

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
STATE PLAN
FOR
Administration of the Block Grant
FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)**

The purpose of this document is to outline the District of Columbia's plan for providing assistance to families with children using funds provided under Title I of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 (P. L. 104-193), and the TANF Final Rules published in the Federal Register on April 12, 1999. The Act amends Section 402 of the Social Security Act to require that states submit a plan to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that outlines how the state will provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

The District of Columbia uses Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to operate a cash assistance program and provide supportive services for families with children, known as the District's TANF program. The local legal authority for this program is the District of Columbia Public Assistance Act of 1982 (D.C. Law 4-101; D.C. Official Code § 4-201.01 *et seq.*), as amended. The provisions of this plan are effective October 1, 2011. This program provides temporary cash assistance to low income families with children and requires non-exempt adult recipients not already employed in unsubsidized employment to participate in work activities to increase their self-sufficiency. Teen parents meet the work participation requirement by attending school. Non-exempt TANF applicants are also required to participate in work activities, which include job search and job readiness activities and other activities set forth in D.C. Official Code § 4-205.19d.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The TANF Program is designed to provide short-term assistance to families when the support of one or both parents is interrupted. It also provides supplemental support when family income from employment and other sources is not sufficient to meet basic needs. It is not intended to provide long-term support or become a way of life. The provisions of the TANF Program are intended to meet one or more of the following basic purposes of this program as articulated in the Federal statute and regulation:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Public Availability and Review:

- The District of Columbia's State Plan was made available for public review on November 15, 2014 on the District of Columbia Department of Human Services' website at www.dhs.dc.gov.
- Additional Outreach- The TANF State Plan will be published in its entirety in the *DC Register*. The DC Register is the vehicle whereby agencies publish proposed programmatic and regulatory changes. The Notice published in the *DC Register* will indicate that comments on the TANF State Plan are to be directed to the Department of Human Services' Economic Security Administration.
- Public Comments: The State Plan will have a 45 day review period. During the 45-day public review period, the Department will accept comments on the TANF State Plan from the general public. Comments shall be directed to Ellen Wells, Interim Administrator, Economic Security Administration, 64 New York Ave., NE, 6th Floor Washington, D.C. 20002.
- The Department's ongoing review of the TANF Program includes review and consideration of public comments along with the tracking of outcomes of the TANF Program. The Department will submit amendments to the State Plan on an as-needed basis.

SECTION 2: TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES STATE PLAN

A. Program Goals

Mayor Vincent C. Gray has set forth four key priorities for his administration. These priorities include (1) fiscal stability; (2) quality education; (3) jobs and economic development; and (4) safe communities. In support of the Mayor's priorities, DHS has established the following goals:

- (1) Move more families to self-sufficiency by addressing their unique needs;
- (2) Allocate limited resources to solutions that address the underlying barriers to self-sufficiency and break the cycle of dependency;
- (3) Institutionalize cross-agency collaboration to create a unified service plan that is crafted in conjunction with the family, and to deliver coordinated services that integrate distinct programs operated by individual agencies;

- (4) Engage local organizations and leverage community-based resources to supplement and reinforce the services and supports for the customer; and
- (5) Maximize the use of support programs that promote early intervention and proactive issue remediation, thereby mitigating the need for more intrusive and costlier measures involving the criminal, juvenile justice, and child welfare systems.

Over the last four years, the District has undertaken a significant redesign of the entire TANF program. Activities and initiatives anticipated or provided for in the previous state plan have been implemented. Fundamentally, the District has designed a TANF program which recognizes that each individual and each family are unique and have unique circumstances, conditions and needs which must be addressed in order for them to find success. As such, the District has created a TANF program which is tailored to the individual. The goal of the program is to help families achieve a greater degree of self sufficiency.

B. Work Activities

- (1) There are a number of changes that will be implemented in the TANF program in the coming year. These changes are:
 - a. A progressive sanction policy for non-compliance, which includes a partial sanction; a half grant sanction; and a full family sanction. This sanctions policy is fully articulated in District Regulations and can be found at 29 DCMR 7200.
 - b. Work eligible customers who have received TANF benefits in excess of 60 months, will/may experience a gradual reduction or elimination of their TANF cash assistance benefits. Effective 10/1/14, the maximum grant for an individuals who has received TANF for greater than 60 months is approximately 37% of the maximum full grant. Effective 10/1/15, individuals who have received TANF or greater than 60 months will no longer be eligible for a cash grant.
 - c. Work eligible TANF customers will be given expanded options to unify their case plan and receive services from one case manager, in order to achieve their self sufficiency goals.
- (2) Any applicant or recipient who is exempt from work participation may voluntarily participate. If he or she volunteers and then fails to participate without good cause and for a reason unrelated to his or her qualification for an exemption, the individual is subject to sanction.

