agreements not in excess of \$7,500 cash value for each member of the assistance unit, and one burial plot for each member of the assistance unit. Burial plots are defined as the designated space in the ground, vault, or mausoleum reserved for burial of the TANF family. Bona fide funeral agreement is defined as a prepaid funeral plan or burial insurance policy to pay for services, facilities, and items needed for burial.

- Real property that the family is making a good faith effort to sell. "Good faith effort to sell" is defined as using classified ads in newspapers, or listing the property with a realtor, or accepting an offer that equals or exceeds the fair market value of the property.
 - Basic maintenance items.
 - Necessary non-liquid income-producing property as determined under the following criteria: Real property, stock, inventory, tools, equipment, and other non-liquid income-producing property which are usual and customary for a given trade, profession or business.
 - Individual Development Accounts (IDA's) established for the purpose of a home purchase, starting a business, or paying for a college education.
 - Income earned by an individual who marries an individual receiving TANF cash assistance at the time of the marriage. The earnings are excluded during the first six months following the date of the marriage only if the combined income of the TANF recipient and new spouse does not exceed 200% of the federal poverty level for their family size.
- Policies provide for allocating an individual's income for his or her own support if the individual is not applying for or receiving assistance; for the support of other individuals living in the same household but not receiving assistance; and for the support of other individuals living in another household. Such other individuals are those who are or could be claimed by the individual as dependents for determining Federal personal income tax liability, or those he or she is legally obligated to support.

Those included for allocation are all individuals allowed under 45 CFR Section 233.20(a)(3)(ii)(E) living in the home who are not applying for or receiving TANF, and are not sanctioned for failing to comply with a program requirement.

- In determining the amount of an assistance payment, assigned support payments retained in violation of state policy will be subject to IV-D recovery. Support payments sent directly to the client and retained in violation of state policy will be subject to IV-A recovery.
- Assistance from other agencies and organizations is disregarded in determining need and amount of the assistance payment if it is for a different purpose than TANF.
- The State excludes the following types and amounts of support and maintenance assistance (including home energy assistance) that has been certified by the appropriate State agency as based on need.
 - Energy assistance
 - The State excludes an unlimited amount of such assistance when it is provided in-kind by a private non-profit organization.
 - The State excludes such assistance when it is provided by a rate-of-return entity. An unlimited amount is excluded if the assistance is furnished in-kind.

- The State excludes such assistance when a supplier of home heating gas or oil provides it. An unlimited amount is excluded if the assistance is furnished in-kind.
 - The State excludes such assistance when it is provided by a municipal utility providing home energy. An unlimited amount is excluded if the assistance is furnished in-kind.
 - The State does not prorate allowances in the need and payment standards for shelter, utilities, and/or similar needs.
- A dependent care deduction in an amount of \$175 (\$200 for a child under age two) is determined and applied in the case of an individual engaged in full-time employment throughout the month.
- The State disregards all income which is received from participation in a program under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA).
- The state disregards from available income gifts or contributions if they are made by private, nonprofit organizations on the basis of need and total \$300 or less per household in a federal fiscal quarter.

Good Cause

- The State's definition of "good cause" for an individual who terminates employment or reduces earned income, refuses employment, or fails to make a timely report of earned income is described below:
 - Good cause for terminating employment is the existence of circumstances beyond the control of the individual.
 - Good cause for reducing earned income is the existence of circumstances beyond the control of the individual.
 - Good cause for refusal to accept employment is the existence of circumstances beyond the control of the individual.

Budgeting

- The State's time period covered by the payment month is a calendar month.
- Proration of the amount payable for the month of application is based on a 30 day standard.
- Cost of child care and incapacitated person care are provided as a combination of cost of care expended by worker up to \$175 (\$200 for a child under age two) per child or incapacitated person and service provided or purchased by agency.

The case manager attempts to arrange purchased child care for the clients. If unable to provide purchased care for a client with earned income, HHSC allows a dependent care deduction.

- The agency deducts the first \$120 of earned income for work related expenses.
- In addition to the \$120 work related expense deduction, the agency disregards 90% of remaining earnings up to a maximum of \$1,400 per person for the first four months of employment. After the fourth month, the agency allows only the \$120 disregard.
- The agency computes the assistance payment using its best estimate of income that will exist in the payment month as described below:

For prospective budgeting, the agency computes the assistance payment using its best estimate of income that will exist in the payment month. This estimate is based on the agency's knowledge of past and current circumstances and (1) accurately reflects all facts that occurred (whether known or unknown to the State); (2) establishes a specific time frame which the State uses to determine the estimate; (3) is calculated correctly; and (4) remains an accurate reflection of the likely situation in the payment month because no change in circumstances has occurred since the time frame used for the estimate. If the actual case circumstances differ from those used to calculate the estimate, the agency must reconcile the differences by recovering any overpayment or issuing a check to remedy any underpayment.

The following methodology is used by the agency to calculate a best estimate of income:

- Evaluate with the client, the household's income and circumstances.
- Budget the actual income received as of the interview date. Budget only the income that can be reasonably anticipated for pay periods after that date. If income is ongoing, but the amounts fluctuate, average income from past pay periods.
- Verification of at least four consecutive pay periods is required. Methods of verification must be documented.
- Evaluate other factors with the client to determine if amounts verified are representative of future amounts.
- Average the representative amounts to determine the amount of income to project.

Best estimates are recalculated at each complete review and/or any income change that requires re-budgeting.

- The following is a description of the prospective budgeting provisions in effect which the State adopted to achieve compatibility with SNAP:

The Health and Human Service Commission uses 4 and 1/3 and 2 and 1/6 factors for converting weekly and biweekly income into monthly income to determine eligibility for current and future months as well as determining benefit amounts.

Income is converted to a monthly figure using a conversion factor unless income is received once a month or less than a full month's income is received. If an additional payment is received outside the regular payment cycle, convert the regular payments and add the additional payment to the converted amount.

For new income that is paid semi-monthly, determine the estimated number of hours worked per week; estimate the weekly gross income by multiplying the weekly estimated hours by the hourly wage and multiply the weekly gross income by 4.33. For ongoing semi-monthly income, multiply the regular semi-monthly payment by 2.

Spouse-to-Spouse Deeming

When one spouse is included in an assistance unit (AU) while the other spouse is not, even though they are living together, the income of the spouse not in the AU is considered available to the other spouse. The State counts as income to the AU the income of the spouse who is in the home but who is not included in the AU after applying the income allocations and stepparent disregards in 45 CFR Section 233.20(a)(3)(xiv).

Overpayment Recovery and Underpayments

- Recovery of overpayments from current recipients is accomplished by either recoupment or repayment from the participating household.
- The State will not attempt to recover overpayments from participating households where the overpayment amount is \$35 or less.
- In cases that have both an underpayment and an overpayment, the State elects to offset one against the other in correcting the payment.
- Overpayment claims are established and collected from assistance payments as described below:
 - fraud or intentional program violation.
 - client error or misunderstanding.
 - agency error.

Work Related Expenses (WRE) and the Earned Income Disregard (EID) are not deducted in determining overpayment claim amounts for Intentional Program Violation and inadvertent household error claims.

- A report of changes in circumstances that affect eligibility and the amount of payment is not timely if it is reported later than 10 days after the change occurred.

Overpayments to Aliens Where the Sponsor(s) Failed To Provide Correct Information

- The agency's uniform statewide policy is that aliens and sponsors admitted under non-binding affidavits of support will be jointly and severally liable for overpayments caused when the sponsor fails to provide correct information. If the sponsor has good cause or receives benefits in the same program in which the alien's overpayment occurred, then the alien alone is liable.
- Reimbursement will be requested from the sponsor for aliens admitted under Section 213A of the Immigration and Nationality Act.
- The state defines "good cause" as: Alien provision of incorrect information without the knowledge of the sponsor.

