NEW JERSEY WORKFIRST

THE DIGNITY OF WORK; THE PRIDE OF INDEPENDENCE

NEW JERSEY STATE PLAN
for
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE
for NEEDY FAMILIES
(TANF)

FFY 2027 - FFY 2029

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INTRODUCTION

New Jersey, pursuant to the statutory requirements of the Work First New Jersey Act, Public Law 1997, c. 13, c. 14, c. 37, and c. 38, established the Work First New Jersey Program (WFNJ). WFNJ, which is New Jersey's assistance component of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, builds and expands upon the basic principles set forth in the Federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, Public Law 104-193.

The WFNJ/TANF assistance program is designed specifically to help families with the resources and supports they need to improve their economic standing and recognizes the importance of employment and child support contributions in a household. WFNJ/TANF clearly recognizes that both parents, whether or not they are the custodial caretakers of their child(ren), share responsibilities for the financial support of their child(ren), as well as all of the developmental aspects which occur throughout childhood.

Aside from certain categories of Federally-exempt individuals, assistance benefits provided to adults under the WFNJ/TANF program are limited to a lifetime maximum of 60 cumulative months, and are considered a temporary cash subsidy to bridge the gap while individuals seek and obtain unsubsidized employment.

In addition to the provision of assistance benefits, the WFNJ program has been modified pursuant to final Federal Regulations at 45 CFR Part 260, et seq. to provide preventive and supportive services to help families maintain self-sufficiency. These services include, but are not limited to, diversion from cash assistance, and pre- and post-TANF supportive services, such as transportation, child care, and case management services.

New Jersey State Plan for Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (FFY 2027)

PUBLIC PROCESS

During the preparation of the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2027 renewal of the New Jersey TANF State Plan, the Department of Human Services is soliciting comments from the public and private sectors. Prior to finalization, a public notice was issued via electronic mail and a draft of the State Plan was posted to the Department of Human Services website. A 45-day period is being offered for obtaining comments regarding the State Plan renewal.

PROGRAM GOALS

In accordance with the PRWORA and the final Federal Regulations at 45 CFR Part 260, et seq., New Jersey's WFNJ/TANF program is being operated in a manner designed to:

1) Provide assistance to families in need so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives or legal guardians standing "in loco parentis";

2) Help families improve their economic standing through job preparation, employment, income supports including child support, and health care coverage;

3) Improve family circumstances for program participants through targeted supports such a behavioral and mental health interventions, family reunification and parenting training and prevent and reduce the incidence of unplanned pregnancies;

4) Encourage two-parent families participation and engagement as appropriate;

5) Promote responsible parenting;

6) Address the work readiness needs of recipients and non-custodial parents;

7) Assisting families able to participate in our workforce by providing intervention and support services to help maintain the economic independence of these families;

8) Provide a variety of post-TANF supportive services to former recipients to help them transition into and remain in the workforce and stabilize their economic situation so that it is sustainable;

9) Provide timely services and assistance to families with a past or present history of family violence, through program requirement waivers, so they can be in a safe and enriching environment;

10) Provide work activity and support services to non-custodial parents so they can better contribute to the support of their child(ren);

11) Prevent and reduce instances of child abuse and neglect by offering comprehensive in-home visitation and nutritional education services; and

12) Increase the health and well-being of children and young adults in families receiving assistance.

The primary objectives of the WFNJ/TANF program are the following:

- To provide the channel by which temporary cash assistance and other services are made available;

- To provide supports and assistance to families so they can participate in our workforce and improve their economic standing through wages, child support and other income supports;

- To actively engage the cooperation and assistance of private/public employers in order to maximize available employment opportunities for WFNJ/TANF participants;

- To establish and implement, through the concept of mutual obligation, an Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP) for all WFNJ/TANF recipients, which is directed at helping recipients gain employment and self-sufficiency;

- To maximize the monetary support of non-custodial parents to help foster the self-sufficiency of WFNJ/TANF participants;

- To address the work readiness needs of individuals who have not completed a high school education, or its equivalent, through the provision of alternative work programs combining education and job experience (work study);

- To provide assistance to recipients in order to address problems of substance use disorders through assessment and appropriate treatment to improve their outcomes;

- To report periodically on the WFNJ program and its impact on clients in order to enhance future planning and program development efforts;

- To conduct training of WFNJ/TANF agency staff to inform them about the dynamics of family violence and how to provide assistance to WFNJ/TANF recipients who are victims of family violence;

- To address issues of family violence through assessments and safety and service plans which are designed to support victims of family violence and address work or participation in a work activity, to the extent possible;

- To coordinate and maximize the use of all public, private and community resources available through all levels of government and the private sector, to provide necessary services/supports to ensure that cash assistance recipients and non-custodial parents secure and maintain employment;

- To provide a variety of viable choices and options to meet WFNJ/TANF participants' diverse child care needs while they engage in work activities;

- To provide a smarter and more efficient administration of all the elements which constitute the service delivery system through enhanced child support enforcement, delivery of benefits via an Electronic Benefit Transfer program (EBT), and structuring the child care service delivery system to be maintained by a single entity which coordinates and administers the provision of all child care services;

- To provide a non-assistance cash payment as well as supportive services through the Early Employment Initiative (EEI) to individuals who apply for cash assistance benefits. These otherwise eligible individuals will be diverted from receiving cash assistance if they are successful in securing employment prior to the case being granted cash assistance benefits;

- To assist recipients who are likely eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in applying for SSI benefits
- To provide working families with low-incomes with short-term emergency services to prevent homelessness, stabilize housing, and maintain self-sufficiency;
- To provide enhanced housing assistance services to non-employable WFNJ cash assistance recipients who have utilized all housing benefits available; and
- To provide post-TANF supports such as child care and transportation to help families transition out of the program.

THE WFNJ/TANF PROGRAM

Cash Assistance

The Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development (DHS/DFD) is the agency responsible for supervising the WFNJ/TANF program at the State level. WFNJ/TANF cash assistance and social services are administered at the local level by the 21 county agencies, under DFD supervision, and through various contracts with vendors for certain services. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) is responsible for WFNJ employment-directed and workforce development activities. Employment-directed and workforce development activities are administered at the local One-Stop Career Centers (OSCC) under LWD supervision. By integrating the WFNJ/TANF population into the OSCC system, opportunities for self-sufficiency, employment retention and career advancement are maximized.

New Jersey's WFNJ/TANF program provides cash assistance to eligible families with children. In addition to cash assistance benefits, WFNJ provides a variety of supports to aid families in obtaining and maintaining employment. These supports include, but are not limited to: referrals to health care coverage through Medicaid, food assistance through SNAP, child care, transportation, work activity substance use disorder treatment, parenting and nutritional education services through home visitation and assistance to survivors of family violence.

The program provides recipients with job preparation, work experience, training, and support services to help them enter the workforce. WFNJ also provides support services to income-eligible working families. These services are provided with Federal TANF funds, State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) dollars, and/or State funds which are not designated as MOE. Services are provided either directly or through contracts for services.

Families applying for WFNJ cash assistance must comply with certain requirements in order to apply for WFNJ benefits. These initial requirements are cooperation with child support to establish paternity and obtain, modify, or enforce child support and medical support orders, assign all rights to child and spousal support to the county agency, and agree to cooperate with work requirements. Unless deferred from the work requirement, all WFNJ recipients must also register for work. When applicants have demonstrated compliance with these initial requirements, the application process for WFNJ benefits may proceed.

As part of the application process, families must:

- Be income and resource eligible,
- Provide all necessary documentation,
- Sign an Agreement to repay benefits in the event that the family receives significant income or resources,
- Obtain and provide a Social Security Number for all members of the assistance unit, and

- Comply with personal identification requirements, which may employ the use of systems technology processes for the detection of fraud.

When a family fails to comply with any of these requirements at the time of application or redetermination, the applicable members of the assistance unit are ineligible for WFNJ benefits. Those determined ineligible as a result of any of the requirements listed may reapply at any time and have their eligibility determined, provided they comply with all requirements.

A family receiving cash assistance mush also develop an Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP). This plan serves to identify the mutual obligations of both the participant and the county agency. Included in the plan are steps to be taken by the participant to accomplish goals and objectives that can lead to employment and it also serves to identify any barriers to employment, and any support services that the agency will provide to assist the family in participating in meeting their goals. The IRP is a living document, updated each time a participant enters a new activity or at the time of re-determination. An updated IRP ensures that changes in a family's circumstances can be ameliorated with supportive services, and their participation in the program uninterrupted. WFNJ/TANF cases are re-determined for eligibility at least every 12 months.

TANF-eligible adults with a recent work history may be directed to participate in the Early Employment Initiative while their application is being processed. This alternative is meant to re-engage applicants in the workforce by helping them identify employment opportunities if possible while they apply for TANF. Other adult WFNJ family members may be assigned to job search as their first work activity based on individual history or need. While in job search, the participant's skills are further assessed to determine the next appropriate activity. It may be determined that certain participants require basic education remediation, such as English as a Second Language or Adult Basic Education. Others may benefit from vocational education. Since WFNJ is a time-limited assistance, it is important to ensure that clients participate in appropriate work activities that will help them sustain in the long-term.

For those recipients that find employment and no longer require WFNJ cash assistance, time-limited supportive services such as child care, transportation assistance, continued substance use disorder treatment, and post-TANF Case Management Counseling Services are available to assist families in retaining employment. Other programs available to assist employed post-TANF recipients include the Career Advancement Voucher Program (CAVP) and the Supplemental Work Support (SWS) program.

For those families facing significant barriers to employment or other longer-term supports, cash assistance may be extended beyond the 60-month time limit through the use of the 20 percent federal extreme hardship exemption provision via State defined exemptions or participation in the Supportive Assistance for Individuals and Families (SAIF) program.

WFNJ/TANF cash assistance is provided to eligible recipients through the Families First electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system. Administrative operations, such as the Families First EBT benefit issuance system, computer matching, and the Family Assistance Management Information System (FAMIS) automated eligibility system, are funded with Federal TANF funds and/or State MOE dollars.

In addition to cash assistance, Emergency Assistance (EA) can also be provided to TANF-eligible recipients experiencing homelessness. Such assistance includes emergency food, clothing, and shelter and, when necessary to establish the family in permanent shelter, rent, security deposit, moving expenses, utility deposits, and an allowance for replacement furniture. Payment of retroactive rent or mortgage and/or utility payments may also be provided. Services are provided with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funding.

Who is Eligible for Cash Assistance?