- (3) In addition to funding basic cash assistance and work-related programs for TANF recipients, the District uses or intends to use federal TANF funds for the following activities for TANF-eligible families (for programs and services other than cash assistance, the District has eligibility criteria of under 300% of FPL):
- a. *Literacy Services* \ncong to provide literacy services to low-income parents, including both TANF and non-TANF recipients. Programs may include, but are not limited to, programs that link adult education and vocational educational training; programs that provide fast-track GED classes to individuals capable of preparing for and passing the GED exam in 10 weeks or less; English as a Second Language programs; and family literacy programs. This falls under TANF purpose #2, and is not considered assistance.
 - b. *Teen Pregnancy Prevention* \ncong to support grants for teen pregnancy prevention programs. These programs focus on girls and boys in 5th through 8th grades. This falls under TANF purpose #3, and is not considered assistance.
 - c. *Preventing Repeat Pregnancies* \ncong to pay for an intensive intervention program for low-income minor parents including both TANF and non-TANF recipients to reduce the incidence of second births to low-income teens. This falls under TANF purpose #3, and is not considered assistance.
 - d. *Domestic Violence Services* \ncong to provide one or more grants to a domestic service provider or providers. The grantees provide counseling and other services to TANF applicants and recipients who indicate a history of domestic violence. These service providers assess the TANF applicant or recipient and develop a plan of service with the individuals. The services also include aid to families who are the victims of domestic violence. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and is not considered assistance.
 - e. *Wraparound Family Services* \ncong to provide case management services to address short-term crises as well as long-term family issues that lead to welfare dependency and inhibit self-sufficiency. The services will address the needs of the hardest to serve, target the well-being of the family unit, and serve to supplement financial and employment assistance. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and is not considered assistance.
 - f. *Family Emergency Services* \ncong to provide services to families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Funds may be used for program enhancements, including the provision of shelter and case management services for families in District shelters and/or in support of energy assistance to families to help avoid homelessness. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and may be considered assistance.

- g. *Fatherhood Initiative* –to provide a continuum of supportive services to fathers of children in low-income families. Specifically, TANF funds support life skills education, group peer instruction, mediation services, counseling, and instruction on effective parenting. Services may include those to assist ex-offenders with their re-entry transition. This falls under TANF purpose #1 and #4, and is not considered assistance.
- h. *Tuition Assistance Program Initiative for TANF (TAPIT)* –to provide tuition assistance for TANF recipients pursuing post-secondary education. TAPIT participants generally combine school attendance with employment-related activities such as a work-study program. TAPIT is the funding source of last resort, and recipients receive assistance pursuing alternative funding sources including Pell grants and District-supported tuition assistance. This falls under TANF purpose #2, and is not considered assistance.
- i. *Diversion Payment Program* – to divert TANF applicants from receiving ongoing TANF assistance. Applicants who face a short-term financial need and who indicate that employment could be found quickly if the short-term financial need is met are eligible for the Diversion Payment Program. Diversion payments may be applied to items such as auto insurance or car repair, rent and utilities, work clothes, and professional licenses or fees. This falls under TANF purpose #2, and is considered non assistance. It is also limited in duration to four (4) months.
- j. *Transfers to Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)* –to transfer SSBG funds for homeless programs for families with children.
- k. *Child Care* –to fund child care subsidy payments for low income families in order for them to obtain or maintain employment. This is run through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
- l. *Family Preservation Services* –to provide family preservation-related services to low-income families with children. These services may include short-term out-of-home placements when a child is removed due to a family crisis. Such services may not be supported for more than 180 days and must be provided in conjunction with an assessment or services geared toward family reunification. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and may be considered assistance.
- m. *Services to Teens in Foster Care* –to provide an array of services to teens transitioning from foster care to independence. By assisting the teens to make successful transitions and prepare for employment, these services will support the goal of reducing out-of-wedlock childbearing among this group. This falls under TANF purpose #1 and #3, and is not considered assistance.

