

Child-Only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Program Description

In some situations, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance is provided solely for children in a household (known as “child-only TANF”). This happens when children are living with non-parental caregivers or with parents who are not eligible for TANF. Child-only TANF households don’t need to engage in participation requirements as a condition of assistance. Receiving child-only TANF does not count against the 60-month federal time limit for assistance.

Non-Parental Child-Only TANF

In these households, adults care for a minor child who is not their own. The grant is for the child only. We do not count the caregiver’s income because we don’t consider them to be financially responsible for that child. These households include:

- Kinship families who provide care for a minor relative¹ and do not request or are not eligible to receive a TANF grant for themselves. These households make up about 50% of all child-only TANF.²
- Legal guardian(s) and In Loco Parentis³ caregivers (those not related to the child in their care) who do not request or are not eligible to receive a TANF grant for themselves. These households make up about 9.5% of all child-only TANF cases.



¹ See [WAC 388-454-0010](#) for the applicable definition of “relative.”

² See [ESA Briefing Book 2024](#), TANF/WorkFirst Section, page 20.

³ The department completes a background check for non-relative caregivers over the age of 18 in the household who do not have legal guardianship. Results do not affect program eligibility; they are used to identify optional supports that are offered to the family, as needed.

More information:

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Parental Child-Only TANF

In these households, the child lives in the home with their legal parent, but the parent is not eligible for a TANF grant for themselves. These households include:

- Disabled parents who are not eligible for TANF because they receive federal Supplemental Security Income but receive a child-only TANF grant for their qualified child. Since the parent is not counted as part of the assistance unit, their SSI income is not budgeted against the TANF grant. These households make up about 22% of all child-only TANF cases.²
- Undocumented immigrant parents who are not eligible for a TANF for themselves due to their citizenship status but receive a child-only TANF grant on behalf of their citizen or qualified noncitizen children. Since the parent is financially responsible for providing for their child, a portion of their income is counted against the TANF grant. These households make up about 18% of all child-only TANF cases.²
- Disqualified parents who are not eligible for TANF due to legal status but receive a child-only TANF grant for their qualified children. Since the parent(s) are financially responsible for providing for their child, a portion of their income is counted against the TANF grant. These households make up less than 1% of all child-only TANF cases.²



¹ See WAC 388-454-0010 for the applicable definition of “relative.”

² See ESA Briefing Book 2024, TANF/WorkFirst Section, page 20.

³ The department completes a background check for non-relative caregivers over the age of 18 in the household who do not have legal guardianship. Results do not affect program eligibility; they are used to identify optional supports that are offered to the family, as needed.