An “eligible assistance unit” is comprised of those individuals who are living together and functioning as one economic unit and whose relationship is based upon a blood and/or legal relationship. A legal relationship is one that is created through marriage, adoption, or legal guardianship procedures. Thus, the assistance unit includes the parent(s), related parent person(s), or legal guardian(s), along with his, her, or their children within the age limit specified under the “Eligible Families” section. Children must be living with a relative or legal guardian standing “in loco parentis” in order to be eligible for WFNJ/TANF.

A parent can be either biological or adoptive. Under New Jersey Statute, relatives or persons who adopt children become legally related to such adopted children to the same extent that they are related to any biological children of the adopting parent.

The term “related parent-person” includes, but is not limited to, grandparents, siblings, great-grandparents, uncles or aunts, nephews or nieces, great-great grandparents, great-uncles or aunts, first cousins, great-great-great-grandparents, great-great uncles or aunts, or first cousins once removed. Spouses of parent-persons may also be considered parent- persons, even though death or divorce has terminated the marriage. The establishment of relationship to the child(ren) is required.

A legal guardian is defined at N.J.S.A. 9:3-38, N.J.S.A. 3B:12-12, N.J.S.A. 3B:12-23, N.J.S.A. 3B:12-73d, N.J.S.A. 3B:12A-1 to-6, and N.J.S.A. 30:4C-84 to-88, and serves as a parent-person who has “the right to exercise continuing control over the person or property or both of a child which includes any specific right of control over an aspect of the child’s upbringing, pursuant to a court order.” The legal guardian parent-person stands “in loco parentis.”

Parents may apply for assistance and services on behalf of a child in need and in their care through the Kinship Care Subsidy Program, see below.

Eligible Families

Under WFNJ/TANF, cash assistance is provided to families in need and otherwise eligible one- parent families with a child(ren) under the age of 18, or under the age of 19 who is a full-time student in secondary school or in an equivalent level of vocational or technical training, and is reasonably expected to complete the program before reaching age 19. WFNJ assistance is also provided to families with children up to the age of 21, if they are enrolled in a special education program.

In addition, New Jersey will maintain a "State Only" WFNJ Program for two-parent households who do not meet program work requirements. Determination of non-financial and financial eligibility will remain consistent with Federal TANF and WFNJ criteria. Benefits provided to families under this portion of the WFNJ two-parent program will be provided solely with State funding. Benefits received by two-parent households that are meeting the work requirement will be provided with Federal funds.

Minor Parent Requirements

In addition to complying with all of the nonfinancial eligibility requirements listed below, applicants/recipients who are less than 18 years of age, never married, and the biological parent of a dependent child(ren), and who are caring for the dependent child(ren) must, as a condition of eligibility, reside in a home maintained by, and have benefits paid to, the individual's parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative, and regularly attend a high school or equivalency program of study, or engage in a work activity if the individual has completed secondary education.

WFNJ/TANF allows the following exceptions to the minor parent requirements:

- An alternate adult-supervised living arrangement is required for a minor parent if, the parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative poses a threat to the emotional health or physical safety of the minor parent or the minor parent's child, or is unable to allow the minor parent or minor parent's child to reside in that adult's home.

- An alternative educational or training program for a minor parent is permitted if, based upon an assessment of the person's ability and aptitude, it is determined that the minor parent lacks a reasonable prospect of being able to successfully complete the academic requirements of a high school or equivalency program of study.

Failure of the minor parent to cooperate with the nonfinancial eligibility requirements and the minor parent provisions renders only the minor parent and the minor parent's child ineligible for WFNJ/TANF cash assistance, not the entire assistance unit with whom the minor parent resides.

Non-citizen Eligibility

Only those persons who are either United States citizens or eligible non-citizens shall be eligible for WFNJ/TANF benefits. "Eligible non-citizen" means an individual defined in the provisions of section 431 of the PRWORA, as amended (8 U.S.C. 1641). Eligible non-citizens will be eligible for WFNJ/TANF benefits to the maximum extent permitted by Federal law.

The following individuals who were present in the United States prior to August 22,1996, are considered to be qualified immigrant: legal permanent residents, refugees, asylees, conditional entrants, non-citizens paroled into the United States for at least one year, non-citizens whose deportation has been withheld, non-citizen spouses, non-citizen children victims of family violence, non-citizen parents of children victims of family violence, non-citizen children of parents victims of family violence who fit certain criteria, and Cuban/Haitian entrants.

Non-citizens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 are barred from receiving WFNJ/TANF for their first five years in the United States with the following exceptions: veterans and persons on active duty in the U.S. military, their spouses or unmarried dependent children, refugees, asylees, non-citizens whose deportation is being withheld, Cuban or Haitian entrants, and certain Amerasian immigrants.

Pursuant to section 431 of the PRWORA, as amended (8 U.S.C. 1641), certain non- citizens who are survivors of family violence may be eligible for WFNJ/TANF benefits when the non-citizen (or parent of a child victim of family violence, or children of parents victims of family violence) has been a victim of family violence or subjected to extreme cruelty in the United States by the spouse or parent of the non-citizen. If the individual responsible for the battery or cruelty continues to reside in the same household or family assistance unit as the individual who was subjected to such battery or cruelty, then the non-citizen shall be ineligible for benefits. Additionally, such potentially eligible non-citizens must have been approved or have petition pending which sets forth a prima facie case for the appropriate immigration status as outlined in 8.U.S.C. 1641. During the five-year period in which these survivors of family violence (and their families, as described above) are prohibited from receiving Federal TANF benefits, New Jersey will provide services to these survivors of family violence with State MOE funding.

Kinship Care

Both TANF recipients acting as parent-persons who are caring for a related child who is not their biological or adopted child, may become “kinship legal guardians” for these children pursuant to the Kinship Legal Guardianship Act, P.L. 2001, c. 250, codified at N.J.S.A. 3B:12A-1 to-6 and N.J.S.A. 30:4C-84 to –88, and if otherwise eligible, participate in the Kinship Care Subsidy Program. In addition to relatives, “family friends” can be caretakers provided that Legal Guardianship pursuant to State law that allows a non-relative guardian to act “in loco parentis” has been established. This form of legal guardianship transfers rights to the kinship caregiver that allow for the care and protection of the child Kinship guardians with family incomes of less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level may receive child only Kinship Subsidy Payments of up to $250 per child per month. And kinship legal guardians, who are TANF recipients and whose income is at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, serve as a “payee” for the kinship child and receive Kinship Subsidy Payments of up to $250 per child per month. Payments and services are funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE money.

Assistance Unit: Ineligible Individuals

Individuals who are not eligible for assistance include:

- Not-in Need Parent-persons or guardians caring for a child,
- SSI recipients,
- Persons who have legal custody of a child(ren) but who are unable to prove a permanent legal or blood relationship to such child,
- Individuals who do not meet the citizenship requirements,
- Persons incarcerated in correctional facilities,
- Persons fleeing to avoid prosecution, custody or confinement after conviction, for a crime or attempt to commit a crime which is a felony or high misdemeanor, or who are in violation of probation or parole,
- A person found, on or after August 22, 1996, to have willfully and knowingly fraudulently misrepresented his or her residence in order to obtain means-tested, public assistance benefits in two or more states or jurisdictions is ineligible for 10 years from the date of conviction in a Federal or State court,
- Persons who, after July 1, 1997, intentionally make false or misleading statements or misrepresent, conceal or withhold facts for the purpose of receiving benefits are ineligible for a period of six months for the first violation, 12 months for the second violation, and permanently for the third violation,
- A parent or a parent-person must notify the county agency when a child will be absent from the home for more than 180 consecutive days. Failure to provide notice will render the family ineligible for a period of three months. The family must provide this notice no later than five days after it becomes clear that the minor child will be absent for 180 days.

- Adult recipients who voluntarily quit a job without good cause are ineligible for TANF cash assistance, and
  - If the adult recipient is a member of a family that is applying for TANF cash assistance, the adult who quit the job is ineligible for TANF for a period of 90 days from the date of the quit. The adult may apply for TANF cash assistance on behalf of all other family members.
  - If the adult recipient is a member of an active TANF case at the time of the quit, the entire assistance unit is ineligible for TANF cash assistance benefits for a period of two months from the date the county agency makes the determination that the recipient quit the job.
- Pregnant women with no other children are not eligible for TANF. These individuals are served under the State-funded General Assistance component of WFNJ and the state funds are not claimed as MOE.

Residency

With respect to the level of WFNJ/TANF assistance issued, New Jersey treats families who move into New Jersey from another State no differently than families who have been residing in New Jersey.

WFNJ/TANF Cash Assistance Non-Financial Eligibility Requirements

WFNJ/TANF applicants/recipients, in addition to having to be either U.S. citizens or eligible immigrants and residents of New Jersey, must:

- Cooperate with child support enforcement requirements in establishing paternity and obtaining, modifying and enforcing child support and medical support orders,
- Assign all rights to child and spousal support to the county agency,
- Cooperate with work requirements,
- Apply for any other assistance for which members of the assistance unit may be eligible,
- Be income and resource eligible, including the deeming of income and resources as appropriate,

- Provide all necessary documentation,
- Sign an Agreement to Repay benefits in the event of receipt of lump sum income or resources,
- Satisfy any sanction or repayment obligation incurred pursuant to any Federal or
- State law governing public assistance,
- Obtain and/or provide Social Security Numbers for all members of the assistance unit, and;
- Comply with personal identification requirements, which shall employ the use of high technology processes, such as finger-imaging, for the detection of fraud.

In accordance with WFNJ statute, New Jersey limits an adult recipient's receipt of cash assistance to a lifetime limit of 60 cumulative months, whether or not consecutive. At the end of the adult recipient's 60 cumulative months of receipt of cash assistance, the assistance unit shall no longer be eligible to receive WFNJ/TANF. Individuals under age 18 are subject to the 60-month time limit as long as they remain in the same household in which the 60 months of assistance was received. In the event that an individual received cash assistance as a dependent child and later becomes a member of another adult's assistance unit or an adult head of household, the time during which such dependent child had previously received benefits shall not count towards the 60 cumulative month lifetime limit.

Individuals under age 18 in child-only cases are not subject to the 60-month time limit. Minor parents are not subject to the 60-month time limit in New Jersey because they are not permitted, under WFNJ statute, to be a head of household. In the event that an individual received cash assistance as a minor parent and later becomes a member of another adult's assistance unit or an adult head of household, the time during which such minor parent had previously received benefits shall not count towards the 60 cumulative month lifetime limit.

Federally countable extreme hardship exemptions are permitted via State exemptions or participation in the Supportive Assistance for Individuals and Families (SAIF) program. State exemptions are not time limited for individuals who are over 60 years of age, permanently disabled, sole caretaker of a dependent, chronically unemployable, or subject to family violence.