- n. *Services for Teen Parents in Foster Care* –to provide services to parenting teens that live in foster care with their children to foster good parenting skills and self-sufficiency. This falls under TANF purpose #1 and #3, and is not considered assistance.
- o. *Community Mini-Grants* –to provide small grants (typically less than \$40,000) to community-based organizations that provide services to needy families with children. The grantees will be organizations with overall budgets of less than \$150,000. These grants are largely meet purposes three (3) and four (4) and is not considered assistance.
- p. *Children’s Services* –to support the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, a non-profit organization established to identify unmet needs among the District’s children and youth and to provide grants to community entities to meet those needs. Grants utilize a variety of populations- and neighborhood-specific approaches designed to strengthen families and prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock births. This falls under TANF purpose #1, #3, and #4, and is not considered assistance.
- q. *Home Visiting Services* –to fund community-based grantees that conduct home visits with customers at risk of sanction, customers who have been sanctioned and long-term TANF recipients. Home visitors conduct an in-depth assessment of customers’ needs and barriers and assist the customers in reconnecting with or fully engaging in, work-related activities. Home visitors also make referrals to a wide array of supportive services to address identified barriers. This falls under TANF purpose # 1 and #2, and is not considered assistance.
- r. *Individual Development Accounts* –to fund Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). Such funds will be used to match contributions made by needy families consistent with guidelines for such a program outlined in the Social Security Act and policy guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This falls under TANF purpose #2, and may be considered non assistance.
- s. *Services to Families with Youth involved with Juvenile Court* –to provide an array of services to youth involved with the juvenile court and their families which will help children to become productive and competent members of society and families. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and is not considered assistance.
- t. *Services to Homeless Families* - to fund both shelter and services to families who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, in the District. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and may be considered assistance.

- u. *Subsidized Employment and Supported Employment* - to fund subsidized and/or supported employment for both custodial and non custodial parents, as well as youth. This falls under TANF purpose #1 or #2, and is considered non assistance.
- v. *Housing* - to help families secure or maintain permanent housing. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and may be considered assistance.
- w. *Earned Income Tax Credits* –to fund earned income tax credits for families. This falls under TANF purpose #1, and is not considered assistance.
- x. *Financial Management and Budgeting*- to educate low-income families to manage a budget and save to increase economic stability and family well-being. This falls under TANF purpose #2, and is not considered assistance.
- y. *Work Place Communication and Expressive Remediation training*- to assist TANF participants with fostering quality communication with employers and peers to improve job placement and retention. This falls under TANF purpose #2, and is not considered assistance.
- z. *Mental Health and Substance Abuse assessment and Services* – to assist TANF participants who screen for mental health and substance abuse issues and need those issues to be resolved so that they can become work ready (these are for services which are not covered by Medicaid. This falls under TANF purpose #2, and is not considered assistance.

(4) Exemptions from Work Requirements

Effective October 2013, DHS began conducting comprehensive assessments of TANF applicants, as a condition of eligibility, to determine their work readiness or exemptions as well as to identify barriers to employment. These strength based assessments are the basis for the formulation of the initial Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP) and customized referral for the TANF customer. The assessment allows the agency to make the best possible referral for services, based upon both an individual's level of work readiness as well as barriers to work. In addition, the assessments enable the agency to identify barriers to employment and self sufficiency, by identifying possible exemptions to the work requirements.

The following applicants and recipients are exempt under District law from participation in work-related activities:¹

- a. A minor who is not the head of an assistance unit;
- b. A single custodial parent or caretaker who personally provides care for a child under six years of age, who cannot obtain needed appropriate

¹ Although exempt from DC work requirements – those who do not qualify for a federal exemption will be included in the universe of reported cases.

- childcare because it is unaffordable or not within reasonable distance of parent or caretaker's home or work activity;
- c. A single custodial parent with a child under 12 months of age;
- d. A recipient 60 years old or older;
- e. A parent or caretaker in a two-parent or caretaker household who is not a primary wage earner (if the household is eligible for TANF because of primary wage-earner's unemployment) and who is personally taking care of a child under six years of age, if the parent or caretaker cannot obtain needed childcare because it is unaffordable or not within reasonable distance of parent or caretaker's home;
- f. A person who is ill, injured or incapacitated as determined by competent medical evidence;
- g. A person who is needed at home because another household member requires the individual's presence due to illness or injury;
- h. A woman who is verifiably expected to deliver within four months;
- i. Persons in a two-parent household who are working for a combined total average of at least 35 hours per week; or persons in a two-parent household where the family receives federally-funded child care and no parent in the family is disabled, or caring for a child with a disability, who are working a combined total of at least 55 hours per week;
- j. A full-time VISTA or AmeriCorps volunteer (do not have to participate in activities with a job vendor); and
- k. Persons who are granted a domestic violence waiver because accepting the work requirement would put the applicant or recipient at further risk of violence.

