# GEORGIA STATE PLAN
# Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

## Effective January 1, 2026




Georgia Department
of Human Services

**Updated April 1, 2026**

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# Temporary Assistance for Needy Families State Plan: Georgia

*The State of Georgia continues to operate a program to serve the broad purposes of Title 1, Block Grants to States for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (P.L.104- 193) using the State family assistance grant made under Section 103 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.*

## Introduction

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104- 193), Title I, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) states that the purpose of the TANF program is to strengthen the economic and social stability of families, in part by:

- Providing assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their homes or in the homes of relatives;
- Ending the dependency of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- Preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establishing annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Georgia will continue to conduct a program under the provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and the Deficit Reduction act of 2005 (DRA 2005). Georgia's primary goal is to provide necessary assistance on a temporary basis to needy families with children, to assist parents with job preparation, and to provide work opportunities, support services, and the enforcement of child support obligations to children living in these families.

Georgia will not discriminate against any person applying for or receiving TANF due to race, color, national origin, disability, age, or any other protected status. In so doing, Georgia will help all needy families become self-sufficient and able to leave the TANF program as soon as possible. There is no entitlement to any assistance under Georgia's TANF program. Assistance is provided for a maximum of forty-eight months, except as noted in the hardship sections of this plan.

Promoting the well-being of the children of Georgia is a major part of the mission for the Department of Human Services (DHS) and its Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). In order to fulfill its mission, the Department assists families in their efforts to acquire the necessary means to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Assistance is provided in the following manner:

- Work activities that include job search, job training, and assistance with job placement;
- Support services such as childcare, transportation assistance, and reimbursement for other necessary expenditures that can assist families in obtaining employment and remaining employed;

- Cash assistance that is normally provided by electronic payment processing information card;
- Support services intended to maintain two-parent families (state funded); and
- Support services intended to prevent teen and out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

In the administration of the TANF program in Georgia:

- Work is given the highest priority in the provision of services and benefits.
- The needs of children receive high priority in choosing program options.
- Benefits are directly linked to the exercise of responsible behavior on the part of parents receiving benefits on behalf of their children.
- Parental responsibility and employment initiatives are incorporated into the program's design.
- Efforts to reduce teen pregnancy are pursued in cooperation with non-profit agencies and other governmental organizations.
- Efforts include encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

The focus on employment reflects Georgia's commitment to meet all work requirements contained in the federal legislation. The focus on children reflects Georgia's commitment to an aggressive effort to end the cycle of welfare dependency that was characterized as an "entitlement-based" program in the past. Georgia's focus on what is beneficial to children extends beyond merely providing cash assistance. Children benefit from the availability of child welfare, public health, and community-based programs and, consequently, prevention programs benefit a broad range of at-risk youth. Children in TANF families have access to Georgia's Pre-Kindergarten and HOPE Scholarship programs.

Georgia requires responsible parental behavior as a condition of eligibility for public assistance. The State has retained its immunization requirement, work acceptance and maintenance requirement, a teen living arrangement provision, and participation in work activities. These efforts are coupled with diligent child support enforcement. In submitting this plan, Georgia restates its commitment to continue and expand these efforts.

# I. General Provisions

## A. Program Administration and Management

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) administers the TANF program at the state level while services are delivered at the local level through the network of DFCS offices located in each of Georgia's 159 counties.

The identified services are available in all political subdivisions in the state. The services are directed by county staff in collaboration with other local public and private agencies. A range of job placement, job preparation and support services are available in each county office but may vary in scope depending on local resources. All services provided are in keeping with the current goal of reducing dependency by helping families leave the cash assistance rolls as soon as possible and by diverting applicants toward employment so they will have no need for cash assistance.

Services are provided through a structure that connects TANF applicants and recipients to jobs, job preparation, and support systems. The Department uses non-financial agreements when possible and paid agreements when necessary to ensure that clients can access needed services. Some services may be provided through other divisions within DHS.

Working with other state agencies and providers outside of DHS is crucial to the Department's success in making needed services available. The range of services needed by recipients is provided through partnerships with the Department of Public Health, Department of Education and local Boards of Education, the Board of Regents, Community Action Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, business associations, community-based organizations, and religious groups.

Coordination of local services and obtaining the cooperation and involvement of communities are priorities of DHS. Third-party contractors help to develop resources at the local level and ensure the involvement of numerous local service providers, agencies, and businesses.

To ensure the effective and efficient management of the Georgia TANF program, outcome-based performance measures are identified and evaluated on an ongoing basis. These outcome measures include, but are not limited to:

- Increases in family income, including a review of family income as a percentage of the federal poverty level;
- The number of TANF families that achieve employment;
- Decrease in the out-of-wedlock pregnancy rate, with special focus on data about teens;
- The number of former TANF recipients returning to the roles; and
- The number of applicants diverted from cash assistance.

The purpose of the program is to provide state-level administration to program staff that manage the TANF program. Administration costs cover state-level administration staff, program personnel, and overhead expenses. Qualifying state expenses are direct charged or identified

through the State's Cost Allocation Plan and include the following:

- Cash Match Eligibility - County administration costs distributed to eligibility activities that are applicable to TANF based on percentages determined by quarterly random moment sampling matched with county/local funds. This cost includes all administrative costs such as county directors, accountants, building rents, telephones, etc.
- IT OIS Case Tracking System - Computer mainframe charges related to fraud investigation and prevention applicable to TANF based on time sheet distribution of investigators performing Food Stamp and TANF activities.
- Office of Fraud & Abuse - Investigation of suspected fraud in the TANF program based on time sheet distribution of investigative staff including detailed reports concerning case transaction and case dispositions, and providing supporting documentation to the office director, matched with state funds.
- IT Fraud & Abuse Holding Pool - Computer mainframe charges related to fraud investigation and prevention applicable to TANF based on time sheet distribution of investigators performing Food Stamp and TANF activities.
- Office of Fraud & Abuse-Retention - Investigation of suspected fraud in the TANF program based on time sheet distribution of investigative staff, including detailed reports concerning case transaction and case dispositions, and providing supporting documentation to the office director, matched with retained earnings from fraud recoveries rather than state funds.
- Work First Eligibility Training - Cost for new caseworker training.
- Training Contracts--Cost Allocation - Cost on ongoing training for caseworker staff distributed proportionately to TANF based on applicable percentage determined by quarterly random moment sampling matched with state funds.
- Fraud & Abuse Prosecuting Attorneys - A contractual agreement between the Office of Fraud and Abuse (OFA) and the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council for adjudicating guilt in suspected TANF fraud cases.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**TANF Purpose #3:** Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
**TANF Purpose #4:** Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.
**Funding Source:** Segregated Funds/State MOE Funds.

## B. Human Trafficking Survivor Support

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) is a unique form of abuse that jeopardizes the emotional and physical health and safety of minors for the purpose of collateral gain. Children are often manipulated or forced into "the life" of sex trafficking, where their well-being is viewed as secondary to their potential to earn a profit for their exploiters. Victims of DMST may be at risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), demonstrating difficulty forming healthy and supportive relationships, experiencing homelessness, and dropping out of school, thereby limiting their future educational and career opportunities.

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) is carrying forward the need for a comprehensive and unified strategy to combat all forms of trafficking by functioning as the coordinating agency for the management of the Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force. The task force promotes a statewide, multidisciplinary approach to combating all forms of human trafficking and other initiatives. The DHS Special Victims Unit, found on page 39, also supports this effort.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

## C. Civil Rights

No applicant for or recipient of benefits or services provided by the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall be subjected to unlawful discrimination in the application for or receipt of benefits and services.

The Georgia Department of Human Services complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, or sex. DHS does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, or sex.

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services:

- Provides free aid and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
  - Qualified sign language interpreters
  - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
  - Qualified interpreters
  - Information written in other languages

The aforementioned requirements apply to individuals, childcare facilities, and other agencies or organizations to which DFCS makes referrals or from which services are purchased.

The legal authority that ensures equitable participation in federally funded programs is provided, in part, from Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. DFCS policy also prohibits unlawful discrimination in its administration of TANF.

## D. Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 affords civil rights protections to

individuals with disabilities. These protections are similar to those provided to individuals because of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion.

The ADA and Section 504 are intended to remove barriers that a person with a disability may have to employment, public accommodations, public services, and telecommunications. It prohibits discrimination in all employment practices, job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, training, terms, and conditions of employment, and to all employment-related activities.

Title II of the ADA and Section 504 prohibit discrimination against a qualified individual with a disability in all programs, activities, and services of public entities. It applies to all state and local governments, their departments, and agencies, and any entities with which a government agency contracts for services.

A qualified individual with a disability has the right to request an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, and request a reasonable modification to DFCS policies, practices, or procedures when such modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination based on disability.

## E. Confidentiality

The state statute that provides the legal basis for safeguarding the confidentiality of assistance-related information is the Official Code of Georgia Annotated 49-4-14. The statute restricts the use or disclosure of information concerning applicants for, or recipients of, public assistance to purposes directly connected to the administration of public assistance (See Appendix A).

## F. Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012

In accordance with section 4004 of the Middle-Class Tax Relief Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-96), this describes Georgia's policies and procedures to prevent access to the TANF cash assistance benefits through electronic transactions at casinos, liquor stores, and adult-oriented entertainment (strip clubs). This section will also explain how the State will ensure that the recipients have adequate access to their cash assistance and be allowed to withdraw the cash with minimal fees or charges.

**Prevention Methods**

- The Georgia Application for Benefits, Form 297, was revised to include the information on the Middle-Class Tax Relief Act of 2012, including restrictions and penalties. This form is completed by the customer at application and renewal.
- The TANF Family Service Plan (TFSP), Form 196, was revised to include debit card restrictions for TANF customers. Each applicant and recipient is required to sign the form, acknowledging that it was discussed and understood.
- TANF staff receive continuous refresher training on the debit card restrictions.
- The Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 verbiage was added to the brochure that is mailed out to all recipients.

- The Office of Inspector General (OIG) Benefits Recovery Unit (BRU) is also involved in the prevention process:
    - OIG has communicated with all licensed liquor and tobacco stores in the State of Georgia concerning the TANF purchasing regulations implemented under the Middle-Class Tax Relief Act of 2012. In addition to the communiqué, fraud prevention posters were provided to the retailer for display at point-of-sale (POS) terminals and ATMs. OIG BRU monitors TANF transactions at restricted retailers through reports and conducts site visits to licensed liquor and tobacco stores in the State of Georgia as needed.
    - OIG BRU receives referrals for investigation on benefit recipients who are suspected of violating the TANF purchase regulations articulated in the Middle-Class Tax Relief Act of 2012. OIG also works with Conduent, our EBT and Way2Go Card service provider, to gain quarterly reports that are used to identify transactions that have occurred at restricted retailers. If a retailer is identified in the report, OIG contacts the owner/operator of the retailer to advise of their status as a restricted retailer for the TANF Electronic Payment Card (EPC) transactions.