The SAIF program serves WFNJ recipients that have received benefits for at least 48 months and/or who do not meet State criteria for an exemption from the 60-month time limit. Recipients receive cash assistance benefits and intensive case management services through the SAIF program for up to 24 months. Intensive case management provides additional supports to families that have been unable to become self-sufficient because of significant barriers. Any individual who is exempt from the 60-month time limit may continue to receive services from the SAIF program after exhausting 24 cumulative-months. The SAIF program is funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE money.

New Jersey will not spend TANF funds for adult recipients receiving public assistance beyond 60 months, unless they are part of New Jersey's 20 percent extreme hardship categories. Cases in excess of the permitted 20 percent will be funded as separate State program expenditures and counted as MOE.

WFNJ/TANF Cash Assistance Financial Eligibility Requirements

Once non-financial eligibility status appears to be satisfied, the assistance unit's financial need must be established. Financial eligibility entails evaluating the resources and income available to the assistance unit.

Resources

Resources are defined as all real and personal property, including bank accounts, which are within the control of one or more members of the eligible assistance unit. Resources are considered either countable or exempt. Countable resources are all those resources which are not considered to be exempt. A listing of some exempt resources can be found in Attachment A. Exempt resources are not subject to any liquidation requirement and are not considered in determining WFNJ/TANF financial eligibility or in determining the cash assistance benefit.

The WFNJ/TANF resource limit is $2,000 for an assistance unit. An exemption to the resource limit is allowed for a minor parent living in an alternate adult supervised living arrangement. In this circumstance, the full amount of a special teen alternate living arrangement savings account and all interest and/or dividend earnings from the account are exempt. In addition, Individual Development Accounts are exempt from the WFNJ/TANF resource limit. WFNJ/TANF exempts all motor vehicles, except recreational vehicles.

A voluntary assignment or transfer of income or resources for the explicit purpose of qualifying for WFNJ/TANF cash assistance benefits renders the applicant/recipient and all assistance unit members ineligible for benefits for a period of up to one year from the date of discovery of the transfer. This disqualification period is applied if the income or resources are transferred knowingly in the one-year period prior to application, or if the assistance unit acquires assets after being certified for benefits and then transfers such assets knowingly in order to qualify for cash assistance.

Income

Income can be earned or unearned. Income includes, but is not limited to, child support, commissions, salaries, self-employment earnings, spousal support payments, interest and dividend earnings, wages and unemployment compensation. Income is either countable or exempt. WFNJ/TANF, utilizing prospective budgeting, considers the countable income of all persons in an assistance unit, including any income deemed to assistance unit members as a result of deeming from parents to adolescent parents and from sponsors to eligible immigrants, to determine financial eligibility. Exempt income is not considered in determining financial eligibility or in computing the amount of the cash assistance benefit. A listing of some exempt income can be found at Attachment A.

Initial financial eligibility for cash assistance is determined through a test for an assistance unit applying as a new applicant, re-applicant or reopened case by comparing the total countable income with the maximum income allowed for the appropriate unit size in accordance with Schedule I (See Attachment B). Schedule I income allowances are 150 percent of the maximum benefit levels in Schedule II (See Attachment B). If the assistance unit's income is less than the maximum allowable income level for the appropriate unit size, initial financial eligibility exists. As long as the assistance unit's countable income is less than the applicable benefit level in Schedule II, WFNJ/TANF financial eligibility continues to exist. When the total countable income equals or exceeds the applicable benefit level in Schedule II, then the assistance unit is no longer eligible for WFNJ/TANF cash assistance benefits.

In computing the monthly cash assistance benefit, WFNJ/TANF allows for the application of certain disregards for earned income. If a recipient is employed for 20 hours or more per week, 100 percent of the gross earned income is disregarded for the first full month of employment, 75 percent is disregarded for six consecutive months and 50 percent is disregarded for each additional month of employment thereafter. If a recipient is employed for less than 20 hours per week, 100 percent of the gross earned income is disregarded for the first full month of employment and 50 percent is disregarded for each additional month of employment thereafter.

The earned income disregards are not applied to the earned income of an individual who is not in the eligible assistance unit because of a sanction for failure or refusal to comply with a WFNJ program requirement. The earned income disregards are also not applied to the earned income of an individual who is disqualified for an intentional program violation. In the case of an overpayment caused by a recipient's failure, without good cause, to report earned income on a timely basis, the amount of the overpayment is calculated without application of the earned income disregards. New Jersey requires that recipients report all changes that may affect their eligibility within 10 days of the date of the change except for cases with earned income that are subject to simplified reporting requirements. Only assistance units with countable earned income are eligible for simplified reporting. Such cases need not report changes in earned income until such time as the assistance unit's total income exceeds 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or until the next redetermination, whichever occurs first. However, if the assistance unit does report a change, the county agency shall act on that change. The only change reporting to be encouraged is one that will result in the assistance unit obtaining higher benefits.

These income tests and benefit determinations are applied uniformly for all WFNJ/TANF cash assistance applicants/recipients on an objective and equitable basis. Actions on applications for cash assistance must be taken in a timely manner. Assistance is provided from the date of application, so long as the family was eligible from the time of application.

Non-recurring lump sum income will be subject to repayment of past cash assistance benefits in accordance with the Agreement to Repay, which is signed at the time of application/redetermination. After an Agreement to repay is satisfied, any remaining amount of countable income, if any, will be used to determine a period of ineligibility. This treatment of non-recurring lump sum income applies primarily in cases of unexpected windfalls, and is not applicable in situations where any received lump sum income is designated for a special purpose, such as back medical bills resulting from an accident or injury. SSI payments are not subject to lump sum payment rules. If assistance payments (including emergency assistance) are repaid to a county or municipal agency, in accordance with the agreement to repay, the months of assistance for which cash payments were repaid shall not count toward a recipients' five-year time limit on receipt of public assistance.

Cash Assistance Recipients' Self Sufficiency Requirements

In accordance with PRWORA, New Jersey requires parents or caretakers receiving cash assistance under WFNJ/TANF, unless they are 62 years old or over, a survivor of family violence, or a non-needy caretaker adult in a child only case, to engage in work for a minimum of 35 hours per week. This requirement applies once the State determines that the individual is ready to engage in work or at some time prior to the individual having received 24 months of cash assistance benefits (whether or not the receipt of such cash assistance is consecutive), whichever comes first. Under WFNJ, work-eligible parents in a two-parent family are required to participate for a combined average of at least 35 hours per week between the two parents and at least a combined average of 55 hours if the family receives federally funded child care assistance. In order to ensure the work requirement is met, New Jersey obtains employer pay stubs, employer reports and other employer-issued documentation from work-eligible individuals or employers to substantiate suitability, time and attendance of a work activity. This information serves as documentation and verification of hours worked and is maintained in the recipient's case file. In addition, periodic assessments are conducted as an ongoing tool in determining an individual's continued program eligibility and compliance with the work activity requirement.

Assistance benefits provided under the WFNJ/TANF program are time-limited and generally considered a temporary cash subsidy to bridge the gap and assist individuals in seeking and obtaining unsubsidized employment.

Applicants are informed that receipt of WFNJ/TANF cash assistance benefits is limited to a lifetime maximum of 60 months and that seeking and accepting employment is the primary requirement for receipt of continuing cash assistance. WFNJ/TANF cash assistance benefits are provided with Federal TANF funds and/or State MOE dollars.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 402(a)(1)(B)(iv), New Jersey elected not to require parents or parent-persons who have received assistance for two months to participate in community service, unless exempt or participating in a work activity. New Jersey requires all such participants to enter an appropriate work activity as soon as the first month of receipt of WFNJ/TANF.

The Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP)

An IRP is developed jointly by the WFNJ and LWD caseworkers and the WFNJ/TANF parent or parent-person, including teen parents, survivors of family violence, and recipients with substance use problems, to outline services and activities needed by family members in order to establish goals toward achieving self-sufficiency. New applicants who become eligible for WFNJ/TANF must complete an IRP at the time of application and each time their activity changes. The IRP is designed as an evolutionary tool that is modified to address the recipient's changing needs/circumstances. A WFNJ/TANF parent or caretaker relative must comply with all provisions agreed upon in the IRP including, but not limited to, attending activities or services to improve his or her skill levels or to address educational needs, participating in other services provided through referrals (such as medical services and/or rehabilitation for purposes of restoring or improving employability), or by maintaining employment, when appropriate.

Assistance Authorized Solely Under Prior Law

Child Protection & Permanency (CP&P) Emergency Assistance (EA)

Through a partnership and collaboration with the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency, EA services may be provided to families in instances where a lack of adequate housing is impeding the placement of a child. EA services may also be provided in order to facilitate the return of a child from foster care placement when a lack of adequate housing exists. These services are funded through the Federal TANF grant.

Work, Education and Training Activities

Most cash assistance recipients are required to participate in employment and work readiness activities. The activities under New Jersey's WFNJ/TANF program include the following:

1. Unsubsidized employment: includes all full or part-time paid employment that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program. Unsubsidized employment includes paid employees of private and public sector employers, self-employed individuals such as paid family day care providers, and participants in registered paid apprenticeship programs.

2. Subsidized private sector employment: includes paid employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing a recipient. Subsidized private sector employment includes:
   - Supported employment which provides mentoring services to employers and employees with disabilities while they are working.
   - A grant diversion or work supplementation program to subsidize up to 100 percent of wages. This program involves employment on a temporary basis with a promise of permanent employment once the individual satisfactorily completes the training program.
   - Sheltered workshops which are used for chronically unemployable and severely disabled individuals. These workshops involve light assembly work or collation of materials for mailing and are subsidized by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or through TANF.

3. Subsidized public sector employment: includes paid employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing a recipient. Employment opportunities could include library workers, community recreational workers, teachers' aides, and municipal service employees. Subsidized public sector employment includes:
   - Supported employment which provides mentoring services to employers and employees while they are working, and
   - A grant diversion/work supplementation program to subsidize up to 100 percent of wages. This program involves employment on a temporary basis with a promise of permanent employment once the individual satisfactorily completes the training program.

