

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program

Environmental Scan 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Introduction](#) 3

[Executive Summary](#) 4

[Overview](#) 6

[Social and Economic Environment](#) 6

[Characteristics of Tribal Reservations](#) 7

[Cost of Living](#) 7

[Poverty](#) 7

[Transportation](#) 7

[Unemployment Information](#) 8

[Labor Market](#) 8

[TANF Block Grant](#) 10

[TANF Funded Programs in North Dakota](#) 11

[Federal TANF & State MOE Expenditures Summary](#) 12

[North Dakota Support Services](#) 14

[Characteristics of ND TANF Caseload](#) 16

[Program Requirements and Eligibility](#) 18

[Basic Standard of Need](#) 19

[Case Scenario: Meet Carla](#) 20

[Modernization](#) 24

[Modernization Efforts](#) 26

[Summary of Findings](#) 28

[Next Steps](#) 34

[References](#) 36

[Appendix](#) 38

INTRODUCTION

The North Dakota Department of Human Services (NDDHS), Economic Assistance Division provides leadership, planning, development, and oversight of the North Dakota’s social safety net programs including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and ND Rent Help. The Division consults with other state agencies and partners in striving to improve access to services, assist North Dakota citizens (individuals and families) affected by poverty and hardship, develop policies, and ensure quality and timely service delivery.

This report presents findings from an in-depth review conducted by the North Dakota Department of Human Services, Economic Assistance Division in partnership with the Office of Family Assistance, Peer Technical Assistance Network (OFA Peer TA), and Manhattan Strategy Group.

Authors

Bianca Bell, MSW, LMSW
Assistant Director, Economic Assistance
North Dakota Department of Human Services

Amy Ingersoll Johnson, MSW, LMSW
Special Projects Assistant, Economic Assistance
North Dakota Department of Human Services

Joan Schatz
TANF Program Administrator, Economic Assistance
North Dakota Department of Human Services

Community Partner Group

Village Family Service Center
Community Options Inc.
North Dakota Department of Human Services Children & Family Services Division
Job Service North Dakota
North Dakota Head Start
North Dakota Human Service Zones- Cass & Ward
North Dakota Vocational Rehab Services
Roughrider Education Services Program
Turtle Mountain Employment and Training

Technical Assistance & Project Support

Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Family Assistance- Peer Technical Assistance Network
Manhattan Strategy Group
MEF Associates



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

North Dakota Department of Human Services, Economic Assistance Division (EA) is committed to developing responsive and evolving economic assistance services through the efforts of modernization. This commitment aligns with North Dakota Department of Human Services (NDDHS) key priorities identified as part of North Dakota's strategic plan. These priorities were developed to shape and guide the work across all divisions over the next four years.

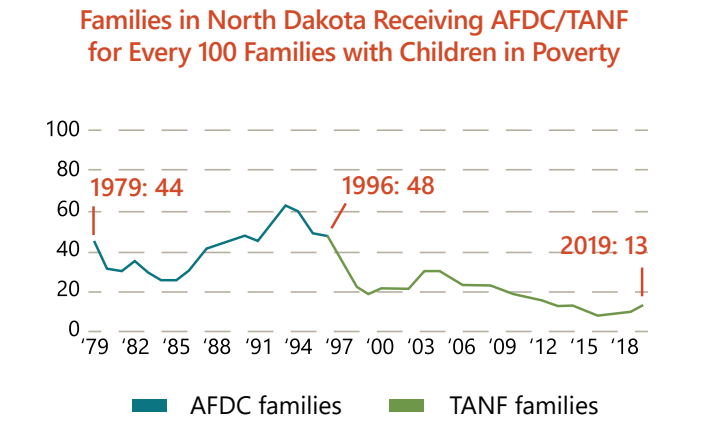
In 2021, EA sought to develop an understanding of how to meet the needs of individuals and their families through modernization. This report presents findings from an in-depth review conducted by the Division, in collaboration with community partner group, community members, project partners, and the OFA Peer TA Network.

Our work serves two purposes. First, to conduct a review of TANF services in the state of North Dakota and summarize the needs of those eligible to receive TANF services. Second, to provide information that will serve as the basis for future TANF Modernization efforts. This report is not an exhaustive study. It is work product of program administration, community partner group, and partners efforts to uncover the needs of North Dakota citizens and families.

OVERVIEW

A parental job loss, a change in family structure, long term unemployment, or unforeseen medical conditions can impact family stability. Safety net benefits like TANF enable families to meet basic needs and prevents greater and more damaging crises. While the goals of the TANF Program remain the same, each year TANF caseload numbers decline casting a smaller net to those in need of support.

Today TANF reaches fewer families than it used to. **According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), in 2018-2019, for every 100 families living in poverty in North Dakota, only 13 received TANF Basic Assistance.**¹ If TANF reached the same share of families in poverty as AFDC did in 1996, 2,664 more families in North Dakota would be helped by TANF.



TANF-to-poverty ratio	1995/96	2018/19
North Dakota	48	13
National	68	23

Note: TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; AFDC = Aid to Families with Dependent Children.¹ CBPP analysis of poverty and deep poverty data from the Census’ Current Population Survey.² CBPP uses two-year averages of the poverty data and the TANF-to-Poverty ratios to improve the reliability of the data at the state level. Single year labels represent two-year averages for state data. For example, “2019” represents “2018-2019.” AFDC/TANF caseload data from Department of Health and Human Services and (since September 2006) caseload data collected from state agencies. All ratios are rounded and point differences between ratios may appear inexact due to rounding.

Families facing economic instability have greater material hardship than more economically stable families. Growing

up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development. Urban Institute research notes low-income parents, (having incomes below 200% of FPL), and their children, endure significant challenges when they are unable to meet their basic needs, otherwise known as material hardship.² The four domains of material hardships include housing, utilities, food security and health care. Material hardship is linked to poor physical health, poor cognitive health, and negative behavioral outcomes among children in the short term.² Additionally, it may also contribute to the negative association between childhood poverty, long-term health, and economic prospects.² Risk factors contributing to material hardship include health problems or disability, serious psychological distress, a large unexpected drop in income, or a large unexpected expense within the previous 12 months, or continuous family income fluctuations.²

Social and Economic Environment

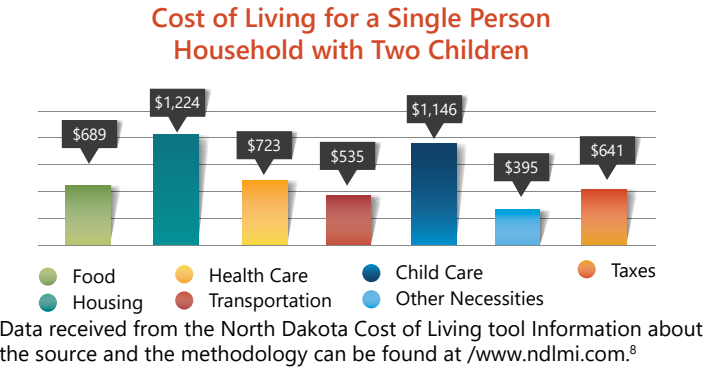
The U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019) provides information on various social and economic factors about North Dakota citizens.³ North Dakota’s population is under 780,000 and contains approximately 320,000 households.³ Of those households, 192,000 are family households and almost 90,000 are households with children.³ There are over 15,000 households led by single mothers.³ 52% of adults are married. Approximately 60% of housing units are owned while 30% are rented.³ Of those renting, almost 40% are paying greater than 30% of household income on rent.³ North Dakota remains the fourth most sparsely populated state and 83% of residents identify as non-Hispanic Caucasian.³ That said, the Decennial Census (2020) shows an average population increase of over 190% for Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, other, or two or more races in the last ten years.⁴ Over 60% of the population is under age 45. Only about 30% of North Dakota’s population age 25 and older and have attained a bachelor’s degree or beyond in higher education.⁴ Median household income in 2019 was approximately \$65K.⁴ According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, less than 10% of the population is employed in the agricultural sector, agriculture is a major contributor to the state’s economy.⁵ Other major employment sectors include natural resources, food processing and technology.⁵

Characteristics of Tribal Reservations

North Dakota houses five tribal reservations within its borders that include Spirit Lake, Fort Berthold, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Standing Rock Sioux, and Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (North Dakota Indian Affairs, n.d.).⁶ Almost 40,000 citizens identify as Native American in North Dakota according to the most recent census data.³ Tribal communities are rich with a legacy of oratorical expressions of history and culture. Commonly spoken Native American languages include Dakota/Lakota Sioux, Mandan, Hidatsa, Sahnish and Ojibwe.⁵ Counties with the highest poverty rates and the highest rates of households led by single mothers include those on reservations.³ According to a report from Administration for Children and Families (2021), of the 2,392 TANF participants in 2020, over 60% identified at Native American.⁷

