

Cash Assistance Programs

Revised ~~July 27, 2022~~ [December 18, 2023](#)

Purpose:

This section contains rules and procedures on how to decide who is in an assistance unit for TANF, SFA, PWA and ABD cash.

WAC 388-408-0005 What is a cash assistance unit?

- [Clarifying Information](#)

WAC 388-408-0015 Who must be in my assistance unit?

- [Clarifying Information](#)

WAC 388-408-0020 When am I not allowed to be in a TANF or SFA assistance unit?

- [Clarifying Information](#)

WAC 388-408-0025 When can I choose who is in my TANF or SFA assistance unit?

- [Worker Responsibilities](#)

WAC 388-408-0030 What children must be in the same TANF or SFA assistance unit?

- [Worker Responsibilities](#)

WAC 388-408-0060 Who is in my assistance unit for Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) cash assistance?

- [Clarifying Information](#)

[WAC 388-408-0070 Who is included in my assistance unit when the department determines eligibility for referral to the housing and essential needs \(HEN\) program?](#)

For more complete details see these EA-Z Manual chapters: [APPLICATION](#) and [INTERVIEW REQUIREMENTS OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION](#)

Clarifying Information - WAC 388-408-0005

For cash programs, we decide who is in the AU at application and when someone moves in or out of the home. We make this decision before we look at financial eligibility requirements.

In general, we decide who to include in the AU based on the relationship of people living in the home and whether they meet eligibility requirements, other than income or resources. We may allocate the income of someone in the home excluded from the AU to people in the AU if the excluded person is financially responsible for someone in the AU.

Clarifying Information - WAC 388-408-0015

1. **Home-monitored clients for TANF/SFA:**

A client that lives in the home but is under home monitoring or home detention ordered by the courts or the Department of Corrections is living in the home. We do not consider them as inmates of a public institution. Clients that live in a public institution aren't eligible for TANF under [WAC 388-400-0005](#).

2. **How a child's adoption affects the relationship between a child and their siblings:**

Adoption ends the legal relationship between biological siblings.

EXAMPLE Doug and Wendy have legally adopted their 12-year-old grandchild Tom. They have taken in Tom's little sister Lisa, but haven't adopted her. Doug and Wendy want TANF for Lisa as non-needy caretaker relatives. Because his grandparents legally adopted Tom, we do not recognize Tom and Lisa as having a legal relationship as siblings.

NOTE: If Doug and Wendy wanted assistance for both Tom and Lisa, the four of them would all be in the same AU, as required under [WAC 388-408-0030](#).

3. **How a child's adoption affects the relationship between a child and their biological parent(s):**

- a. Adoption ends the legal relationship between a child and the biological parents.

EXAMPLE Grandparents have legally adopted their grandchild. The biological mother has since moved into the household. The biological mother would like to apply for TANF for herself and the child excluding the adoptive parents in the AU. Because the child's grandparents have legally adopted him or her, we do not recognize the biological mother and child as having a legal relationship.

4. **When a child is placed in a permanent guardianship:**

- a. [WAC 388-450-0100](#) explains the financially responsible person is legally obligated to support the dependent and defines the financially responsible person as a parent, stepparent, adoptive parent, spouse or caretaker relative. [WAC 388-450-0105](#) says the income of a financially responsible person is countable to meet the needs of the assistance unit. If a child is permanently placed with a guardian and the guardian now has legal and financial responsibility for the child, they must both be included in the AU.

EXAMPLE [Blessica Karen](#) is applying for TANF for her granddaughter [Sadie Mahalia](#). [Karen Blessica](#) provides documentation ~~that~~ she has temporary custody of [Sadie Mahalia](#) while her dad is incarcerated. Since [Karen Blessica](#) is not [Mahalia Sadie](#)'s parent and she is not legally or financially responsible for [Sadie Mahalia](#), she can apply for a non-need-based TANF grant for [Mahalia Sadie](#).

EXAMPLE Six months later [Karen Blessica](#) reports ~~that~~ [Sadie Mahalia](#) will not be going back to her parents' home and provides a document verifying ~~that~~ she is now [Sadie's her permanent guardian receiving the Guardianship Assistance Program \(GAP\) subsidy and has accepted and she has accepted with](#) legal and financial responsibility for [Sadie Mahalia](#). Since [Karen Blessica](#) is now financially responsible for [Mahalia Sadie](#), we can't exclude her from the TANF AU.

NOTE: If [Blessica Karen](#) wanted assistance for [Mahalia Sadie](#), she would need to apply for benefits for both of them.

5. **When a pregnant minor or minor parent lives with their parents:**

It doesn't change who we include in the AU if a pregnant or minor parent who lives with their parent gets married, starts military service, or gets emancipated by court order.

6. **How we apply the AU rules in some common situations:**

- a. A married woman applies for assistance for herself and her two children from a previous marriage. She lives with her husband. She has a child in common with her husband and he has a child by a previous marriage. She doesn't want assistance for her husband, his child, or the common child. We must include all of the children in the AU because the husband must be included as he is the natural father of two of the kids and the stepfather of the other two.