4. Work experience: is a work activity that provides an individual with an opportunity to acquire the general skills, training, knowledge, and work habits necessary to obtain employment for the value of the public assistance being provided. The purpose of work experience is to improve the employability of those who cannot find unsubsidized employment. Work Experience includes Community Work Experience Programs

5. Community Work Experience Program (CWEP): is a program with employers who agree to provide training opportunities at local worksites. Sponsorship is limited to non-profit agencies, such as federal, local, State government, and not-for-profit community-based employers. CWEP activity is limited to public service projects in fields such as health, social services, environmental protection, education, urban and rural development and/or redevelopment, welfare, recreation, public activities, public safety, and child and adult care. Some examples of work experience positions include receptionist at a local housing authority; grounds worker at a municipal park or child care assistant at a childcare provider. The primary purpose is to provide work experience and training to enable participants to participate in and learn from an employment setting.

6. On-the-job training (OJT): is an on-the-job training position with an employer in the private or public sector given to a qualified WFNJ/TANF participant. A qualified participant is one who has completed an objective assessment, an Employability Plan Development Tool (EPDT), and an IRP, and who has been referred to and hired by the employer. An agreement is developed with the employer to provide occupational training in exchange for reimbursement of up to fifty percent (50%) of the participant's wage rate to compensate for the employer's extraordinary costs. OJT providers may be contracted for up to six months.

7. Job search and job readiness: consists of activities designed to help an individual find employment or improve an individual's employment prospects, including: the act of seeking or obtaining employment, preparation to seek or obtain employment, life skills training as well as short-term substance use treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities for those who are otherwise employable. (Such treatment or therapy must be determined to be necessary and certified by a qualified medical or mental health professional).

8. Community service: is an activity for participants who cannot otherwise obtain employment and need to increase their employability by improving interpersonal skills, job retention skills, stress management, and job problem solving, and by learning to attain a balance between job and personal responsibilities. Community service programs are structured programs and activities in which TANF recipients perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. Community service programs are limited to projects that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social service, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, recreation, public facilities, public safety, and child care. Activities could include work with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, AmeriCorps, Big Brother/Big Sisters, and volunteer work in hospitals, libraries, or shelters.

9. Vocational education/career and technical education: consists of organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations. Vocational education involves instruction to provide skills required for entry-level employment in specific occupational areas and career clusters (such as customer service and retail trades). Schools that provide this type of activity must be on the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development Eligible Training Provider List and be an approved/licensed school in New Jersey. These schools include, but are not limited to, community-based organizations, private for-profit organizations, community/county colleges, vocational-technical schools, and adult high schools. Vocational educational training includes: Associate or Bachelor's Degrees in the following categories: Business Administration, Culinary Management, Dental Hygiene, Drafting and Design, Early Childhood Management, Electronics Technology, Interior Design, Legal Assisting, Medical Laboratory Technician, Registered Nurse, Radiography, Respiratory Care, and other degree categories that are listed as demand occupations. Vocational Certificate categories are: Automotive Service Technician, Barbering, Brick Masonry, Carpentry, Child Care Center Operator, Corrections Officer, Cosmetology, Credit Union Service Marketing, Dental Assisting, Electricity, Facials Specialty, Heating and Air Conditioning, Massage Therapy, Medical Secretary, Customer Service and Retail Trades, Network Support Services, Office Systems Specialist, Paramedic, Plumbing, Practical Nursing, Teller Training, Travel Agency Operations, Webmaster and Web Development, and other certificate categories for demand occupations.

10. Job skills training directly related to employment: means training or education for job skills required by an employer to provide an individual with the ability to obtain employment or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace. Job skills training directly related to employment promotes basic skills including English as a second language, computer and workplace literacy, work values, occupational and transferable skills, personal career portfolio development, and other skills necessary for the individual to obtain employment. All training and basic skills will be targeted to a particular occupation. This activity could include certificates that enhance occupational skills such as a Forklift and Hazardous Material Certificate or Associate or Bachelor degree programs for specific occupational skills at State certified colleges or universities. It also includes all services and programs described in the vocational education/career and technical education section.

11. Education directly related to employment: is an activity for adult clients who have not received a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and need further education to obtain a specific occupation, job, or job offer. Specific occupational skill development can be provided by the Workforce Learning Links through the OSCC. This activity includes a course of study to attain a GED, when required by the individual's career goals.

12. Satisfactory school attendance at a secondary school or course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalence, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school: This activity requires regular attendance, in accordance with the requirements of a secondary school or course of study, leading to a certificate of general equivalence, for recipients who have not completed secondary school or received such a certificate.

Sanctions

Most cash assistance recipients are required to participate in employment and work readiness activities. Failure to participate in a WFNJ work activity, without documented good cause or an identified barrier that prevents participation is considered noncompliance and will result in a sanction which can lead to a loss of cash assistance benefits.

Sanctions are imposed in a graduated manner for continued noncompliance (i.e., first month per capita reduction, second month case is suspended and no assistance is granted, and at third month the case is closed). Sanction penalties differ according to whether the sanction applies to a single adult, two-parent family, minor parent, or dependent child 16 years of age or older. Agency staff will attempt to contact an individual before the sanction is imposed to address any issues that may be causing the individual not to comply. Any case that remains in sanction status for two consecutive months will be closed at the end of that two-month period. The individual may re-apply but must demonstrate compliance before the case is re-opened.

A single custodial parent with a child under age 13 will not be sanctioned for failure to comply with a work requirement if it is substantiated that failure to participate is due one or more of the following reasons:

(1) Unavailability of appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from the parent's home or work site;

(2) Unavailability or unsuitability of informal child care by a relative or under other arrangements;

(3) Unavailability of appropriate and affordable formal child care arrangements.

"Appropriate child care" means that the child care provider is open for the hours and days that the parent would need child care in order to comply with the work requirement, the provider is able and willing to provide child care services (including being able to serve a child with a disability, if that is the case), and the provider meets all other regulatory standards.

"Reasonable distance" means that the child care provider is located at a site that allows the parent to get from home to the provider and then to the work activity within 90 minutes.

If the following minimum requirements are not met, then an "informal child care arrangement" is unsuitable:

(1) there must be satisfactory results of a Child Abuse Record Information (CARI) check,

(2) there must be a negative background check on all household members 14 years of age and older,

(3) there must be a cleared criminal background check for the provider and all household members 18 years of age and older, (4) there must be a satisfactory health and safety inspection of the home using the "Self Arranged Care Inspection" and "Interview Checklists," and, there must be a standard interview with the provider and family members. Providers that do not meet the above criteria cannot operate as an Approved Home.

A child care arrangement is considered affordable for a child care subsidy program participant as long as the cost does not exceed DHS/DFD's reimbursement rate.

Work Supports

Work Expense Allowances for Cash Assistance Recipients

Supportive service payments are allowed for services that a WFNJ recipient needs to participate in WFNJ/TANF work or work readiness activities. Such payments are not an entitlement. These services are provided when no other source of support is available. Supportive services primarily include child care payments, transportation services, a limited allowance to cover necessary work-related expenses, and family violence intervention. WFNJ/TANF services are provided either directly, or through contracts for services. These services are provided with Federal TANF funds and/or State MOE dollars.

The following work expense allowances may be provided:

- Transportation allowances up to $6.00 a day (or more with DFD approval), or transit passes;

- Employment-directed activities allowances, up to a lifetime maximum of $500.00 for items such as clothing (uniforms), tools, car maintenance, licenses, and testing fees. Based upon an assessment of individual needs and circumstances and approval by DFD, an additional allowance not to exceed $300.00 may be authorized over the lifetime of the case;

- An allowance, not to exceed $500.00, may be provided over the lifetime of the case for a one-time moving expense allowance when the recipient has a firm job offer and the allowance is necessary to secure the employment. This allowance is in addition to the work expense allowances noted above, and is subject to DFD approval.

- Employed post-TANF recipients are eligible for a subsidized bus or train pass. These services are funded as separate State program expenditures and counted as MOE.

Career Advancement Voucher Program

The Career Advancement Voucher Program (CAVP) is available to eligible post-TANF recipients who are employed and have expressed an interest in career advancement. The CAVP provides funds for educational or occupational training opportunities. The program is intended to foster career advancement for individuals who demonstrate that participation will result in a potential for growth in their current job or increased potential growth in a new job. Eligibility for this program is limited to post-TANF recipients whose cases have closed within the past 24 months and whose income is less than 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. This program is administered by LWD. Services are funded as separate State program expenditures and counted as MOE.

Supplemental Work Support Program

The Supplemental Work Support Program is a voluntary program for TANF recipients who have been in receipt of benefits for at least the last six months and who during that time have been employed a minimum of 20 hours per week for at least four months. Although still eligible for a partial grant, these individuals may voluntarily close their TANF cases and receive a monthly supplemental work support payment to help offset the cost of working.

By closing their case, these individuals will be able to maintain employment and not draw from their 60-month lifetime limit on receipt of TANF cash assistance benefits. This support can be provided for up to 24 months so long as the assistance unit would have remained eligible to receive a partial assistance benefit but chooses to keep their TANF case closed and provided the assistance unit's income is less than 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level at redetermination. Supplemental work support payments are intended to cover transportation costs including car maintenance, auto insurance, parking costs, etc. for a vehicle used for work, child care costs over and above the amount paid through the post-TANF transitional child care program, clothing and uniforms necessary for employment, meals at work, tools, equipment and materials incidental to the job, training costs above the amount provided through the Career Advancement Voucher Program, etc. This program is funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funds.

Child Care

Child care supportive service benefits are provided when child care is needed so that a WFNJ/TANF adult can accept employment, remain employed, or participate in WFNJ/TANF employment-directed or educational activities, or to complete the initial determination of employability, or to allow a teen parent to remain in high school. Participants who are employed and in receipt of WFNJ/TANF cash assistance benefits shall be required to contribute toward the cost of child care services.

Early Care and Education

Child Care and Early Childhood Programs

Those families whose WFNJ/TANF cash assistance cases are closed are eligible for up to 24 consecutive months of child care benefits from the date of the case closing, provided that the adults included in the assistance unit are employed. Child care is also provided to working families with low-incomes. All families are also provided child care resource and referral services in addition to child care placement services.

Child care and quality early childhood education services for TANF recipients, post-TANF and income eligible families are offered by a variety of providers, including but not limited to: publicly and/or privately funded non-profit child care centers and private for-profit child care centers licensed by either the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the Department of Health (DOH), youth camp programs, before and after school child care for pre-kindergarten programs operated under the supervision of the State Department of Education (DOE) and local school districts, family child care providers registered through the contracted sponsoring agencies and home based providers approved by DFD.

Child care services for cash assistance recipients are provided with both State MOE and Federal TANF funds. Services provided under DOE are funded as separate State program expenditures and counted as MOE. Funding for extended child care benefits for families with income levels of less than 250 percent of the FPL is provided through State MOE money. Funding for extended child care benefits for post-TANF families with income levels in excess of 250 percent of the FPL is provided through State-only money for up to 24 months from the date of case closing.