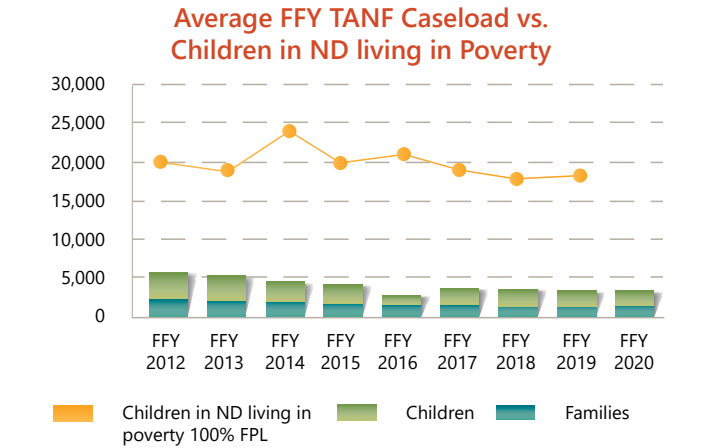
Cost of Living

The North Dakota Cost of Living tool, developed by Job Service of North Dakota’s Labor Market Information, indicates a single parent household with two children in the state of North Dakota requires an annual gross household income amount of \$64,258.00 to sustain a “basic life”.⁸ A “basic life” includes the cost of food, housing, health care, transportation, childcare, other necessities, and taxes. For a single person with two children, a basic life includes: \$689 for Food; \$1,224 for Housing; \$723 for Health Care; \$535 for Transport; \$1,146 for Child Care; \$395 for other necessities and \$641 in taxes.⁸



Poverty

Census data from 2019 shows almost 80,000k people live in poverty in North Dakota according to Federal Poverty Level (FPL) Guidelines, which is a measurement describing the minimum income a person requires to pay for material needs.⁹ North Dakota has 27 counties with poverty rates between 10% and 20% of county population totals (U.S. Census, 2021).⁹ North Dakota houses five tribal reservations within its borders and the three counties which have poverty rates higher than 20% include tribal reservation communities.³ Thirty-three counties have poverty rates between 10% and 20% for children ages 0-17, while five North Dakota counties show poverty rates between 20% and 35% for children according to the U.S. Census.⁹ 2020 saw an increase in national poverty rate for the first time in a five-year period.⁹



Source Note: TANF average caseload by FFY Administration of Children and Families. Trendline indicates children living poverty.¹⁰

Transportation

According to the North Dakota Labor and Market Information website, average monthly transportation costs for 1 working parent with two children is \$5,359.⁸ In more sparsely populated counties, such as one of the 36 considered highly rural or having fewer than seven people per square mile, transportation costs can be up to \$1,000 per month for that same household.⁸ In North Dakota, all 53 counties have limited public transit services 3 to 5 days a week that can be

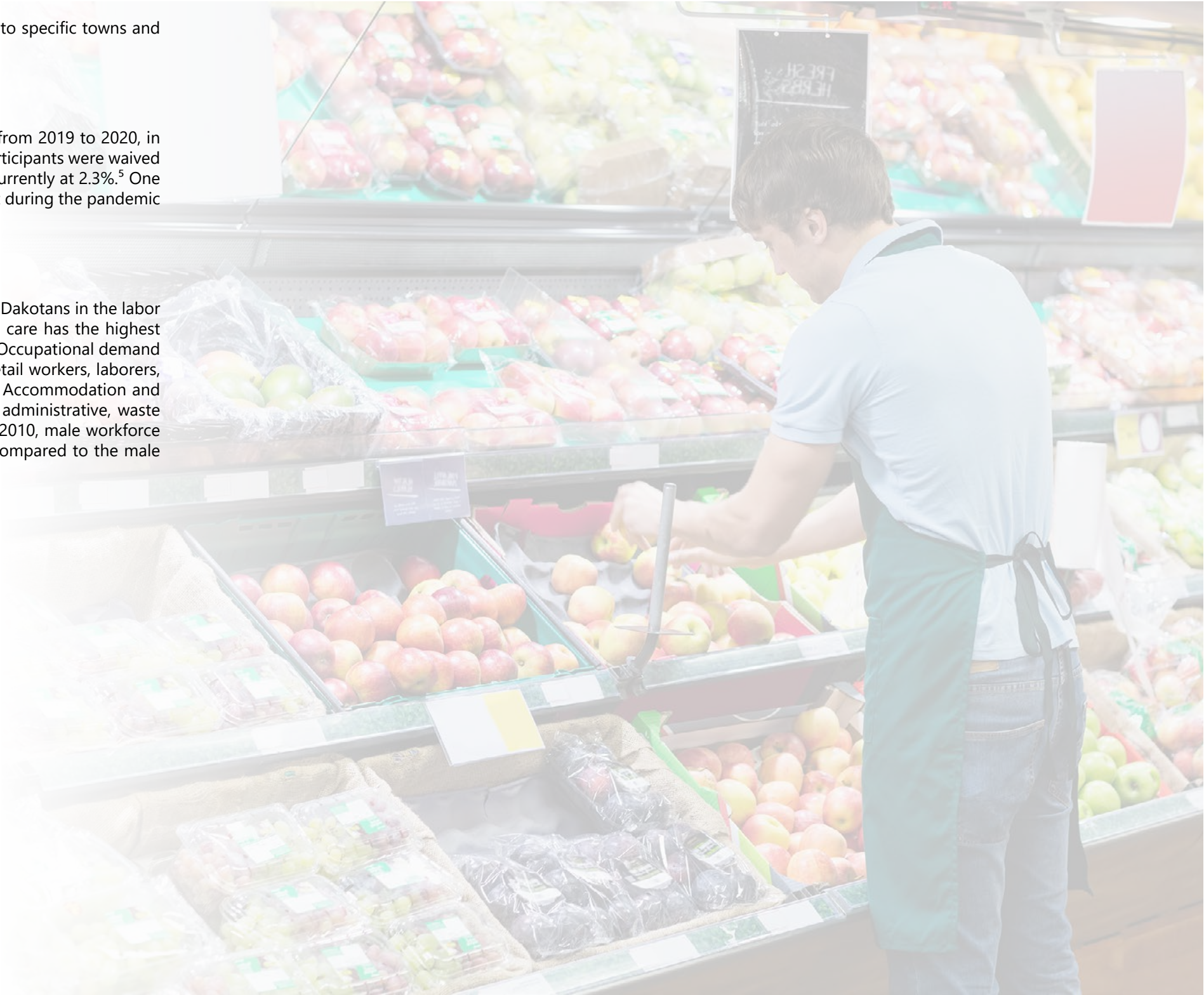
accessed by the public.¹¹ Typically, transit services only provide rides during certain days and times to specific towns and hubs.

Unemployment Information

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, North Dakota saw a jump in unemployment rates from 2019 to 2020, in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ TANF caseload declined even though requirement for participants were waived and became voluntary. Unemployment rates have almost returned to pre-COVID numbers and are currently at 2.3%.⁵ One report showed the weekly average for unemployment benefits, without the additional federal benefit during the pandemic was \$406.57.¹²

Labor Market

According to the U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2019), there are over 400,000 North Dakotans in the labor force.³ The Bureau of Labor and Statistics provide a snapshot of labor market information. Health care has the highest rate of job openings and along with the government sector, has the highest employment average.⁵ Occupational demand is highest for nurses and nursing assistants, fast food and restaurant workers, home health aides, retail workers, laborers, janitors, and maids.⁵ Of these, only nurses and nurse assistants require post-secondary education.⁵ Accommodation and food services are among the lowest wage work with annual wages typically under \$20,000, while administrative, waste services, accommodation, and food services show the highest rates of turnover by industry.⁵ Since 2010, male workforce participants grew at twice the rate female workforce grew, and the female workforce rate is 47% compared to the male workforce rate of 53%.⁵





TANF BLOCK GRANT

The **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant** provides approximately \$16.5 billion to states, the District of Columbia, and US territories (Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico).¹³ Federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Native organizations may offer TANF through a tribal TANF program.

TANF provides states with flexibility in operating programs designed to help low-income families with children who are deprived of the support of one or more parents achieve economic self-sufficiency. States use their TANF grants to fund monthly cash assistance payments to low-income families with children, as well as a wide range of services that are designed to address one or more of the program’s four broad purposes:

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

These purposes were outlined in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), the law that created TANF, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and related programs (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).¹⁴

TANF Funded Programs in North Dakota

The TANF block grant funds provide the following financial assistance services and programs.

Financial Support is offered to qualifying low-income households and is administered statewide by the Economic Assistance Policy Division (EA). North Dakota does not have any tribal TANF programs.

Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program is the mandatory work program for work-eligible individuals receiving TANF with the primary goal to assist families with achieving self-sufficiency. The JOBS Program offers supportive services that assist with costs associated with care of incapacitated household members, child care, housing/shelter, job readiness, license, certification and examination fees, relocation assistance, tools for employment, transportation assistance, tuition assistance and vehicle repair and insurance.

Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment (PRIDE) provides job placement services to noncustodial parents to address their nonpayment of child support. The PRIDE project is modeled similar to TANF Job Opportunities and Basic Sills program, providing case management, job skills improvement, job placement and supportive services to help noncustodial parents obtain or improve their employment in order to pay child support.

Transition Assistance is offered to qualifying households with earnings from employment exceeding the allowable standard of need. Financial support is offered during the six-month period to assist households in attaining self-sufficiency, thereby eliminating the need for future government assistance. Individuals eligible for Transition Assistance are required to participate in the JOBS Program and are eligible for JOBS Supportive Services providing assistance for care of incapacitated household members, child care, housing/shelter, job readiness, licenses, certification and examination fees, relocation assistance, tools for employment, transportation assistance, tuition assistance and vehicle repair and insurance.

Kinship Care Program provides an alternative to out-of-home foster care by placing children in the homes of relatives. TANF Kinship caregivers take on the responsibility of caring for their relative’s children and may experience unexpected costs. TANF Kinship Care is available to help offset such costs. Placements are usually temporary until the child

is reunited with parents or moves into a more permanent living situation. This program offers support services which include child care assistance, clothing assistance, legal fees associated with obtaining guardianship status, school and community activity fees, and emergency needs.

Diversion Assistance provides short-term emergency benefits and services to families during a ‘specific crisis or episode of need’. These benefits and services are designed to deal with a specific crisis or episode of need, are not intended to meet recurrent or ongoing needs, and will not extend beyond four months in a 12-month period. This will allow individuals to clear up problems that might push them further into poverty. This program offers supportive services, which include housing/shelter, job related expenses, disaster related expenses, emergency household needs, unforeseen circumstances, child restraint seat, essential services, GED/ High School Graduate Incentive Payment, health insurance premiums, and health tracks reimbursement.

Post-TANF Supportive Services are available to former TANF or Transition Assistance recipients during a 6-month period to succeed in the workforce, therefore, avoid the need to receive further TANF benefits. Supportive Services consist of Post-TANF Transportation and Post-TANF Discretionary.

Crossroads Program assists young parents up to age 21 who are attending school with short- and long-term goals to complete their education while working to develop key tools to become self-supporting in the future.

Alternatives to Abortion services are for pregnant teens and women, or those who think they may be pregnant. Services include providing information, counseling, pre-natal and parenting education, and referrals.

Emergency Assistance is available to children who are in situations where a court has determined that continued presence in their home is not in their best interest or is available to eligible families with children who are experiencing an emergency for out-of-home care and family preservation services.



FEDERAL TANF & STATE MOE EXPENDITURES SUMMARY BY ACF 196R SPENDING CATEGORY¹⁵

These dollar charts represent both North Dakota and national federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and state Maintenance-of-Effort (MOE) spending and transfers to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). As a condition of receiving federal TANF funds, states are required to spend a certain amount of their own funds (MOE) on TANF-allowable categories. Many states spend additional funds above the required amount. Expenditures are grouped into 15 categories for the purposes of these charts, as defined below.

TANF in North Dakota

In FFY 2020 North Dakota received \$39.1 million dollars.

For every TANF dollar spent in North Dakota...

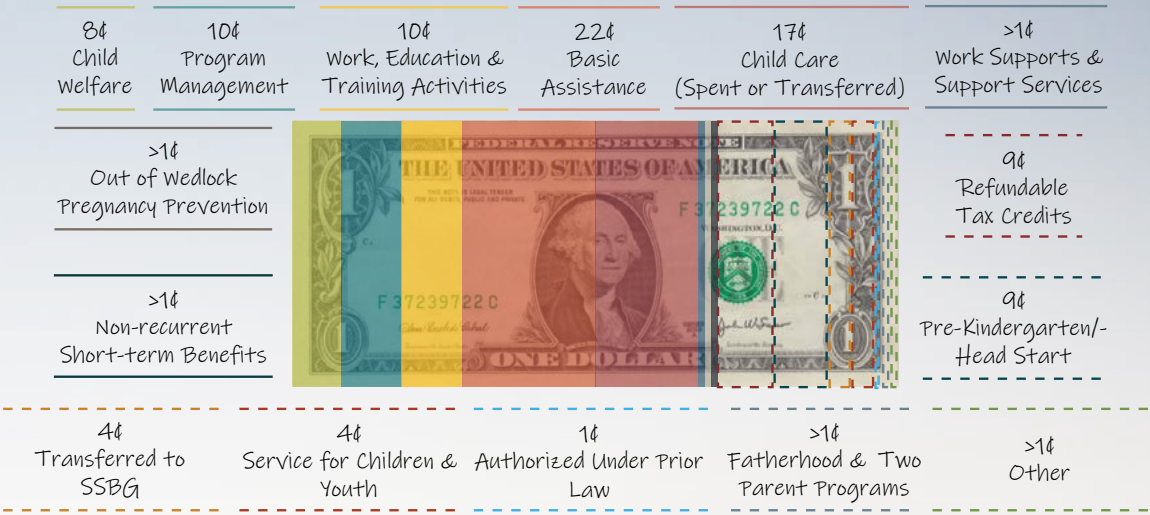


TANF Nationwide

In FFY 2020 TANF Agencies

\$31,552,167,672 billion dollars.

For every dollar spent in the United States...



Source Note: Information received from 2020 Office of Family Assistance- Administration of Children and Family Services website; dollar amounts are rounded to the nearest penny. Includes spending and transfer of TANF Block Grant and MOE for FFY 2020.¹⁵

1. **Basic Assistance:** Cash, payments, vouchers, and other forms of benefits designed to meet a family’s ongoing basic needs (i.e., for food, clothing, shelter, utilities, household goods, personal care items, and general incidental expenses) and including Relative Foster Care Maintenance Payments and Adoption and Guardianship Subsidies

2. **Work, Education, and Training Activities:** Subsidized Employment; Education and Training (including secondary education; adult education, GED or equivalent and English as Second Language classes; education directly related to employment; job skills training; education provided as vocational educational training or career and technical education; and post-secondary education); and Additional Work Activities (including costs related to providing work experience and community service activities, job search assistance and job readiness, related services)

3. **Child Care (Spent or Transferred):** Child care expenditures for families that need childcare to work, participate in work activities or for respite purposes and also includes funds transferred to Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Discretionary. A state can transfer up to 30 percent of its block grant to CCDF.

4. **Program Management:** Administrative costs (subject to a 15% cap); assessment/service provision; and systems costs related to monitoring and tracking under the program.

5. **Refundable Tax Credits:** Refundable portions of state or local earned income tax credits (EITC) and other tax credits paid to families.

6. **Child Welfare Services (including Authorized Solely Under Prior Law):** Family Support/Family Preservation/Reunification Services: community-based services, provided to families involved in the child welfare system that are designed to increase the strength and stability of families so children may remain in or return to their homes; Adoption Services and activities designed to promote and support successful adoptions; Additional Child Welfare Services provided to children and families at risk of being in the child welfare system, or who are involved in the child welfare system; Foster Care Payments (Authorized Solely Under Prior Law); and Child Welfare or Foster Care Services (Authorized Solely Under Prior Law).

7. **Pre-Kindergarten/Head Start:** Pre-kindergarten or kindergarten education programs (allowable if they do not meet the definition of a “general state expense”), expansion of Head Start programs, or other school readiness programs.

8. **Transferred to SSBG (Social Services Block Grant):** All funds transferred shall be used only for programs and services to children or their families with income less than 200% of the federal poverty level. A state can transfer up to 10% of its TANF funds to the Social Services Block Grant.

9. **Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancy Prevention:** Programs that provide sex education or abstinence education and family planning services to individuals, couples, and families to reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

10. **Non-Recurrent Short-Term Benefits:** Short-term benefits to families in the form of cash, vouchers, subsidies, or similar form of payment to deal with a specific crisis or episode of need. Includes expenditures such as emergency assistance and diversion payments, emergency housing and short-term homelessness assistance, emergency food aid, short-term utilities payments, burial assistance, clothing allowances, and back-to-school payments.

11. **Work Supports & Supportive Services (including Financial Education and Asset Development):** Work Supports (e.g. transportation benefits, tools, uniforms, fees to obtain special licenses, bonuses, incentives, and work support allowances, and expenditures for job access); Supportive Services (e.g. domestic violence services, and health, mental health, substance abuse and disability services, housing counseling services, and other family supports); and Financial Education and Asset Development (e.g. programs and initiatives designed to support the development and protection of assets including contributions to Individual Development Accounts, financial education services, tax credit outreach campaigns and tax filing assistance programs, initiatives to support access to mainstream banking, and credit and debt management counseling).

12. **Services for Children & Youth (including Home Visiting):** Programs designed to support and enrich the development and improve the life-skills and educational attainment of children and youth, including after-school programs, and mentoring or tutoring programs. Also includes Home Visiting Programs, where nurses, social workers, or other professionals/paraprofessionals provide services to families in their homes.