Protective, Vendor and two Party Payments for Dependent Children

Protective payments are made:

- For mismanagement cases. The agency does not presume mismanagement based on a recipient's nonpayment of rent. The following criteria are used by the State in determining mismanagement of the TANF grant:
 - nonpayment of rent and/or utilities,
 - failure to provide necessary food and clothing for children,
 - availability of private or public assistance to supplement assistance from HHSC, or
 - the recipient uses the grant on items that are not essential or necessary to meet the family's needs.
- At the voluntary request of the recipient.

Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS)

State Wage Information Collection Agency

The source of State Wage information (used in determining eligibility and the correct benefit amount for applicants and recipients) which is designated as the State Wage Information Collection Agency (SWICA) is the agency administering the State unemployment compensation laws (the Texas Workforce Commission).

Requesting and Furnishing Eligibility and Income Information

Approval has not been obtained to use an alternate source(s) of information instead of the one(s) specified.

Use of Income and Eligibility Information

The State agency will independently verify information received from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) by obtaining verification from the applicant/recipient, the source of payment as identified by the IRS or another collateral source before taking any case action. Texas Workforce Commission wage information and Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) resource information can be used as verification to establish the claim amount when all other efforts to verify wage income or unreported financial institution accounts have been exhausted.

The State agency also interfaces with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Verification Information System (VIS) to verify the validity of documentation showing alien status. The State agency uses the SAVE VIS:

- at application;
- when adding a new household member identified as an alien; or
- when the client's USCIS document has expired.

IEVS Information Items

Because the state emphasizes an upfront fraud and overpayment prevention system which includes: Employee New Hire Report, On-line inquiry into the Texas Workforce Commission system for unemployment compensation benefits and wage information, Data Broker inquiry and Finger Imaging, the IEVS match system acts only as a final detection measure. The State excludes certain IEVS information items from follow-up based on an approved State follow-up plan.

The categories of IEVS information items excluded from follow-up are defined as follows:

- Interest income matches from IRS that are less than \$50.00 for the tax year.
- Wage discrepancies from Texas Workforce Commission that are less than \$900.00 per quarter.
- Unemployment benefit discrepancies from Texas Workforce Commission that are less than \$440.00 per month.
- Wage matches from the BEERS file that are \$3,600 or less per year.
- Unemployment information items from IRS.

Analysis in Texas has shown that the State administrative cost for processing all possible referrals is not cost effective. Therefore, criteria were established to focus on cases with high dollar discrepancies or unreported income. Excluding follow-up of the above categories is cost effective as it eliminates as many non-productive matches as possible and obtains high return for the time invested in verifying the information.

Availability of Agency Program Manuals

The State agency makes available its program manuals and other policy issuances to groups, individuals, and the public via the Internet at:

<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/handbooks/TexasWorks/>

Upon request, the specific policy materials necessary for an applicant or recipient, or his representative, to determine whether a hearing should be requested or to prepare for a hearing, are available without charge.

Report of Lost or Stolen TANF Payments

Texas generally issues benefits by EBT. For the small percentage of benefits issued by warrant the IV-A agency does not require that as a condition for issuance of a replacement check, a recipient must report a lost or stolen TANF check to the police or other appropriate authorities.

(ii) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program to engage in work (defined by the state once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months (whether or not consecutive), whichever is earlier, consistent with section 407(e)(2).

In accordance with federal requirements, Texas requires parents and caretakers to engage in work as defined in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 1, Section 372.1154(g), and as defined in 40 TAC Chapter 811.

(iii) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance under the program engage in work activities in accordance with section 407.

Texas requires parents or caretakers to engage in work activities in accordance with federal requirements. Detailed information about work activities is described in Texas' Work Verification Plan.

(iv) Take such reasonable steps as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

Texas restricts the disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program. HHSC is subject to and follows the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) concerning a client's privacy rights. TANF applicants are provided with a HIPAA privacy notice that explains to the applicant about the agency's duty to protect the privacy of their personal information. The State statute that provides the legal basis for safeguarding the confidentiality of certain information is the Texas Human Resources Code, Section 12.003

The State agency criteria for the types of information to be safeguarded and the conditions under which such information may be released or used are as follows:

- Any information relating to a client may be released upon written consent of the client. All case record information concerning client's personal relationships and circumstances, including medical information is considered confidential. Such information is available to Internal Revenue Service only upon issuance of a summons. Request by courts are released only by receipt of a subpoena.
- The State also releases the current address of any recipient to a federal, state or local law enforcement officer, in accordance with Section 408(a)(9)(B).
- The State also releases information for other law enforcement purposes, such as complying with a subpoena or if the information is relevant to an investigation that relates to the administration of one of the agency's programs, or for judicial or administrative proceedings, such as a response to an order from a regular or administrative court.

(v) 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.

Texas continues to operate programs using State and federal funds to prevent or reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teen pregnancy, including abstinence education. Additional details about these specific programs can be found in Section 2 within this plan.

(vi) 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 teen pregnancy programs may be expanded in scope to include men.

Texas conducts programs for law enforcement officers, the education system and relevant counseling organizations, primarily administered by the Texas Office of the Attorney General(OAG), that address the problem of statutory rape in the curriculum. The Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services Program in the Crime Victim Services Division of the OAG provides training for registered nurses to become OAG Certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs). All victims of sexual assault (adult, adolescent and child) in Texas have the right to a sexual assault medical forensic exam, including medical assessment, medical treatment, and forensic evidence collection. Additional training and technical assistance is provided to community partners who collaborate on behalf of sexual assault victims through a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Prevention of sexual violence in Texas is guided by a state plan, which is a collaborative product of the Primary Prevention Planning Committee (PPPC) and includes members from the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the OAG and the statewide sexual assault coalition. Local sexual assault centers are implementing prevention activities and strategies, including educational sessions, identified in the State Plan. Pregnancy

Prevention Programs are administered through DSHS. DSHS clinical pregnancy prevention services are targeted to both women and men. Additionally, state statute requires local school districts to devise and implement a dating violence policy within their district improvement plans. The policy requires local school districts to provide training to teachers and administrators on the issues concerning dating violence. Community organizations such as Communities in Schools (CIS) assist the local school districts to coordinate programs in schools that address statutory rape and teen pregnancy prevention. CIS assists local school districts by bringing in guest speakers, providing literature and supplying curriculum materials as dictated by the local school district policies.

(B) Special Provisions:

(i) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to treat families moving into the State differently than other families under the program, and if so, how the State intends to treat such families under the program.

Texas does not treat families moving into the State differently than other families under the program, except as noted below for aliens who are qualified aliens and who entered the U.S. on or after August 22, 1996.

(ii) The document shall include whether the State intends to provide assistance under the program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States, and if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

Texas provides assistance under the TANF program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States in the same manner and based on the same eligibility criteria as U.S. citizens, if the non-citizen meets the definition of a qualified alien in Section 431(b) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), and is not subject to the five-year bar in section 412(b) of PRWORA. Texas reserves the right to provide TANF assistance to unexempted individuals who entered the country on or after August 22, 1996 and whose federal five year bar on assistance expires. In determining assistance under the TANF program, Texas deems the income and resources of alien sponsors as required by Section 421 of PRWORA.

(iii) The document shall set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how the State will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process.

Texas determines eligibility and delivers benefits under the TANF program in accordance with federal requirements.