For the TANF program, expended child care funds are tied to individual children. Early childhood education for pre-kindergarten programs is operated under the auspices of the State DOE. The pre-kindergarten program is funded by separate State MOE funds. The State expanded this program to provide before and after school and full time summer child care (known as Wraparound child care). This program uses licensed, existing early childhood and child care programs in the community, that contract with a district receiving Preschool Education Aid (PEA) funds to provide pre-Kindergarten educational services. Families who have income up to 200 percent of the FPL are eligible to apply for DOE Wraparound child care services. Expenditure claims for these children are based on the formula contained in Attachment C (education services).

Financial Education and Asset Development

New Jersey Individual Development Accounts

The New Jersey Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) Program is being operated in conjunction with the Department of Community Affairs and its designated entities. NJ IDAs are being made available to both TANF and post-TANF recipients, living with a dependent child, whose incomes are below 200 percent of the FPL. Client contributions are matched dollar for dollar up to specific amounts yearly for the purpose of saving for a primary residence, post-secondary education, and qualified business capitalization. Parallel to the savings process, participants are required to attend a basic financial education course and an asset specific training program. The NJ IDA program is funded with Federal TANF funds.

Refundable Earned Income Tax Credits

New Jersey Earned Income Tax Credit Program

Similar to the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the New Jersey EITC is made available to qualifying individuals and families with low-incomes in order to supplement their yearly incomes and promote independence and self-sufficiency. For purposes of claiming State MOE funds, the definition of a “qualifying child” parallels that found in the Internal Revenue Code used for Federal Income Tax reporting purposes but does not include foster care children, disabled children over age 21 and foster-care pre-adoptive children. This program is funded in part with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funding.

Non-Recurrent Short Term Benefits

Kinship Wraparound Services

Kinship Wraparound service's goal is to offer supports to adults caring for teens who are unable to live with their parents by providing related adults with the supports necessary to take these children into their homes. These supports make it possible for the children to live with family members instead of ending up in the foster care system and have better outcomes. The program provides up to $500 annually for services and supports such as furniture, clothes, computers, opportunities to participate in sports, and non-sporting activities such as tutoring, summer camps, or other extracurricular activities which cultivate life- long habits. These supports can help families support a teen and reduce outcomes such as teen pregnancy. This program is implemented by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families through a memorandum of understanding. These services are available to families at or under 250 percent of the FPL. The program is funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funds.

Social Services for the Homeless

Post-TANF recipients and other income-eligible families with income levels of no more than 250 percent of the FPL are eligible for services to prevent homelessness and to help secure housing. These services include emergency shelter placements, prevention services (e.g., security deposits, back-rent, utility deposits, etc.), 24-hour emergency homeless assistance services, and limited case management services. This is a short-term benefit designed to deal with a specific crisis situation or episode of need and it is time-limited. This program is funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funds.

Supportive Services

Second Chance Homes

A TANF eligible parent under the age of 18 who is unable to live with a parent, legal guardian or other adult relative is placed in Second Chance Home (SCH). SCH also known as Alternative Adult Supervised Supportive Living Arrangement provides a "host home" for minor parents and children. SCH act as the protective payee to receive and administer cash assistance payments on behalf of the minor parent and provide the minor parent and child with room and board. The program is funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funds.

Behavioral Health Initiative

The Behavioral Health Initiative (BHI) is designed to assist WFNJ recipients, unable to fully or partially engage in work activities due to having a mental health condition or a substance use disorder and are in need of evaluation and treatment. A WFNJ recipient is offered a referral to the BHI Care Coordinator for an assessment. The specialized BHI Care Coordinators provide recipients with access to the necessary mental health supports and treatment.

A WFNJ/TANF recipient who identifies him or herself as having a substance use disorder will be offered a referral to meet with a Substance Use Care Coordinator for a substance use assessment and adequate treatment. Cooperation in the program is voluntary if the recipient is not in sanction status. Substance use assessments and subsequent treatment are mandatory for TANF recipients in order to waive the work activity requirement or sanction status, if there is evidence indicating that substance use is a barrier to engaging in work activities. If a person is in sanction status, the sanction can be lifted once the individual cooperates with the substance use program. Once the individual has cooperated, the sanction can be lifted.

BHI is funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE money. When appropriate, a TANF eligible adult may be referred to the substance use program offered by the Department of Children and Families, even if the family is not receiving WFNJ/TANF cash assistance.

Services for non-cash assistance recipients are funded as separate State program expenditures and counted as MOE.

Family Violence Option (FVO)

The WFNJ/TANF Program has implemented the PRWORA Family Violence Option (FVO) which has established standards and strategies for identifying victims of domestic violence, referring recipients to services and providing temporary waivers of WFNJ program requirements to provide timely services to a family. TANF agency staff trained in family violence screen recipients for a history of family violence throughout the WFNJ benefit process.

When appropriate, recipients are referred for an individualized risk assessment, after which a service plan is developed by a person trained in domestic violence with the recipient. The FVO service plan identifies which WFNJ program requirements are being waived and lists the services being offered to assist the recipient. Family violence risk and the need for program waivers are re-determined no less often than every six months and the service plan is revised to reflect any changes in the recipient's circumstances. Recipients with a history of family violence may also be referred to a designated Domestic Violence or Sexual Assault Services Program for counseling, alternative interventions and other appropriate supportive services such as the New Jersey Address Confidentiality Program (ACP). These services are provided with Federal TANF funds and/or State MOE dollars.

Services for Children and Youth

At Risk Youth

Outreach to At-Risk Youth (OTARY) programs are designed to prevent crime/juvenile delinquency and deter gang involvement by providing enhanced recreational, vocational, educational, outreach and supportive services to youth ages 13 to 18, with the option to serve youth up to the age 21. The programs are located in communities with demonstrated high crime and gang violence and are open to youth regardless of their involvement with DCF. OTARY programs partner with schools, local government, law enforcement, and other community providers to reduce the impact of risk factors on youth while increasing protective factors and developing resiliency. Most youth receiving services from this program are within WFNJ/TANF or TANF like families whose income is at or below130 percent of the federal Poverty Level. These services are provided with Federal TANF funds and State MOE dollars.

Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Initiative and School Based Youth Services

The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (APPI) seeks to reduce New Jersey's teen pregnancy rate by providing counseling, sex education, and referrals to family planning services for teens. The APPI supports adolescent pregnancy prevention efforts through a variety of programs such as the Parent Linking Program (PLP), NJ School Based Youth Services Programs (SBYSP), and the Office of School Linked Services in the DCF. The APPI also consists of the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention County Opportunities Initiative and a Hotline that operates through Parents Anonymous NJ (1-800-THE KIDS) for teens and their parents concerned about pregnancy. All of the programs serve both males and females.

The APPI and the PLP coordinate with the already existing TANF funded School Based Youth Services Programs (SBYSP). The SBYSP provides a comprehensive set of services on a "one stop shopping" basis at urban, rural, and suburban high school sites, with at least one site in each of the 21 counties. The SBYSP is also established in some middle school and elementary school sites. Each site provides connections to health care (including family life education), mental health and family counseling, job and employment training, substance use counseling, recreation, and referral services. Programs operate before, during, and after school, and during the summer.

In conjunction with SBYSP sites, the APPI also provides sites in or near high schools. The APPIs target teens at risk of pregnancy, and include mentoring, family life education, and other support services through the services of a skilled social worker, with coordinated, collaborative partnerships in the school and community.

Although all of the APPI programs focus on prevention of first pregnancies, the PLPs focus on the prevention of subsequent pregnancies. The PLP provides child care at the school site and intensive case management and social services, access to health services, parenting education, and relationship education to increase the teen parents' ability to relate effectively.

A hotline, 1-800-THE-KIDS, has been established to take calls 24 hours per day on teen issues, specifically teen pregnancy prevention. Other efforts include public relations (i.e. cards, posters and Public Service Announcements (PSA) promoting the hotline, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Month activities at the State and local level, and the staffing of an interactive web-site (www.sexetc.org) through the Rutgers University Network for Family Life Education, which has a nationally acclaimed newsletter by teens and for teens, known as *Sex, Etc.).*

The APPI County Opportunities Initiative provides funds to each of the 21 counties to create programs specifically designed to reduce teen pregnancy. It provides referrals to appropriate community based agencies and family planning organizations.

In addition to these efforts, the New Jersey Department of Health maintains administrative oversight for the Abstinence Education Projects. An additional collaboration is the NJ Teen Prevention Education Program (PEP). Teen PEP is a collaboration between the New Jersey Department of Health and the Princeton Center for Leadership Training and Health Interested Teens' Own Program on Sexuality, Inc. (HiTOPS). Teen PEP is based on the peer-to-peer education model developed by the Princeton Center and the nationally recognized sexual health curriculum developed by HiTOPS, Inc. The collaborating partners work with interested high schools across New Jersey to institute the Teen PEP sexual health course that is consistent with the curriculum standards developed by the New Jersey Department of Education. Several of these services are supported by Federal TANF funds.

Independent Living Skills Training/Supports

Independent Living Skills Training/Supports are provided to youth who are aging out of the DCF's care. The skills training and supports provided are meant to help youth enhance their independence, including money management, employment directed skills, and good decision making as well as prevent outcomes like teen pregnancy. One-time services or goods that will help youth become employed or go back to school are also provided. For example, youth may be provided with services to assist in finding a place to live, transportation to secure housing or employment, or an initial basic furniture purchase. Other items that facilitate independence such as tuition reimbursement and payment for driving lessons or car insurance can also be provided. Youth receiving these funds participate in life skills education that teaches pregnancy prevention. Federal TANF funds are used for this purpose.

New Jersey Youth Corps

New Jersey Youth Corps is a statewide program that was designed to help young people earn their General Education Diploma (GED) while acquiring valuable life skills and job readiness experience. Most New Jersey Youth Corps centers are located in lower income communities and serve TANF or TANF eligible youth. The five essential components of New Jersey Youth Corps are community service projects, personal and career counseling, employability and life skills, education development and continuing support services. Pregnancy prevention services to youth is also provided by New Jersey Youth Corps to youth who are either at risk of pregnancy or are teen parents at risk of subsequent pregnancies. To support pregnancy prevention, the Youth Corps assists youth by promoting education and self- esteem, employability and self-sufficiency. The New Jersey Youth Corps is funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funds.

Efforts Re: Statutory Rape

The New Jersey Advisory Council on Adolescent Pregnancy prioritizes efforts surrounding statutory rape. The Council has committed itself to support the efforts by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division on Women, as well as New Jersey Law Enforcement agencies to provide education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded in scope to include men.