- b. A grandmother applies for cash assistance for her grandchild as a non-need relative. The minor parent of the grandchild lives in the home as well. Since you can't separate a child from their parent that lives in the home, we must include the minor parent in the AU. In this case, we would include the minor parent and allocate the income of their parent to the AU.

Clarifying Information - WAC 388-408-0020

If a financially responsible person cannot be in the AU under [WAC 388-408-0020](#), we allocate the income of this person to the AU. How we allocate this income varies based on why the person is ineligible. See [INCOME - Allocation and Deeming](#).

If a minor parent gets Title IV-E foster care, the minor parent's child is not eligible for TANF or SFA. The foster care payment includes the child's needs.

Adoption support

Adoption support is money given to families that adopt children with special needs. This money is intended to help the family with the special expenses that these children have.

For cash and medical assistance, this money is excluded because it is assistance from another agency that does not cover ongoing living expenses. See [WAC 388-450-0055](#) for more information.

For Basic Food, this money is ~~countable, and is~~ budgeted as countable unearned income.

~~Relative~~ Guardianship Assistance Program (~~R~~-GAP)

~~Relative Guardianship Assistance (R-GAP)~~, also known as guardianship income, is money given to ~~families-caregivers that who~~ accept permanent guardianship of ~~relative-a~~ child~~ren/ren~~. These ~~families-caregivers~~ have accepted permanent legal and financial responsibility for the child in their care ~~and therefore must be included in the TANF AU~~. The ~~Department/division~~ of Child~~ren~~, Youth and Families (~~DCYF~~) determined ~~that~~ these children have special needs. This money is intended to help the family with the special expenses for the children. The income is considered the children's income.

For cash and medical assistance, this money is excluded because it is assistance from another agency that does not cover ongoing living expenses. See [WAC 388-450-0055](#) for more information.

For Basic Food, this money is ~~countable, and is~~ budgeted as countable unearned income.

Worker Responsibilities - WAC 388-408-0025

1. Parent or caretaker relative of a child that gets SSI:

In order to decide if an AU member is eligible for TANF, count a child who gets SSI as an "eligible child" even though the child isn't eligible for TANF. Don't include the SSI child's income, resources, or needs when you determine the AU's eligibility and grant amount. If the parent of an SSI child asks for assistance as a needy caretaker relative, don't include the parent's spouse or other children in the AU unless the parent wants assistance for them.

2. Relatives who are not the child's parent:

- a. If a non-parent relative ~~who isn't a parent~~ chooses to get TANF instead of foster care payments they can choose whether or not to be in the AU based on their needs.
- b. If a non-parent relative ~~who isn't a parent~~ chooses to get foster care payments for a child in their care and the relative needs financial assistance, count the child a "dependent child" to make the relative eligible for TANF or SFA. Don't include the foster child's income, resources, or needs when you determine the AU's eligibility and grant amounts.
- c. If a couple is married and applying as a needy relative for a child that/who is not their child, only one of the relatives can be a recipient on the grant. The non-parental caregiver and their spouse cannot both be on the grant.
- d. If a non-parent relative ~~who isn't a parent~~ chooses to get TANF for multiple siblings in their care, they can choose to ~~not count~~exclude one or more ~~the the~~ siblings as a "recipient" if ~~that sibling has~~they have income or including that sibling would cause ~~the entire AU to be ineligible for TANF~~TANF ineligibility.

EXAMPLE A grandmother is the caretaker for her two grandchildren who have different mothers, making them half-siblings. One of the children is receiving Social Security Survivors Benefits from their mothers Social Security claim. The grandmother can choose not to include that sibling in the AU and not count them in the needs.

EXAMPLE A child is living with their half-sibling and the half-siblings mother. The mother is not the parent of this child and has no financial responsibility for this child. She is working and has income. She can choose to apply for non-needy TANF for the child that is not hers, and not include her child in the needs, since including her child would require her to be part of the TANF AU and her income would cause the AU to be over income for TANF.

1. Child in common of unmarried parents:

Unmarried parents that live together may choose to exclude their common child if one of the parents is a TANF or SFA **recipient**. ~~The excluded child in common may be eligible for medical.~~

EXAMPLE A mother and her two children get TANF and live with the mothers' boyfriend, who is not the father of the children. The mother gives birth to her boyfriend's child. The mother can choose whether or not to include the baby in the AU. If we include the baby, we must include the

boyfriend. If the boyfriend has income or resources, it may be the best for the client to **not** include the common child.

EXAMPLE Two unrelated TANF AUs get assistance and live together. (AU#1 is a woman and her two children. AU#2 is a man and his two children.) The woman and man have a child in common and want to exclude the child in common from being on assistance. Because both parents are recipients of assistance, then neither parent is able to financially support the child in common. Therefore, they do not have the option to exclude the child from the AU. They will need to become one TANF household (one AU) as required under [WAC 388-408-0030](#).

