

FACT SHEET

August 17, 2009

REQUEST: Make Significant Changes to TANF during Reauthorization to Better Help Families.

TANF Reauthorization

Congress must reauthorize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program by September 30, 2010. TANF is **NOT** welfare, it is a temporary work supports program. TANF currently falls short of providing a sufficient safety net for families in need. Most of the nation's poorest families are female-headed households and TANF is the principal federal safety net for impoverished women and children.

IMPORTANT ITEMS TANF REAUTHORIZATION SHOULD ADDRESS:

- **Make adequate and stable employment the goal of the TANF work program and not the number of participation hours.** Currently TANF focuses on how many hours participants are engaged in approved work activities without any focus on the quality or ability of the programs to actually lead to meaningful, long-term employment. Programs such as GED preparation, ESL, literacy, higher education and vocational job-skills training should all be included as participation activities and states should be regulated on how well the programs increase employment rates and earnings.
- **Reduce access barriers and create state accountability.** The 1996 PRWORA deregulated federal oversight of state administration, resulting in significant access barriers being erected and no regulation of state administration of the program.
- **Barriers that limit access to domestic violence victims need to be eradicated.** Many women that seek TANF are fleeing domestic abuse and TANF is the only temporary source of support they can access during this dangerous time. TANF must assure victims are promptly aided and not turned away.
- **Offer subsidized employment opportunities when unsubsidized employment is unavailable.** In times of high unemployment, TANF should require and provide funding for states to subsidize employment.

Benefits Must Be Raised to an Adequate Level. Benefits are inadequate in every state. TANF benefits are usually less than half of the official federal poverty guidelines.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY – USING TANF TO HELP CHILDREN

- **Set “appropriate” standards for childcare in statute and require child care for all school-age children when school is out, not just for those under six, and for disabled children of any age when necessary.** The majority of TANF parents need child care in order to work, attend training, or look for work. While TANF currently prohibits sanctioning mothers for not working if “appropriate” child care is unavailable, the statute doesn't set standards for what care is “appropriate.”
- **Ban the denial of benefits to children based on circumstances of birth or maternal conduct.** The so called child exclusion/family cap policies that deny benefits to a child born into a family that is receiving TANF, and “full family sanction” policies which deny benefits to everyone in the family, including children, if the mother is found to have failed to comply with a program requirement are unfair to children and should be removed from TANF.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION contact
Melissa Smith at melissa@utahcap.org**

Community Action Partnership of Utah
230 South 500 West, Suite 260, Salt Lake City, UT 84101
801-433-3025 801-596-2011 (fax)
www.utahcap.org