When implementing the Block Grant for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the District will defer to any existing TANF provisions or subsequent changes in federal law that may conflict with District law and regulations. It is not the intent of the District that any provision of its TANF plan be construed as an entitlement. This plan will be amended, as necessary, to reflect future program changes required after the opportunity for further consideration by the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia.

SECTION 3: GENERAL PROVISIONS

- (1) *Provide Assistance to Needy Families:* The District will use TANF funds to administer a cash assistance program for needy families with children. A family is a group that includes at least one child age, not yet 18, or not yet 19 if full time

student, and with at least one parent or related caretaker. The child may be an unborn child or a child receiving Supplemental Security Income, in which case the needs of the child are not included in the TANF payment. The parent or caretaker may or may not be included in the TANF payment, but all TANF assistance units must include at least one person. The eligibility rules and work participation requirements and exemptions will be the same throughout the District. If a family, with an adult in the grant, has received TANF cash benefits for greater than 60 months, the maximum grant amount is reduced, in accordance with District statute and regulation. In addition to providing cash assistance to needy families, the program will also provide job preparation, work, and support services to enable families to leave the program and become self-sufficient.

- (2) *Work Requirement:* The program will require non-exempt parents or caretakers receiving assistance to engage in work activities. The assessment, and consultation with the customer at the time of assessment, will determine the appropriate activities and services providers. Unless exempt, customer are required to participate. Each non-exempt customer will be referred to a primary service provider. The providers may be contracted vendors, sister agencies, community providers, and DHS programs. Customers shall be permitted to access programs, services and work activities that support the customer's self sufficiency goals beyond those coordinated by the Department of Human Services, and submit supporting verifiable documentation for purposes of the work verification plan to DHS, and receive credit toward compliance with the work participation requirements; provided these activities are addressed and agreed upon in the IRP.
- (3) *Section 407 Work Requirements:* Parents and caretakers receiving assistance under the program shall be engaged in work activities in accordance with Section 407 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. This will be achieved by requiring non-exempt recipients (exemptions are based on District law and regulations) to participate in employment-related programs such as those run by our vendors.
- (4) *Confidentiality:* Reasonable steps will be taken to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the federal government. The District maintains a strict confidentiality policy under which information about TANF applicants or recipients may not be disclosed to third parties, without the consent of the applicant or recipient, except in specific cases, such as: information reported to the Child and Family Services Agency or law enforcement related to child abuse or neglect, information provided to law enforcement authorities when DHS has knowledge of the commission of a crime or when law enforcement requests information needed for criminal investigations or proceedings, and information reported to the Child Support Enforcement Division for the purposes of establishing paternity and collecting child support.

- (5) *Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies:* The District uses TANF funds to administer a wide range of teen pregnancy prevention efforts through partnerships with other government agencies and with the participation of community-based organizations. These efforts have contributed to the District's success in reducing out-of-wedlock births. The District's numeric goal for the reduction in the illegitimacy ration is one percent for each fiscal year.
- (6) *Statutory Rape:* The District will disseminate information and materials about the issue of statutory rape to teen pregnancy prevention grantees through regular grantee meetings. In attendance at the meeting will be our teen pregnancy prevention partners (including community based organizations, school-based programs, and other government partners, as appropriate), as well as invited officials from the appropriate law enforcement agencies. These efforts will ensure that teen pregnancy prevention programs as well as social service providers, educators, and law enforcement officials who come in contact with teens and teen parents understand the legal issues surrounding statutory rape, what can be done to deter statutory rape, and the steps that shall be taken if statutory rape is suspected. The intent of this information is to facilitate the on-going inclusion of men and boys in the District's teen pregnancy prevention efforts.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL PROVISIONS