Within the Division on Women, the Office of the Prevention of Violence against Women (OPVAW) provides legislative analysis, public education, and policy and program development on issues of violence against women, including statutory rape. The OPVAW also houses grant programs related to violence against women such as the State Rape Care Program, which provides funding for a rape crisis program in each county. Other grant programs housed in the OPVAW include Prevention of Violence against Women Grants and Police Training Grants. As a continued part of public education on issues of violence against women, the Division on Women maintains current information on the agency's website including publicly scheduled meetings of the New Jersey Advisory Commission on the Status of Women and the Governor's Advisory Council Against Sexual Violence (GACASV). Notices of these meetings are also published in various newspapers at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

The New Jersey Coalition against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is the collective voice for sexual violence prevention programs and for survivors of sexual assault in New Jersey. Many of the sexual violence prevention programs, including education, are provided by NJCASA member programs. The NJCASA offers free confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can be accessed through the State's hotline number (1-800-601-7200) or each county's rape crisis hotline.

NJCASA has several public information campaigns, which include TV PSAs, radio PSAs, billboards throughout the state and posters distributed to medical and law enforcement agencies as well as to other organizations. The NJCASA has a statewide public education campaign called "Begin by Believing.".

NJCASA's "Let's Talk About It" Campaign includes initiatives to reach out to various community groups across the State. The goal is to promote community discussions of sexual assault topics, including statutory rape, to promote the compassionate treatment of survivors and their loved ones in our communities.

NJCASA has a public education campaign, entitled, "You Have the Right Not to Remain Silent." The goal of this initiative is to get the word out that survivors of sexual assault have a right to an advocate. Many survivors of statutory rape are unaware of their right to a rape care advocate. Rape care advocates ensure that survivors know their rights and options.

The NJCASA provides Sexual Assault Reduction Educators who speak to high school students about preventive measures, what to do if they should become victimized, and some self-defense techniques. The NJCASA provides spokespersons for workshops and community groups. Their spokespersons have testified to the State legislature. The NJCASA's work with men addressing male accountability regarding violence against women is gaining national attention. Several statewide events have included "The Men's Initiative" and "A Call to Men: Becoming Part of the Solution to End Violence Against Women" National Conference.

The NJCASA website (www.njcasa.org) provides updated information and resources such as events, support group meetings and locations, and age-specific statistics. Additional information includes television public service announcements entitled, "You Didn't Choose" and "Male Accountability Deaf Ears" as well as radio public service announcements. NJCASA develops written curricula for various audiences regarding sexual violence issues, including statutory rape. Subjects include Law Enforcement and First Responder/Patrol Response and Prevention.

NJCASA developed brochures in Bengali, Hindi, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. Paired with Language Line hotline translation services, the brochures provide local programs with a tool for reaching more of New Jersey's diverse communities. While working closely with the GACASV, the Legislative Committee and Prevention & Public Education Committee (PPEC) collectively began to evaluate the effectiveness of current NJ statutes pertaining to sexual violence. This research will help to identify strategies that are effective in preventing sexual violence. New Jersey is participating in the EMPOWER (Enhancing and Making Programs and Outcomes Work to End Rape) Project. The focus of this effort is to implement statewide prevention initiatives.

Most importantly, the NJCASA provides survivors of sexual assault with a professionally trained rape care advocate to offer support to the survivor during law enforcement interviews and/or medical examinations. The advocate ensures that counsel and necessary legal services are provided to young women and their families to encourage and support court testimony.

Prevention and Reduction of Unplanned Pregnancies

For details regarding programmatic action that the State is taking to prevent and reduce the incidence of unplanned pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies, please refer to the program descriptions above which reflect New Jersey's pregnancy prevention activities.

Early Start Kids Need Healthy Families Program

In partnership with the Department of Children and Families, Division of Family and Community Partnerships, the Division of Family Development, Early Start Kids Need

Healthy Families Program provides evidence-based home visitation services for pregnant mothers and families with children between birth and three months who are TANF eligible and face challenges with stressors correlated with child use and neglect. Some of these stressors include but are not limited to a lack of employment, social isolation, homelessness, domestic violence, substance use, childhood history of abuse and neglect, mental illness, criminal history, and/or lack of knowledge about child development. These at-risk families receive parent education and supportive services including outreach, screening and assessments with an emphasis placed on employment goals to prevent child abuse/neglect, stabilize families and help families balance work and parenting responsibilities. Early Start Kids Need Healthy Families Program also connects families to quality child care/preschool and other services which prevent child abuse and neglect until the target child is 3 years old. The Early Start Kids Need Healthy Families Program is funded with Federal TANF money.

Fatherhood and Two-Parent Family Engagement and Participation Programs

New Jersey's efforts with non-custodial parents to strengthen family relationships, promote the engagement of two-parent participation, and reduce the incidence of unplanned births include but are not limited to: peer counseling and support services, one- on-one work with participants, pregnancy prevention, parenting skills training, employment counseling, and family revitalization efforts such as substance use counseling or treatment, and "abusive relationship" counseling.

Operation Fatherhood

Operation Fatherhood is a program that serves men and the majority of those who participate in this program are unemployed, non-custodial fathers who face multiple systemic barriers to self-sufficiency. Through a comprehensive array of free programs and services, the program empowers and equips fathers so that they can meet their child support obligations and become meaningful, active and positive participants in their children's lives. This initiative is funded with Federal TANF money.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Initiative for Parents (TIP)

The TIP Program is a home visiting parenting program that promotes healthy child development and family functioning for all pregnant General Assistance (GA), a state-funded program for single adults and adult couples without children, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients with at least one child under the age of 12 months. TIP Program services are made available initially based on the local vendor's screening assessment which determines the needs of the family. Trained family specialists work to improve the entire family's health and well-being by providing, among other things, developmental screenings, linkage to health care and strategies for discipline. The TIP Program provides additional supports to recipients required to participate in a work activity and/or who wish to seek employment. Federal TANF funding supports this program.

Two-Generation Policy

Through a technical assistance grant New Jersey worked with Community Legal & Advocacy Services Project (CLASP) and National Governors Association (NGA) to develop a state plan that employs a more intentional, strategic approach in how New Jersey collectively serves families with low-incomes from a two generation approach – both children and parents. It is a cross-state agency collaboration with the Departments of Human Services, Children and Families, Education, Health and Labor and DHS, DCF, DOH, DOE and DLWD and builds upon the systems/foundation the state has established in the Early Education and Development efforts. Priorities under this collaboration include: refreshing the TANF Initiative for Parents Program, policy and eligibility criteria review to improve participation across programs, and to maximize recruitment strategy for enrollment within programs across the state agencies. Activities include, but are not limited to on-going monthly cross-state departmental meetings where strategies are developed to improve the services to children and parents of low-income families.

Special Initiatives

Early Employment Initiative (EEI)

Certain recipients are eligible, when funding is available, to receive several types of time-limited non-cash assistance TANF supports, which are funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE dollars, even though the individuals do not receive TANF cash assistance. These include individuals who may otherwise be eligible for cash assistance or working families whose income does not exceed 250 percent of the FPL, and employed cash assistance recipients who voluntarily close their cases and meet specific eligibility criteria. Under the EEI Program, adult members of an applicant family that appear to meet all financial and non-financial eligibility requirements for WFNJ shall be referred for participation in the EEI while their application is being processed, if they meet the mandatory criteria for participation or if they volunteer to participate. This does not include families in immediate need or those which would qualify for WFNJ work deferrals.

Mandatory applicants are those individuals who have a work history that equals or exceeds four months of full-time employment in the 12-month period prior to application. Applicants who have a high school diploma, a GED, or a work history that equals or exceeds four consecutive weeks within the year immediately prior to applying for assistance may volunteer for participation. However, once an applicant volunteers, participation in EEI is mandatory.

When such funds are available, applicants who are prescreened and determined eligible for participation in EEI are referred to an EEI agency for participation. EEI participants are eligible to receive immediate up-front short-term financial assistance to pay for the necessary supportive services required to allow the individual to participate in EEI. A one-time lump sum payment may be provided, as needed, to cover necessary employment-related expenses until the individual receives his or her first paycheck. If the individual is successful in obtaining unsubsidized employment within the 30-day EEI participation period, he/she must withdraw his/her application for TANF assistance. EEI participants may receive up to 24 months of child care benefits, and may also receive medical benefits through Medicaid and NJ SNAP benefits if eligible. The agency that is authorized to provide EEI

services receive a fee for providing intensified job placement and development that is inclusive of an amount to cover administrative costs. The EEI program is administered by LWD and funded with separate State funds that are counted as MOE.

Elder Care Training

New Jersey has a long tradition of assisting its TANF participants in obtaining the skills necessary to enable them to enter the growing field of elder care. Entering the elder care field provides an opportunity for qualified TANF participants to re-enter the workforce and improve their economic situation.

New Jersey will continue to assist qualified TANF participants in training for, seeking and maintaining employment in providing direct care in long-term facilities and in other appropriate occupations related to caring for the elderly. Such assistance includes comprehensive assessment and testing to identify potential candidates for such occupations. Those already possessing the requisite skills are placed into an intensive job search program in order to assist them in re-entering the workforce as quickly as possible. Individuals that require training to obtain the necessary skills are placed into the appropriate training for positions such as Certified Nurse's Aides, Home Health Aides and administrative support positions. Upon completion of training, these individuals are placed into the job search assistance component.

New Jersey has also initiated two subsidized employment programs which offer employers wage reimbursement incentives for a designated amount of time. These employer incentive programs have proven successful in moving the less skilled customers to employment.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Application Assistance Initiative for Cash Assistance Recipients

Entities are under contract with DFD to assist WFNJ/TANF recipients in all 21 counties in New Jersey in obtaining SSI benefits to which they may be entitled. Services include, but are not limited to, pre-paid legal help by Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) to assist clients in filing for or appealing a denial of SSI benefits, referrals to a medical specialist who

will prepare expert medical documentation on the client's behalf, transportation assistance to get the client to and from medical visits and hearings. These services are funded with Federal TANF and/or State MOE money.

Intensive Case Management (ICM)

ICM is a service that helps SSI recipients receiving Emergency Assistance (EA). ICM provides additional housing assistance benefits for up to six months while intensive case managers, through contracts with non-governmental vendors, work with individuals and families to find permanent and affordable housing. This service is supported by State MOE funds and is included in the Social Services for the Homeless (SSH) program expenditures.