13. **Authorized Solely Under Prior Law:** Activities that are not otherwise consistent with the purposes of TANF and/or with the prohibitions in section 408 but are allowable expenditures of federal TANF funds as activities that were in effect on Sept. 30, 1995, or (at the option of the state) Aug. 21, 1996. Includes Juvenile Justice Payments and Services and Emergency Assistance and Services authorized solely under prior law. Does not include Foster Care Payments and Child Welfare or Forster Care Services authorized solely under prior law (see Child Welfare Services).

14. **Fatherhood and Two-Parent Family Programs:** Programs that aim to promote responsible fatherhood and/or encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. For example, activities within these programs may include marriage education, marriage and relationship skills, fatherhood skills programs; parent skills workshops; public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage and responsible fatherhood; education regarding how to control aggressive behavior; financial planning seminars; and divorce education and reduction programs.

15. **Other:** Non-assistance activities that were not included in any of the above categories.

NORTH DAKOTA SUPPORT SERVICES¹⁶

Support Services are offered to individuals participating in programs funded by the TANF block grant. The table below provides a high-level summary of support service availability by program and type.

Support Service Type/Description	Crossroads	Diversion Assistance	JOBS	JOBS Transition	Tribal New	Post TANF	PRIDE	TANF Kinship Care
Care for an Incapacitated Household Member		✓						
Child/Dependent Care Expenses	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clothing Allowance Reimbursement								✓
College/Post-Secondary Education Completion Incentive Payment	✓							
Emergency Needs								✓
Educational Incentive Payment	✓							
GED Household Graduate Incentive Payment	✓		✓	✓				
Housing/Shelter Assistance		✓	✓	✓				✓
Job Readiness Assistance	✓		✓	✓				
Job Retention (\$200.00 for up to 6 months)				✓				
License Certification and Exam Fees			✓	✓				
Legal Fees								✓
Relocation Assistance			✓	✓				
School Supplies								✓
Tools for Employment			✓	✓			✓	
Transportation Assistance	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tuition Assistance								
Vehicle Repair & Insurance			✓	✓				
\$400 in Discretionary Funding						✓		
Emergency Needs		✓						✓

*Job Readiness Assistance may be used to reimburse expenses related to the participant’s purchase of employment-related clothing, expenses for obtaining a driver’s license or reinstatement of a driver’s license, expenses for utility bills in an ongoing case, phone installation charges and other expenses determined by the JOBS Employment Contractor to be reasonable and necessary for employment interviews including transportation, lodging, grooming, and clothing.


In addition to Support Services, individuals receiving TANF may be eligible to receive Special Items of Need. These include child restraint seat; essential services; GED High School Graduate Incentive Program; health insurance premiums; Health Tracks; housing allowance; special projects; and unforeseen circumstances.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ND TANF CASELOAD

TANF helps families with **children who are deprived of parental support or care**, meaning a parent is absent due to divorce, separation, death, or one or both parents are aged or disabled.

In North Dakota the TANF Block Grant provides temporary financial assistance averaging **\$297 a month**, work readiness, training and job placement services, and case management support to about **950 qualifying low-income families per month**.¹⁷ Over the last state fiscal year - **81% of individuals served were children** and **52% of the cases were “child only” cases**.¹⁷

Looking back to 2012, North Dakota has seen a **43% decrease in overall caseload**.¹⁷



8 out of 10 TANF recipients are children

972 families 2392 recipients

Average Individuals by County

1*	1	0	7	341	2	0	1*
15	8	95	3	1	162	33	26
4	1	14	0	3	4	1	79
1	0	1*	0	81	1	13	9
0	16	44	0	0	0	1*	0
0	0	1	130	0	1	2	0
0	0	1	130	0	1	2	0

*Asterix indicates averages below one. According to North Dakota Department of Human Services Economic Assistance Division, SFY 2020.¹⁷



67% native american

26% caucasian

95% U.S. citizens

According to Administration of Children and Families, FFY2020.⁷







58% of households have zero adult participants.

42% of cases have one adult member and 85% are between the ages of 20-39.


Majority of adult participants are female.

According to Administration of Children and Families, FFY2020.⁷






98% enrolled in Medicaid



73% enrolled in SNAP



27% enrolled in subsidized housing

According to Administration of Children and Families, FFY2020.⁷

Program Requirements & Eligibility

The TANF benefit amount is determined by subtracting the adjusted net income from the Basic Standard of Need. TANF utilizes retrospective budgeting, or a determination of the grant amount for a benefit month, which is based on income and circumstances of the TANF household during the base month, or initial month. If a family has no monthly income the benefit amount is equal to the Basic Standard of Need by household size. In addition to the initial eligibility process, families must meet up-front eligibility requirements. Up-front requirements consist of providing information regarding child support, initial participation in the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Program and not quitting a job or refusing employment without good cause.

Factors of eligibility can impact the household size and limit the amount of assistance available to a family. A sanction is an adverse action taken against an individual who does not cooperate with program requirements. ND TANF does not allow an increase in the TANF benefit to recognize the increase in household size when a child is born to a household member who was a recipient of TANF during the month of the child’s probable conception. An exception to this provision is in cases of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. This policy is referred to as benefit cap. This policy is applicable at application and in ongoing cases. Factors of eligibility such as benefit cap can impact the household size and limit the amount of assistance available to a family. Only 11 other states still utilize benefit cap policies.

Once initial eligibility has been approved, ongoing eligibility is determined monthly. All families are required to submit a monthly report form monthly to determine the following months financial assistance. Some required individuals receiving assistance must participate a set number of hours to meet their work requirements.

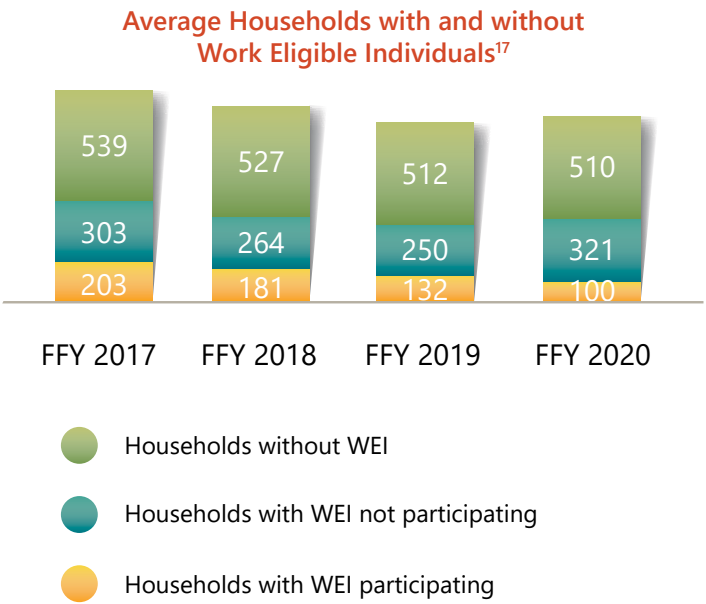
Another consideration that limits eligibility is lifetime limit. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996 prohibits states from providing cash assistance to households where the head of household or spouse of the head of household has received assistance for a total of 60 months, regardless of if the months were consecutive.¹⁴ States have the option to set lower time limits. North Dakota has chosen 60 months. States can exceed the 60-month limit for up to 20 percent of their caseload based on hardship. Federal law does not impose a time limit on “child-only families” (those with no adult receiving TANF

benefits in the household unit) or on families receiving assistance funded entirely with state MOE funds.

In FFY 2020, out of an average monthly caseload of 972, one case received more than the 60-month lifetime limit due to hardship or waiver.⁷

The table below shows the average household with and without working individuals from FFY 2017 through FFY 2020.

Work required Individuals who apply for basic assistance are subject to Pay After Performance (PAP) during the first four months of assistance. During this time the financial needs of the work required individual are supplemented only after the work required individual has met work participation requirements for the month. If an individual does not meet the requirements, the individual will only receive the children’s portion of the benefit and may be subject to a program sanction.



FFY includes reporting anomalies due to new system roll-out. In 2020, households in North Dakota with a Work Eligible Individuals (WEI) declined by approximately 24%, and over half of work eligible individuals were not participating in work due to the waiver of the requirement to participate during the pandemic.

The Basic Standard of Need

The Basic Standard of Need (N.D.A.C. 75-02-01.2-35) represents the amount of income by household size and living arrangement necessary for a standard of living compatible with decency and health.¹⁶ The six basic items of need considered in the TANF cash grant are shelter, food, clothing, personal need items, household supplies, fuel, and utilities. North Dakota’s standard of need was last updated in 2015. Families eligible to receive TANF Financial Assistance in North Dakota fall within approximately 20-25% of Federal Poverty Level. Meaning a single parent household with two children, may be eligible if their income is equal to or less than \$5,069 a year or approximately \$422 a month.