Hearings

The hearing authority for TANF benefits is the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the single agency administering the Title IV-A eligibility Program. The State provides a hearing before our State agency only. When changes in Federal or State law require automatic payment adjustments for classes of recipients, there is no right to appeal with respect to the adjustment except when the reason for the individual appeal is a challenge of the correctness of the computation of his payment. Requests for hearings may be in writing, by phone or in person. Time allowed for claimants to file for a hearing is 90 days from the date of notice. The State may conduct hearings by telephone except when federal or state law requires the hearing to be in person. HHSC provides reasonable accommodations for individuals needing additional assistance due to disability or language needs at the request of the client. Reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities are determined by the hearing officer on a case by case basis, determined by the individual's specific needs and may include ensuring wheelchair access or providing an interpreter for the hearing impaired. HHSC provides interpreters at no cost to those applicants/clients and witnesses who have bona fide language barriers to ensure that they will be able to participate in the hearing. People with language barriers may include people who are unable to understand or communicate in English or whose ability to understand or communicate in English is limited. Written information containing contact information for HHSC's Civil Rights Office and The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights is provided to applicants and clients in the event that they feel that they have been discriminated against or had their privacy rights violated.

Non-Discrimination - Methods of Administration

The agreement which provides a description of the methods of administration to ensure that provisions of 45 CFR Part 80 are adhered to was signed by the Commissioner of the Texas Department of Human Resources and the Health and Human Services Regional Civil Rights Manager in 1997. It is on file in the Health and Human Services Regional Civil Rights office in Dallas, Texas. In accordance with federal law, HHSC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

(iv) Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this section, unless the chief executive officer of the State opts out of this provision by notifying the Secretary, a State shall, consistent with the exception provided in section 407(e)(2), require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving such assistance for 2 months is not exempt from work requirements and is not engaged in work, as determined under section 407(c), to participate in community service employment, with minimum hours per week and tasks to be determined by the State.

Texas does not opt to mandate participation in a community service program for parents or caretakers after two months of receipt of assistance. Parents and caretakers are mandated to participate in work activities throughout the receipt of assistance, with early participation focusing on opportunities to obtain unsubsidized employment.

Section 402(a)(2) Certification that the state will operate a child support enforcement program. – A certification by the chief executive officer of the State that, during the fiscal year, the State will operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved by Part D.

The Governor of Texas certifies the State operates a child support enforcement program in accordance with federal requirements.

Assignment of Rights to Support and Cooperation in Establishing Paternity and Securing Support.

- Assignment - An assignment by operation of State law that is cited as 231.104 of the Texas Family Code is utilized.
- Claiming good cause - Every applicant or recipient is given written notice of the right to claim good cause for refusal to cooperate with child support requirements and of all the requirements applicable to a good cause determination.
- Determination - The State or local agency's determination as to good cause is made within a time standard of 45 days from the day the good cause claim is made.
- If the State or local agency has found that good cause exists, it does not make a determination of whether child support enforcement could proceed without risk of harm to the child or caretaker relative if the enforcement or collection activities would not involve their participation. Also, the IV-D agency will not attempt to establish paternity or secure support.

Notice to Child Support Agency

- The IV-A agency provides written notice to the IV-D agency within two working days of furnishing the aid or the determination that an individual is a TANF recipient.
- Prompt notice is a written notice containing all relevant information from the case record as prescribed by the child support agency.

Section 402(a)(3) Certification that the state will operate a foster care and adoption assistance program. - A certification by the chief executive officer of the State that, during the fiscal year, the State will operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under Part E , and that the State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under Title XIX.

The Governor of Texas certifies the State operates foster care and adoption assistance programs approved under part E of Title IV and ensures that children receiving assistance under Part E qualify for Title XIX medical assistance as required by Section 472(h)(1).

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services uses the Title IV-A rules and regulations in effect as of July 16, 1996 to determine eligibility for foster care assistance under Title IV-E.

Section 402(a)(4) Certification of the administration of the program. – A certification by the chief executive officer of the State specifying which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the fiscal year, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations-

(A) have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations, and (B) have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and design of such services.

The Governor of Texas certifies that the Health and Human Services Commission, the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and other appropriate agencies will jointly administer the TANF program. The State continues to consult with local governments and private sector organizations via formal advisory councils and informal methods regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State and will allow all Texas citizens at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and its service design.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) provide both eligibility determination services for TANF applicants and TANF cash assistance payments. Under its “Texas Works” program, HHSC offers initial, up-front assistance and resources to TANF applicants to help identify employment barriers and find a job.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and local workforce development boards constitute Texas Workforce Solutions. Texas Workforce Solutions provides extensive welfare-to-work services under the “Choices” program designed to help TANF applicants, recipients, non-recipient parents, and former recipients find and maintain employment in order to assist an individual’s progression toward self-sufficiency. Texas Workforce Solutions also provides child care assistance to Choices participants and those leaving welfare for work. Texas Workforce Solutions delivers services through more than 265 local one-stop career centers.

Additionally, Texas reserves the right to use TANF funds as follows:

- transfer or redistribute block grant funds to other agencies and program currently funded through Title IV-A, Social Services Block Grant and the Child Care and Development Block Grant, according to the provisions in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996;
- operate a subsidized public and/or private employment program that may use SNAP and TANF benefits as a wage supplement. The State reserves the option to use private placement agencies and/or nonprofit organizations, including faith-based organizations, for placement services.

Section 402(a)(5) Certification that the state will provide Indians with equitable access to assistance. – A certification by the chief executive officer of the State that, during the fiscal year, the State will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

The Governor of Texas certifies the State will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under Section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

Section 402(a)(6) Certification of standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse. – A certification by the chief executive officer of the State that the State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage.

The Governor of Texas certifies the State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage.

Fraud Control

- The State operates a TANF fraud control program pursuant to requirements under section 402(a)(6).
- The State disqualifies individuals found to have committed an intentional program violation(s) based on findings of administrative disqualification hearings and findings of prosecution or court actions.
- For situations in which a State has imposed a disqualification penalty when there is another program sanction in effect, the State opts to run the disqualification penalty concurrently with the other program sanction.

Administrative Disqualification Hearings

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) will refer less flagrant cases of suspected intentional program violation to administrative disqualification hearing officers, with a recommendation for disqualifications. If a household member accused of the intentional program violation does not wish to attend a hearing, he or she will be allowed to waive that process, with or without any admission of guilt. The waiver, signed by the client,

includes statement of client's rights, responsibilities and all requirements of an advance notice of disqualification hearing except the date, time, and place of the hearing. If a member declines the waiver or accepts the waiver and changes his mind within 7 workdays, a disqualification hearing will be scheduled. The member will then be notified in writing that a hearing has been scheduled and the date, time and place for his appearance. If the hearing is waived or the hearing officer decides an intentional program violation occurred, disqualification will occur and the member will be required to repay the over-issuance. The agency will continue to refer the more serious felony cases to local prosecutors.

TANF and associated cases will be coordinated for administrative disqualification hearings and prosecution when the factual issues arise from the same or related circumstances. TANF fraud penalties for intentional program violations committed on or after September 1, 2003 are:

- Individuals found to have committed an intentional program violation in the TANF programs either through an administrative disqualification hearing or who have signed a waiver of right to an administrative disqualification hearing will be disqualified for 12 months for the first intentional program violation determination and permanently for the second intentional program violation determination.
- Individuals convicted of a state or federal offense for conduct that constitutes an intentional program violation, or if the person is granted deferred adjudication or placed on community supervision for that conduct, will be permanently disqualified from receiving financial assistance.

The OIG will pay probation departments for collection of fraud claims as allowed under 2 CFR Part 1 255 (Appendix B), 45 CFR 263.0(b)(2), 45 CFR 263.2(a)(5)(i), and 45 CFR 263.13.

Verification Measures

Verification measures utilized by the State to detect fraudulent applications for TANF prior to the establishment of eligibility for such assistance include:

- Once an application is filed, the household members listed on the application are checked through the Department's main files using an automated match process to ensure they are not already on an active case or have already received benefits on a denied case. The matches are done by checking the social security number, name and date of birth for each member listed on the application.
- Department eligibility staff also use the following automated match systems to establish eligibility:
 - Social Security's SDX files if the applicant indicates on the application that they are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to determine the amount being received and if they are receiving RSDI.