**Adequate Access to Cash Assistance**

A TANF recipient can use their card when they need to, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are no fees for cash withdrawals at Mastercard Member Bank or Credit Union teller windows, or any commercial point of sale (POS) device. The Way2Go® card is accepted at merchant and bank locations worldwide--everywhere the MasterCard® acceptance mark is displayed.

There is an online Customer Portal and mobile app, which provides access to the applicant/recipient's card account, balance, and transaction history. These are the quickest and easiest ways for an applicant/recipient to review transactions and deposits posted to his/her account. The information is displayed in real time, date, and time order, and reflects transactions posted to the account at the time they are conducted.

If the applicant/recipient is having trouble finding an ATM close to their residence, they can go to the Way2Go® website (https://www.GoProgram.com), or the mobile app. They can follow the instructions on the page to find the closest ATM by zip code or address. If applicants or recipients have any problems with their prepaid card or ATM locator, they may call Customer Service at 1-800-656-1347 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

**Free Services, Fees, and Surcharges**

**Free Services:**

1. Deposit notification - The customer can receive phone, email, or text messaging notification for each deposit posted to their card.
2. Purchases using signature or personal identification number (PIN) at merchant locations -The customer can use their PIN for purchases with cash back with no

fee.
3. Bank teller cash withdrawals are unlimited at MasterCard® member banks or credit unions.
4. ATM balance inquiries are unlimited. However, customers may be assessed a fee by the ATM operator for out-of-network balance inquiries.
5. One (1) instant mobile balance request per deposit
6. Two (2) ATM cash withdrawals per deposit at Money Pass or Comerica Bank locations
7. One (1) ATM cash withdrawal is free if no deposit is received in the calendar month.
8. Five (5) free calls to the Customer Service Interactive Voice Response (IVR) each month to check balances or hear transaction history.

**Assessed fees:**

1. $1.50 for ATM cash withdrawals after the free transactions
2. $1.50 for withdrawals at out-of-network ATMs
3. $1.50 per international ATM balance inquiry
4. $1.50 plus 3% of the transaction amount for each international transaction
5. $5.00 for each card replacement

**Surcharges:**

Some banks may apply a surcharge to use their ATMs. Customers can avoid these fees by using any Money Pass or Comerica Bank ATM. The ATM messages should always be read carefully. The customer can cancel if they wish to avoid the fee or press enter and pay the fee. Customers may also be charged a fee by the ATM operator, even if they do not complete the transaction.

Information on accessing TANF benefits, fees and charges, customer service, and card replacement is provided to the Prepaid MasterCard® cardholder on the brochure and the website at https://www.GoProgram.com.

In addition to contacting Customer Service, the customer is also able to contact DHS Customer Service and report challenges or concerns with access. There are ongoing procedures in place to handle complaints received via the DHS customer service phone lines which may include notifying Conduent to assist with resolution.

With all the accessibility options, coverage is widespread throughout the State of Georgia and nationwide.

## G. Technology

A collaborative effort was initiated in 2014 by four of Georgia's Health and Human Services agencies. This collaboration led to a computer-based integrated eligibility system (IES) called Georgia Gateway. Customers with benefits through the Department of Community Health (DCH), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Public Health (DPH), and/or

the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) will have one shared account to better manage their benefits. This allowed for a single point of entry for staff to make eligibility determinations across multiple programs including: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medical Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS). Georgia Gateway was piloted in February 2017, with the final wave rolling out in September 2017.

Customers have always had the ability to access Gateway Customer Portal (CP) through a mobile app; however, it wasn't very mobile responsive. Enhancements were implemented in July 2025 to improve customer experience. The mobile friendly app includes a new ease of use design and includes specific improvements to the following areas in the Customer Portal: applying for benefits, checking your benefits, renewing your benefits, reporting changes to your case, viewing notices, uploading documents, and accessing information about the Georgia Pathways program.

## H. Work Requirements

Those applicants or recipients of cash assistance that are deemed to have a work requirement must participate in work activities in accordance with federal TANF guidelines. In two-parent families, where both parents are deemed to be work eligible and have a work requirement, both parents are required to participate in work activities. Two-parent households in Georgia are state-funded. A work eligible individual is expected to participate in work activities at approval.

A parent or caretaker who does not receive TANF because of a disqualification or a penalty must still meet mandatory work requirements unless otherwise exempt.

Georgia requires a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program to engage in work once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months.

Georgia will not reduce or terminate assistance based on a refusal of an individual to engage in work activities for a single custodial parent caring for a child who has not attained 6 years of age, and the individual proves that the individual has a demonstrated ability to obtain needed childcare, for 1 or more of the following reasons:

A. Unavailability of appropriate childcare within a reasonable distance from the individual's home or work site.
B. Unavailability or unsuitability of informal childcare by a relative or under other arrangements.
C. Unavailability of appropriate and affordable formal childcare arrangements.

Georgia allows an exemption to the work requirement for a single custodial parent with a child under 12 months of age. This parent may choose a temporary exemption from work requirements. This exemption may be used for a period of up to 12 weeks (3 months). If additional children under the age of 12 months enter the home, the parent may request to be exempt from work activities again at that time. However, the total exemption period is not to exceed 12 months during the 48-month TANF lifetime limit.

A pregnant teen with no dependent child or a teen parent who does not have a high school diploma or its equivalent cannot be exempted from mandatory work activities. Instead, the

individual must participate in education or alternate training activities.

Non-custodial, non-supporting parents of a minor child who are included in a TANF Assistance Unit (AU) are required to attend school, obtain a high school diploma or GED, participate in parenting and/or money management classes, perform community service, and cooperate with the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS).

## I. Work Participation and Activity Requirements

### 1. Work Activities

TANF recipients are expected to participate in approved work activities at a level consistent with full-time employment, whenever feasible. Placement in an activity is based on an assessment of the individual and in accordance with federal and state law. Activities of first choice are those that count toward meeting the federal work participation requirement. Hours of participation in the following activities count toward the federal work participation rate.

#### a. Countable Activities

Unsubsidized Employment — Full or part-time employment in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program

Unsubsidized Self-Employment — Full or part-time employment that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program or income earned directly from one's own business or profession, rather than as specified salary or wages from an employer

Subsidized Private Sector Employment — Employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all the wages and costs of employing a recipient

Subsidized Public Sector Employment — Employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all the wages and costs of employing a recipient

Work Experience — A work activity, performed in return for welfare, that provides an individual with an opportunity to acquire the general skills, training, knowledge, and work habits necessary to obtain employment; work experience participants continue to receive their TANF grants and do not receive wages or compensation by participating in the activity; daily supervision does not necessarily mean daily contact, but it does mean that a responsible party has daily responsibility for oversight of the individual's participation.

On-The-Job Training — Training in the public or private sector given to a paid employee while he or she is engaged in productive work and that provides knowledge and skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job

Job Search and Job Readiness — The act of seeking or obtaining employment, preparation to seek or obtain employment, including life skills training and substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment or rehabilitation activities for those who are otherwise employable; such treatment or therapy must be determined to be necessary by a qualified medical or mental health professional. Job search includes looking for suitable job openings, contacting potential

employers, applying for vacancies, and interviewing for jobs. Job readiness assistance involves two activities:

- Preparing an individual to obtain employment, such as preparing a resume or job application, interview skills, instruction in workplace expectations, and life skills training; or
- Substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities

for those who are otherwise employable.

Community Service — Structured programs in which TANF recipients perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. Community service programs must be 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 childcare. Community service programs are designed to improve the employability of recipients not otherwise able to obtain employment and must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily. Daily supervision does not necessarily mean daily contact, but it does mean that a responsible party has daily responsibility for oversight of the individual's participation. Counties must consider, to the extent possible, the prior training, experience, and skills of a recipient when making appropriate community service assignments. Community service programs may not include activities that meet the definition of another allowable TANF work activity. Community service programs must include structured activities that both provide a community service and improve the employability of the participants.

Vocational Education (not to exceed 12 months with respect to any individual) – Organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations. Vocational educational training programs may include bachelor's degree programs, advanced degree programs, associate degree programs, instructional certificate programs, industry skill certifications, and other post- secondary education activities. Vocational Education may also occur in the form of distance/online learning programs that include, but are not limited to, learning and developing the following skills:

- Resume writing
- Strategies for researching employers and careers
- Networking skills coaching
- Interview preparation
- Job search skills workshops online
- Career management coaching
- Career counseling skills
- Skills and values assessments

Hours of participation in distance learning programs must be documented, monitored, and verified following the current TANF rules. In Georgia, vocational education is generally provided by education or training organizations, such as vocational-technical schools, community colleges, postsecondary institutions, and proprietary schools, etc. However, individual counties or regions may also contract with non-profit organizations to provide certified, short-term, market-specific training programs. A recipient can receive credit for supervised homework time and up to one hour of unsupervised homework time for each hour of class time in educational activities. However, total homework time counted for participation cannot exceed the hours of attendance required or advised by a particular educational program.

Providing Child Care Services to an Individual who is Participating in Community Service —

Child Care Services enable another TANF recipient to participate in a community service program. This activity must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily. Daily supervision does not necessarily mean daily contact, but it does mean that a responsible party has daily responsibility for oversight of the individual's participation.

Satisfactory School Attendance at a Secondary School or in a Course of Study Leading to a Certificate of General Equivalence, in the Case of a Recipient Who Has Not Completed Secondary School or Received Such a Certificate — Regular attendance, in accordance with the requirements of the secondary school or course of study, at a secondary school or in a course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalence, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school or received such a certificate. This activity must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily. Daily supervision does not necessarily mean daily contact, but it does mean that a responsible party has daily responsibility for oversight of the individual's participation. A recipient can receive credit for supervised homework time and up to one hour of unsupervised homework time for each hour of class time in educational activities. However, total homework time counted for participation cannot exceed the hours of attendance required or advised by a particular educational program.

Education Related to Employment, in the Case of a Recipient Who Has Not Received a High School Diploma or a Certificate of High School Equivalency — Education related to a specific occupation, job, or job offer. Education related to employment must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily. A recipient can receive credit for supervised homework time and up to one (1) hour of unsupervised homework time for each hour of class time in educational activities. However, total homework time counted for participation cannot exceed the hours of attendance required or advised by a particular educational program.

English as a Second Language (ESL) — Education designed to provide the recipient with skills in speaking, reading, or writing English commensurate with the requirements of his or her employment goal. ESL is not counted as a standalone activity. It must be included under the Education Related to Employment or Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment activities.

Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment — 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 must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily. Daily supervision does not necessarily mean daily contact, but it does mean that a responsible party has daily responsibility for oversight of the individual's participation. A recipient can receive credit for supervised homework time and up to one hour of unsupervised homework time for each hour of class time in educational activities. However, total homework time counted for participation cannot exceed the hours of attendance required or advised by a particular educational program.

Mental Health Counseling/Treatment — Treatment that assists recipients in alleviating the symptoms of mental illness that interfere with their ability to function in the home and in the workplace. This is countable as a job search/job readiness activity for up to six weeks.

Substance Abuse Counseling/Treatment — Treatment designed to help a recipient overcome a dependence on or addiction to drugs and/or alcohol. This is countable as a job search/job readiness activity for up to six weeks.

Life Skills Training — Training intended to help a recipient develop the skills necessary to manage activities that typify what is considered as normal daily life, enabling the client to function in society. This is countable as a job search/job readiness activity for up to six weeks.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services — Services provided to a recipient who has a disability, be it physical, mental, or emotional. These services assist the participant in overcoming barriers that interfere with the individual's ability to work, thus enabling the client to achieve his/her employment goals. This is countable as a job search/job readiness activity for up to six weeks.

### b. Non-Countable Activities

Placement in certain activities that do not count toward Georgia's work participation rate may nevertheless be necessary to prepare the recipient for successful participation in countable work activities. Hours of participation in the following activities cannot count toward the federal work participation rate:

- Job search and job readiness training that continues after the six-week limit has been reached;
- Vocational training in excess of the twelve-month limit;
- Job readiness training independent of job search activity;
- Assessment – An in-depth assessment intended to assist in the development of a reasonable work plan by considering a recipient's abilities, disabilities, work history, and vocational interests; and
- Parenting skills training intended to help a recipient develop the skills necessary to effectively care for his or her child.

**TANF Purpose # 2:** End the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.
**Funding Sources:** State MOE and Federal TANF funds.

## 2. Sanctions

Sanctions are applied to those families that fail to meet the personal responsibilities and work requirements outlined in the TANF Family Service Plan (TFSP) — Work plan. Prior to the imposition of a sanction, the case manager should determine if the need for good cause exists. Good cause could include accommodation for language deficiencies, developmental disabilities, or other disabilities as recognized by the ADA. Good cause could also include a situation, event, or condition beyond the individual's control, which prevents the individual from meeting one of those requirements. The sanctions are applied as follows:

- An initial failure to meet work requirements or stated obligations, without good cause,

is called a material violation and can result in a 25% reduction of the family's grant.
- A subsequent material violation of work requirements or stated obligations can result in the termination of a TANF case for three or twelve calendar months based on the number of occurrences.

An assessment is made of the possible risk to children from a failure to comply with the TFSP or from failure to achieve self-sufficiency within the time limit.

Recipients who may have committed a material violation are given an opportunity to conciliate and thus avoid the imposition of a sanction only once in their lifetime receipt of TANF cash assistance. The county DFCS office must initiate the conciliation process. A successful conciliation results in no sanction being imposed on a TANF family.

## J. Two-Parent Families

In order to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families, Georgia broadened the definition of deprivation to allow more able-bodied, two-parent families with marginal resources to access the benefits and support services of the TANF program. Cash assistance to families with two able-bodied parents will continue to be paid out of 100% state funds; however, these funds will not be used for MOE purposes.

The TANF program provides these parents with an opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities to enhance their job skills, parenting skills, and general life skills leading to self-sufficiency.

## K. Family Violence

Family violence has no economic or social barriers. The costs of family violence include misery and trauma for individuals and families and increased government spending for police services, criminal prosecutions, incarcerations, court personnel, foster care, public assistance, and juvenile corrections. Georgia has adopted the Family Violence Option (FVO) which provides for identification and screening of domestic violence victims, referral to services, and waiver of program requirements for good cause.

Program requirements can be waived if they would unfairly penalize individuals who are or have been victimized by domestic violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence. Program requirements that can be waived include time limits and child support cooperation requirements.

On March 15, 2022, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 amended section 402(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.602(a)), adding new required certification for state TANF agencies related to providing information to victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

TANF policy and training has been updated to incorporate the new certification requirements by ensuring that workers and other agency personnel are trained and certified in:

- The nature and dynamics of sexual harassment and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
- 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.
- 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.

Georgia is committed to establishing and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure that applicants and recipients for TANF are informed of assistance provided for victims of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Family violence is assessed at application and renewal of TANF benefits, and during employment service assessments monthly. Free confidential services are available from domestic violence shelters and programs. Families can call this toll-free number (1-800-33-HAVEN or 1-800-334-2836) as needed anywhere in the state to find a safe place to stay for themselves and their children.

## L. Hardship Waivers

Georgia has established a 48-month limit on the receipt of TANF for an adult, minor head of household, or spouse of the head of household who receives TANF cash assistance. The lifetime limit may be temporarily waived for an assistance unit (AU) due to hardship or if the AU includes someone who is or has been a victim of domestic violence.

Georgia grants hardship waivers solely on a case-by-case basis, using criteria established by the state. The granting of a waiver can result in an extension of TANF eligibility for up to three months at a time. Extensions of TANF eligibility count toward the 60-month federal lifetime limit. Waivers granted to the federal limit cannot exceed 20 percent of Georgia's TANF caseload except for reasons of domestic violence.

Specific criteria are used to determine if a hardship waiver may be granted to a TANF assistance unit (AU). A hardship exists when one or more of the following criteria are a barrier to the attainment of self-sufficiency:

- The AU meets the domestic violence criteria when a member of the AU is or has been a victim of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking and the threat of the type of violence is a barrier to the attainment of self-sufficiency.
- The AU has an active child protective services (CPS) case and the circumstances necessitating the CPS case create a barrier to the attainment of self-sufficiency.
- The disability of the grantee relative, other eligible adult, or a household member

is a barrier to employment for the grantee relative or other eligible adults.

- Documentation of the disability of a grantee relative, household member, or other eligible adult must specifically support that the individual has significant barriers that hinder their ability to obtain gainful employment and must include a complete vocational rehabilitation assessment. If the disability is that of a household member, documentation must specifically address attempts made to develop opportunities for participation in any work activity, including the reason that the attempts failed to yield positive results. The documentation must also include the lack of resources or the lack of compatibility of available resources to assist with the disabled household member in order that the grantee relative or other eligible adult could participate in work activities that might lead to employment.
- Natural disasters or pandemics that occur outside the control of the agency create barriers that cause possible economic disruptions, missed work due to illnesses, and reduced work activity.

Waivers to the time limit are granted only to those who have complied with TANF program requirements. When an AU is granted a hardship waiver, it remains subject to all TANF program requirements for as long as it continues to receive.

## M. Reducing Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies

### 1. Department of Public Health (DPH) Partnership

Preventing teen pregnancy is a priority for the Department of Public Health (DPH). In partnership with the Georgia Department of Human Services, DPH addresses teen pregnancy through two programs using a comprehensive approach: the Georgia Adolescent Health and Youth Development Program and Georgia Family Planning Program.

The scope of the problem: Using the OASIS tool on the Georgia Department of Public Health's website (dph.georgia.gov/health-data-and-statistics), one can see that the birth rate among girls in Georgia aged 15-19 years old declined from 16.5% to 15.9% between 2021 and 2024. During that same period, the teen birth rate among non-Hispanic White adolescents declined by 0.3% from 11.7% to 11.4%. The decline in the teen birth rate among non-Hispanic African Americans was reduced from 20% to 17.6%.

Today, more teen mothers are unmarried than in past generations. Single-parent families, especially young families, are at greater risk of emotional and financial instability. Teen mothers are also at greater risk of receiving late or no prenatal care, having a premature birth (<37 weeks) or low birth weight baby (<2,500 grams), and experiencing an infant death (<1 year).

- In 2024, 40% of 10-to-14-year-old mothers had experienced late or no prenatal care.
- In 2024, 9.1% of births by 10-to-14-year-old mothers were premature, and 13% were low birth weight.

In 2024, 5.8% of all births among teens 15-17 years old were repeat births. This has shown a reduction overall of 1.2% from 2014. While the teen birth rates have been declining, pregnancy in this age group remains a serious public health concern. It is imperative that Georgia reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy among adolescents in order to reduce the Georgia teen birth rates.

Progress: Teen birth rates have decreased both in Georgia and nationally. Georgia has made significant progress in reducing teen births and the associated personal and economic costs, but Georgia must continue to reduce the teen birth rate even further by reducing sexual activity and other risky behaviors among unmarried teens.

Unintended pregnancies, particularly those occurring very early in a woman's reproductive years, often have adverse health, social, and economic consequences for the mother and her child. Teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock parenting are linked to poverty and welfare dependency. Teenage mothers are more likely to be unmarried, drop out of school, and rely on TANF.

Georgia Adolescent Health and Youth Development (AHYD) Program: The goal of the AHYD program is to prevent teenage pregnancy by helping adolescents grow up healthy, educated, employable, and connected to their families and communities. The AHYD program focuses on creating the conditions that support young people's long-term health and success. Grounded in the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach, the program strengthens protective factors that help youth thrive. These include supportive relationships, strong community connections, and opportunities to build skills and confidence. By addressing upstream factors that contribute to or increase the impact of adverse childhood experience, the program works to ensure that all youth in Georgia have the foundation they need to develop into healthy, capable adults.

Funds are provided to local public health districts to support the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of successful programs that address the broad range of social and economic factors that affect teen behavior, including substance abuse, violence, tobacco use, obesity, and teen sexual activity.

**TANF Purpose #3:** Preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
**Funding Source:** Federal TANF and State MOE funds

### 2. Services for Children and Youth — DFCS Out of School Services

Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Out of School Services (formerly the DFCS Afterschool Care Program) is designed to support the Georgia Department of Human Services' (DHS) broader goal of promoting self-sufficiency and independence among families and protecting Georgia's vulnerable children and adults. Educational attainment, positive youth development and enhanced well-being are key factors in preventing future welfare dependency among today's youth, particularly youth of economically disadvantaged families. This program provides youth with opportunities for intellectual and social enrichment and other positive alternatives to becoming a teenage parent.

By providing funding through a Statement of Need (SON) solicitation process, DHS partners with

community-based organizations and public agencies throughout the Georgia to provide before school, afterschool, intercession, and summer services to youth. The mission of DFCS Out of School Services is to provide resources to youth-serving organizations within Georgia who serve families within low-to-moderate income communities during the out-of-school time.