- (1) *Treatment of New Entrants to the District of Columbia:* The District does not treat new entrants to the District of Columbia differently from other District residents.
- (2) *Treatment of Immigrants:* The District provides assistance to all qualified immigrants except for those immigrants who entered on or after August 22, 1996, who have not been in the country for five years, and who are not otherwise exempt from the five-year limitation imposed by Federal law.
- (3) *Fair and Equitable Treatment:* While District law does not provide an entitlement to TANF-funded assistance, the TANF cash assistance program (including TANF-related services) provides equal treatment for all applicants/recipients. That is, families in similar situations are treated similarly.
- (4) *Access to Benefits:* The following are the basic TANF (and MOE-funded Segregated State) cash assistance program parameters:
 - a. *Benefit Calculation:* For applicants, the District disregards the first \$160 of earnings for work expenses. Out-of-pocket dependent care costs are also deducted up to a maximum of \$200 per child under two years of age, or \$175 per child two years of age or older. If the applicant's remaining countable income exceeds the District's payment level, the applicant is ineligible for benefits. When determining the eligibility of on-going recipients and the level of benefits to which a family is eligible to receive, a \$160 work

expense deduction is applied and then an additional 2/3 of remaining earned income is deducted to compute countable earned income. The same dependent care deductions apply to recipients and applicants. A family is eligible for benefits equal to the difference between its countable income (composed of countable earned and unearned income) and the payment level.

The District has conformed its asset and resource limit to those utilized under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program (\$2,250 or \$3,250 for households with at least one elderly or disabled member). The District will disregard the entire value of all vehicles owned by or registered to the TANF applicant or recipient's household.

Recipients must generally report all changes in circumstances within 10 days of the change. TANF recipients with earned income are required to report changes in income every six months.

- b. *Orientation and Assessment:* As a condition of eligibility, all work-eligible applicants are required to attend an orientation and complete an assessment. Both are administered by DHS. Failure to complete either without good cause will result in a denial of benefits.
- c. *Work Requirements:* Non-exempt recipients are required to participate in work activities. (Exemption criteria are listed above.) Failing to participate in work activities without good cause leads to a reduction or elimination of the family's TANF grant. (See sanction policy in the Economic Security Administration Policy Manual, Part V.) Non-exempt recipients are required to develop and sign an Individual Responsibility Plan (Plan). All work-mandatory customers are required to complete the plan upon referral to an employment, education vendor or other service provider. The Plan may establish barrier removal and employment goals, and outline the steps the recipient must take to achieve those goals – including the work activities in which the recipient must participate – and describe the services the District will provide to assist the individual to attain self-sufficiency.

The District does not require an individual who is a single custodial parent caring for a child who has not attained 12 months of age to engage in work. In determining participation rates for work requirements, the District does not count the single custodial parent who has been determined to be exempt from work on the ground that he or she is caring for a child under the age of 12 months. This exclusion applies for a period of not to exceed 12 months.

- d. *Child Support Requirement:* Recipients must assign their child support rights to the District of Columbia and must cooperate with child support

requirements. Failure to cooperate with child support requirements, without good cause, leads to a 25% reduction in the family's TANF grant. TANF applicants and recipients are informed by both the TANF and child support agency of their right to claim good cause and the circumstances that would constitute good cause for failing to cooperate with child support requirements. The child support agency makes the determination regarding whether good cause exists for failing to cooperate with child support requirements. A TANF customer who fails to cooperate with child support and is also subject to sanction by the TANF program for failure to meet the work requirements may be subject to multiple sanctions.

- e. *Time Limit*: District law provides that TANF families who received assistance for greater than 60 months, regardless of funding source, are subject to a reduction in their cash benefit. Child only and POWER cases (funded with local, non MOE funds) are exempt from this reduction.
- f. *Minor Child Absent from the Home*: The District will continue cash assistance for a child absent from the home, while residing in the District of Columbia, for no more than 90 consecutive days, unless good cause is established. (See, *IMA Policy Manual, Part IV*).
- g. *Application Timeframes*: TANF applications must be approved or denied within 45 days of the date of application or within 15 days of the date of sending a 30-day notice that informs the applicant of the need to provide additional information to verify eligibility factors.
- h. *Notices of Adverse Action*: Prior to the imposition of any adverse action, including a sanction, case closure, or benefit reduction, a notice of adverse action must be sent to the recipient. The notice must meet the adequate and timely standards. To be adequate, the notice must describe the action to be taken, the reason for the action, and the right to appeal the action. The notice must also include a statement of the legal authority for the action. To be timely, the notice must be sent at least 15 days prior to the effective date of the adverse action.
- i. *Administrative Review and Fair Hearing Rights*: TANF applicants or recipients who disagree with a proposed action, or an action that has been taken, may request an administrative review and/or a fair hearing. An administrative review is an informal process whereby DHS and the applicant or recipient attempts to resolve the issue. An individual who requests an administrative review may proceed to a fair hearing if he or she is not satisfied with the outcome of the administrative review. Recipients who request a fair hearing prior to the effective date of the adverse action may request that assistance continue at current levels pending the outcome of the fair hearing. A fair hearing may be requested

after the effective date of the adverse action, but assistance cannot be continued pending the fair hearing decision.

