

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Jim Pillen, Governor

November 1, 2024

The Honorable Ben Hansen
Members of the Health & Human Services Committee
Nebraska Legislature
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Subject: TANF-Expenditures Allocated Pursuant to PRWORA

Dear Chairman Hansen:

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-3144, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is required to issue a report to the Legislature by November 1 of each year on the current and anticipated expenditures for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program funds allocated pursuant to the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This report is based on data and expenditures from State Fiscal Year 2024.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannon Grotrian".

Shannon Grotrian
Director, Office of Economic Assistance

Attachment

Department of Health and Human Services: Office of Economic Assistance

TANF-Expenditures Allocated Pursuant to PRWORA

November 2024

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 81-3144

Overview of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Programs and Services

The TANF program is a federally administered program used to help low-income families with children achieve self-sufficiency. Nebraska's TANF cash assistance program is called Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), which provides direct payments to low-income families. Cash assistance is also provided to families through emergency assistance payments to cover unexpected costs and overcome barriers that other Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) services do not cover. Nebraska is also allowed the flexibility to fund services that are designed to address one or more of the following broad purposes:

1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
2. End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
3. Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

In State Fiscal Year 2024, Nebraska used a portion of TANF funds towards administration in the amount of \$4,649,054 and information systems maintenance in the amount of \$224,616, as these are required expenses to manage the program. The table below displays the TANF expenditures for the State Fiscal Year 2024.

TANF Expenditures State Fiscal Year 2024	
Current Programs and Services	Expenses
Administration	\$4,649,054
Alternative Response Supports for Child Welfare Families	\$75,160
Cash Assistance [ADC]	\$19,678,831
Child Advocacy Centers	\$3,219,661
Child Care Development Fund	\$17,494,128
Child Welfare Services	\$8,001,436
Court Appointed Special Advocates	\$120,000
Crisis Pregnancy Program	\$2,697,526
Emergency Assistance	\$125,200
Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood	\$1,881,174
Home Visiting Program	\$3,260,906
Information Systems	\$224,616
Jobs for America's Graduates	\$2,418,732
SNAP Employment and Training	\$19,518.67
SSBG Community Response Program	\$858,846
SSBG Mommy & Me Program	\$819,723
Work Activities [Employment First]	\$10,413,921
Total	\$75,958,433

Estimated Expenditures for Federal Fiscal Years 2025-2027			
Future Programs and Services	FFY 2025	FFY 2026	FFY 2027
Administration	\$4,908,214	\$4,908,214	\$4,908,214
Alternative Response Supports for Child Welfare Families	\$71,163	\$71,163	\$71,163
Cash Assistance [ADC]	\$18,301,871	\$18,301,871	\$18,301,871
Child Advocacy Centers	\$7,990,000	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000
Child Care Development Fund	\$14,409,787	\$14,409,787	\$14,409,787
Child Welfare Services	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000
Crisis Pregnancy Program	\$2,950,000	\$2,950,000	\$2,950,000
Court Appointed Special Advocates	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Emergency Assistance	\$132,697	\$132,697	\$132,697
Food Access and Services	\$5,725,765	\$0	\$0
Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Home Visiting Program	\$4,500,000	\$4,500,000	\$4,500,000
Information Systems	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Jobs for America's Graduates	\$6,528,368	\$6,528,368	\$6,528,368
Pregnant Youth	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
SNAP Employment and Training	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
SSBG Community Response Program	\$1,700,000	\$1,700,000	\$1,700,000
SSBG Mommy & Me Program	\$878,383	\$878,383	\$878,383
Work Activities [Employment First]	\$10,552,971	\$10,552,971	\$10,552,971
Total	\$89,449,219	\$83,733,454	\$83,733,454

The following information outlines the programs and services supported in Nebraska by the TANF Block Grant and their impact on Nebraskan families. Due to current subrecipient reporting requirements, the number of persons served may be averages of populations served reflective of State Fiscal Year 2024. DHHS is working to adjust contract language to reflect the needs of this report in the future.

Alternative Response Supports for Child Welfare Families

Purpose 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.	
Number of Households Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
348	\$75,160

Families involved in Alternative Response services are provided support services through shelter, clothing, home supplies, or transportation with TANF funding. Alternative Response participants require individual problem solving and for unique situations, a purchase is made by DHHS for a family. This service helps the family achieve self-sufficiency by providing concrete supports that addresses a specific need and reduces the likelihood of a formal investigation. The services are reported as the number of households served rather than persons served because the services vary based on the household's needs. This service is provided within DHHS' Division of Children and Family Services.