**Funding Allocation and MOE**

Each year, approximately $15.5M has been awarded to selected agencies with additional Maintenance of Effort (MOE) match support of approximately $35M or more annually.
Currently (FFY 2025), Out of School Services is partnering with 28 agencies to provide positive youth development services during the out-of-school time. As in previous programming years, the Georgia Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs continues to serve the largest number of youth and provide the largest amount in match funding for the Department of Human Services and Georgia Division of Family and Children Services' MOE. In FFY 2024, Out of School Services served more than 30,130 youth through awarded funding.

**TANF Purpose #3:** Preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
**Funding Source:** Federal TANF and State MOE funds

## N. Education and Training on The Problem of Statutory Rape

The Georgia Department of Public Health provides a Rape Prevention and Education program that is completely funded by a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant. It is not TANF- or TANF/MOE-funded.

The Georgia Sexual Violence Prevention Program (GASVPP) is in the Medical and Clinical Service Division — Chronic Disease Prevention Section. The Rape Prevention Education Program (RPE) was created as a result of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and was last reauthorized in 2022. Funding through the Rape Prevention and Education Program formula grants are provided to states and territories to support rape prevention and education programs conducted by rape crisis centers and state sexual assault coalitions.

The Rape Prevention and Education program is guided by six prevention principles, which are:

- Preventing the first-time occurrence of sexual violence,
- Reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors linked to sexual violence perpetration and victimization,
- Using the best available evidence when planning, implementing, and evaluating prevention programs,
- Implementing comprehensive strategies that address individual, relationship, community, and societal factors,
- Analyzing state and community data, such as health and safety data, to inform program decisions and monitor trends, and
- Evaluating prevention efforts and using the results to improve future program plans.

The RPE Program provides rural, urban, and suburban areas with the opportunity to change sexual violence through the implementation of the following legislatively approved activities:

- Educational seminars;
- Training programs for professionals;
- Preparation of informational material;
- Operation of hotlines;
- Training programs for male and female students and campus personnel designed to reduce the incidence of sexual assault at colleges and universities;
- Providing literature, education, and information about the Georgia law on statutory rape to adolescent males participating in the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) and Evidence-Based Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Program;
- Increase the awareness about drugs used to facilitate rapes or sexual assaults;
- Other efforts to increase awareness in underserved communities and among individuals with disabilities as defined in Section 3 of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. Section 12102).

To strengthen and improve Georgia's existing State Action Plan, GASVPP staff and key program partners — including the state's SV coalition, the Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault (GNESA) — collaborate regularly to plan, prioritize, and establish the most effective SV prevention approaches. To strengthen economic supports for priority populations in Georgia, GASVPP will partner with local sexual assault centers (SACs) in high-risk areas to provide training or workshops to address needs in the community related, but not limited, to housing, food, and financial insecurities. Two primary prevention strategies will be implemented that focus on promoting social norms that protect against violence. Georgia has expanded prevention interventions to under-represented areas of the state and to add a more diverse group of partners.

- Athletes as Leaders and Coaching Boys into Men are complimentary evidence-based programs with implementation at Georgia Recreation and Parks Association sites and high schools throughout the state to empower girls, engage boys as allies, and promote healthy relationships.
- Step Up. Step In. (SUSI) is a Public Health District awareness campaign in high-risk middle and high schools in Georgia that focuses on identification and stopping sexual bullying from occurring between youth and increasing sexual violence awareness and bystander interventions.

## O. Georgia Law Related to Statutory Rape

In Georgia, anyone who engages in sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 16 may face charges for statutory rape, even if the act was consensual. Furthermore, engaging in any sexual activity by force or without the other person's consent can result in charges for sexual battery or assault, no matter what the age of the other person (Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A. §16-6-3). Georgia child welfare policy requires the reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of any child, aged person, or disabled adult no later than 24 hours

after the suspected or known abuse. This includes reports of physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment or maltreatment. Intake reports that contain an allegation of abuse or neglect will be shared with local law enforcement. In addition to reports of abuse or neglect from the general public, Georgia has a defined list of mandated reporters that includes, but is not limited to, Division of Family and Children personnel, physicians and other hospital personnel, schoolteachers and other school personnel, law enforcement personnel, and reproductive healthcare facility or pregnancy resource center personnel (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5).

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services will coordinate and partner with state, county, and municipal law enforcement to promote safety programs and tips designed to prevent the occurrence of statutory rape, including information regarding legal definitions and consequences of statutory rape and the state law regarding the age of consent to reducing teenage pregnancy to satisfy the requirements of 402(a)(1)(A)(vi). Training is designed to reach state and local law enforcement officials and community educators, which include teachers, coaches, nurses, and other health professionals, such as those providing counseling services.

In addition, the Georgia Bureau of Investigations Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) leads the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Task Force and provides aggregated quarterly reports. CJCC has contracted with agencies to provide law enforcement, prosecutors, the medical community, and mental health providers on awareness, assessment, warning signs, medical treatment, clinical and counseling treatment, and the referral process. The Department of Public Health's Sexual Violence Prevention Unit and the Rape Prevention Education Program provide information from state law regarding statutory rape.

# II. Special Provisions

## A. Interstate Program Regulations

A family subject to the TANF lifetime limit that moves into Georgia from another state can receive TANF cash assistance for the 48-month limit established by Georgia, regardless of a different lifetime limit in the previous state of residence. Assistance received in any other state in January 1997 or thereafter counts toward Georgia's 48-month lifetime limit on the receipt of TANF cash assistance.

## B. Non-Citizen Provision

TANF is provided to qualified aliens in the same manner as to citizens of the United States. For aliens who are victims of severe forms of trafficking, cash assistance is provided to the same extent as to aliens who have been granted refugee status. Federal funds will be used except for those aliens who enter the United States on or after the date of the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and who are not exempted by law from the five-year prohibition. TANF cash assistance is paid out of 100% state funds to those qualified aliens who are not eligible for federally funded TANF solely because of their date of entry into the United States.

## C. Objective Criteria

### 1. Assistance

Assistance is provided to needy families. A family is defined as "one or more children living with a responsible parent(s), other caretaker relative or legal guardian." Assistance includes cash payments and other benefits designed to meet a family's ongoing, basic needs.
Assistance includes certain support services for families who are not employed.

#### *a.* ***Basic assistance*** *(excluding Relative Foster Care Maintenance Payments and Adoption and Guardianship Subsidies)*

Families receiving cash assistance, which is intended to assist families in meeting their ongoing basic needs, represent Georgia's child only cases. Cash assistance will also be provided to a pregnant woman without other dependent children based on support and passage of state law during the 2023 Georgia legislative session.

Georgia currently has three categories of Basic Assistance (excluding Relative Foster Care Maintenance Payments and Adoption and Guardianship Subsidies):

1. Cash Assistance:

   Cash assistance includes the share of the assigned child support collection that is distributed to the family and disregarded in determining eligibility for and the amount of the TANF assistance payment. For cash assistance benefits, a family's income must be below the state's Standard of Need.

2. Work Assistance:

   Work assistance services and cash assistance that are provided to needy families in which the parent or grantee-relative are deemed to have mandatory work requirements.

3. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren:

   Georgia has recognized a growing population of grandparents taking upon themselves the role of caretaker for their grandchildren. Therefore, DFCS will provide supplemental support necessary to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) so that children can be cared for in their homes or in the homes of their grandparents. The GRG Monthly Subsidy Payment (MSP) is a cash payment of $100.00 per child, per month. The payment may be ongoing or retroactive and can be offered to a grandparent or his or her spouse who meets the following criteria:

   - Is a caretaker of his or her grandchild;
   - Grandchild is eligible for cash assistance;
   - Is 55 years of age or older or any age and is disabled, not participating in an existing foster care program and not receiving per diem payments;

- Has a household income of less than 160% of the federal poverty level (FPL); and
- Parent of the child is not in the home (mother, father, or minor parent).

Georgia legislation passed House Bill 129 during the legislation session of 2023. Effective July 1, 2023, this bill ended the Family Cap policy, and TANF cash assistance will be provided to a pregnant woman without dependent children. The needs of the pregnant woman or minor will be used to determine the amount of assistance that the family receives.

Assistance excludes non-recurrent, short-term benefits designed to deal with individual crises rather than ongoing needs. Short-term benefits that are not considered assistance cannot provide for a need that will extend beyond four months. Assistance also excludes childcare, transportation, and other support services provided to employed families. The receipt of assistance does not count against a family's time limit when a grantee relative who is not required to be an AU member does not receive assistance for her or him but instead receives assistance for the children only.

The term "assistance" is important because specific TANF requirements only apply to families receiving assistance. These requirements are:

- Time limits (for federally funded assistance),
- Work and personal responsibility requirements,
- Assignment of child support, and
- Data collection requirements, including three quarterly reports and one annual report.

The State provides services, referrals or cash assistance, or a notice of denial within forty-five days of the application date. Applicants requesting assistance for themselves and dependent children are required to seek and accept employment. Parents and caretakers approved for cash assistance are required to agree to certain work and non-work obligations to receive benefits. These agreements specify the client and agency responsibilities, the temporary and contractual nature of receipt of TANF, and the work activities required of participants. Teen parents are required to live in an adult-supervised setting unless DHS determines that it may be detrimental to the child or parent to impose this requirement.

Eligibility for TANF is based on objective non-financial and financial criteria.

**Non-Financial Rules**

Age — Assistance is provided for children under age 18. Families have the option to include children who are 18 years of age and who are still in school, including high school, vocational or technical school, adult education classes, college, valid home study programs, or a course of study granting a GED.

Application for Other Benefits — Applicants and recipients must apply for all other monetary benefits for which they may be eligible.

Citizenship — Cash assistance is provided to qualified aliens who were residing in the United States prior to the date of the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 in the same manner as citizens of the United States. State funding provides cash assistance to those qualified aliens who are not eligible for TANF solely because of their date of entry into the United States.

Convicted Drug Felons — Individuals with felony drug convictions on or after January 1, 1997 are ineligible for assistance.

Convicted Serious Violent Felons — Individuals convicted of one of the "serious violent felonies" specified in O.C.G.A. 17-10-6.1 (murder or felony murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sodomy, and aggravated sexual battery) are ineligible for assistance.

Cooperation with the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) — Georgia meets all federal requirements regarding referrals to DCSS. Minor absent parents are also referred to DCSS. Failure to cooperate in establishing paternity or obtaining child support makes the family ineligible for benefits.

Cooperation with Fraud Investigation — Families that fail to cooperate with a fraud investigation or an eligibility investigation are ineligible to receive TANF.