The Basic Standard of Need Chart

No. of Caretakers	Number of Children										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0	0	\$166	\$243	\$316	\$393	\$466	\$543	\$617	\$693	\$767	\$843
1	\$237	\$335	\$436	\$533	\$632	\$731	\$830	\$929	\$1028	\$1127	\$1225
2	\$335	\$436	\$533	\$632	\$731	\$830	\$929	\$1028	\$1127	\$1225	\$1325

Source Note: NDAC 75-01-01.2-35; TANF Benefit Calculation 400-19-110

For a household with no monthly income, a single parent family with two children is eligible to receive \$436 per month. Families with monthly income receive a portion of the Basic Standard of Need and without Earned Income Disregards, families may not qualify to receive TANF. Earned Income Disregards allow for certain deductions in eligibility determination. These include a Standard Employment Expense Allowance of 27% or \$180, whichever is greater and Time Limited Percentage (TLP). TLP is available for a 13-month period and allows for the percentage of the earned income to be disregard. Once an individual receives 13 months of the TLP disregard they are not eligible to receive it again. In addition, expense deductions for Child Care and Child Support are factored into eligibility. The following case scenario considers earned income disregards for a single parent household with two children when the parent is working.



CASE SCENARIO: MEET CARLA

Carla Collins is a single parent. Carla recently separated from her partner. She applied for TANF because she is not receiving child support. Carla is a mother of two children and works 40 hours a week. She works full-time doing housekeeping at a local motel. She makes \$7.25 an hour. Her **gross monthly income \$1,160 per month**. Carla is the primary caretaker of her children. Her children are school aged. Carla is not eligible to receive an expense deduction for child care or child support. Carla is eligible to receive **Earned Income Disregards, which include a deduction of 27% or (\$313.20)**. This is Carla’s first time applying for TANF, so she is also eligible to receive a **50% (\$423.40) TLP disregard**. The below Income Budget Summary shows the Benefit Calculation for Carla’s TANF Case. Based on Carla’s income and other eligibility factors described in the scenario, **Carla would be eligible to receive \$12 per month** making her monthly income for a family of three \$1,172.00 per month.

INCOME INFORMATION:

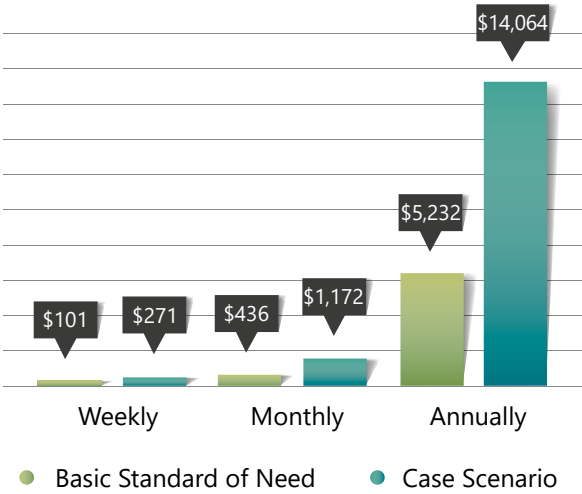
(A) Earned Income:						+	\$1160.00
Person	Type	Employer	Amount (\$)	Excluded Amount (\$)	Countable Income (\$)		
Carla Collins 34F	Wages	x	\$ 1,160.00	\$ 0.00	\$1,160.00		
						Page 1 of 1	100
						View 1 - 1 of 1	
(B) Self Employment Income:						+	\$0.00
(C) Total Gross Earned Income (A+B):						=	\$1160.00
(D) Adjusted Earned Income:						=	\$846.80
Person	Gross Earned Income (\$)	Standard Work Expense Disregard (\$)	Adjusted Earned income (\$)				
		(D)					
Carla Collins 34F	1160.00	\$313.20	846.80				
						Page 1 of 1	10
						View 1 - 1 of 1	
(E) Countable Earned Income:						=	\$423.40
Person	Adjusted Earned Income (D) (\$)	TLP Months	TLP Percentage	Time Limited Percentage (TLP) Disregard (D1) (\$)	Countable Earned Income (E = D-D1) (\$)		
+ Carla Collins 34F	846.80	1	50%	\$423.40	\$423.40		
						Page 1 of 1	10
						View 1 - 1 of 1	
(F) Unearned Income:						=	\$0.00
(G) Total Countable Income (E+F):						=	\$423.40

(P) TANF Standard of Need:	+	\$436.00	
(Q) Kinship Care Maintenance Payment:	+	\$0.00	
(R) OH Allowance:	-	\$0.00	
(S) Total TANF Standard of Need (P+Q+R):	=	\$436.00	
Income Test Result			Pass
(S) Total TANF Standard of Need:	=	\$436.00	
(O) Adjusted Net Income:	=	\$423.40	
Special Item of Need:	+	\$0.00	
Total TANF Standard of Need + Special Item of Need > Adjusted Net Income:			YES
Benefit Calculation			
(S) Total TANF Standard of Need:	-	\$436.00	
(O) Adjusted Net Income:	-	\$423.40	
(T) Benefit Amount (S-O):	+	\$12.60	
(AA) Number of Prorated Days:	=	31	
(AB) Prorated Benefit Amount ([T/Number of Days in a Month]*AA):	=	\$12.60	
Number of Benefit Cap Individuals:	=	0	
(U) Benefit Cap Deduction:	-	\$0.00	
Number of Sanction/PAP Individuals:	=	0	
(V) Sanction/PAP Deduction:	-	\$0.00	
(W) Adjusted Benefit Amount (AB-U-V):	=	\$12.60	
(AC) Special Item of Need:	+	\$0.00	
(AD) Recoupment Amount:	-	\$0.00	
(X) Net Benefit Amount (W+AC-AD):	=	\$12.00	

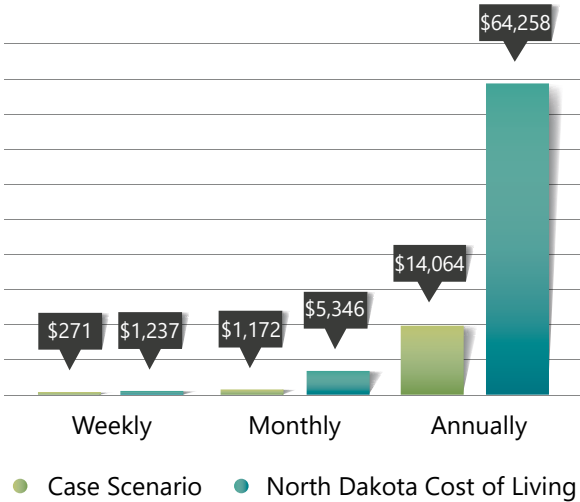
HOW DO CARLA'S CIRCUMSTANCES COMPARE?

Scenarios represent weekly monthly and annual amounts for a 3-person household

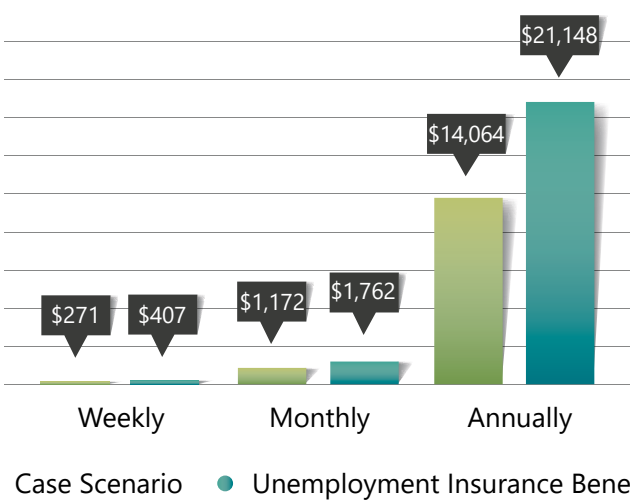
Case Scenario vs.
Basic Standard of Need



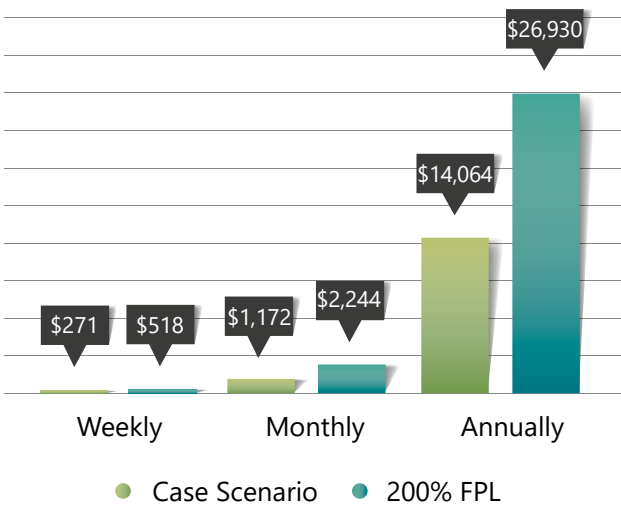
Case Scenario vs.
North Dakota Cost of Living



Case Scenario vs.
Unemployment Insurance Benefit



Case Scenario vs.
200% Federal Poverty Level



This chart compares Carla's wages plus TANF benefit to the Basic Standard of Need.¹⁶

This chart compares Carla's wages plus TANF benefit to the North Dakota cost of living, or the amount of money needed to cover basic expenses such as housing, food, taxes, and health care.⁸

This chart compares Carla's wage plus TANF benefit to Unemployment Insurance Benefits for one adult participant with two children.⁵

This chart compares Carla's wage plus TANF benefit to the 200% Federal Poverty Level. If the amount of annualized income earned by a household falls below federal poverty level, that household would be eligible to receive certain economic assistance benefits.⁹





MODERNIZATION

Modernization is the practice of streamlining and enhancing publicly funded human service programs to increase access by simplifying policies and procedures, promoting best practice, including client and family-centered approaches, reducing paperwork, and reaching out to potentially eligible individuals.

