

TANF Program Update

Important Notice: Changes to stabilize TANF begin October 2026

Beginning October 1, 2026, the District of Columbia (District) will implement changes to stabilize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to ensure it remains sustainable and responsive to families' needs. These steps are designed to improve long-term stability while continuing to support eligible households effectively.

- **Step down benefits for 60-month+ households:** the District will begin to align the program with the federal structure by incrementally stepping down benefits for households that have received TANF for more than 60 months.
- **Increase the failure-to-work sanction:** the District will renew the focus on engaging in work activities by increasing the failure-to-work sanction from 6% to 25% for work-eligible families.

Understanding the impact these changes may have on certain families, the DC Department of Human Services (DHS) has convened a **TANF Hardship Policy Working Group** to develop a hardship extension policy for certain households. DHS is also actively encouraging affected work-eligible customers to take advantage of the **TANF Employment & Education Program (TEP)** to develop a Detailed Individual Responsibility Plan (D-IRP).

What You Should Do Right Now

DHS remains committed to helping families maintain or establish economic stability. **Connect with your TEP provider or vocational development specialist** as soon as possible to develop an actionable plan.

For more information, please visit our [TANF Program Update webpage](https://bit.ly/dhstanfupdate) (bit.ly/dhstanfupdate).

Frequently Asked Questions

WHY ARE THESE CHANGES BEING MADE?

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that is intended to support families with children. Unlike any other federal program, the federal appropriations have remained flat since 1996. The District of Columbia (District) has invested significant local resources over the years to both maintain and expand the program beyond the federal constraints. However, the local cost share has compounded to unsustainable levels. TANF program expenses have grown 48% since 2020 and are forecasted to grow \$11M more in fiscal year 2026 (FY26).

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WHAT HAPPENS TO MY TANF BENEFITS AFTER 60 MONTHS?

If you have been receiving TANF benefits for 60 months or longer, the TANF payment level used to determine the amount of your benefits in FY26 will be reduced by:

- 30% in FY27
- 50% in FY28
- 75% in FY29

WILL MY FAMILY LOSE THE ENTIRE TANF BENEFIT?

In FY30 and beyond, your TANF benefits will continue to be calculated using a TANF payment level that is 25% of the FY26 TANF payment level amount, unless your household qualifies for a hardship extension. If your household qualifies for a hardship extension, your TANF benefit may remain the same.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE FOR A REDUCTION IN MY BENEFITS?

You should connect with your TANF Employment & Education Program (TEP) provider or vocational development specialist as soon as possible to develop an actionable plan. They will help you develop a Detailed Individual Responsibility Plan (D-IRP) and connect you with the right resources.

HOW DO I GET IN CONTACT WITH MY TEP PROVIDER OR VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST?

If you are assigned to a TEP provider, please contact their office to start working on your D-IRP.

If you are participating in TEP independently through the Family Choice Model, please get in touch with your vocational development specialist through the Division of Customer Workforce Employment & Training (DCWET) – Office of Performance Monitoring (OPM) for assistance.

You can contact DCWET-OPM at **202-645-8205** or email tmc.dcwet@dc.gov.