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program to determine if the alien status of required family members listed as non-U.S. citizens is acceptable.
- Verification of all eligibility information provided on the application form or obtained during the face-to-face interview is completed through documentary evidence or collateral statements prior to determination of eligibility. Verification includes age, relationship, and domicile for all certified children. Other required verification includes resources, nonexempt income (including lump sums), unpaid medical bills, third-party resources, and alien status.
- Included in the worker's handbook is a section, "Questionable Information". This list identifies additional situations that require verification when circumstances are questionable. Home visits are also used to verify information if necessary before the certification process is completed.
- Eligibility staff is trained to do investigative interviewing. Training session trainees spend time learning the principles of conducting in-depth interviews. These principles will assist them in the gathering of required information needed to determine the applicant's eligibility.

After an individual is certified for TANF benefits, the State compares files with other state and federal databases. The comparisons are utilized to help identify individuals who may no longer be eligible for benefits because they are deceased, incarcerated, receiving benefits in another state, or there is discrepant information related to earnings and resources:

- Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) Match identifies individuals quarterly to determine if an individual is receiving duplicate benefits in both Texas and another state.
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) State Prison Match identifies individuals monthly who are receiving benefits and may have been incarcerated in a TDCJ facility during the eligibility period.
- Social Security Administration (SSA) Deceased Individual Match identifies individuals who are receiving benefits and who are reported by U.S. Department of Commerce's National Technical Information Service as deceased.
- Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) Deceased Individual Match identifies individuals monthly who are receiving benefits and who are reported deceased by BVS.
- Social Security Administration Prisoner Verification System (SSA PVS) Match identifies individuals monthly who are receiving benefits and may have been incarcerated in a Federal, State, or local facility during the eligibility period.

Section 402(a)(7) Optional Certification of standards and procedures to ensure that the state will screen for and identify domestic violence.

(A) In general. At the option of the State, a certification by the chief executive officer of the State that the State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to (i) screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals; (ii) refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and (iii) waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, and family cap provisions, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.

The Governor of Texas certifies the State is exercising the family violence option in 402(a)(7) and has established procedures to ensure the State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to screen, identify, make appropriate referrals, and waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements that would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.

Section 402(c) Public Availability of State Plan Summary. – The State shall make available to the public a summary of any plan or plan amendment section.

The Governor of Texas certifies the State will make available to the public a copy of the State Plan.

Section 2: Additional Programs

This section details additional programs which meet one of more of the four purposes of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and are funded with federal TANF funds and/or qualify as state maintenance of effort (MOE) expenditures.

1. EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION (Federal TANF)

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI) are administered by the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services. ECI is responsible for implementing an early identification system that ensures all infants and toddlers eligible for ECI services are identified, located and evaluated. ECI provides an array of family support and developmental services to ameliorate the developmental delay and to support and educate families to help their children reach their full potential.

ECI services are available to families of children from birth to three years of age with disabilities or developmental delays. Federal TANF funds some of the non-medical expenses for ECI children and their families with an annual family income of less than \$63,000.

2. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (Federal TANF)

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services provides any service for which the State previously was authorized to use IV-A or IV-F funds under prior law, as in effect on September 30, 1995, as clarified by the State's 1997 plan amendment.

3. FAMILY BASED SAFETY SERVICES (Federal TANF and MOE)

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services provides services to families at risk of having a child removed from the home and families with whom a child can be reunited. Annual family income cannot exceed \$63,000.

Services include but are not limited to:

- family crisis intervention,
- case management services,
- protective homemaker services, and
- community-based treatment services.

4. PROTECTIVE CHILD CARE (MOE)

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) purchases child care for children residing in their own homes in order to control and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect. It is used for children who remain in their own home and for children who are returning to their own home after a period of time in substitute care. These services help keep a child safe and provide some stability while a family is participating in

services to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect to the child. The use of protective child care is often used as an alternative to removal from the home.

Eligibility

- DFPS has an open case where the risk of abuse or neglect is being investigated or has been substantiated and protective child care is needed to:
 - ensure immediate or short term safety from abuse and neglect;
 - prevent the child from being removed from the home;
 - allow the child to be reunified with family;
 - address developmental needs of a child whose physical, social, emotional, cognitive, or language developmental delay is a significant factor in the risk of abuse or neglect in the home; or
 - assist with family stabilization.
- The child is age 0 to 13.
- Annual household income of the caregiver must not exceed \$63,000.

Service Limits

Protective child care services are ended when DFPS closes the protective services case because DFPS is no longer working with the family.

5. RELATIVE CAREGIVER CHILD CARE (MOE)

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) purchases child care for children in the conservatorship of DFPS who are placed with a non-licensed/non-verified relative caregiver (i.e. the caregiver is not a foster parent.) Relatives must meet income eligibility guidelines and work at least 40 hours a week. Relative child care for kinship children is defined as out-of-home care provided in day care facilities licensed or registered by the Child Care Licensing Division of DFPS.

Eligibility

- Youth who are in the conservatorship of DFPS and the relative caregivers of the children who meet the eligibility requirements set by DFPS.
- The caregivers are unlicensed caregivers whom DFPS has approved for a child's placement. Caregivers must be related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption within the 5th degree.
- Annual household income of the caregiver must not exceed 300% of poverty, as determined by federal poverty guidelines.
- The caregiver must be a resident of Texas.

Service Limits

Relative caregiver child care services end if DFPS is no longer the child's managing conservator or the child moves from the relative home.

6. RELATIVE CAREGIVER REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM (Federal TANF)

Effective 9-01-2005

The Relative Caregiver Reimbursement Program is an array of services dedicated to promote continuity and stability for children in the conservatorship of DFPS. The program includes support services and limited financial assistance for eligible caregivers who assume care giving responsibility for children in DFPS conservatorship.

Services

Initial, one- time integration payment of not more than \$1,000 per sibling group placed after March 1, 2006:

- The purpose of this payment is to defray the costs incurred by the caregiver for essential child care items at the time of placement such as beds, bedding, clothing and other necessary items. This payment is provided once to each sibling group. No additional payments will be made if the sibling group moves to the home of another relative

Flexible support payments up to a maximum of \$500 per child per year:

- The purpose of this payment is to reimburse the caregiver for expenses such as summer school tuition, tutoring, school supplies, school activities, car insurance fees for adolescents, and necessary expenses as approved by the Assistant Commissioner of Child Protective Services or designee.

Eligibility

- Youth who are in the conservatorship of DFPS and the caregivers of the children who meet the eligibility requirements set by DFPS.
- The caregivers are unlicensed caregivers whom DFPS has approved for a child's placement. Caregivers must be related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption within the 5th degree.
- Annual household income of the caregiver or a caregiver who is subsequently appointed as permanent managing conservator must not exceed 300% of poverty, as determined by federal poverty guidelines.
- The caregiver or caregiver who is subsequently appointed as permanent managing conservator must be a resident of Texas.
- If the caregiver or caregiver who is subsequently appointed as permanent managing conservator is the child's grandparent, the grandparent must first demonstrate that they do not meet the criteria for receiving a one-time supplemental payment under the existing Temporary Assistance for Needy Family Grandparent Payment program.

Service Limits

The **initial integration payment** is a one-time benefit and is provided to facilitate the transition of the sibling group. The benefit is not available on a per child basis or to subsequent placements. This payment is only available to children placed after March 1, 2006.

Annual flexible support payments are available to enhance the ability of the caregiver to provide for each child placed in their home. This benefit is limited to \$500 per child annually, and may not be used to support the birth or adopted children of the caregiver family. This payment is available to caregivers; however, reimbursement is limited to expenses incurred after September 1, 2005.