DHS 2021-2025 KEY PRIORITIES

Reinforce the Foundations of Well-Being
Economic Health | Behavioral Health | Physical Health



STRONG, STABLE FAMILIES

- Maintain family connections
- Improve stability and prevent crises
- Promote and support recovery and well-being



EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

- Support workforce needs with improved access to child care
- Help kids realize their potential with top quality early experiences
- Align programs for maximum return on investment



DHS KEY PRIORITIES ALIGN WITH THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HUMAN SERVICES ASSOCIATION'S (APHSA) SET OF TANF MODERNIZATION CORE PRINCIPLES¹⁸

1

To help families achieve economic mobility, TANF must support the physical, social, and emotional well-being of individuals and their family.

2

TANF must prioritize tailored solutions that help families succeed for the long term.

3

TANF should foster conditions that advance a person's sense of agency over their life and belonging within their community.

4

To best help families achieve their goals, TANF policies should be centered in evidence and promising practices that reflect the lived experiences of families.

5

The broader workforce system must provide a coordinated continuum of services that supports all jobseekers' strengths, goals, and needs.

6

Families must have access to adequate assistance and services that allow them to meet their basic needs while working to achieve their long-term goals.



SERVICES CLOSER TO HOME

- Create pathways that help people access the right service at the right time
- Engage proactively with providers to expand access to services



EFFICIENCY THROUGH REDESIGN

- Embrace process redesign to find efficiencies in our work
- Leverage technology to support greater efficiency, quality and customer service



HIGH-PERFORMING TEAM

- Develop a One DHS Team culture
- Engage team with opportunities for learning and development
- Implement fiscal scorecard to drive efficiency and effectiveness



MODERNIZATION EFFORTS

In the Spring of 2021, the EA Division partnered with the Office of Family Assistance- Peer Technical Assistance Network (OFA Peer-TA) to conduct an environmental scan of TANF services. Through this effort, EA and OFA Peer-TA, convened virtually with local community partners to address the following framing question and determine what we can do together.

Framing Question: *Imagine if NDDHS and surrounding community-based agencies led the nation in understanding and meeting the changing needs of their TANF population and the people that serve TANF clients. What would that look like?*

APPROACH

Peer-TA facilitated Strategic Doing™ in two sessions during April 2021 and conducted follow-up on ND's action plans through November 2021.

The Strategic Doing™ (SD) framework helped create and maintain trusted partnerships, promote equity in voice related to the current environment and desired future state, and ensure work is accomplished through action-oriented collaborations. Strategic Doing prompts groups to consider the following questions: What could we do? What should we do? What will we do? And what is our 30/30?¹⁹

As an outcome of the Strategic Doing workshops, the community partner group split into two teams to work on Pathfinder Projects¹⁹ that each developed.

Team 1: Team 1's Pathfinder Project focused on external data and information gathering from other state TANF programs; and

Team 2: Team 2's Pathfinder Project focused on collecting data from customers through surveys and focus groups.

Each team agreed to 30/30 check-ins, which is a time set aside every 30 days to review accomplishments from the



prior 30 days and tasks for 30 days forward. These check-ins were a critical component of Strategic Doing to help keep momentum going and all participants in the process engaged in tasks and outcomes.

PATHFINDER PROJECTS

Team 1's focus was on exploring programs and policies in other states that are similar to North Dakota in demographics, focusing on what has worked for TANF customers, including specific areas such as those struggling with mental health issues or addictions and rural areas with low employment rates. The group developed an interview team of professionals representing work in child care, child support, child welfare, and the TANF program.

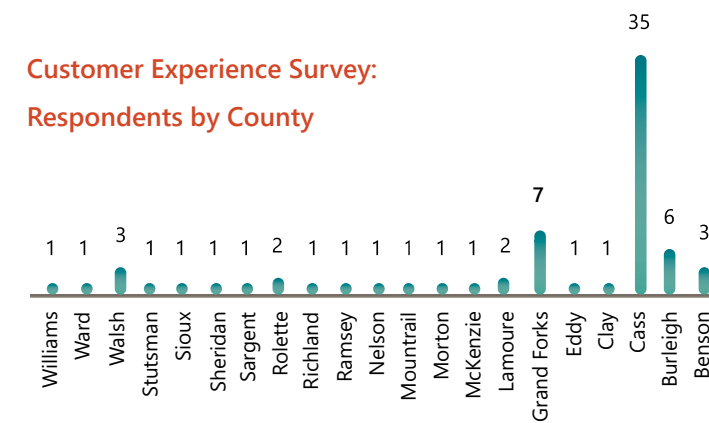
Objectives were to learn about strategies to improve access to TANF services, gain insight into what regulations, policies, and procedures should be reviewed for modernization, and discover client-centered tools and approaches to help engage TANF participants. Eighteen open-ended questions were posed to each state.

Team 2's focus was on understanding customer and staff experience with the TANF program to get a sense of the current needs of the TANF population, and to connect those needs back to current policies, identifying which policies could be modernized to reduce or eliminate barriers and better achieve program goals.

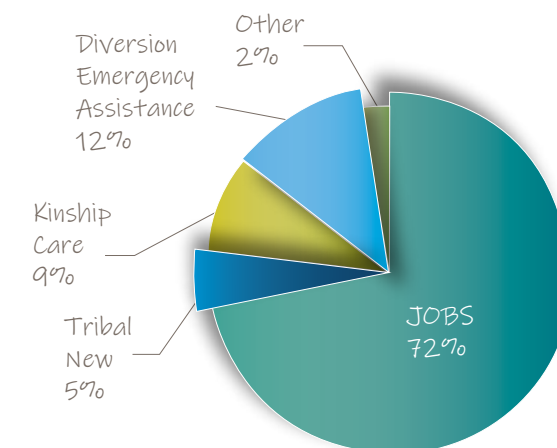
Customer Experience Survey

The customer experience survey was mailed to current and previous TANF households, shared on social media and posted in local offices. The survey was open for responses for 30 days. There were 19 questions that invited mixed method responses to included multiple choice, ratings, and Likert scales. Results consisted of 78 total respondents representing 20 North Dakota counties, with Cass County reporting most prevalently.

Customer Experience Survey: Respondents by County



Customer Experience Survey: Respondents by Program



Focus Groups

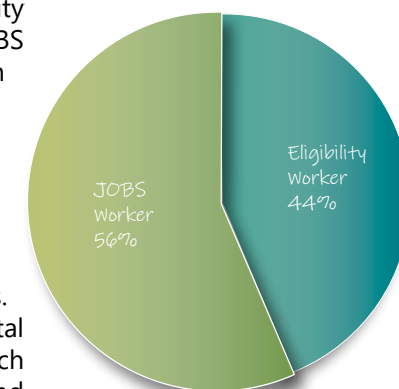
Two Focus Groups were held, each in Cass and Richland counties, as well as two telephone interviews, totaling eight participants. Participants were asked eight questions and were anonymously recorded to protect confidentiality.

Five respondents reported being current TANF participants while three reported being previous participants. All but one participant lived in a metro area, and all participants identified as female.

Worker Experience Survey

The worker experience Survey was emailed to human service zone directors to share with their TANF eligibility workers and to TANF JOBS contractors to share with their workers. The survey was open for responses for 30 days. There were 17 questions that invited mixed method responses to include multiple choice, rating, and Likert scales. Results consisted of 32 total respondents, 44% of which were eligibility workers and 56% of which were employment contractors.

Eligibility Workers vs. JOBS Workers





SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/METHODOLOGY

Findings and recommendations presented throughout this section include information obtained from a wide range of sources. Primary data is qualitative, collected through participant interviews, information provided by community partners, focus groups consisting of present and previous TANF users, customer experience and worker surveys, and best practices learned from other states via site visits, all using thematic analysis. Secondary data was collected through recommendations from literature reviews in addition to census, state government, labor market, and other official websites, and was largely quantitative using content analysis. Data were coded by themes, with outcomes that include the need for increased financial benefit and support services, changes in program requirements as well as more streamlined processes and enhanced worker support/ engagement.