Deprivation — Deprivation, for purposes of determining eligibility for cash assistance, is based on the continued absence, incapacity, or death of one or both parent(s). When both able-bodied parents are in the home, deprivation is based on establishing a recent connection to the workforce.

Enumeration — Applicants and recipients are required to provide or apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) according to established rules. Failure to provide or apply for an SSN without good cause results in the ineligibility of the individual for whom a number is not provided.

Family Planning — Following through on a family planning referral is an obligation to be met by all parents and recipients of childbearing age.

Fleeing Felons and Probation/Parole Violators — Fleeing felons and probation/parole violators are ineligible for assistance. The State provides appropriate law enforcement officials with the last known address.

Immunization — No assistance is paid on behalf of a preschool age dependent child unless the child has received all the specified immunizations appropriate for the age of the child.

Living with a Specified Relative — A child must live with a specified relative or with a legal guardian. If the only child in the family receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the parent(s) or other grantee relative may be eligible for cash assistance.

Pregnant Minor or Minor Parent Provision — Pregnant minors with no dependent children and

minor parents with children must live with a parent, legal guardian, or another relative, or in a supportive living arrangement, unless there is good cause not to do so. A pregnant minor or minor parent who does not meet this requirement is ineligible for assistance.

Personal Responsibilities — Based on an assessment of family needs and circumstances, family members are required to meet certain personal responsibility requirements. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the imposition of sanctions.

Prenatal Care — Individuals who fail to participate in prenatal care arranged by the Department are ineligible for TANF.

Residency — Applicants and recipients must live in Georgia. A family moving into Georgia from another state is subject to Georgia's 48-month lifetime limit on the receipt of TANF, irrespective of a different lifetime limit that may have been in effect in the family's previous state of residence.

Sanction Provision — Failure to meet work requirements or personal responsibilities can lead to a 25% reduction in benefits for the first material violation. Any subsequent material violation will result in TANF ineligibility for a period of three or twelve calendar months based on the number of material violations.

School Attendance — Children must attend school according to guidelines established by the Georgia Department of Education. Failure without good cause to ensure that children attend school may result in sanctions. Additionally, no assistance is provided to teenage parents who are not attending school or other equivalent training program and who do not obtain passing grades.

Third Party Resources — Applicants and recipients must provide information regarding third party resources.

Work Requirements — Work requirements are administered based on federal regulations.

### Financial Rules

**Resources:** The resource limit is $1,000.
The resources of individuals used in determining the family size are considered. Resources such as cash, checking and savings accounts, credit union accounts, and tax refunds are counted in determining eligibility. This list is not all-inclusive.

The resource value of vehicles is determined as follows:

- The equity value up to $4,650 of one vehicle that is used to look for work or used to travel to work or education and training is excluded. If not used for these purposes, the equity value up to $1,500 is excluded.
- The equity value of any other vehicle in the family is counted toward the resource limit.

Individual Development Accounts: An Individual Development Account (IDA) may be established by or on behalf of a TANF applicant or recipient for one of the following purposes:

- Post-secondary educational expenses.
- First home purchase.
- Business capitalization (start-up of a new business).

Funds in an IDA, up to $5,000, are not considered as a resource and any interest earned will not be considered income in determining TANF eligibility.

**Income:** Income limits for TANF eligibility are based on the State's Gross Income Ceiling (GIC) and Standard of Need (SON).

- The countable income of all AU members is considered.
- The income of other legally responsible persons in the home (such as the parents of a minor caretaker) is also considered.
- The countable gross income of all AU members must be below the GIC.
- Net income is compared to the SON. The State pays the deficit up to the family maximum.
- Certain deductions are applied to earnings.
- A childcare deduction is allowed for individuals who incur a childcare expense while they are working.

The countable income of all persons included in determining family size is considered as follows:

- Income, including wages, unemployment benefits, child support, contributions and Social Security benefits is considered in the determination of eligibility.
- Certain sources of income, such as educational assistance, adoption assistance, SSI, the earnings of a child who is a student, Lost Wages Assistance (LWA), State Extended Benefits (SEB), and state and federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) income are excluded from consideration in determining eligibility. This list is not all-inclusive.
- Lump sums received by the family are considered and a period of ineligibility is established using the federal poverty limit (FPL).

**Budgeting:** The income of all assistance unit members is considered in the determination of TANF eligibility. In addition, the income of the following individuals is considered in determining eligibility and the payment amount:

- Disqualified individuals.
- Penalized parents.
- Ineligible parents.
- Individuals who are financially responsible for an AU member.

The amount of income budgeted is based on the amount that best represents what the AU has

received or will receive on an ongoing basis.

Deductions are applied to earned income as follows:

- Apply a standard work deduction.
- Deduct incurred childcare expenses up to the following maximums:
  - $200 per month for each child under age 2.
  - $175 per month for each child age 2 and over.

Effective February 2017, with the implementation of the aforementioned new eligibility system called Georgia Gateway, a new standard deduction replaced the $90 standard work deduction and the $30 + 1/3 deduction for earned income. These deductions were replaced with a standard deduction of $250 for earned income for each employed individual in the assistance unit.

If a minor parent living with her parent(s) applies and is included in the determination of the family size, a portion of the income of the minor's parent(s) is considered in the eligibility determination.

The countable gross income must be below Georgia's Gross Income Ceiling (GIC). If the gross income is below the GIC, all income remaining after allowable deductions are applied is compared to the SON. Payment, if any, is made based on the amount of the deficit or the Family Maximum, whichever is less.

Lump sum budgeting is computed by comparing the amount of the lump sum to the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for the household size. The household is ineligible for the number of months the income meets the FPL. The period of ineligibility can be shortened only for good cause reasons.

Sanctions are applied to the final grant amount after all income and deductions are determined, and before any recoupment are deducted.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**Funding Source:** Federal and State MOE Funds

**b. Basic Assistance for Relative Care:** Relatives Caring for Children Currently or Previously in the Custody of DFCS

Georgia pays a cash benefit on behalf of the child to certain non-parent relatives to assist them in caring for children in the custody of DFCS or for relatives who are granted legal guardianship of a child previously in DFCS custody when parental reunification is impossible or in the best interests of a child.

Eligibility for kinship care subsidies:

- The child must be placed with a relative that meets that TANF degree of relationship:

- Grandparent (up to great-great-great)
- Sibling (half, whole, step)
- Aunt/uncle (up to great-great)
- Niece/nephew (including child and grandchild of niece/nephew
- First cousin
- First cousin once removed (the child of a first cousin)

- The child's monthly income, excluding any wages, must be less than the amount of the subsidy.
- The child must be a citizen or legal permanent resident of the United States.

**Subsidies are provided on behalf of the child in the following kinship arrangements:**

**Relative Care Subsidy and Enhanced Relative Care Subsidy:**

The Relative Care Subsidy (RCS)/Enhanced Relative Care Subsidy (ERCS) program enables the Department to provide financial support for children transferred by the courts from the temporary legal custody of the Department to the permanent legal custody of an approved relative caregiver who meets the TANF degree of relationship. The purpose of RCS/ERCS is to financially assist relatives providing a permanent home for a child formerly in agency custody. RCS/ERCS payments are available to help defray basic expenses that otherwise may limit the relative's ability to assume permanent legal custody of the child. Subsidy payments must be used for the child's needs or expenses.

Additional eligibility criteria include:

- The child must be in the legal permanent custody of the relative.
- The relative must have an approved Kinship Assessment.
- Effective January 1, 2014, no new cases may be added to RCS or ERCS.

**The RCS/ERCS monthly rates are as follows (effective July 1, 2025):**
Child aged birth through 5: $741.69
Child aged 6 through 12: $792.50
Child aged 13 and older: $853.85

**Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR)**: The ERR program provides an initial financial payment to assist with the basic care of a child in DFCS custody placed with a relative caregiver while the caregiver completes the foster family home approval process. The ERR subsidy must be terminated prior to receipt of Foster Care Per Diem.

Additional eligibility criteria include:

- There is an approved kinship assessment or abbreviated kinship assessment, and foster home approval should be completed within 120 days from the date of placement.
- An ERR application or agreement has been completed and signed by the caregiver and approved by the DFCS county director or designee.

**The ERR monthly rates are as follows (effective July 1, 2025):**

Child aged birth through 5: $815.87
Child aged 6 through 12: $871.73
Child aged 13 and older: $939.24

**Subsidized Guardianship:**

The Subsidized Guardianship (SG) program provides monthly financial assistance to relative guardians who meet the TANF degree of relationship that have obtained permanent guardianship of a child who was in DFCS custody.

Additional eligibility criteria include:

- There is an approved kinship assessment or current approved foster family home evaluation.
- A subsidized guardianship application and agreement has been completed, signed by the caregiver, and approved by the county director or designee.
- Non-reunification was granted by the court and verified via a court order, and the caregiver was granted permanent guardianship of the child until age 18.
- The child has been placed with the caregiver for at least six months, under DFCS supervision, prior to the transfer of permanent guardianship from DFCS to the caregiver.
- Permanent guardianship has been transferred to the caregiver.
- Only children who achieved permanency via a permanent guardianship from Georgia DFCS custody are eligible for Subsidized Guardianship.

**The SG monthly rate is (effective July 1, 2025):**

Child aged birth through 5: $741.69
Child aged 6 through 12: $792.50
Child aged 13 and older: $853.85

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**Funding Source:** Federal and State MOE Funds

**2. Authorized Solely Under Prior Law**

**a. Foster Care Payments***

For children who enter foster care, they are initially eligible for Foster Care Payments from the time they enter care up to six months under emergency assistance provisions, described as short-term emergency care. Initial services may continue for up to six months; however, if the child is determined eligible for Title IV-E Foster Care Payments, he or she will be moved to the appropriate Title IV-E program. Otherwise, the child will be moved to the appropriate non-TANF-funded program at the end of the six months. The following service types are authorized under prior law,

as established under Emergency Assistance for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) criteria:

- Initial TANF Family Foster Care (FFC) for expenses when a child first enters family foster care
- Initial TANF Specialized Foster Care (SFC) State Approved Per Diem Waiver for expenses when a child is first placed in SFC and who requires a State Office written waiver for per diem.