Complaints: Customers with complaints about service received by DHS may register those complaints with the Customer Service Department, the Office of Administrative Review, or the Office of the Economic Security Administration.

- j. *Two-Month Community Service Requirement:* The District intends to opt out of the option to require participation in community service employment on the part of a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving such assistance for two months, is not exempt from the work requirements and is not engaged in work.
- k. *Elder Care Training and Placement:* The District intends to serve these customers through the general vendors contracted to provide services. The District will work to coordinate services to this population through a partnership between DHS as well as the District of Columbia Office on Aging.
- l. *Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Transaction restrictions:* The District prevents assistance provided under the TANF program from being used in EBT transactions in liquor stores, casinos and adult-oriented entertainment establishments, in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment, in the following manner:
 - The District, on an annual basis, beginning August 1, 2014, will send a notice to all households receiving a TANF benefit, advising them that the use of TANF funds through EBT transactions in liquor stores, casinos, and places for adult entertainment is prohibited. Customers will be advised that conducting one of these prohibited EBT transactions without reporting it to DHS will be viewed as a concealment in violation of the public assistance fraud provisions found at DC Code §4-218.01(c). (<http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/dccode/>). Transactions are monitored by the Office Quality Control, and the District may impose penalties pursuant the above code.
 - The District is building a new eligibility system for public benefits (System), including TANF. The System will include language citing the prohibitions of use under this provision. The System should be implemented in calendar year 2015. The application will contain the following language:

“Per Federal Law, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-96), TANF EBT benefits cannot be accessed from ATM machines or Point of Sale (POS) devices to purchase items in the following locations: casinos, gaming establishments, liquor stores or retail establishments providing adult entertainment in the District of Columbia or any other jurisdiction. By initialing below, I represent that I will not use TANF EBT benefits at the prohibited locations. Violations are subject to the public assistance fraud provisions found at DC Code §4-218.01(c) and may result in a loss of benefits.”

Initials _____

The TANF applicant or their authorized representative is required to initial that they have read and understood the policy as part of the application process. The head of the house is responsible for all household members.

In February, 2014, the District purchased a subscription to *The Fraud Navigator*. *The Fraud Navigator* is a service, established by FISTM Government Solutions to specifically address the requirements of Section 4004 of the Middle Class Tax relief and Job Creation Act of 2012. It will allow the District’s EBT provider to block transaction(s) at specific establishments based on the Merchant Category Code, as well as specific ATM Terminals. The contract modification was executed on April 15, 2014 and the District began blocking all merchant codes associated with businesses subject to this legislation on May 30, 2014. The District worked with FIS to identify applicable businesses, and block the transactions. The methodology was tested by FIS, and is also being utilized in several other states, including Florida, Missouri and Kansas. The District is using *The Fraud Navigator* to block transactions at liquor stores, casinos and places for adult entertainment. It will also allow the District to track activity and patterns, which should further reduce public assistance fraud. FIS provides a report of all blocked transactions to the District on a monthly basis.

SECTION 5: CERTIFICATION THAT THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WILL OPERATE A CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The District certifies that during the fiscal year, the District will operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D.

SECTION 6: CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL OPERATE A FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The District certifies that during the fiscal year, the District will operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and the District will take such actions as necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under Title XIX.

SECTION 7: CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INDIANS WITH EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE.

The District certifies that during the fiscal year, the District will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the District and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

SECTION 8: CERTIFICATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

The District certifies that the District's Department of Human Services is the District agency that will administer and supervise the program for the fiscal year.

The District also assures that the required 45-day comment period was allowed. On November 15, 2011, the draft TANF plan was published on the District web site to allow for a 45 day comment period. The plan was also posted in the *D.C. Register* on November 25, 2011. The Department assures that comments are considered.

The Department assures that the District's TANF plan is available to the public upon request.

SECTION 9: CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE AGAINST PROGRAM FRAUD AND ABUSE

The District certifies that it has established and is enforcing 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 District program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage.