Child Advocacy Centers

This service is approved based on the exception contained in Section 404(a)(2) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). Section 404(a)(2) of PRWORA allows a State to use TANF “in any manner that the State was authorized to use amounts received under part A or F, as such parts were in effect on September 30, 1995.”

Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
4,183	\$3,219,661

TANF funds are appropriated for services provided through the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) to families and for coordination activities of the state chapter of CAC as defined in 34 U.S.C. 20302. CACs provide technical assistance and coordination support for child abuse investigation and significant life stressors such as poverty, exposure to violence or substance abuse, teen parenting, or military families with one or both parents in service. CAC services are provided at no cost to the family and include medical exams, forensic interviews, and mental health referrals that families would likely be unable to afford or access if this program was unavailable. There are seven CACs and one additional provider (Alliance) that have entered into agreements with DHHS. Awards are issued to the following providers:

- Bridge of Hope
- CAPStone
- Faith Regional
- Family Advocacy Network
- First Light
- Lincoln/Lancaster County
- Project Harmony
- Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)

States can transfer up to 30% of their TANF block grant to CCDF.

Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
12,218	\$17,494,128

CCDF administers Child Care Subsidy, which provides child care assistance to low-income families who are working or participating in education and training. Child care subsidy currently serves children under the age of 13 or children with special needs through age 18. DHHS administers this program through the Office of Economic Assistance (OEA) and assists families with becoming more economically mobile by ensuring quality child care environments are available to their children. TANF funds are used to pay for child care subsidy services to families specifically.

Child Welfare Services

Purpose 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.

Number of Households Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
1,930	\$8,001,436

Community-based services are provided to families involved in or at risk of entering the child welfare system. Services, including parenting classes, case management, assessment of family circumstances, and counseling, are designed to increase the strength and stability of families so children may remain in or return to their homes. These services are not available for private pay, and all provide support for families to become more self-sufficient outside of the child welfare system. The services are reported as

the number of households served rather than persons served because the services vary based on the household's needs. The Division of Children and Family Services administers this program within DHHS.

Crisis Pregnancy

Purpose 4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
5,973	\$2,697,526

The Crisis Pregnancy Program provides information and counseling regarding pregnancy, fetal development, childbirth, parenting, and adoption; mentoring services related to parenting and life skills; and referral to other services available to support pregnant females and delivery. There is a subaward agreement with Nebraska Parent Care Network (NPCN) that began 7/1/2024. These programs offer counseling, educational classes, nutrition education, and items necessary to care for children, including car seats, cribs, diapers, and other baby accessories. Contractors are reimbursed on a fee-for-service basis for these items, which is a cost savings to both the participants and the state as items are bought in bulk and at reduced prices that participants would not be able to pay if given cash to buy the items independently.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Services

Purpose 3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
201	\$120,000

CASA services are provided by screened, trained, and highly qualified community volunteers who advocate in court for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed, and the child is in a safe, permanent home. They get to know the child and work with legal and child welfare professionals, educators, and service providers to ensure judges have all the information they need to make well-informed decisions. Volunteers provide information to the court through a report with recommendations about the child's placement, visitation, education, and service needs. A CASA agreement was signed with the Nebraska CASA Association that has been backdated to 10/1/2023. According to Nebraska CASA, children with a CASA volunteer are half as likely to spend time in long-term foster care, and fewer than 10% of children with a CASA volunteer re-enter the foster care system. This service is not a private pay service, and the cost savings of engaging CASA with a family helps them reduce the amount of time involved with foster care and child welfare systems that they otherwise would not have access to.

Food Access and Services

Purpose 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
<i>Service began 8/1/2024</i>	<i>Service began 8/1/2024; agreements total \$5,725,765</i>

Because agreements just began in August 2024, DHHS does not yet have a number of persons served or the total expenditures of this program. TANF grants are provided to eligible agencies that distribute food in ten or more counties in Nebraska and qualify for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These agencies coordinate with food pantries, schools, churches, emergency shelters, and other non-profit organizations to supply emergency and supplemental food to needy children and families throughout Nebraska. The

eligible agencies can collect food and funds from individuals, businesses, foundations, government, and other organizations to make the biggest impact in serving the high need of food insecurity. Individually providing clients money for food would not have the same value or impact as many individuals, as the eligible agency services provide because of the bulk they can maintain at a lower cost than individual purchasers. The following agencies were awarded TANF funds to provide this service:

- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Inc.
- Food Bank for the Heartland
- Food Bank of Lincoln

Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF)

Purpose 4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
374	\$1,881,174

The Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) Initiative services aim to strengthen positive father-child engagement, promote healthy relationships and marriage, and improve family economic stability for noncustodial fathers. This is a no-cost program for participants that provides teaching and coaching to fathers to help set goals and follow a trauma-informed approach to develop parenting skills and reconnect with their children. Increasing direct cash assistance would not provide the opportunity for the participants to learn this skill, as these services are not available through a private pay method.