***See Appendix C for AFDC State plan excerpt.**

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall:

Ensure that a child meets all AFDC criteria to be Title IV-E eligible. The following must exist in the removal home to meet the AFDC Relatedness criteria for Title IV- E purposes:

- The child must be under the age of 18;
- The child was living with a specified relative in the removal home;
- A child must meet AFDC eligibility criteria in the month in which either a voluntary placement agreement (VPA) is entered into, or a court order is initiated to remove the children from the home. For the purpose of meeting the living with a specified relative prior to removal from the home requirement, one of the two situations will apply:
    - The child was living with the parent or specified relative, and was AFDC eligible in that home in the month of the voluntary placement agreement or initiation of court proceedings; or
    - The child had been living with the parent or specified relative within six months of the voluntary placement agreement or the initiation of the court proceedings, and the child would have been AFDC eligible in that month if s/he had still been living in that home.
- The child must have been deprived of the care, guidance, or support of one or both parents, married or unmarried, if paternity is established, and deprivation must exist in the eligibility month; and
- The child must be a United States citizen or a lawfully admitted qualified immigrant to be Title IV-E eligible.
    - Verify the citizenship or immigration status of any child in foster care under the responsibility of the State, without regard to whether foster care maintenance payments are made on behalf of the child.
    - Ensure child meets the definition of “qualified immigrant” as defined in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) to be eligible for foster care maintenance or adoption assistance, (except children receiving adoption assistance pursuant to agreements signed before August 22, 1996, who may continue to receive such assistance.

***See Appendix D – Child Welfare Policy Manual Policy Number 9.6 for the Aid to Families**

**with Dependent Children (AFDC)**
**Relatedness Criteria.**

### b. Room and Board Watchful Oversight

Room and Board and Watchful Oversight (RBWO) is the name for foster care placements (out-of-home care) with private foster care providers, such as licensed Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) and Child Caring Institutions (CCIs). Private contributions assist the RBWO program and are used to pay for services for some children in RBWO placements. The funds are also used to contract with community-based organizations to provide employment training, housing assistance, social skills training, and after-school program activities in order for eligible families to obtain self-sufficiency. Eligibility criteria: A family's income must be below the State Standard of Need or must be eligible for TANF. (Source: Georgia's COSTAR manual).

Two types of Room and Board Watchful Oversight are funded by TANF:

- Initial TANF RBWO: Institutional Foster Care Per Diem and other placement-related services expended from the date of placement for a maximum of 6 months,
- Initial TANF RBWO: Privately Supervised FFC – Licensed and Approved Private Foster Care Agencies Per Diem and other placement-related services may be charged from the date of placement for a maximum of 6 months.

***See Appendix C for AFDC State plan excerpt.**

Placement for Institutional Foster Care and Privately Supervised FFC are paid from state funds if placement-related services extend beyond 6 months.

## 3. Non-Assistance

Non-assistance is also provided to needy families. Non-assistance is benefits or services that do not count toward the 48-month lifetime limit on receipt of TANF because they do not meet the TANF definition of "assistance." Georgia has chosen the option of defining a "needy family" for each category of non-TANF assistance.

Non-assistance includes:

- Payments designed to remedy a specific crisis situation that are not intended to deal with ongoing basic needs and cannot continue for more than four calendar months.
- Work subsidies (e.g., payments to employers or to third parties to help cover the costs of employee wages, benefits, supervision, and training).
- Certain support services.
- Contributions to, and distributions from, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)
- Services that do not provide basic income support.
- Transportation assistance provided under a job access or reverse commute project to an individual who is not receiving other assistance.

- Diversion payments intended to provide employed TANF applicants with short-term assistance in order to obtain or maintain employment.
- Work support payments intended to assist with work related expenses.

The family that receives non-assistance rather than TANF cash assistance:

- Is not subject to TANF lifetime limits
- Is not subject to TANF work requirements
- Is not subject to TANF personal responsibility requirements
- Retains all child support

The provision of this type of aid, funded by federal TANF dollars and State MOE funds, is consistent with the efforts being made by Georgia to assist needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives, and to end the dependency of needy parents on government benefits. The various types of non-assistance being provided will also help to strengthen and maintain two-parent families through both the alleviation of short-term financial crises as well as the prevention of potential problems that may place undue strain on families and will help to prevent and reduce both out-of-wedlock and teenage pregnancies.

**a. Work Supports**

**Support Services for TANF Recipients**

When needed, support services are provided to assist TANF recipients to participate in work activities that will preserve months of potential TANF eligibility and lead to stable employment. Support services for TANF recipients are provided through a combination of federal TANF and State MOE funds. These services may include:

- Childcare;
- Transportation;
    - Transportation reimbursement
    - Purchase of Marta cards
    - Transportation provided through a DHS contract, referral service
- Work clothing, when required for employment;
- Eyewear, medical and dental services when required for employment (ASUPL — See Appendix C excerpt);
- Tools when required for employment;
- Occupational licensing fees.

Persons eligible for these services must meet the State's defined TANF income and resource guidelines. Support services are considered assistance and are provided when necessary but cannot exceed the maximum allowed by state law and funding. Benefits are provided at application and during periods of eligibility through cash to the TANF client and payments to providers.

**TANF Subsidized Employment Program (TSEP)**
The TANF Subsidized Employment Program (TSEP) provides an environment where TANF eligible staff may gain work experience and job skills. TSEP positions are full-time, time-limited positions lasting no more than 24 months. It is considered non-assistance. Eligibility criteria must be maintained during the 24-month period. TSEP staff should make active attempts to apply for regular, full-time positions after successful completion of training and once proficiency has been obtained. Staff who have not transitioned into a regular, full-time position within the 24-month period will not be eligible to continue employment.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**Funding Source: Federal Funds**

**b. Transitional Services for Employed**

The Work Support Program is non-assistance that assists former applicants and recipients who find employment and become ineligible for ongoing TANF (for who choose to end reduced TANF payments to save months). It consists of three sub-programs:

- Work Support Payments (WSP): Payments of $200 per month for the 12 months following case closure
- Transitional Support Services (TSS): Regular TANF support services will be available as needed to those clients who qualify for the Work Support Program for the 12 months following case closure.
- Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA): Payments of up to $1500 will be available for shelter and essential utility deposits for those eligible for the Work Support Program. They assist TANF families to transition into stable and permanent housing. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime payment.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

# III. Early Care and Education

## A. Child Care

The Child Care Assistance Program (CAPS) is administered by Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). It provides childcare to families to assist in job preparation, job search, placement, and job retention. Clients receiving services in the TANF applicant and TANF Employment Services programs are eligible for childcare assistance without an additional parent fee. Childcare assistance is provided in the form of vendor payments to providers. State funds expended to meet the MOE requirements of Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) are also counted as basic MOE expenditures in addition to excess state funds spent in this program not

being used to match another grant. TANF recipients who go to work and lose their cash benefits may continue to receive transitional childcare assistance for up to twelve months. A sliding fee scale is used for families with income once they are no longer eligible for TANF cash assistance.

**TANF Purpose #2:** End the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.
**Funding Source:** State MOE and Third-party MOE

## IV. Non-Recurrent Short-Term Benefits

Non-recurrent, short-term assistance for families in need of assistance due to a natural disaster or other emergency determined by the local, state or federal government.

### A. Disaster TANF Assistance

Families are eligible for a one-time-only payment equivalent to four times the TANF grant amount for their family size. If families choose to receive this benefit, they will not be eligible for ongoing TANF cash assistance for four months in a declared emergency. Families are eligible for this assistance up to once per occurrence.

To be eligible for this assistance, the family must meet the following TANF Basic Eligibility Criteria as defined in DHS DFCS Economic Support Services Policy Manual Volume I, TANF:

- Household Composition
- Age
- Relationship
- Deprivation
- Income
- Residency (disaster area must be verified)
- Identity
- Citizenship

Other eligibility criteria:

- Income guidelines are based on 200% of the FPL.

Disaster TANF benefit amount is based on the size of the assistance unit. TANF mandatory forms or work requirements are not applicable to those receiving Disaster TANF. TANF recertifications may be extended to allow impacted families to recover.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

## B. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Crisis Intervention Services Payment (CRISP)

Georgia has recognized a growing population of grandparents taking upon themselves the role of caretaker for their grandchildren. Therefore, DFCS will provide supplemental support necessary to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) so that children can be cared for in their homes or in the homes of their grandparents.

GRG CRISP is a one-time cash payment that equals up to four times the maximum TANF benefit amount for that AU size. This assistance is available to a grandparent or his or her spouse who meets the following criteria:

- Is a caretaker of his or her grandchild;
- Is 55 years of age and older, or any age and disabled, not participating in an existing foster care program, and
- Not receiving per diem payments;
- Has a household income of less than 160% of the federal poverty level (FPL); and
- The parent of the child is not in the home (mother, father, or minor parent).

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

## C. Employment Intervention Services

Employment Intervention Services (EIS) is available to TANF applicants who have a full-time job but are temporarily on unpaid leave due to a temporary illness or other crisis and are scheduled to return to work within four months. EIS is non-recurrent, short-term assistance that is equivalent to four times the maximum grant amount for the AU size. The AU must meet the gross income ceiling (GIC) test or be eligible for less than the maximum amount of cash assistance and so decline to receive cash assistance to preserve months of potential TANF eligibility.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

## D. Diaper Bank Program

Georgia TANF has partnered with Helping Mamas Inc. Diaper Bank to provide short-term, non-recurring diaper assistance to TANF recipients in need. As such, they have agreed to provide diapers for a four-month period, in the amount of $1,200 ($300 per month), to families expressing need. Diaper assistance will increase the family's income by $300 for that period, which allows families to utilize childcare, assist with housing, or pay for utilities, overall giving each family a boost toward self-sufficiency. Families must show proof of TANF receipt to be eligible.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

## E. Food Banks

Georgia TANF has partnered with the Atlanta Community Food Bank to provide short-term, non-recurring food distribution to TANF recipients in need. The focus of the program is to purchase and distribute nutritious foods to current TANF clients and their children, to TANF clients and their children who are in the 12-month transitional stage of TANF, and to Georgia families at risk of TANF eligibility. This support service assists families during periods of financial crisis and transition to maintain their households and keeps families intact. To be eligible, clients must have children in the household, either currently participate in TANF or TANF transitional programs, or have annual incomes below 200% of the FPL. Clients affirm they are under the 200% FPL by meeting one of the following conditions:

- They are a current TANF recipient;
- They are currently participating in the TANF Transitional program;
- They are a current SNAP recipient;
- They are enrolled in Medicaid; or
- They currently receive SSI.
- The food banks will account for the four-month limitation on non-recurrent, short-term (NRST) assistance and determine the value of the food package or other benefit using the estimation methodology outlined in the scope of services of the contract.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

## F. Rapid Rehousing

Georgia TANF has partnered with Partners for Home to provide short-term, non- recurring housing assistance to TANF recipients in need. The maximum amount of TANF funding is not to exceed $4,250 per family for the four-month period. The Rapid Rehousing Program will provide ongoing case management services, to include assessing, coordinating, and monitoring the delivery of individualized services to facilitate housing stability for program participants. Employment assistance (job training and employment services) will also be offered. Partners for Home receives supplemental funding from other sources used once the four-months of TANF funding are exhausted. Families must show proof of TANF receipt to be eligible.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**Funding Source:** Federal Funds

# V. Child Welfare Services

## A. Family Support/Family Preservation/Reunification Services

Child Protective Services are preventive services where the staff provide intake, investigations, family support, and ongoing services. These services are provided to abused or neglected children to protect the child and strengthen the family. Preventive Services is where the Child Protective Services (CPS) staff provide intake, investigations, family support and ongoing CPS services (Family Preservation).