Caregivers subsequently appointed as permanent managing conservators are eligible for the annual flexible support payment of up to \$500 per child for up to three additional years after the appointment or until the youth's 18th birthday, whichever comes first.

7. SERVICES TO AT-RISK YOUTH (Federal TANF and MOE)

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services provides services to children and youth ages 0-17, and their families to reduce risk factors and resolve problems that lead to child abuse and neglect, delinquent behavior, running away or truancy, and preventing children/youth and families from becoming involved in the Juvenile Justice and Child Protective Services systems. Annual family income cannot exceed \$63,000. Services may be provided or purchased, and may include public awareness programs, family crisis intervention, youth and family counseling, and short term residential care. Services cannot exceed 180 days per year, and residential services are limited to 60 days. Residential services are provided as a short-term crises intervention while on-going activities aimed at family conflict resolution and family reunification continue. The program's highest priority is to support children/youth remaining in their homes and fall under TANF purpose 1 by providing assistance to needy families so their children may be cared for in their own home.

8. STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH ENHANCED IN-HOME SUPPORT PROGRAM (Federal TANF)

Effective January 1, 2008 through August 31, 2009

The purpose of the Strengthening Families through Enhanced In-Home Support Program is to offset certain poverty-related factors related to neglect by utilizing federal TANF funds to provide benefits and services to eligible families working with CPS to avoid having their children removed from the home and to speed reunification efforts of children with their families. The program will be piloted in 15 counties and expand on the current intensive Family Based Safety Services (FBSS) and Family Reunification delivery models to provide families with funds for short-term, non-recurring, non-traditional expenses.

Services

The funding has two components:

- Family Enhancement – a one-time cash assistance component with a maximum cumulative amount of \$250, and
- Family Empowerment and/or Purchased Goods and Services – a component for activities and/or purchased goods and services with a maximum cumulative amount of \$3,000.

These benefits and services will be provided to families at various times in the life of the case to help with meeting the child's needs, maintaining the safety of the child, relieving the stress of the family and enhancing family strengths and functioning. Foster care diversions are anticipated as a result of this program.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive benefits under the program, a family must:

- be recommended by Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) staff to receive Family Based Safety Services or Family Reunification Services and the family must agree to the services;
- have the child living in the home or have a family service plan that recommends the child be returned to the home within 180 days;
- have a household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines;
- be the subject of a DFPS investigation in which it is determined that neglect is a primary problem for the family;
- be a parent by blood, marriage, or adoption or a managing conservator of the child who is the victim of or at risk of neglect;
- have an identified problem in the home environment or family that contributed to neglect and can be remedied or mitigated by benefits available under this program; and
- have a child in the home or returning to the home that meets applicable citizenship and immigration status requirements.

Service Limits

Strengthening Families In-home Support eligibility is valid for four months. If services are necessary and continue beyond four months, a recertification is completed before the end of the fourth month. No more than two recertifications per case are allowed.

9. STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH ENHANCED IN-HOME SUPPORT PROGRAM (Federal TANF)

Effective September 1, 2009 through August 31, 2010

The purpose of the Strengthening Families through Enhanced In-Home Support Program (Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI)) is to offset certain poverty-related factors related to neglect by utilizing federal TANF funds to provide benefits and services to eligible families working with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Child Protective Services (CPS) program. Funds used to provide any benefits under the Strengthening Families through Enhanced In-Home Support Program are subject to DFPS approval and must be used:

- to accomplish one or more of the objectives that are identified in the family's Plan of Service and that promote family stability;
- to prevent removal of the child from the home or speed reunification of the child with the family; and
- for one or more of the following purposes;
 - protect the safety of the child;
 - meet the child's needs;
 - relieve family stress; or
 - enhance family strengths and functioning.

Categories of Services:

Expenditures for this program are grouped by the following three categories:

- **Family Enhancement Funds:** Purchased goods and services provided with these funds must not be used to support a family's basic daily needs. DFPS may provide a maximum of \$600 of Family Enhancement goods and services to an eligible family.
- **Family Empowerment Funds:** DFPS may provide a maximum of \$3,000 in Family Empowerment benefits which may include purchased goods and/or services and monetary assistance of \$250 or less to an eligible family. Family Empowerment monetary assistance, goods, and services are for a family's basic needs and must be:
 - authorized and provided within the first four months of the case and may not be extended;
 - designed to deal with a specific crisis or episode of needs; and
 - provided for non-recurrent, short-term benefits, but not for ongoing needs.
- **Traditional Services:** DFPS may provide a variety of purchased child protective services, including counseling, therapy, assessments, and other services provided by DFPS to families who receive traditional Family-Based Safety Services.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive benefits under the program, a family must:

- be recommended by Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) staff to receive Family-Based Safety Services or Family Reunification Services and the family must agree to the services;

- have the child living in the home or have a family service plan that recommends the child be returned to the home within 180 days;
- have a household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines;
- be the subject of a DFPS investigation in which it is determined that neglect is a primary problem for the family;
- be a parent by blood, marriage, or adoption or a managing conservator of the child who is the victim of or at risk of neglect;
- have an identified problem in the home environment or family that contributed to neglect and can be remedied or mitigated by benefits available under this program and;
- have a child in the home or returning to the home that meets applicable citizenship and immigration status requirements.

Service Limits

Strengthening Families through Enhanced In-home Support Program eligibility is valid for four months. Family Empowerment funds must be authorized and provided during this four-month period of eligibility. If services are necessary and continue beyond four months, a recertification is completed before the end of the fourth month. Family Enhancement funds and Traditional Services may be authorized and provided during this recertification period. No more than two recertifications per case are allowed.

10. ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (Federal TANF and MOE)

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides basic skills training and education for eligible current and former TANF recipients. The overall purpose of the program is to move TANF recipients and TANF eligible individuals into self-supporting employment, thereby reducing the number of long-term welfare recipients. Recipients are required to participate in adult education and job training programs as a condition of eligibility. TEA also serves individuals who are eligible for TANF but are attempting to avoid welfare in the adult education program. Families that include a child living at home are deemed eligible for TANF-funded adult education services if a family member receives any of the following form of assistance: SNAP, Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) or Free or National School Lunch Program. Individuals are also referred to adult education programs by HHSC eligibility workers or local workforce centers after they are determined eligible for a related assistance program, such as TANF, SNAP, CCDF or CHIP.

Adult education services provided through the program may include job preparation skills, transition to postsecondary education, English as a Second Language, GED preparation and other educational services that will enable individuals at risk of needing TANF benefits in the future to remain financially independent.

Collaboration and coordination is critical to successfully serving recipients of adult education services. Adult education programs are required to have a signed MOU with local workforce development boards prior to receiving funds.

11. BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS AMACHI PROGRAM (Federal TANF) **MENTOR SERVICES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH (Federal TANF)**

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Amachi program is administered by the Texas Education Agency. BBBS provides one-to-one mentoring for youth ages 6 – 18 whose parents or family members are incarcerated, recently released from the prison system or on probation. The mentoring is provided through community based, school based and/or school plus initiatives.

The at-risk children and youth served by BBBS share many of the same life factors such as living in a high crime area, living in a single-parent/caregiver home, experiencing a variety of physical and psychological abuse, living in poverty, economically disadvantaged, living with a parent or family member who is or has been recently incarcerated and living in an everyday environment riddled with criminal activity and substance abuse. BBBS mentoring services change lives by enriching, encouraging and empowering children to reach their highest potential through safe, positive mentoring relationships. Each mentor relationship is managed by a professionally educated and trained staff that monitors and assists the relationship for its duration. These programs provided by BBBS are intended to serve TANF purpose 3 through the counseling and mentoring services provided to at-risk youth.

12. PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM (MOE)

The Texas Education Agency provides pre-kindergarten services for eligible children who are four years old and from families who are eligible for the national free or reduced-price lunch program. Pre-kindergarten classes are offered school districts to develop the skills necessary for success in the regular curriculum. Texas Education Code, Section 29.153(a) requires school districts to offer a pre-kindergarten program if the district identifies 15 or more eligible children who are at least four years of age. A student meets the eligibility criteria if he/she:

1. is unable to speak and comprehend the English language;
2. is educationally disadvantaged. “Educationally disadvantaged” pre-kindergarten students are defined by the Agency as students eligible to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program;
3. is homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 11302;
4. is the child of an active duty member of the armed forces of the U.S., including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who is ordered to active duty by proper authority;
5. is the child of a member of the armed forces of the U.S., including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who was injured or killed while serving on active duty; or
6. is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family Protective Services following an adversary hearing held as provided by Section 262.201, Family Code.

A child who is eligible for enrollment in a pre-kindergarten program under numbers 4 or 5 above remains eligible for enrollment if the child's parent leaves the armed forces, or is no longer on active duty, after the child begins a pre-kindergarten class. A school district may, as a local option, offer pre-kindergarten classes if the district identifies 15 or more eligible children at least three years of age. The program also serves four-year-old children with disabilities who are at least three years of age and eligible to participate in school district special education programs. Texas Education Code, Section 29.009 requires school districts to notify parents or guardians of children with disabilities of the availability of preschool programs for these children.

Funding for pre-kindergarten program services may be used to employ teachers and other personnel and to acquire scientifically research-based curriculum materials and equipment, including computers and other expenditures to develop plans and models related to pre-kindergarten instructional services.

Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds claimed for pre-kindergarten programs are calculated from the number of children identified as being a part of a needy family. Texas has analyzed the applicable data to determine if free public pre-kindergarten programs are considered "generally available" to all pre-kindergarten aged children in the state. Information used for this estimate was extracted from the Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer (TXSDC), the US Census Bureau and Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

In the 2006-2007 school year, data from PEIMS shows 180,682 children enrolled in pre-kindergarten and 133,705 pre-kindergarten children receiving free or reduced price lunch. The most current estimate of three and four year old children in Texas available from TXSDC is 731,300 for the year 2006. Using the actual enrollment compared to total eligible three and four year olds, the pre-kindergarten program in Texas served 24.7% of all pre-kindergarten aged children in Texas. Additionally, the US Census Bureau data from 2007 estimated that 26.69% of Texas children under the age of 5 are living in poverty. Therefore, the state has concluded that pre-kindergarten programs funded with TANF MOE is not "generally available" to all three and four year olds in Texas.

13. SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION SERVICES **(Federal TANF)**

Communities In Schools (CIS) is an exemplary youth dropout prevention program administered by the Texas Education Agency. CIS provides services to youth considered at risk of dropping out of school. "At risk of dropping out of school" means any of the following: A student who is at risk as defined by chapter 29.081, section d. and g. of the Texas Education Code, or a student who is eligible for the national free or reduced price lunch program, or a student who is in family conflict or crisis or who meets delinquent conduct according to section 51.03, of the Family Code. Families of these students are encouraged to be involved with their student's education and may also receive services. Students and families served by CIS may be one or more of the following: a family

member or student who is economically disadvantaged, a TANF recipient or TANF eligible or receive or are eligible to receive any of the following: public assistance, SNAP, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or the national free or reduced price lunch program.

CIS provides case management services to keep students in school, to provide opportunity for post secondary education or employment to reduce risk factors such as delinquent behavior, truancy, teen pregnancy, and others. CIS helps youth successfully learn and prepare for self-sufficient, successful adulthood by providing, connecting and/or coordinating services through a six component model:

CIS Six Components:

- Supportive Guidance and Counseling
- Health and Human Services
- Family/Parent Involvement
- Career Awareness/Employment Activities
- Enrichment Activities
- Educational Enhancement

14. PREGNANCY SUPPORT PROGRAM (Federal TANF)

The Health and Human Services Commission pursuant to Section 50 Special Provisions Article II, H.B.1 (The General Appropriations Act) 79th Legislature, 2005, effective September 1, 2005 provides support services to Texas women promoting childbirth. The comprehensive services offered include, but are not limited to, the following specific services: Information and counseling regarding pregnancy, fetal development, childbirth, child care, parenting, and adoption; Mentoring services related to parenting and life skills; Referral to other services available to support pregnant females and childbirth, including neonatal health care services; Promotion of public awareness of other resources that support childbirth; Programs to provide or assist expectant parents and their unborn children to obtain certain goods and services including, cribs and car seats, maternity and baby clothes, and temporary child care. This program is intended to serve TANF purpose 4 through encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families while providing pregnancy support services to expectant parents.

15. TEXAS FOOD BANK NETWORK (Federal TANF and MOE)

Effective June 1, 2010 through September 30, 2010

The Texas Food Bank Network (TFBN) is a statewide association of nineteen regional food banks serving all 254 Texas counties. TFBN distributes a monthly "nutrition benefit" containing nutritious food and nutrition education materials to families with children at times when school meals are unavailable. Eligible households must contain at least one child under eighteen and have an annual household income equal to or less than 185% of the federal poverty line. Eligible households may receive the monthly nutrition benefit up to a maximum of four months.

TFBN identifies eligible households among existing clients already utilizing the food banks. These families are tested for eligibility using a prescreening tool and then referred to the distribution sites to obtain their monthly nutrition benefit. The prescreening tool is collected by the local food bank, and later signed by an adult representative of the household upon collection of the nutrition benefit. TFBN uses this signed prescreening tool to track and monitor distribution of the nutrition benefit to eligible households within an electronic database.

16. TEXAS NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP (Federal TANF)

Since September 1, 2008, the Health and Human Services Commission pursuant to Senate Bill 156, 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007, provides nurse home visitation services to low-income, first-time parents, and their child through the Texas Nurse-Family Partnership (TNFP). Registered nurses in the TNFP program visit first-time pregnant women, beginning no later than the 28th week of their pregnancy. The nurse home visitor visits each client until the child turns two-years old. Participation in the program is voluntary, and visits typically occur in the client's home.

TNFP meets the third purpose of TANF, to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, by focusing on the following goal:

- Increase families' economic self-sufficiency by helping parents to develop a vision for their future, including helping the mother plan future pregnancies, assisting her to continue education, and helping her to find work.

Through nurse home visitation, TNFP also strives to:

- Improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women access resources to alter their health-related behaviors, including reduction of smoking, alcohol, and illicit drugs;
- Improve child health and development by helping parents to provide more responsible and competent care for their children, using available community resources.

17. AFTER-SCHOOL YOUTH INITIATIVES (Federal TANF)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) will implement after-school youth initiatives expected to meet TANF purpose 3 by serving youth and providing them with supervised after-school activities. These activities will incorporate workforce strategies that engage youth in furthering their education in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

One such initiative, the *Robotics Initiative*, provides after-school robotics programs for youth. The initiative helps youth gain math and science skills, self-confidence, problem-solving abilities, and team-building experience, while developing other life skills. The Robotics Initiative comprises two parts:

- **Tech Challenge:** With a mentor and volunteers, a team of up to 10 students participate in after-school activities in which they design, build, and program a robot. The mentors and volunteers develop a strategy based on engineering principles, allowing the students to get real-world engineering experience.
- **Robotics Competition:** With volunteer professional mentors, a team of up to 25 students participate in a competition. The students will be responsible for designing and building a robot to compete against other teams, giving them an opportunity to apply math and science concepts in a competitive setting.

