

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for Teen Parents

Introduction

If you are a minor under the age of 18, low income, and have children or are pregnant, you may be able to get help (money) from the state TANF program. Read on for answers to your questions about how to get TANF.

How can I get financial help for myself and my children?

The state TANF program provides monthly cash help to families in need. If you are under 18, and you want these benefits, you must be:

- low income
- a parent or pregnant

To get the full TANF amount, you must also be:

- living with your parents, another adult relative, a legal guardian, or in a DSHS approved living situation; and
- in high school or in a GED program, and meeting that program's attendance requirements; or
- looking for a job, or otherwise participating in Workfirst if you already have your diploma (see our publication [Questions and Answers about Workfirst](#) for more information)

If you cannot get a full TANF grant because of the living situation rules and/or the school attendance rules, you can still get a TANF grant for your child. You can also get other DSHS benefits, such as food stamps and Medicaid, for your children and yourself.

To get TANF, go to your local welfare office (the Department of Social and Health Services, or DSHS) and ask for an application for TANF. You have the right to file a written application for benefits. You should not be turned away at the front desk without filing an application. After you fill out the application, DSHS should decide within 30 days if you can get the benefits. If DSHS denies your application, or if over 30 days have passed and you have not heard anything from DSHS about your benefits, you should contact a legal services program for help. The phone number for legal services is 1-888-201-1014.

What if DSHS says I cannot get TANF?

If DSHS tells you that you can't get TANF benefits for yourself and/or your children, you have the right to ask for a "fair hearing." A fair hearing is a hearing with an administrative law judge, where you get to tell the judge why you should get TANF. You may be able to get legal help for the hearing by contacting a legal services program. You may also bring another person to help you. You have the right to have witnesses and to show evidence to the judge. Ask for our publication [How to Represent Yourself at a Fair Hearing](#).

To ask for a fair hearing, you should fill out a Fair Hearing Request at the welfare office or write to the Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 42489, Olympia, WA 98504. *You must ask for your hearing no later than 90 days after the date you were denied.* If it is an emergency, you may ask to have your hearing held as soon as possible by calling the Office of Administrative Hearings at (360) 664-8717

or 1-800-583-8271. This is called an “expedited” hearing.

If I get TANF, how much money will I get?

The amount of TANF money you get depends on two things: how many children you have, and how much income you get from work or other sources. If you are a single parent and have no other income, and have one child, your TANF grant will be \$453 per month. If you have one child and are not eligible for TANF yourself because of DSHS’s living situation and/or school attendance rules, your child’s TANF grant will be \$359 per month.

How will I be paid?

All minors under 18 years old are paid through a “protective payee.” A “protective payee” is an adult or agency that gets your check from DSHS and then pays your bills or gives you money to meet your and your child’s needs.

Will my parents’ income be considered for TANF?

It depends on whether you live with your parents or not. If you live with them, their income will be counted in part. If you do not live with them, DSHS will contact your parents to ask if they will support you. DSHS will not contact them if you are married, or in the military, or emancipated.

Do I have to go to school if my child is a newborn?

No, you do not have to be in school until your child is 12 weeks old. After that, you will have to be enrolled in high school or a GED program and meeting attendance requirements if you want to keep getting a full TANF grant.

Do I have to go to school if I’m pregnant?

Yes, if you would otherwise be in school, you are required to remain in school until the baby is born.

What if I already have my diploma?

If you have graduated from high school or have a GED, you will have to participate in the Workfirst program if you want to get TANF benefits. For more information about Workfirst, see our publication [Questions and Answers about Workfirst.](#)

What if I don’t want to live with my parents or legal guardian?

Sometimes living with your parents or legal guardian can be difficult or dangerous. If you do not live with your parents because of abuse, or if you have another good reason why you can’t live with your parents, you should tell the DSHS social worker assigned to your case about why you can’t live there. DSHS should allow you to live in a different living situation, such as with another adult relative or friend.

If DSHS thinks that you are in an “inappropriate living situation” they will not give you TANF. If this happens, you can ask for a fair hearing and ask the judge to approve your living situation. You should contact a legal services program for help. The phone number for legal services is 1-888-201-1014.

May I live with the father of my child if he is 18 years or older?

That depends on the age difference between you and the adult father of your child. If the adult father of your child is a certain number of years older than you, DSHS will not let you get TANF benefits if you live with him. Also, DSHS will not allow you to receive

benefits while you live with an adult boyfriend who is a certain number of years older than you, even if he is not the father of your child. If you have questions about this rule, you should contact your legal services office.

May I get childcare while I am in school?

Yes. As long as you are meeting the satisfactory attendance requirements of your high school or GED program, DSHS should pay for childcare during your school hours.

If DSHS refuses to pay for your childcare, you should ask DSHS for a fair hearing and call your legal services office for advice.

Can my child and I get help if I don't comply with all these rules?

Yes, even if you don't comply with the living situation and school attendance rules, your child can get a TANF grant. Also, If you are working with a DSHS social worker, you may be able to get Support Services money to get into school and/or get into a DSHS approved living situation (see our publication [DSHS Support Services for WorkFirst Participants](#)).

Also, even if you don't comply with the living situation and school attendance rules, you can get other DSHS benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid for your children and yourself.

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