## B. Foster/Adoption Parent Services

Foster/Adoption Parent Services enable the county departments to reimburse services required in the screening, preparation, and approval of foster and adoptive families and homemakers.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**TANF Purpose #3:** Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
**Funding Source:** Federal TANF and State MOE Funds

## C. Child Protection – Special Victims Unit

The DHS Special Victims Unit (SVU) is a unit of caseworkers and recovery assistance officers focused on coordinating with law enforcement regarding missing and sexually exploited children and prevention of trafficking of minors in the state. SVU works with federal, state, and local law enforcement for the recovery of youth who are missing and at risk of, or known to be, trafficked. Recovery of missing and trafficked children helps prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock and teenage pregnancies.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #3:** Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
**Funding Source:** Federal TANF

## D. Child Protection – Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Call Center

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Call Center operates a hotline that receives reports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year. The Hotline (1-844-END-CSEC or 1-844-363-2732) can accept calls from professionals, friends, family members, and concerned citizens to report suspected sex trafficking, also referred to as Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) cases, by calling the hotline. Every report initiates an assessment to determine whether a child or young person has been exploited or trafficked. CSEC survivors will be connected to services to support their recovery. CSEC referrals can also be made online at https://dfcs.georgia.gov/services/child-abuse-neglect/csec-hotline.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #3:** Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
**Funding Source:** Federal TANF

# VI. Supportive Services

Support services are available and intended to assist families in their efforts to become self-sufficient. The services are available to all current TANF recipients.

## A. Women's Treatment and Recovery Service (WTRS)

Substance abuse outpatient or residential treatment are available through the Women's Treatment and Recovery Service (WTRS) program, a gender-specific treatment program designed to address the needs of women who abuse alcohol and other drugs. The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities provides services for this program.

Participation in the program is available to individuals who meet one of three non- financial criteria and the sole financial requirement.

Participation in the WTRS program is available to individuals with active TANF cases, individuals whose cash assistance was terminated within the previous twelve months because of employment, and individuals with active DFCS Child Protective Services cases. These services are provided through contracts or referrals to partner state or community agencies.

The income limit for the WTRS program is set at 235% of the FPL for individuals ineligible for TANF cash assistance.

**TANF Purpose #1:** Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of caretaker relatives.
**TANF Purpose #2:** End dependency of needy families by promoting job preparation and work.
**TANF Purpose #3:** Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
**Funding Source:** Segregated Funds/State MOE Funds

## B. Community Service Requirement

Georgia has elected not to implement the optional provision available under TANF, Section 402(a) (1) (B) (iv). Instead, the State has decided to utilize available resources to support parents and caretakers in seeking and securing employment or participating in education or work activities that will ultimately lead to full time employment and self-sufficiency.

## C. Administrative Hearing, Appeals Process, and Benefit Recovery

The DFCS administrative appeal process provides an opportunity for a hearing to any applicant

who requests one because his or her claim for financial assistance is denied or is not acted upon with reasonable promptness, and to any recipient who is aggrieved by a DFCS action resulting in suspension, reduction, discontinuance, or termination of assistance or determination that a protective, vendor, or two-party payment should be made or continued. A hearing request is a clear expression made by an applicant, recipient, or his or her authorized representative that such individual wants the opportunity to present the applicant's or recipient's case to a higher authority. The hearing request, made verbally or in writing, must be directed to the applicant's or recipient's county DFCS office in accordance with and within the timeframes outlined in DFCS policy. The State Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH) will conduct a hearing. The applicant or recipient may represent themselves at the hearing or may authorize another person (e.g., an authorized representative, such as legal counsel, relative, or friend) to act on his or her behalf. The continuation of benefits and recovery for the overpayment of benefits will be made in accordance with applicable regulations and DFCS policy.

Effective May 8, 2018, in accordance with O.C.G.A. Section 50-13-41(c), every decision of an OSAH judge is a final decision. If the applicant or recipient (also referred to as the petitioner) or DHS DFCS seeks to appeal the final decision, a petition for judicial review shall be made by the commencement of a civil action, with the proper service of process made in accordance with applicable law, in the Fulton County Superior Court or in the superior court of the county of residence of the petitioner within 30 calendar days after service of the final decision from OSAH.

### D. Elder Care Provision

Georgia does not intend to fund any special initiative for training or employment of individuals providing direct care in long-term facilities or in occupations providing eldercare. On a case-by-case basis, a TANF recipient may receive assistance or services while they are pursuing training or employment to provide such eldercare. In this regard, assistance or services will include payment for short-term training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), supplies, uniforms, equipment, etc.

## VII. Certifications

Georgia will operate a program to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; dependence of needy parents on government benefits ends by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies is prevented and reduced and annual numerical goals to prevent and reduce the incidence of these pregnancies are established; and formation and maintenance of two-parent families are encouraged.

This program is known as the Georgia Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program and the grant received by families under this program will be called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance.

The Chief Executive Officer of the State of Georgia, Governor Brian Kemp, in administering and operating a program that provides Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) with minor children under title IV-A of the Social Security Act, certifies the following:

1. The Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Family and Children Services is the agency responsible for administering and supervising the program.

2. Local governments and private sector organizations have been and will be consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations and will have at least 45 days from the date of this submission to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services.

    a) A Child Support Enforcement program is operated under the State plan approved under Part D.

3. A Foster Care and Adoption Assistance program is operated in accordance with Part E, and the State will take all necessary actions to ensure that children who receive assistance are eligible for medical assistance.

4. 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 is provided with equitable access to assistance under the state program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the federal government.

5. Standards and procedures to ensure 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 - are established and enforced.

6. A summary of the state plan will be made available to the public.

7. On March 15, 2022, the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2022 amended section 402(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.602(a)), adding new required certification for state TANF agencies related to providing information to victims of sexual harassment or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

TANF policy and training has been updated to incorporate the new certification requirements by ensuring that workers and other agency personnel are trained and certified in:

- The nature and dynamics of sexual harassment and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking;
- 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
- 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.

Georgia is committed to establishing, and is enforcing, standards and procedures to ensure that applicants and recipients for TANF are informed of assistance provided for victims of sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Family violence is assessed at application and renewal of TANF benefits, and during employment service assessments monthly. Free confidential services are available from domestic violence shelters and programs. Families can call this toll-free number (1-800-33-HAVEN or 1-800-334-2836) as needed anywhere in the state to find a safe place to stay for themselves and their children.

# OPTIONAL CERTIFICATION

The State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to:

1. Screen and identify individuals applying for TANF, recipients receiving assistance under this part with a history of sexual harassment, and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals;
2. Refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services;
3. Waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements, such as time limits (for as long as necessary), residency requirements, and 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 would unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or for individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence; and
4. Provide information about the options available to current and potential beneficiaries.

# CERTIFIED BY:



Candice L. Broce
DHS Commissioner I DFCS Division Director

December 29, 2025
Date

# Appendix A – Georgia Confidentiality Law

O.C.G.A. §49-4-14. Regulations as to records; use or disclosure of information; penalty.

(a) The board is directed to prescribe regulations governing the custody, use, and preservation of the records, papers, files, and communications of the Department of Human Services, including the county departments, relating to public assistance. Except as otherwise provided in this Code section, such regulations shall provide safeguards restricting the use or disclosure of information concerning applicants for or recipients of public assistance to purposes directly connected with the administration of public assistance. The board is authorized in its discretion to include in such regulations provision for the public to have access to the records of disbursement or payment of public assistance made after March 30, 1965.
(b) No person who obtains information by virtue of any regulation made pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section shall use such information for commercial or political purposes.
(c) Any person violating subsection (b) of this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Ga. L. 1965, p. 385, §§ 10, 11; Ga. L. 2009, p. 453, § 2-2/HB 228.

## Appendix B – Georgia Statutory Rape Law

O.C.G.A. § 16-6-3. Statutory rape

(a) A person commits the offense of statutory rape when he or she engages in sexual intercourse with any person under the age of 16 years and not his or her spouse, provided that no conviction shall be had for this offense on the unsupported testimony of the victim.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this Code section, a person convicted of the offense of statutory rape shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than 20 years; provided, however, that if the person so convicted is 21 years of age or older, such person shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than ten nor more than 20 years. Any person convicted under this subsection of the offense of statutory rape shall, in addition, be subject to the sentencing and punishment provisions of Code Section 17-10-6.2.

(c) If the victim is at least 14 but less than 16 years of age and the person convicted of statutory rape is 18 years of age or younger and is no more than four years older than the victim, such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

(d)

(1) As used in this subsection, the term “sexual felony” shall have the same meaning as set forth in paragraph (2) of subsection (j) of Code Section 16-5-21.

(2) Any person having been previously convicted of a sexual felony who is convicted of the felony offense of statutory rape when the individual convicted was 21 years of age or older, shall be punished by imprisonment for life or a split sentence that is a term of imprisonment followed by probation for life. As a condition of probation, the court shall impose the requirement of electronic monitoring as set forth in paragraph (14) of subsection (a) of Code Section 42-8-35.

Ga. L. 1918, p. 259, §§ 1, 2; Code 1933, §§ 26-1303, 26-1304; Code 1933, § 26-2018, enacted by Ga. L. 1968, p. 715, § 1; Ga. L. 1995, p. 957, § 3; Ga. L. 1996, p. 871, § 1; Ga. L. 1996, p. 1115, § 3; Ga. L. 2006, p. 379, § 10/HB 1059; Ga. L. 2023, p. 637, § 3-6/HB 188, effective May 4, 2023.