EXAMPLE AU contains a woman, her boyfriend, his child, and their common child. Nobody gets TANF or SFA. The boyfriend applies for TANF for himself and his child only. He doesn't want to include the common child because the mom gets UC and can provide for their child. As an applicant, the boyfriend doesn't have the choice to exclude the common child. All four people are in the AU since we can't exclude the common child for a reason other than need.

NOTE: In the example above, if the AU is eligible when we include the woman's income, the AU can then exclude the common child because it is now a **recipient** AU. If the family is eligible in the month of application, you can consider them as recipients and exclude the [common](#) child before you issue benefits for the AU.

EXAMPLE Susan applies for assistance for herself and her two children from a previous marriage. She lives with her husband Doug and his child from a previous marriage, Timmy. The couple doesn't have a child in common. She doesn't want assistance for Doug or Timmy because he works and gets child support. Even though we can exclude Timmy from the AU because he is the other children's stepbrother, we must include Doug because he is the stepfather of Susan's two children. If we exclude Timmy, we would allocate some of Doug's earned income to Timmy. See [INCOME - Allocation and Deeming](#).

Worker Responsibilities - WAC 388-408-0030

1. If we don't have to include a child in the AU under [WAC 388-408-0015](#), give the caretaker relative, guardian, or custodian the choice whether or not they'd [like to](#) include the child in the TANF/SFA AU.
2. Explain to the client that the child cannot receive TANF/SFA in a separate AU.

EXAMPLE Aunt applies for TANF for her niece and nephew, who are cousins. Aunt doesn't want assistance. Set up a two-person AU for the niece and nephew.

EXAMPLE Married couple apply as needy relatives for their two grandsons. The grandsons are cousins to each other. Even though the grandfather claims to be the caretaker of one child and the grandmother claims to be the caretaker of the other, we must include the two children in the same AU.

EXAMPLE Woman applies for TANF for her daughter and nephew. Since the woman is the caretaker relative for both children and is the parent of one, include all three people in the same AU.

EXAMPLE Grandmother and two grandchildren receive a three-person grant. Her husband starts to get retirement benefits. We allocate \$700 of the retirement benefits to the AU because the husband is financially responsible for his wife. Because the grandmother isn't financially responsible for her grandchildren, don't terminate assistance due to the excess income. Remove the grandmother from the grant and continue assistance for the grandchildren.

EXAMPLE A client ~~receives~~ gets a three-person grant of \$~~546,706~~ for herself, her daughter and ~~her~~ nephew. She starts working and has monthly gross earnings of \$~~11001,400~~. Terminate assistance for the woman and ~~her~~ daughter ~~and authorize transitional medical~~. Continue cash assistance (one-person grant) for ~~her~~ the nephew. When the income of an AU member reduces the grant payment to a level ~~that which~~ is less than what the other AU members would get if the individual with income were not included, inform the client of the option to request termination from the AU member with income. By making this choice, the family would get more cash and, if the person with income is an adult, preserve their time-limited TANF eligibility. Add the following free form text to the ACES client notice: **"Your family may be better off financially if you stop getting a cash grant for (Name of person receiving the income). To find out, call me at the number listed above."**

EXAMPLE A client gets a three-person grant for herself, her daughter and her nephew. She starts working and has gross earnings of \$~~800-1,000~~ per month. When we budget the income, the AU is eligible for a grant of \$~~146,206~~. However, if the client chose to end TANF for herself and her child, she could get a one-person grant of \$~~349-450~~ for her nephew and preserve her ~~her~~ TANF eligibility under the 60-month lifetime limit.

NOTE: There are some valid values you can't enter in the Financial Responsibility field. ACES will enter these values after it determines eligibility and you finalize the action. Make sure that all the following conditions are true before you use the non-member valid value [NM]: - The person isn't part of the AU; - The person isn't financially responsible for anyone in the AU; and - We don't have to count the person's income or resources when we determine the AU's eligibility or benefits.

Clarifying Information - WAC 388-408-0060

1. For justice involved individual, reference the following Desk Aids:
 1. [Program Options for Inmates](#) (Staff use only)
 2. [Desk Aid - Sentencing Alternatives – Offenders with Minor Children](#) (Staff use only)
2. For information on ABD case processing, reference [Aged, Blind, or Disabled Cash Assistance \(ABD\) | DSHS \(wa.gov\)](#) in the ACES Manual.

3. If an AU with a disabled adult is over income for TANF because of a child's income, the disabled adult may be eligible for ABD cash. We don't allocate the child's income to the parent because the child isn't financially responsible for the parent. See [WAC 388-450-0100](#)

EXAMPLE A disabled parent applies for TANF for herself and her daughter. The daughter gets a monthly SSA death benefit of \$650. This income makes the AU ineligible for TANF. Since the client is disabled and ineligible for TANF, she may be eligible for ABD cash. The daughter is not in the AU and the death benefit is not allocated to the AU.

ACES Procedures

See Assistance Unit (AU)