Post-WFNJ Referral Services

Households with earned income whose TANF cases closed in the past 24 months are eligible to receive post-WFNJ Referral Services, provided that their income is less than 250 percent of the FPL. Post-WFNJ Referral Services directs eligible post-TANF households to supportive services that may be beneficial to the household’s maintenance of active employment. These services are provided with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funding.

Burial/Funeral Expenses for Cash Assistance Recipients and Post-TANF Recipients

Both TANF recipients and post-TANF recipients in receipt of Medicaid are eligible for funeral and burial services. In addition to active TANF recipients, those eligible for burial and funeral expenses include Early Employment Initiative (EEI) working families with income from

employment equal to or less than 250 percent of the FPL. These services are provided with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funding.

Program Management

Education and Outreach Efforts of the WFNJ Program

The Division of Family Development's Communications and Training Unit provides a wide variety of informational and educational materials about the WFNJ program and related programs/services for the benefit of current and former WFNJ participants, potential participants, the New Jersey Legislature, employers, State/county/local and private service providers, and the general public. These materials include:

- Brochures, flyers, and posters that address specific programs and supports provided to WFNJ participants, former recipients who become employed and leave cash assistance, and low-income working families.
- Presentations that provide comprehensive information and up-to-date statistics on WFNJ and related programs to community partners.
- Educational videos on WFNJ and specific programs/services.

Published materials and videos are translated into Spanish (and other languages, as necessary). All of the above are updated/revised as needed to reflect major policy and programmatic changes.

The Division periodically conducts training, conferences, workshops, and other forums on WFNJ and related programs/issues for the benefit of staff and human services providers (State agency/county/local and community and faith-based providers).

Collaboration with key stakeholders throughout the state, other State agencies, and various human services advisory bodies is critical to the Division's efforts to provide enhanced outreach services to our many constituents. WFNJ outreach activities are provided with Federal TANF and/or State MOE funding.

Information Technology Systems

Federal TANF and/or State MOE funds are utilized to support the automated systems development and operations of the TANF program. Operationally, systems support for TANF is provided through the Family Management Information System (FAMIS) and On- line Management Economic Goal Achievement (OMEGA) system.

America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS) is used to facilitate inter-agency communication between WFNJ and OSCC agencies. AOSOS is the formal electronic communication system for employment directed case management. Basic client information from FAMIS is electronically transferred to AOSOS nightly. The WFNJ agency uses AOSOS to create inter-agency referrals to the OSCC and avoid conflicts in appointments. Recipients' work registration is fielded through the electronic transfers of information from FAMIS to AOSOS or by entering the information directly into AOSOS. When the client reports to the OSCC staff for his/her appointment, initial information has already been entered into AOSOS. The OSCC can activate the file and complete additional sections.

Under the sponsorship of DFD, a web-based screening tool, NJ Helps, was developed to provide New Jersey residents with an online tool screen and apply for State benefit programs. Using basic demographic and income information, the tool screens for several programs, including TANF, General Assistance (GA) and Medicaid.

MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE POLOICIES

Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

New Jersey takes reasonable and necessary steps to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program. Information about applicants or recipients is used or disclosed only for purposes directly connected with the administration of public assistance and related services, which cannot be offered without such information. The safeguards do not prevent the State agency from furnishing a Federal, State or local law enforcement officer with the current address of any recipient provided the information is necessary for the officer to conduct official duties pursuant to the PRWORA.

State of New Jersey Address Confidentiality Program

The New Jersey Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) is authorized under the Address Confidentiality Program Act (P.L. 1997 c. 369), *N.J.S.A.* 47:4-1, et seq., which became effective in January 1998. The goal of the ACP is to assist survivors of family violence who have relocated in their efforts to keep batterers from finding them. The ACP Program offers two service components: a substitute address service and a protected record service. These services will severely limit a batterer's ability to access information that could identify the new location of a survivor of family violence who has taken advantage of the Family Violence Option. The ACP is funded and administered by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division on Women, and is not TANF funded.

Nondiscrimination

New Jersey has established nondiscrimination regulations, policies, and procedures for ensuring fair and equitable treatment of applicants or recipients of public assistance. There shall be no discrimination (based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital, parental or birth status, sexual orientation, or disability, etc.) by State or local agencies in the administration of any public assistance program. Further, New Jersey has established provisions for applicants and recipients who have been adversely affected by WFNJ regulations to be heard in a State administrative hearing process. Recipients have the right to appeal any action or inaction affecting eligibility, benefit determination, or condition of payment, and are advised of this right with each adverse action notice. Clients must appeal within 90 days of the effective date of the agency action (or inaction). Clients may request a continuation of benefits pending the outcome of the fair hearing if requested within 15 days of receiving the adverse action.

The following provisions of law apply to any program or activity administered by New Jersey from Federal funds received for this program:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794)
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.)
- Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.)
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. Section 6101, et seq.)
- Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.)
- Equal Pay Act of 1963 (29 U.S.C. Section 206(d))
- NJ Law Against Discrimination (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1, et seq.)

Restricted Electronic Benefit Transfer

In order to comply with the amendments made to sections 402(a)(1)(A)(vii) and (viii) of the Social Security Act by Section 4004 of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-96), which prevents TANF assistance from being used in any Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) transaction at any liquor store, casino or any retail establishment which provides adult –oriented entertainment, the New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJDHS) has collaborated with the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, Divisions of Alcoholic Beverage Control and Gaming Enforcement, to inform all owners/operators of the newest prohibited EBT restrictions by sending out a letter informing all Casino Counsel and Non-Casino CHAB Licensee General Managers of the Act and requesting that they consider establishing procedures and internal controls to address the Act's requirements.

NJDHS has posted on its website the EBT restrictions outlined in P.L. 112-96 and provides all new Families First card recipients with a brochure detailing the EBT restrictions, including the prohibition on using EBT cards at any liquor store, casino or any retail establishment which provides adult –oriented entertainment. The brochure also reminds benefit recipients that they are free to access their benefits, with no fee or charges, at any ATM in New Jersey bearing the Quest logo or at any United States Department of Agriculture approved vendor. Should a situation arise where a recipient does not have access to one of these locations, DFD would have to confer with our EBT vendor to fill the void. Until an access point is brought online, DFD would take interim measures to refer the recipient to the nearest location and provide transportation if needed. In addition, NJDHS has also instructed all County Boards of Social Services to display posters in highly visible areas of their facilities that detail the EBT restrictions.

Finally, the New Jersey EBT provider has developed a portal webpage where benefit recipients can log in and check their benefit balances, transaction histories, etc. The portal webpage contains information on purchases restricted from EBT use as well in an effort to comply with the EBT restrictions outlined in P.L. 112-96.

DFD will accept reports regarding the misuse of an EBT card, along with all other reports received from the public, using the DFD hotline, at 1-800-792-9773. Any reports submitted to DFD will be referred to the local county board of social services for further investigation. At this time there are no plans in place to impose penalties on a recipient who is found to have used an EBT card at one of the restricted locations. Should future data demonstrate a pervasive problem of TANF recipients accessing benefits at restricted locations, DFD will consider an appropriate penalty period for those found to be in violation of the use restrictions.

ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Administration of TANF Program

The DHS/DFD is the agency responsible for supervising the WFNJ/TANF program at the State level. WFNJ/TANF will be administered at the local level by the 21 county agencies, under DFD supervision and through contracts for services.

2. Assurances

New Jersey will use Federal TANF funds in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.L. 104-193), the final TANF Federal regulations at 45 CFR Part 260, et seq., and State legislation.

New Jersey will conduct a program designed to reach state and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services that provide education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded in scope to include men.

New Jersey has in place a grievance procedure for resolving complaints involving alleged work displacement of regular employees through the LWD Division of Worker's Compensation and Workplace Standards.

New Jersey will deny assistance for 10 years to an individual convicted after August 22, 1996 in Federal or state court of having made a fraudulent statement or representation with respect to the individual's place of residence in order to receive TANF, NJ SNAP, SSI under Title XVI, or Title XX assistance simultaneously from two or more states.

New Jersey will deny assistance to an individual who is violating a condition of probation or parole imposed by a Federal or state court.

New Jersey will not use TANF funds to provide medical treatment, with the exception of pre-pregnancy planning services.

New Jersey will not use TANF funds to provide cash assistance for a child who is out of the home for more than 180 days.

New Jersey will submit required reports, participate in the Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS), and maintain the required State maintenance of effort as provided in accordance with the PRWORA and implementing regulations. Effective with the submission of the original TANF State Plan, New Jersey adhered to the 15 percent administrative cap.

3. Quality Control and Program Evaluation Reviews

New Jersey maintains a quality control/assurance function under WFNJ/TANF, which preserves some features of the pre-block grant quality control system, including reviews of individual case records to determine payment accuracy rates, as well as other statistical measures of policy implementation and application.

Program Evaluation reviews are also performed by State personnel within individual counties. These Program Evaluation reviews focus on specific aspects of the WFNJ program, such as program access, policy dissemination and implementation, reporting, training provisions, and fraud prevention and investigation. The Program Evaluation review process ensures the accountability of the program.

FUNDING

Section 403(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act provides that each eligible State shall be entitled to receive a grant in an amount equal to the State family assistance grant as defined in Section 403(a)(1)(B).

1. Payments to Agency Administering the TANF Program

Payments shall be made to the Department of Human Services.

2. State Payments for TANF Program

Section 405 requires that grants be paid to States in quarterly installments, based on State estimates. The State's estimate for each quarter of the fiscal year by percentage is:

1st Quarter: 25%
2nd Quarter: 25%
3rd Quarter: 25%
4th Quarter: 25%

CERTIFICATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, I, Dr. Stephen Cha, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, who has been delegated the authority for submission of the State Plan for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, as well as any amendments to such Plan, by Mikie Sherrill, Governor of the State of New Jersey, certify that the State of New Jersey will operate a program to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives or guardians standing “in loco parentis,” to promote job preparation and work, to prevent and reduce the incidence of unplanned pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies, and to encourage two-parent engagement as appropriate.

Additionally, the Governor has delegated to the Director of the Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, or his or her designee, the authority to negotiate any Plan revisions necessary in order to have the Plan, or amendments made thereto, certified complete by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. All final submissions will be submitted by the Director of the Division of Family Development.

New Jersey's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program is known as Work First New Jersey (WFNJ/TANF).

In administering and operating a program, which provides Temporary Assistance for Needy Families with minor children under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, the State:

(1) Certifies that the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, is the State agency that will supervise the administration of the program during the fiscal years and that, as determined by the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services and/or the Director of the Division of Family Development, the County Board of Social Services within each respective county of the State will serve as the primary "administrative entity" that will administer the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program during the fiscal years via direct or contracted services.