In August 2010, TWC sponsored the Texas High School Competitive Robotics Education Team Development Program. The total number of youth engaged in this after-school activity was approximately 6,832 with a total of 726 new teams with 8 to 25 students per team competing in Texas.

The *Summer Merit Program*, a supervised after-school youth initiative, provides scholarships to Texas middle school and high school students, ages 14-21, with the goal of increasing the number of underrepresented and disadvantaged students served in STEM skills-related summer camp programs. It is anticipated that the Summer Merit Program will be implemented in 2012. The estimated total number of youth, ages 14-21, who will likely be engaged in summer STEM-based activities is 1,250. The approximate total number of summer camps (day and residential) is projected to be 40.

These initiatives are reasonably expected to meet TANF purpose 3 by serving youth and providing them with supervised after-school activities that engage them in furthering their education in the STEM fields.

18. CHILD CARE (MOE)

Child care services are administered by the Texas Workforce Commission.

- To allow parents, when placing their child in care, to choose from a variety of child care providers including licensed centers, regulated family homes and care by a relative in the child's own home or in the relatives home;
- To assist applicants, recipients, non-recipient parents who are work eligible individuals and former recipients of TANF cash assistance to maintain or transition toward self-sufficiency through the provision of child care subsidies that enable them to work or participate in education or training; and
- To prevent future dependency through early physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children who are applicants and current or former TANF recipients and who are an integral part of the states future workforce.

Texas counts eligible child care expenditures used as maintenance of effort for the Child Care and Development Fund as MOE for TANF up to the statutory limit. Parents are eligible to receive child care services if they are participating in the Choice program. This

includes recipients and non-recipient parents who are work eligible individuals. Texas Workforce Commission rules require that Boards establish income eligibility limits as long as the limits do not exceed 85 percent of the state median income for all other families receiving child care services. This includes TANF applicants and former recipients of TANF cash assistance. Attachment 3.3.2.B of Texas Child Care Development Fund State Plan for 2010-2011 provides each Board's income limits, and Attachment 3.3.2.C provides the most current year's federal poverty guidelines and state median income information for various family sizes.

19. FOSTER YOUTH TRANSITION CENTERS (Federal TANF)

Since 2004, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has funded foster youth transition centers serving both current and former foster youth, ages 14–25 years. The goal of these transition centers is to address critical life barriers facing youth who have aged out, or are close to aging, out of the foster care system. The centers are designed to provide foster youth access to education, employment and training services, life skills classes, mentoring opportunities, and appropriate support services through a comprehensive one-stop service delivery system approach. Youth in these centers also receive comprehensive case management services and financial support through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services' Preparation for Adult Living program. Youth are provided a safe environment where they receive the necessary services to become self-sufficient. This initiative also focuses on assisting foster youth in accessing self-sufficiency training that is geared toward assisting them in becoming self-sufficient by advancing their skills, thus resulting in increased self-esteem and fostering success in transitioning into adulthood. This also enables foster youth to develop strong character and leadership skills, and furthers their education, training, and subsequent employment.

Many of the youth receiving services are either pregnant or parenting youth and a substantial number of youth have been diagnosed with mental illness or are experiencing substance abuse issues. Services received from these centers are reasonably expected to meet TANF purposes 3 and 4 through the provision of dropout prevention activities, self-esteem and leadership activities, parenting classes, and job readiness activities.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2012, TWC will expand this initiative statewide, and will fund 14 transition centers.

20. NONCUSTODIAL PARENT CHOICES PROGRAM (Federal TANF)

A significant number of TANF families consist of low-skilled single mothers who live with their children apart from low-skilled, underemployed fathers. Many of these fathers are involved in the lives of their children and provide some financial support, but would like to do much more. Historically, however, the fathers have found limited employment opportunities, and public assistance rules have worked to discourage family formation and fuller involvement of these fathers in the lives of their children. To address this issue, Texas has built on its success in public assistance reform and broadened its approach to

effective work mandates by providing employment services to noncustodial parents (NCPs) associated with TANF recipients under the provisions of TANF purpose 4.

Initiated in August 2005, the NCP Choices Program is a collaborative effort of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) of Texas, Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards), Workforce Solutions Office staff, and family court judges. NCP Choices—currently operating in 17 local workforce development areas—targets low-income, unemployed, or underemployed NCPs who are behind on their child support payments and whose children are current or former recipients of public assistance. NCPs either participate in the program or are subject to jail time as directed by a local court. The program’s goal is to help NCPs with substantial barriers to finding employment, thereby enabling them to become economically self-sufficient while also making consistent child support payments.

21. ONESTAR FOUNDATION (Federal TANF)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) aims to increase the capacity of community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) that provide services to low-income families. The OneStar Foundation (OneStar) assists Texas’s nonprofit and faith-based sectors through innovative approaches that provide high-quality support services to special needs groups, such as low-income families and youth. Through efforts to expand, enhance, and build community capacity, OneStar seeks to strengthen services for Texas’s low-income families by providing grants to a variety of CBOs and FBOs.

CBOs and FBOs are well positioned to deliver training, job preparation, job readiness, and education services to Texas’s low-income families, being uniquely situated to develop job opportunities tailored to each region’s economic characteristics. These activities focus on helping CBOs and FBOs build and strengthen their administrative framework by providing assistance with the following:

- Leadership development
- Organizational development
- Programs/services
- Fund diversification
- Community engagement

These activities further the charitable choice provisions contained in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). PRWORA’s sweeping reform of federal welfare programs recognizes that financial collaboration with state and local governments can offer increased financial resources, capacity, and networking opportunities for FBOs. In support of the intent of charitable choice, TWC seeks to remove barriers to FBO participation in government procurement processes and thus increase FBO participation.

To assist with fulfilling TANF purposes 3 and 4, OneStar builds the capacity of organizations that promote and sustain healthy marriages and family relationships, as well as those that seek to help youth practice healthy and positive lifestyles through

strategic planning, community collaboration and engagement, program expansion, and the enhancement of program service delivery. OneStar will improve the operational and organizational skills of CBOs and FBOs, thereby enabling them to better serve the most vulnerable citizens in their communities. This initiative is reasonably expected to achieve outcomes under TANF purposes 3 and 4.

22. PROJECT REINTEGRATION OF OFFENDERS (MOE)

Effective September 1, 2009 through August 31, 2011

Project Reintegration of Offenders (Project RIO) is a statewide employment referral program designed to reintegrate offenders and adjudicated youth efficiently and effectively into the labor force, thereby promoting public safety, reducing recidivism, and meeting the needs of Texas employers. Project RIO is designed to transition releases into employment as quickly as possible.

Project RIO offers job search and job readiness activities, case managed employment services, offender specific employment counseling, the development of offender friendly employment job leads, automated employment tax credit for offender employment credit, fidelity bonding services, and joint case management with parole offices. Through integration in our one-stop Workforce Solution Centers, eligible RIO participants can receive training and supportive services such as transportation or work-related expenses. Eligible RIO participants are unemployed or underemployed adult job seekers formerly sentenced to TDJC correctional institutions, who are within one year after release from incarceration or discharge of sentence, and who are noncustodial parents.

Services provided through Project RIO are reasonably expected to accomplish the goals of TANF purpose 4 by improving the capacity of parents to provide financial and emotional support for their children.

23. SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT (Federal TANF and MOE)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) expanded the availability of subsidized employment opportunities for youth ages 14-24, low-income individuals, and individuals receiving unemployment insurance (UI) compensation. Subsidized employment is designed to help participants enter the labor market through the acquisition of work experience and enhanced connections to employers. It gives participants the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning a paycheck to help meet basic needs.