The table below provides a high-level summary of findings and the environment(s) in which suggestions and recommendations are made.

Key Findings	Environment			
	Policy Federal & State	Resource/Capacity (Funding)	Internal Procedure/Practice	Technology
Financial Benefit	●	●	●	
Program Requirements	●	●	●	●
Support Services	●	●	●	●
Support from Worker			●	
Equity and Access			●	

Financial Benefit

According to the TANF Customer Experience Survey data, the TANF financial benefit ranked as first choice for most helpful benefit in participation. While financial benefit is reported as being the most helpful, respondents across all surveys indicate an increase, or changes in the benefit amount, as being helpful in overcoming challenges. State site visits produced valuable insights as well. Montana’s TANF dollars are the most comparable to North Dakota out of the three state site visits, with total spending of \$48 million compared to North Dakota’s \$39 million¹⁵. Montana, however, spends 36% of its budget on basic assistance, totaling over \$17 million.¹⁵ North Dakota, by comparison, spends just under 10%¹⁵ or about \$3 million, on basic assistance. North Dakota ranks 37 among states and the District of Columbia for percent of TANF funds spent on basic assistance.¹⁵ National average was 21% for basic assistance.¹⁵

As with many states, the TANF Standard of Need in North Dakota has not been adjusted since 2015, resulting in a decrease in value of TANF benefits. This decrease in value has left families’ benefit amounts far below the poverty line, making it extremely difficult for families to meet their basic needs.

“The only thing I don’t like about the TANF Program is that it’s not enough money. I know its money given to us but it’s just not enough. It’s hard. It’s really hard.”

Suggestions to address financial benefit from respondents include:

- Increase TANF grant
- Increase POST and Transitional Assistance
- Include incentives like groceries, household incidentals, gas
- Expand financial management skills and education

Research from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [CBPP] indicates that redirecting more TANF funds back towards cash assistance would improve academic, health, and economic outcomes for children and families in poverty.²⁰ Additionally, CBPP suggests states spend at least 50% of

existing TANF block grant and MOE funds towards direct financial assistance to help families meet basic needs. In 2020 North Dakota directed 9.8% towards Basic Assistance.¹⁵

“The program is very confusing. Four months of not full payment and then it gets broken down and the transportation amount is different depending on the caseworker.”

Strategies to address financial benefit from research and site visits include:

- Target all spending towards families with incomes at or below 100% of federal poverty level. Currently in North Dakota, individuals eligible for TANF fall within 20-25% of federal poverty level.¹⁵
- Restoring basic assistance funding to original value to account for inflation.
- Consider strategies like prospective budgeting to reduce the burden of monthly reporting requirements.
- Reevaluate the method used to determine TANF Basic Standard of Need.
- Develop strategies to understand the “cliff effect” such as the efforts in Connecticut. Implement services like benefits planning or developing a benefits cliff calculator to inform changes in practice and policy and improve pathways to self-sufficiency²⁶.

“I can get jobs at fast food, but I don’t want to do that my whole life. I’m 30. I want something stable. I’m too old for that. I need something with benefits.”

Program Requirements

Pay after Performance (PAP), Proof of Performance (POP), and the timeline for the delivery of benefits are all reoccurring “non-satisfactory” themes across survey responses. Additionally, respondents prefer a more streamlined process with fewer monthly reports, preferring one worker or contact person, and almost 40% of respondents suggest changing PAP.

Suggestions to address program requirements from respondents include:

- Remove PAP.
- “It should be a permanent income for people who don’t get SSI death benefits, especially if they have kids to take care of and no type or income to help with, and while having bills some can’t afford to balance daycare/work.”
- Terminate the sanctions because it’s very hard to know ‘the truth’ behind a person’s employment experience and a judgement shouldn’t be made.

A recent report by Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [CBPP] highlights how the TANF program requirements, as a condition of eligibility and focused on getting recipients employed as quickly as possible, results in TANF recipients leaving the TANF program for employment in unstable jobs.²¹ The outcome leaves participants with earnings far below the federal poverty line. This can be especially burdensome for low-income individuals and people of color who are overrepresented in low wage jobs.

O’Neill, Hayes & Van Horn (2021) outline employment and educational attainment as significant factors as they correlate to poverty.²² If someone is employed full-time, they are less likely to be living in poverty. Similarly, the more education a person has attained, the less likely they are to be living in poverty due to increased probability of being employed full-time and with higher-wage jobs. Alternatively, the lack of a stable and predictable work schedule, can lead to income volatility, with the amount of income varying from month to month and even week to week (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2021).²³ When hours and income are unpredictable, it can be difficult to maintain needed benefits and to receive an accurate and adequate amount of support. Research also indicates that female-headed households are far more likely to be living in poverty. Women’s Labor force participation and share of women working full-time is 23% lower than rates for men (O’Neill Hayes & VanHorn, 2021)²¹. Additionally, only 73% of women with children under age six in the home are working full time, as compared with men.²²

Strategies to address program requirements from research and site visits include:

- Removing program requirements like pay after performance as a condition eligibility ensures access to services at the most critical times.
- Reevaluate proof of performance and noncompliance/ sanction procedures. Consider alternatives for benefit reduction that are less punitive.
- Consider universal engagement strategies as an approach to increase program engagement. Allow members to engage in activities that reduce barriers rather than emphasizing work participation requirements.
- Implement the use of strengths-based models and approaches (family centered coaching, motivational interviewing, two-generational approaches etc.).
- Strengthen regional partnerships with agencies that address barriers like: vocational rehabilitation, housing, domestic violence, education, behavioral health, counseling and child care.
- Implement the use of third-party verification systems to track and monitor hour requirements.
- Implement the use of assessment tools that measure barriers. States like Montana implement the use of the Bridge Assessment. This tool is a standardized approach for staff to assess and reevaluate current hardship and barriers.
- Implementing programs like subsidized employment, sectoral training, career pathway programs and work-based education can assist in building long-term career growth for individuals. States like Montana allow contractors the option to offer services like subsidized employment.
- States like Connecticut implement intergenerational approaches like the Two-generation with a goal to support the entire family.
- Consider program integrity in continued use of antiquated language in program titles, descriptions, and goals.

“Transportation really helped me. Even getting the money while transitioning off really helped. Childcare. Clothing. I don’t know what it was (Dress for Success) but they got clothes for me for my interview. That really helped me out.”



Support Services

Seventy-seven percent of respondents were able to utilize support services to include child care assistance, transportation, job readiness, housing and shelter costs, and vehicle repairs, however only 56% feel they are aware of all the support services available. Transportation is identified as the biggest challenge in achieving goals by half of participants, while workers identify caregiving responsibilities as a barrier to clients’ engagement.

Suggestions from respondents to address support services from respondents include:

- Pay first month of child care deposits and expand child care options
- Better support service delivery options to include online/electronic opportunities
- Consider the role of individuals living in rural communities
- Increase transportation allowance and options

Evans et.al., (2020) research identifies eight barriers to working among current service participants nationwide that include low skill, lack of transportation, poor mental or physical health, low work experience, presence of a young child, having a child on SSI, and language barriers.²⁴ Additional research indicates almost 60% of participants had two to four barriers, while 23% had five to eight barriers.²⁴

Strategies to address support services from research and site visits include:

- Consistent messaging to inform clients of support service availability
- Detailed assessment
- Individualized service plan
- Wrap-around case management team
- Financial assistance that can accommodate potential obstacles and incentivize behavior
- Allow for support services to be available upon program referral (States like Montana allow clients to access support services where they can assist the client with getting back into compliance with TANF requirements.)

“Communication is good with the caseworkers (JOBS). Communication is the main key.”

Support from Worker

Sixty-two percent of survey respondents identify treatment from eligibility worker as being most helpful in achieving goals, and half report feeling supported by their case worker. The JOBS case manager ranked third in most helpful benefit of participation, however, participant feedback notes inconsistent eligibility worker/JOBS case manager experiences across zones. Need for communication is a heavily emphasized theme across all surveys and 22% of eligibility workers report a need for more trainings.

Respondents’ suggestions to address support from worker from respondents include:

- Train in JOBS, verifications, SPACES, and policy
- Workgroups to align policy interpretation, good cause, modified plans, and sanctions
- Provide strengths-based coaching
- Caseworkers to meet client where they are at
- Lighten worker loads

Studies confirm both the need for, and importance of, effective communication. Savaya et al (2016) describe a quality working alliance with the client and understanding the perspective of the person utilizing services as important for effective communication.²⁶ Krumer-Nevo & Barak (2007) note the importance of workers to combine practical support and emotional support within service provision to encourage continued participation, and increased client understanding of rights and responsibilities in program participation.²⁶ Evans et. al (2020) expands on this by arguing people in poor financial situations may have reduced human capacity to effectively navigate the long-term investments needed for self-sufficiency when they might be more concerned with immediate needs such as feeding their family that day.²⁴

Strategies to address support from workers from research and site visits include:

- Partnerships with the client in developing action plans
- Employing more perspective taking approach, implement the use of strengths-based models and approaches (Family centered coaching, motivational interviewing, two-generational approaches etc.)
- Mitigate risk of worker burnout, evaluate client-to-worker ratios to ensure access and availability of workers
- Informed Choice and Bridge Assessments

Equity & Access

Majority of respondents report alleviating judgement/ stigma is most helpful in achieving goals. The need for better communication, available opportunities, and program explanation, is noted across all surveys and methodologies. Fair treatment regarding race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion or political beliefs, and support from workers is an integral approach for overcoming barriers and challenges.