(2) Assures that local governments and private sector organizations:

(A) have been consulted regarding the Plan and design of TANF services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations, and

(B) have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the Plan and the design of such services.

(3) Will operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under Part D.

(4) Will operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under Part E, and will take all necessary actions to ensure that children receiving assistance are eligible for medical assistance.

(5) Will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a Tribal Family Assistance Plan approved under Section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal government.

(6) Has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to protect against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage.

(7) Shall make available to the public a copy of the State Plan, upon request.

OPTIONAL CERTIFICATION – FAMILY VIOLENCE OPTION

[x] The State of New Jersey has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to:

(1) Screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of family violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals,

(2) Refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services, and

(3) Waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for as long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape family violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further family violence.

(4) Ensure that applicants and potential applicants for Work First New Jersey are notified of assistance made available by the State to victims of sexual harassment and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

(5) Ensure that case workers and other agency personnel responsible for administering Work First New Jersey are trained in:

(A) The nature and dynamics of sexual harassment and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking;

(B) State standards and procedures relating to the prevention of, and assistance for, individuals who are victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; and

(C) Methods of ascertaining and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information and documentation related to applicants for assistance and their

children who have provided notice about their experiences of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

(6) Ensure that current and potential Work First New Jersey beneficiaries are provided information about the options available pursuant to the Family Violence Option.

(7) Ensure that caseworkers and other agency personnel responsible for administering the Work First New Jersey program are provided with training regarding State standards and procedures related to the Family Violence Option.

X _____

Dr. Stephen Cha
Commissioner

ATTACHMENT A

Examples of Exempt Resources:

(A) WFNJ supportive service benefits,
(B) Supplementary aid/assistance from public/private agencies as exempt from Federal/State law, which do not supplant WFNJ/TANF benefits,
(C) Up to a total of $2,000 in resources, including savings and special teen parents' savings accounts,
(D) All motor vehicles, except recreational vehicles,
(E) Real property used by the assistance unit as a home,
(F) Personal property such as house furnishings and clothing in regular use, including personal effects, if regularly used or of small intrinsic value,
(G) Livestock, machinery, tools, equipment, stock-in-trade, and farm and garden products raised for home use that serve to produce some net income,
(H) Any asset, real or personal, the liquidation of which would produce no net revenue to the assistance unit,
(I) Occasional nonrecurring gifts,
(J) Loans for a specific purpose,
(K) Fees paid in conjunction with the collection of a pending claim when the costs were incurred during a period of receipt of WFNJ/TANF benefits,
(L) Prepaid burial plots and funeral arrangements,
(M) Life insurance policies,
(N) Resources excluded by Federal or State law and/or regulation for a special purpose, e.g., allowances and benefits received under national services programs such as Americorps, VISTA, etc.

Examples of Exempt Income:

1. Income tax refunds,
2. Homestead property tax rebates,
3. Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) payments,
4. Unearned income (including monies to offset training expenses) received by a WFNJ/TANF dependent child through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) formerly Workforce Investment Act (WIA),
5. Earned income received through the WIOA by a WFNJ/TANF dependent child,
6. Allowance payments to offset expenses related to training received by any WFNJ/TANF recipient who is participating in the WIOA program,
7. The earned income of any middle or secondary school student in the eligible assistance unit within the ages specified under Needy Families,
8. Any financial aid received by an eligible child/adult who is a student who continues to attend school and meets the conditions under which the monies were granted and complies with WFNJ/TANF work requirements,
9. SSI benefits,
10. Income in-kind or benefits received in the form of goods, services or via third party payments, rather than cash,
11. Kinship Subsidy Program payments,
12. Individual Development Accounts including matching contributions and interest,
13. Income excluded by Federal or State law and/or regulation for a special purpose; e.g., allowances and benefits received under national service programs such as AmeriCorps, VISTA, etc.,
14. Benefits received pursuant to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act of 1971,
15. Disaster assistance benefits,
16. Income earned as a result of temporary census employment.

ATTACHMENT B

WFNJ/TANF Schedules I and II

Initial Maximum Allowable Income Levels and Maximum Benefit Payment Levels

Schedule I		**Schedule II**
Initial Maximum Allowable Income Levels	Number In Assistance Unit	Maximum Benefit Payment Levels
$321	1	$214
$638	2	$425
$839	3	$559
$966	4	$644
$1,092	5	$728
$1,221	6	$814
$1,341	7	$894
$1,442	8	$961
Add $99.00 each additional person	More Than 8	Add $66.00 each additional person

New Jersey Division of Family Development Estimating Methodology to Claim Pre-School/Pre-Kindergarten Early Childhood Program Aid for Separate State Program/State MOE Funding

The Formula for Claiming:

A. Early Childhood Program Instructional and Support Services Aid

B. *plus* employee benefits

C. *multiplied* by pre-school/pre-kindergarten ratio

D. *multiplied by* National School Lunch Program eligibility rate for each ECPA school district

E. *multiplied by* the employment rate for each ECPA school district using annual local unemployment data

F. *multiplied by* the increasing factor for families between 186 percent and 250 percent of FPL

G. *multiplied by* one minus the ratio of the number of 3, 4, & 5 year olds in ECPA school districts in out-of home foster care placement, to the number of 3, 4, & 5 year olds enrolled in the ECPA school districts

H. *less* pre-school/pre-kindergarten expenditures in ECPA schools for the 1994–1995 school year

A. Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) - Included in ECPA is funding for instruction, support services, and facilities. Instructional aid includes all expenditures associated with direct classroom instruction. Support services aid includes expenditures for activities that support instructional staff, such as, health and social services, parental educational involvement activities, curriculum development and implementation, professional development and training, and community collaboration and planning. Facilities aid will not be claimed for TANF MOE because it is not permitted by the PRWORA. ECPA establishes full-day kindergarten programs, preschool programs, and other childhood programs and services in areas with high concentration of low-income pupils. These services are provided with separate State program funding and the expenditures are claimed as MOE.

NJ DOE calculates each school's low-income concentration rate by dividing the number of free lunch students by total student enrollment as of October 15. Schools must have at least a 20 percent rate to qualify for ECPA, which is distributed and budgeted by ECPA category during the current school year. However, actual/expended data is not available from schools until the following year. Since only claims based on expenditure data will be accepted, claims will be submitted in the following Federal Fiscal Year.

The financial information provided by NJ DOE from their Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the ECPA school districts is a combination of pre- school/pre-kindergarten and kindergarten expenditures. This cost pool cannot be directly broken down due to the fact that the funding provided to the ECPA school districts is combined. Since actual enrollment figures are available from NJ DOE, they will be used to arrive at a ratio to allow us to isolate the costs applicable to only the pre- school/pre-kindergarten population.

B. Employee Benefit Rate – Benefits are funded by State and the local contributions. The NJ Office of Management and Budget negotiates with the United States Department of Health and Human Services for a composite fringe benefit rate of base salaries each year. That rate currently used is 51.95 from Fiscal Year 2017.

C. Pre-School/Pre-Kindergarten Ratio – Only costs relating to ECPA programs that are not generally available are TANF MOE eligible. The ECPA cost pool includes a combination of both pre-school/pre-kindergarten and kindergarten costs. Since only the portion of costs related to pre-school/pre-kindergarten are eligible, a ratio of pre-school/pre-kindergarten children enrolled in the ECPA districts to the total of pre-school/pre-kindergarten plus kindergarten children enrolled in ECPA districts will be applied. This ratio will be arrived at by using actual enrollment data provided by NJ DOE.

D. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) – Families at or below 250 percent of the FPL are TANF eligible in NJ. Since schools do not maintain data on family income, eligibility for TANF will be determined through NSLP counts, even though its FPL ceiling of 185 percent under represents TANF eligibility. The NSLP eligibility rate for each ECPA school district for free and reduced lunch will be calculated by comparing October NSLP eligible free and reduced students to the October 15 school enrollment.

E. Employment Factor – To avoid the classification of ECPA expenses as TANF assistance, and its disaggregate data reporting requirements, an employment rate factor is included in order to reduce ECPA payments made on behalf of unemployed participant families. Information will be obtained from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development for the most recent period available and the factor will be based upon the employment rate for each ECPA school district using annual local unemployment data.

F. Increasing Factor for Families between 186% and 250% of the FPL - The NSLP was used in Item D above to limit the costs to those families in the respective school district who are below 186 percent of the FPL. TANF allows eligibility to those families with income up to 250 percent of the FPL. In order to recognize the families that are between186 percent and 250 percent of FPL, the State's New Jersey Cares for Kids (NJCK, childcare subsidy program for low income families) database is analyzed. Specifically, a report produced from the Child Care Automated Resource and Eligibility System (CARES) that tallies the number of children who were active on the CARES database as of October31st. The report shows the number of children whose family income falls between 186 percent and 250 percent of the FPL. The number of children whose family income is between 186 percent and 250 percent of the FPL will be divided by the total number of children who were active on the CARES database. The product of this division is the increasing factor.

Example:	Total NJCK Children	10,000
	186%-250% of the FPL	2,500
	Below 186% of the FPL	7,500
	2,500 divided by 10,000=	25%
	Plus one (increasing factor)	1.25

G. Out-Of-Home Placements – PRWORA stipulates that State expenditures countable towards the MOE requirement must be for families in which a child is living with a custodial parent or other caretaker or includes a pregnant individual. As this information is not collected by schools, claims will be calculated by using one minus the ratio of the number of 3, 4, & 5 year olds in ECPA school districts in out-of-home foster care placement, to the total number of 3, 4, & 5 year olds enrolled in ECPA school districts.

H. Early Childhood School Program Prior to TANF – PRWORA requires that State spending in early childhood programs for Federal Fiscal Year 1995 (10/1/94–9/30/95) be deducted from TANF MOE claims. The 1994-1995 school year will be used to approximate Federal Fiscal Year 1995 since school data is based on October 15th enrollments, which determines ECPA school budgets. In the schools now designated as ECPA districts, the State funded early childhood programs that existed in the 1994–1995 school year were Pre-K, Expanded K, and Good Starts. As such, State expenditures of
$5,198,200 will be deducted each year from TANF MOE Pre-K claims.

<u>Eligibility Criteria</u>

- ***Families must be TANF eligible (not necessarily receiving cash assistance)***
- ***Families must be at or below 250 percent of the FPL***
  (In order to correspond to New Jersey's Seamless Child Care System's Universal Maximum Income Eligibility Level)
- ***Families must be working or in employment directed activities***
- ***Services must not be generally available in the non-ECPA school district***