SECTION 10: OPTIONAL CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THAT THE STATE WILL SCREEN FOR AND IDENTIFY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The District certifies that it will screen and identify individuals who receive assistance and who have a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals. The District will refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services.

Individuals with a history of domestic violence may be exempted from work participation requirements and child support requirements. However, such individuals may choose to participate in work activities or pursue child support.

Explanation

Screening and Assessment

DHS caseworkers use the TANF Comprehensive Assessment (TCA) to screen all applicants at initial application, and at any point during a customer's TANF receipt as necessary, for various barriers to employment and work participation, including domestic violence. If current or history of domestic violence is identified, a written referral for additional screening or assessment services will be provided to the applicant or recipient who should comply with the instructions. The additional screening is completed by a domestic violence provider in the District, trained in the prevention and treatment of victims of domestic violence. If an entity that operates a TANF work or education program discovers that a recipient has a domestic violence issue and may need services, that entity may contact DHS and a referral to the domestic violence service provider(s) will be made.

Should further screening or assessment confirm an initial finding of domestic violence, a plan of service is developed in conjunction with the applicant or recipient. When developing the plan of service, the possibility of requesting a waiver of work requirements and/or child support cooperation requirements and the duration of such waivers is discussed. Good cause waivers of work requirements are granted when work participation requirements would make it more difficult for the applicant or recipient to escape family violence.

Decisions on Domestic Violence Waivers

Decisions on granting or denying a domestic violence waiver of work requirements will be made within 15 business days of such a waiver request. During that time, if the applicant or recipient is otherwise eligible for TANF, financial assistance will not be delayed or denied. Because it may be necessary to waive work requirements to ensure the safety of the applicant or recipient, he or she will not be required to participate in work programs pending a decision on whether to grant a waiver.

When determining whether domestic violence occurred, the following evidence, among other factors, shall be considered:

- police, government agency, or court records;
- documentation from a shelter, legal, clerical, medical, or other professional worker from whom the applicant or recipient has sought assistance;
- statements from other individuals with knowledge of the circumstances;
- physical evidence of domestic violence or any other evidence supporting the allegations; and
- in the absence of evidence as listed above, allegations that the victim makes under oath, including the applicant's petition for a Civil Protection Order, shall be sufficient to substantiate a claim.

If an applicant or recipient decides not to seek or declines services or a waiver of work requirements due to domestic violence, he or she will not be barred from seeking such services and waivers at a later date. An applicant or recipient may terminate an existing waiver at any time without penalty. No waiver will ever be implemented against the will of the applicant or recipient.

Once granted a waiver, any applicant or recipient who voluntarily chooses to participate in approved TANF activities shall be allowed to do so.

Child Support

Information on the “good cause” reasons for failing to cooperate with child support requirements are provided to an applicant or recipient at application and recertification for TANF benefits. The “good cause” reasons largely focus on domestic violence issues. This information is also provided directly by the Child Support Enforcement Division. Applicants and recipients can indicate to their TANF caseworker their intent to claim good cause for failing to cooperate with child support requirements. That will alert the child support agency that the individual wishes to claim good cause. The applicant or recipient can also indicate intent to claim good cause with the child support agency directly. Ultimately, the Child Support Enforcement Division makes good cause determinations related to child support requirements.

SECTION 11: NON-DISCRIMINATION ASSURANCES

The District assures that the following provisions of law will apply to programs and activities funded under TANF:

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. §§ 6101 *et seq.*)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794).

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 *et seq.*)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d *et seq.*)

District of Columbia Human Rights Act (D.C. Official Code §§ 2-1401.01 *et seq.*)

The District assures that there will be services available to individuals with disabilities as well as those for who may have limited proficiency in English.

SECTION 12: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- (A) The District intends to use data matches with quarterly wage records and administrative records to determine the performance of State programs funded under this part.