Home Visiting Program

Purpose 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
968	\$3,260,906

The Nebraska-Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (N-MIECHV) Network Program, through DHHS' Division of Public Health, utilizes the Healthy Families America home visiting model, which is evidence-based and family-centered. N-MIECHV programs offer support for pregnant or parenting families of children birth to age five who may struggle with significant life stressors such as poverty, exposure to violence or substance abuse, teen parenting, or military families with one or both parents in service. Because these services are not available for private pay, the program helps families achieve self-sufficiency in a way that increased cash assistance would not. TANF funds are sub awarded to the following providers to provide this service:

- Nebraska Children's Home Society - Omaha
- Panhandle Public Health Dist.
- Lincoln-Lancaster Co Health Dept.
- Visiting Nurse Association
- Public Health Solutions
- Northeast NE Comm. Action Partnership
- Central District Health Dept.
- Two Rivers Public Health Dist.
- Nebraska Children's Home Society - North Platte
- Southeast Dist Health Dept.
- Four Corners Dist Health Dept.
- So. Heartland Dist Health Dept.
- Loup Basin Public Health Dist.

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)

Purpose 3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
1087	\$2,418,732

JAG services assist youth with developing skillsets and overcoming hurdles to set them up for success in the classroom and the workplace. Students eligible for the JAG program must have at least five of the barriers to success, as recognized by JAG National standards, which make them more at risk for not graduating from high school, pursuing a postsecondary education, and/or having a successful attachment to the labor force. The United Way of the Midlands has an agreement administered through the Department of Labor, in partnership with DHHS, to provide JAG services. Through partnerships with community and business partners, participants develop real-world skills that make self-sufficiency achievable. Because this is a partnership-based program, JAG provides opportunities for participants that would otherwise not be available to help them achieve economic mobility or self-sufficiency.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T)

Purpose 2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2023:
213	\$19,519

SNAP Next Step Employment and Training (E&T) Program helps SNAP participants gain skills, training, or work experience that moves them towards self-sufficiency. Through SNAP E&T, participants have access to training and support services to help them enter or move up in the workforce. This program helps reduce barriers to work by providing support services to increase their ability to obtain regular employment and achieve economic mobility. SNAP E&T is administered through the OEA within DHHS.

Social Services Block Program (SSBG) Community Response Program

TANF funds transferred to SSBG become SSBG funds, and activities are not required to meet TANF purposes. Services are available to families with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.	
Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
1,865 children; 752 adults	\$858,846

The Community Response Program is funded by the SSBG transfer and is designed to reduce unnecessary involvement with the child welfare system through a community-based Central Navigator. This program develops and coordinates an array of local resources to identify, screen, and provide short-term support to qualified families when no other public or private money is available. The program aims to strengthen family resilience, increase self-sufficiency, and improve overall life outcomes by offering a range of formal and informal services, such as child care and neighborhood groups. Nebraska Children & Families Foundation (NCFF) provides these services through a subaward with DHHS.

SSBG Mommy and Me Program (Mom and Parenting Program, Project Mother Child, & Women are Sacred)

TANF funds transferred SSBG become SSBG funds, and activities are not required to meet TANF purposes. Services are available to families with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
163	\$819,723

States can transfer up to 10% of their annual TANF block grant to SSBG. Two Mom and Parenting programs are funded by this SSBG transfer providing services for expectant mothers and their children in a residential drug treatment facility. Both programs provide comprehensive treatment that focuses on overcoming addiction and enhancing a mother's readiness to change. These programs focus on relapse prevention, reintegration into the community, spiritual assessments and counseling, family counseling, and aftercare planning services. DHHS has subaward agreements with St. Monica's and The Bridge, Inc. to provide services to participants at no cost to them to help them work towards self-sufficiency while maintaining their parenting bond with their children.

Work Activities [Employment First]

Purpose 2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Number of Persons Served:	Expenditure of Program in SFY 2024:
8,782	\$10,413,921

Parents receiving ADC who can work must participate in Employment First (EF), Nebraska's federally required mandatory work program. EF assists individuals with long-term economic stability through employment. It emphasizes education and training to meet work requirements, making it a key tool for enhancing the job prospects of low-income families. Equus Workforce Solutions has a subaward to complete the case management of EF, while the OEA within DHHS monitors and evaluates the outcomes of the program. This collaboration assists individuals meet immediate work requirements and equips them with skills for sustainable economic independence, breaking the cycle of poverty and dependence on public assistance.