# Appendix C – Excerpt from State AFDC Plan

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Attachment 3a
State of Georgia Page 1

**EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

A. Kinds of emergencies covered:
   1. Energy emergencies, including emergencies which result from a circumstance or combination of circumstances which require immediate action, such as:
      - Impending cutoff of utilities
      - Cutoff of utilities within the 30 days prior to application
   2. Family emergencies involving child abuse/neglect, including those which:
      - Result in a child abuse and neglect report
      - Place a child at risk of an out of home placement, or
      - Result in the opening of a preventive case

B. Kinds of assistance provided:
   1. For energy emergencies the following assistance is provided:
      - Payments to vendors to avoid cutoff or to reconnect services disconnected withing the last 30 days
      - Payments to clients to avoid cutoff or to reconnect services disconnected withing the last 30 days
   2. For family emergencies the following assistance is provided:
      - Payment for psychological or psychiatric services, including testing
      - Payment for childcare
      - Payment for temporary child placement
      - Payment for emergency shelter care
      - Payment for legal services
      - Payment for transportation
      - Payment for intensive family services
      - Payments to avoid foreclosure/eviction
      - Payments for medical and dental services
      - Payments for parental skills training
      - Payment for parental aide services
      - Payment for other emergency services required to meet the family's emergency needs

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1. For family emergencies the following services are provided:

• provision of emergency counseling • crisis intervention • emergency provision of employability services child care services
child protection services • child placement services • homemaker services • psychological/ psychiatric services, including testing • emergency shelter care • transportation • legal assistance to staff on behalf of a child in emergency services parental skills training
intensive family services

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# 9.6 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Relatedness Criteria

| Georgia Division of Family and Children Services Child Welfare Policy Manual | | | |
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| **Chapter:** | (9) Eligibility | | |
| **Policy Title:** | Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Relatedness Criteria | | |
| **Policy Number:** | 9.6 | **Previous Policy Number(s):** | N/A |
| **Effective Date:** | July 2024 | **Manual Transmittal:** | 2024-06 |

## Codes/References

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act § 471 (a) (27)
Title IV-E of the Social Security Act § 472 (a) (1) & (2)

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act § 472 (a) (3) (A) & (B) and (4)
45 CFR Part 1356 (l)
Public Law 104-193 The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) aka The Welfare Reform Act of 1996

## Requirements

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) will:

1. Confirm that a child meets AFDC Relatedness criteria to be title IV-E eligible. The following must exist in the removal home to meet the AFDC Relatedness criteria for title IV-E purposes:
   a. Age - A child must be under the age of 18.
   b. *Living with a specified relative in the removal home - A child must meet AFDC eligibility criteria in the month in which either a voluntary placement agreement (VPA) is entered into, or a court order is initiated to remove the child from the home. For the purpose of meeting the living with a specified relative prior to removal from the home requirement, one of the two following situations will apply:*
      i. *The child was living with the parent or specified relative, and was AFDC eligible in that home in the month of the voluntary placement agreement or initiation of court proceedings; or*
      ii. *The child had been living with the parent or specified relative within six months of the month of the voluntary placement agreement or the initiation of the court proceedings, and the child would have been AFDC eligible in that month if s/he had still been living in that home.*

**NOTE** The "living with" and "removal from" condition must be met by the same specified relative. A child may be "physically or constructively" removed from the home (see policy 9.4 Eligibility: Removal from the Home).

e. Household members of the removal home.

f. Available information about income and resources.

g. Documentation of a child's qualified immigrant status, and updates to the Citizenship page if the child does not meet qualified immigrant status requirements.

3. Verify a child's lawful residency status using documentary evidence:

a. U.S. Birth Certificate

b. Naturalization Certificate (N-550 or N-570)

c. Certificate of Citizenship (N-560 or N-561)

d. U.S. Passport

e. Hospital Certificate, or Baptismal Certificate

f Permanent Resident Card ("Green Card" or I-551)

g. Other form of immigration documentation

**NOTE** Refer to the Citizen and Identity page in Georgia SHINES for additional document options to verify citizenship and immigration status. If resources in your region are unable to confirm a method of verification you may contact the RevMax Specialist (see Practice Guidance: Citizenship, Immigration and Identity)

4. Upload the following in External Documentation in Georgia SHINES:

a. Income and/or resource verification, if applicable.
b. Child's Birth Certificate or other citizenship documentation

**NOTE** If the birth certificate is not uploaded, the RevMax Specialist may check Vital Statistics for children born in Georgia.

c. Documentation of the child's qualified alien status.

s. Contact the RevMax Specialist with any questions regarding which home constitutes the removal home.

6. Submit a Notification of Change (NOC) via Georgia SHINES to report any changes to the RevMax Specialist.

c. Deprivation - The child must have been deprived of the care, guidance or support of one or both parents (married or unmarried) if paternity is established. Deprivation must exist in the eligibility month.

d. Financial need (income and resources) - The income and assets of the removal home family must be considered.

e. Citizenship/immigration status - The child must be a United States (U.S.) citizen or a lawfully admitted qualified immigrant (qualified alien).

i. *Verify the citizenship or immigration status of any child in foster care under the responsibility of the State under Title IV-E or Part B, and without regard to whether foster care maintenance payments are made under section 472 on behalf of the child.*

ii. *For the purposes of meeting the requirements of the section 401(a) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), children must meet the definition of "qualified alien" (as defined in section 431(b) of PRWORA) to be eligible for Federal foster care maintenance or adoption assistance (except that children receiving adoption assistance pursuant to agreements signed before August 22, 1996 may continue to receive such assistance).*

2. Complete the Person Detail and Income and Resources pages in Georgia SHINES to allow the Revenue Maximization (RevMax) Specialist to determine if the child meets the AFDC relatedness criteria in the removal home.

## Procedures

**Social Services Case Manager**

1. Complete the Person Detail and Income and Resources pages in Georgia SHINES.
2. Complete the "living with" and "removal home" information on the Application and Background page in Georgia SHINES, including:
   a. The child's caretaker in the month the VPA was signed, or the court order was initiated.
   b. The relationship of the caretaker to the child as parent, relative or other.
   c. Whether the child lived with a specified relative in the past six months if other is checked.
   d. The person from whom legal custody was removed.

**NOTE** The SSCM must ensure the removal home box is checked on the address for the child for the information to pre-populate to the Medicaid/IV-£ application.

   e. Household members of the removal home.
   f. Available information about income and resources.
   g. Documentation of a child's qualified immigrant status, and updates to the Citizenship page if the child does not meet qualified immigrant status requirements.

1. Review the case record to ensure the following:
    a. Completion of the following pages in Georgia SHINES:
        i. Person Detail
        ti. Income and Resources
        ill. Application and Background
    b. Verification is uploaded into External Documentation in Georgia SHINES.
    c. Any changes are reported to RevMax via the NOC.
2. Staff with the SSCM if any follow-up is needed.

## Practice Guidance

In all references to AFDC criteria, the eligibility of the child is based on the AFDC program in effect in Georgia's State Plan on July 16, 1996. Only those who meet the relatedness criteria are considered eligible.

**Specified Relative and Removal Home**

The removal home is the home of the specified relative from whom legal custody of the child was removed. The following relationships meet the requirements of a specified relative:

1. Parents (either by birth, legal adoption or step-relationship)
2. Grandparents (up to great-great-great)
3. Siblings (whole, half or step)
4. Aunts/uncles (up to great-great)
5. Nieces/nephews (up to great-great)
6. First cousin
7. First cousin once removed (the child of a first cousin)
8. Spouses of any person named **in** the above group, even after the marriage is terminated by death or divorce

**EXCEPTION** The spouse of a stepparent or the spouse of a stepsibling is NOT within the specified degree of relationship

Relationship is established by one of the following:

1. Birth
2. Marriage
3. Legal adoption

An individual who has legal custody of the child does not meet the relationship requirement. Adoption or severance of parental rights does not terminate blood relationship for the specified relative requirement. The requirement for "living with a specified relative" is met if a newborn child is placed in DFCS care and responsibility directly from the hospital.

**Eligibility Month**

The eligibility month is defined as the month in which one of the following occurs:

1. The initiation of court proceedings (i.e., the filing of the complaint or petition) that led to the removal of the child; or
2. The date a VPA was signed by all parties.

**Parental Deprivation**

Deprivation results from one of the following situations in the removal home:

1. Death
2. Separation: Parents are legally separated and one of the parents is not living in the same house
3. Divorce: Parents are divorced and one of the parents is not living in the same house
4. Continual absence: One of the parents is continually absent from the home where the child resides
5. Institutionalized/incarcerated: One of the parents is in an institution or incarcerated, prior to the child's placement
6. Incapacitated or disabled: Any condition of mind or body which substantially reduces or eliminates the ability of the parent to support or care for the child. The parent's disability should be determined, and the disability continues for at least 30 days. If the parent is receiving SSI or Social Security disability benefits, Veteran's Disability benefits (100%), Railroad benefits, or Worker's Compensation benefits, the incapacitation requirement is met, and verification of benefits shall be included in the record (such as a copy of the award letter or copy of a check).
7. Termination of parental rights: The child is deprived from the date of the termination of parental rights
8. Unemployment of the principal wage earner: This condition only applies when both parents are present in the household. The child can be considered deprived if the principal wage-earning parent is unemployed.

### Citizenship, Immigration and Identity

For additional information on citizenship, immigration and identity, see the Medicaid Manual Policy 2215 Citizenship/Immigration/Identity. The section outlines a wide variety of circumstances, classifications and verification one may encounter when assessing an individual's status.

### Citizenship/Immigration Status

Title IV-E can be claimed for an otherwise eligible child pending the SSCM's verification of immigrant status.

### Qualified Alien

PRWORA defines a qualified alien as an alien who, at the time of application for, receipt or attempt to receive a Federal public benefit, is:

1. An alien who is lawfully admitted for permanent residence under the Immigration and Nationality Act.
2. An alien granted asylum under section 208 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.
3. A refugee who is admitted to the United States under section 207of the Immigration and Nationality Act.
4. An alien who is paroled into the United States under section 212(d)(5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act for a period of at least one year.
5. An alien whose deportation is being withheld under section 243(h) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.
6. An alien who is granted conditional entry pursuant to section 203(a)(7) of the Immigration and Nationality Act as in effect prior to April 1, 1980.

## Forms and Tools

Medicaid Manual Policy 2215 Citizenship/Immigration/Identity

## Appendix E- Georgia's TANF Financial Standards Income

| AU Size | Gross Income Ceiling | Standard of Need | Family Maximum | TANF160%FPL GRG Income Limits |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | $435 | $235 | $155 | $2087 |
| 2 | 659 | 356 | 235 | 2820 |
| 3 | 784 | 424 | 280 | 3553 |
| 4 | 925 | 500 | 330 | 4287 |
| 5 | 1060 | 573 | 378 | 5020 |
| 6 | 1149 | 621 | 410 | 5753 |
| 7 | 1243 | 672 | 444 | 6487 |
| 8 | 1319 | 713 | 470 | 7220 |
| 9 | 1389 | 751 | 496 | 7953 |
| 10 | 1487 | 804 | 530 | 8687 |
| 11 | 1591 | 860 | 568 | 9420 |
| Each additional member | +44 | +24 | +17 | +733 |

**Resources:**

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| Each AU $1000 limit |