Suggestions to address equity and access from respondents include:

- Holistic approach to overcoming barriers that employs participants’ assets, needs, interests, goals, cultural competency and supports the whole family
- Build trusting relationships focusing on strengths
- Implement person-centered practices to increase client engagement
- Expanded allowable job search activities, remove rules around primary and secondary activities
- Increase hours for MI or Substance abuse treatment
- Distance to mandated office visit was too far away, so include more home visits/electronic options and workbook activities from home to include potential provision of technology to assist with those tasks

The Urban Institute’s report notes similar findings as those found in respondent surveys. Karmpan et. al. (2018) report 95% of people who perceived unfair treatment or judgement, based on their race or ethnicity when applying for public assistance, said they faced a consequence from or acted in response to that experience.² Over 40% of those report disruptions to their receipt of social services (Pratt & Hahn, 2021).²⁷

Strategies to address equity and access from research and site visits include:

- Evaluate policies for disproportionate burden on populations such as benefit capped children
- Training for understanding and narrative change about bias, culture, and people in poverty
- Utilize community-based enrollment and navigator programs
- Streamlining application processes
- Increase racial diversity of frontline staff
- States like Connecticut have implemented a program advisory board. This has allowed equity in voice. The board compensates parents for their time. One example of this outcome is the development of benefits cliff calculator and evolved from a calculator to a broader tool and focus on career pathways.²⁸

“In my experience the treatment I received by various staff, mainly intake workers was quite negative and caused me a lot of stress and anxiety. I did not feel safe tapping into these resources and sometimes went without in an attempt to avoid judgement and bias comments that were implied and directly communicated to me.”

NEXT STEPS

The information garnered through this process will help to inform subsequent planning and future decision making, specifically in the development of changes within state policies and practice. This work will continue until the EA Division has developed a strategy to modernize services an implementation plan. EA recognizes the need for assistance with planning and implementation of strategy.

EA will continue the work of modernization with the support of OFA-Technical Assistance. The North Dakota Department of Human Services Economic Assistance Division was recently awarded 18 months of technical assistance through the TANF Learning Community.

OUTCOME 1

Prioritize and implement evidence-based strategies. Develop an implementation plan to address key findings, including changes within policies and practice.

OUTCOME 2

Develop a strategy to maintain relationships with state and federal partners, community-based agencies and tribal organizations and governments.

OUTCOME 3

Build internal capacity to develop responsive and evolving systems.





REFERENCES

1. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2021, March 31). Policy Basics: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families>
2. Karmpan, M., Gonzalez, D., Zuckerman, S., Adams, G. (2018, December 20). What Explains the Widespread Material Hardship among Low-Income Families with Children?. Urban Institute. What Explains the Widespread Material Hardship among Low-Income Families with Children? | Urban Institute
3. United States Census Bureau. (n.d.) American Community Survey Data. Retrieved December 6th, 2021, from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>
4. 2020 Decennial Census. (n.d.). How many people live in North Dakota? IndyStar. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from North Dakota Demographics and Housing 2020 Decennial Census | indystar.com
5. U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics. (n.d.). Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Retrieved December 6, 2021, from Bureau of Labor Statistics Data (bls.gov)
6. North Dakota Indian Affairs. (n.d.). Tribal Nations. Retrieved December 29, 2021, from Tribal Nations | Indian Affairs Commission, North Dakota
7. Administration for Children & Families. (2021, November 1). Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients, Fiscal Year 2020. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients Fiscal Year 2020 (hhs.gov)
8. North Dakota Job Service Labor Market Information. (n.d.) North Dakota Cost of Living by County. Retrieved December 20, 2021 from NDLMi - North Dakota Cost of Living Dashboard
9. United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. Retrieved December 6, 2021, from https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saiper/#/?map_geoSelector=aa_c&s_state=38&s_year=201912. Adamczyk, A. (2020, July 23). This is the average unemployment insurance payment in every U.S. state without the extra \$600 in federal aid. CNBC Make It. Average unemployment insurance payment in each U.S. state (cnbc.com)
10. Kids Count Data Center. (n.d.). Children in Poverty (100 percent poverty) in North Dakota. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved December 30, 2021 from Child poverty statistics in the U.S. (kidscount.org)
11. North Dakota Department of Transportation. (n.d.). Transit Providers Information. Retrieved December 29, 2021, from <https://www.dot.nd.gov/divisions/localgov/transit.htm>.
12. Adamczyk, A. (2020, July 23). This is the average unemployment insurance payment in every U.S. state without the extra \$600 in federal aid. CNBC Make It. Average unemployment insurance payment in each U.S. state (cnbc.com)
13. Congressional Research Service. (2021, October 13). The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. Retrieved December 13, 2021, from <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10036>
14. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (n.d.). About TANF. Office of Family Assistance. Retrieved December 29, 2021, from About TANF | The Administration for Children and Families (hhs.gov)
15. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2016, August 15). Federal TANF and State MOE Expenditures Summary by ACF-196R Spending Category. Office of Family Assistance. Retrieved December 29, 2021 from Federal TANF and State MOE Expenditures Summary by ACF-196R Spending Category | The Administration for Children and Families (hhs.gov)

16. North Dakota State Government. (n.d.). Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Policy Manual. ND Department of Human Services. Retrieved December 20, 2021, from default (nd.gov) default (nd.gov)
17. North Dakota State Government. (n.d.). Publications About the N.D. Department of Human Services. Retrieved December 20, 2021 from About DHS: Publications: Publications/Research: Department of Human Services: State of North Dakota (nd.gov)
18. American Public Human Services Association. (2021). Core Principles for TANF Modernization. Retrieved December 30th, 2021, from 4251ff7a-5206-4cc3-8e3c-c360b320f9a6.pdf (constantcontact.com)
19. Strategic Doing. (2018). An Introduction to Strategic Doing. Retrieved January 17, 2022, from <https://strategicdoing.net/intro/>
20. Safawi, A. & Schott, L. (2021, January 12). To Lessen Hardship, States Should Invest More TANF Dollars in Basic Assistance for Families. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. To Lessen Hardship, States Should Invest More TANF Dollars in Basic Assistance for Families | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (cbpp.org)
21. Meyer, L., Pavetti, L. (2021, January 28). TANF Improvements Needed to Help Parents Find Better Work and Benefit from an Equitable Recovery. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/tanf-improvements-needed-to-help-parents-find-better-work-and>
22. O'Neill Hayes, T. & VanHorn, M. (2021, June 14). Poverty in the United States. American Action Forum. Poverty in the United States - AAF (americanactionforum.org)
23. University of Wisconsin-Madison. (2021, November 29). The Connection Between Unpredictable Work Schedules and Meeting Basic Household Needs. Institute for research on poverty. The Connection Between Unpredictable Work Schedules and Meeting Basic Household Needs – INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON POVERTY – UW–Madison (wisc.edu)
24. Evans, W. N., Turner, P. S., Kolka, S., & Sullivan, J. X. (2020, March 18). Fighting poverty One family at a time: Experimental Evidence from an Intervention with Holistic, Individualized, Wrap-Around Services. Retrieved December 2, 2021, from https://leo.nd.edu/assets/433913/fighting_poverty_one_family_at_a_time_evans_sullivan_turner.pdf.
25. Savaya, R. (Riki), Bartov, Y., Melamed, S., & Altschuler, D. (2016). Predictors of perceived changes by service users: Working alliance, hope, and burnout. Social Work Research, 40(3), 183–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svw011>
26. Krumer-Nevo, M., & Barak, A. (2007). Service Users and Personal Social Services in Israel. Journal of Social Service Research, 34(1), 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1300/J079v34n01_03
27. Pratt, E. & Hahn, H. (2021, August). What Happens When People Face Unfair Treatment or Judgment When Applying for Public Assistance or Social Services. Urban Institute. What Happens When People Face Unfair Treatment or Judgment When Applying for Public Assistance or Social Services? (urban.org)
28. Connecticut's Career ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster. (n.d.). Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. Retrieved December 30, 2021, from <https://www.ctoec.org/cliff>

APPENDIX

[Appendix A: TANF Customer Experience Survey](#)

[Appendix B: TANF Worker/ Employment Contractor Survey](#)

[Appendix C: Focus Group Analysis](#)

[Virtual Site Visits](#)