TWC uses federal TANF funds to support youth ages 14-24 in subsidized employment activities. Youth are placed at a supervised worksite that provides training suitable for youth that will benefit from a hands-on learning environment. Subsidized employment provides a strong incentive for employers to hire and train an individual for an occupation not requiring classroom-based learning. It also provides adequate time for participants to become proficient in the occupation for which they are being hired. The following is a description of the subsidized youth employment initiatives:

- Federal TANF funds are applied to support subsidized employment programs for school-age youth (14-18) during non-school hours (after school, or during the summer). These activities accomplish the goal of purpose 1, which allows states the flexibility to define “needy” and to provide assistance to needy families by operating subsidized employment activities for youth in needy families during non-school hours.
- Federal TANF funds are applied to support summer youth employment programs that serve youth age 14-24. The youth engaged in these programs may or may not be attending school. This initiative accomplishes the goals of purpose 1, which allows states the flexibility to define “child” and to operate (non-assistance) subsidized job programs for older youth.

Low-income youth are defined as youth whose families are receiving any of the following means-tested benefits:

- Household receives TANF benefits;
- Household receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits;
- Youth receives Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) benefits;
- Youth receives Medicaid benefits;
- Household receives subsidized child care through the Child Care and Development Fund;
- Household is eligible for or receives subsidized public housing assistance;
- Household participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services’ Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program;
- Youth receives free or reduced-cost school lunch;
- Youth is eligible for, or enrolled in, Workforce Investment Act youth services; or
- Youth whose family income is 200 percent of or below HHS’s Poverty Guidelines or DOL’s Lower Living Standard Income Level.

TWC utilized federal TANF funds to support subsidized employment opportunities for TANF recipients, and other low-income parents (defined as a parent with annual wages that do not exceed \$37,000 with a minor child, noncustodial parents, and SNAP recipients). These subsidized employment opportunities help participants gain valuable skills, and can significantly increase the likelihood of securing an unsubsidized job. This initiative accomplishes the goals of TANF purpose 2.

TWC also made use of state general revenue (as appropriated to TWC in Rider 31(c), Article VII, General Appropriations Act, 81st Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2009)) to implement the Texas Back-to-Work Initiative (MOE). This initiative targets eligible families, defined as UI claimants who were previously earning less than \$15/hour, and have a minor child. Funds can be used to offset wages paid by the employer, which support employment opportunities to assist these individuals in gaining valuable skills, and can significantly increase the likelihood of securing an unsubsidized job. This initiative accomplishes the goals of TANF purpose 2.

24. TEXAS DISABILITY NAVIGATOR INITIATIVE (Federal TANF)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) implemented the Texas Disability Navigator Initiative in 2006 as part of a national U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Initiative in collaboration with the Social Security Administration. The DPN Initiative is intended to eliminate barriers in the one-stop career center system, including physical, programmatic, and communication access, and to promote meaningful and effective participation of job seekers with disabilities in the workforce investment system. The DPN Initiative focuses on:

- developing new and ongoing partnerships to achieve seamless, comprehensive, integrated access to services;
- creating systemic change; and
- expanding the workforce investment system's capacity to serve customers with disabilities and employers.

The Texas Disability Navigator Initiative provides funding for one Disability Navigator staff position in each of the 28 local workforce development areas. These Navigators serve as resources for service delivery staff, employers and community organizations, but do not provide direct customer service. Data from September 1, 2008 through August 31, 2009 showed there were 304,111 customers (unduplicated) served in our Workforce Centers through the TANF, SNAP E&T, Project Reemployment of Offenders, Workforce Investment Act, Trade Adjustment Act, and subsidized child care. Of those served, 183,766 (or 61%) are TANF eligible (low-income in a family or noncustodial parents).

The Texas Disability Navigator Initiative aims to foster sustainable business practices that improve access to workforce services and work incentives, enhance customer services, and increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Disability navigators are located across the state in urban and rural local workforce development areas, and serve as resources for service delivery staff, employers, and community organizations. TWC recently approved an expansion of the Texas initiative, using federal TANF funds, to supplement the DPN grant awarded by DOL. This will allow for a statewide expansion of the Texas Disability Navigator Initiative. TANF customers with disabilities or those caring for a disabled family member will be able use the connections and resources developed by the disability navigators, thus meeting TANF purposes 1 and 2.

25. TEXAS WORKFORCE LITERACY INITIATIVE (Federal TANF)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) provides workplace literacy training projects integrated with occupational skills training to individuals of limited English proficiency (LEP) or individuals in need of adult education to obtain training to help them compete in today's competitive workforce. Services include:

- Job Literacy – an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.

- Basic Adult Education – services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals.
- Workplace Literacy Services – services that are offered for the purpose of improving the productivity of the workplace through the improvement of literacy skills.

Services in the Texas Workforce Literacy Initiative are targeted to needy adult parents, relative caretakers of a child, or out-of-school youth (age 16 or older) who have limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language. Services in this area meet the goals of TANF purpose 1 (youth cared for in their own homes by parents or relatives) and TANF purpose 2 (participants who are needy parents). A needy individual is a person that resides in a household that contains at least one dependent child and is receiving any of the following means-tested benefits:

- household receives TANF benefits;
- household receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits;
- child in household receives Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) benefits;
- youth or adult receives Medicaid benefits;
- household receives subsidized child care through the Child Care and Development Fund;
- household is eligible for or receives subsidized public housing assistance;
- household participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services’ Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program;
- youth or adult is eligible for, or enrolled in, WIA services;
- youth whose family income is two-hundred percent (200%) of or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Poverty Guidelines or the U.S. Department of Labor’s Lower Living Standard Income Level.

To maintain the competitive business climate of Texas, the workforce must be ready and equipped with the educational background, training, and skills that employers need. There is a large number of Texans who lack a high school diploma and/or have difficulty speaking or understanding English.

Combining workplace literacy training integrated with occupational skills training to eligible individuals can expedite the process of moving Texas individuals further and faster along career pathways by:

- Increasing their educational functional level;
- Earning certifications or credentials related to the literacy or occupational skills training they receive;
- Obtaining employment;
- Advancing in their careers; and/or
- Increasing their wages

The goal of the Workforce Literacy Initiative is to get participants as job ready as quickly as possible. Strategies that integrate workplace literacy with occupational skills training have shown positive employment and earnings outcomes. Workplace literacy programs

help employees improve basic skills such as reading, writing and computation, and to develop other job-related skills/qualities.

26. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES (Federal TANF)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) provides workforce services to needy individuals to assist with their training and employment needs. Eligible individuals are those parents, including noncustodial parents and SNAP recipients, whose annual wages do not exceed \$37,000. Services include:

- employment activities that assist low-income parents in obtaining and sustaining employment, such as those offered through subsidized employment or work experience programs; and
- other activities to assist low-income parents with addressing their educational and literacy needs, which are foundational requirements for obtaining and sustaining employment.

Services include those provided by Self-Sufficiency Fund (SSF) programs, as well as other on-the-job training services such as those provided by apprenticeship programs. SSF programs provide training for targeted employment for TANF recipients as well as those at risk of becoming dependent on public assistance. SSF services that focus on customized job training and necessary support services are provided through various business consortiums, whether independently or in partnership with a public community or technical college.

Section 3: Funding

Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, section 403(a)(1)(A) provides that each eligible state shall be entitled to receive for each of the fiscal years 1996 through 2010, a grant in an amount equal to the State family assistance grant as defined in section 403(a)(1)(B). On February 8, 2005 Congress extended funding under section 403(a)(1)(A) until September 30, 2010.

Payments to Agency Administering the TANF Program

Payments for the TANF program will be made to the organization managing the AFDC/JOBS programs as of August 22, 1996, unless the State indicates that the TANF administering agency is changed.

State Payments for TANF Program

Section 405 requires that grants be paid to States in quarterly installments, based on State estimates. The State's estimate for each quarter of the fiscal year by percentage is:

For FY 2000 and Future Years--

1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter
25%	25%	25%	25%