- (B) The District may administer and provide services through contracts with charitable, religious, or public and private organizations, and may provide beneficiaries of the services with vouchers, certificates, or forms of disbursement which are redeemable with such organizations, or used as a means of providing assistance.
- (C) The District has chosen not to adopt the following:
- (1) The option to deny assistance to individuals convicted (under Federal or District law) of any offense which is classified as a felony by the law of the jurisdiction involved and that has as an element the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance (D.C. Official Code § 4-205.71 (April 20, 1999));
 - (2) The option to require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving such assistance for two months is not exempt from work requirements and is not engaged in work, to participate in community service employment;
 - (3) The option to sanction a family that includes an adult who is older than 20 years of age or younger than 51 years of age if such adult does not have, or is not working toward attaining, a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent unless certain exceptions are met;
 - (4) The option to test recipients of assistance for use of controlled substances or sanction recipients who test positive for controlled substances.
- (D) TANF-Funded Programs

TANF Cash Assistance Program/Diversion Payment Program including: TAPIT and home visiting services are funded with TANF and are available only to TANF recipients. Diversion assistance is available only to individuals otherwise eligible for TANF cash assistance. Domestic Violence services and other non-cash grant services are available to TANF applicants up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and TANF recipients. Net Income must be less than Payment Level. Countable Resources must be less than Food Stamp Resource Limit. District code also provides for an annual increase in the TANF cash grant based on the change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The average change since 1996 has been an increase of 2.4%. The increase in FY14 was 1.5%.

Group Size	Payment Levels for Customers who have received TANF benefits for greater than 60 months (effective October 1, 2013)
1	\$274
2	\$341
3	\$434
4	\$531
5	\$611
6	\$719
7	\$824
8	\$910
9	\$1,002
10	\$1,088
11	\$1,148

Group Size	Payment Levels for Customers who have received TANF benefits for less than 60 months (effective October 1, 2014)
1	\$95
2	\$120
3	\$152
4	\$186
5	\$214
6	\$252
7	\$289
8	\$319
9	\$351
10	\$381
11	\$402

- (1) Literacy Services- Gross Income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (2) Child Care- For the childcare subsidy program, income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (3) Family Preservation Services -Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (4) Services to Teens in Foster Care- Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (5) Services to Teen Parents in Foster Care- Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (6) Community Mini Grants- Grantees are required to use the funds to assist families with children with gross incomes below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- (7) \ Fatherhood Initiative -Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (8) Family Emergency Services - Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (9) Wraparound Family Services- Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (10) Children's Services- Some of the programs funded by the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (Corporation) will be for a purpose that falls within Section 401(a)(3) or Section 401(a)(4) of the Social Security Act. In these cases, no income test is required. For programs funded by the Corporation that do not fall within these purposes, the program must serve children, youth, or families with children whose incomes are below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- (11) Preventing Repeat Pregnancies/Teen Pregnancy Prevention - These programs are not required to include a means test because they meet the third purpose of the TANF statute ("...prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies..."). However, programs are designed to serve low-income families; that is, those with incomes below 300% of the federal poverty level.
- (12) Individual Development Accounts- Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.

- (13) Services to Families with Youth involved with Juvenile Court who are in the community reuniting with their family - Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (14) Services to Homeless Families- Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (15) Subsidized Employment and Supported Employment - Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (16) Housing - Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.
- (17) Earned Income Tax Credits – Gross income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. No Resource Limit.

(E) MOE-Funded Segregated Programs

- (1) MOE funds are used to provide cash assistance under a Segregated State Program not subject to federal time limits on the receipt of assistance. Income and resource standards applied to the Segregated State Program mirror those applied to the TANF-funded cash assistance program as documented in Section (4) above.

This program supports eligible families with children under 12 months of age who have exhausted their 12-month lifetime exemption from federal work participation requirements, but whom the District exempts from participating in work activities. Additionally, the District supports long-stayer customers (those who had received assistance more than 60 months) who make a good faith effort to participate in countable activities (i.e., who are not sanctioned).

- (2) The District of Columbia will also support through the segregated state program customers who meet the federal work participation requirement, as well as those who do not meet the requirement, but are making a good faith effort, as measured by hours of participation in countable activities.

(F) MOE-Funded Separate State Programs

District of Columbia does not provide cash assistance under an MOE-funded Separate State Program.

1. Use of MOE

- (1) Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds may be used to provide childcare subsidies to eligible low-income District children whose parents are working or participating in TANF employment-related programs. These funds are used to provide subsidies to low-income working families and support quality enhancement

initiatives. For the childcare subsidy program, income must be below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. In addition to that listed below, the District of Columbia may use MOE funds for any services listed in Section 2B of this Plan.

- (2) MOE funds may be used to support employment services for TANF recipients. Employment retention service is available to former TANF recipients up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- (3) MOE funds may be commingled with federal TANF funds to fund basic cash assistance to families in the TANF program.
- (4) MOE funds may be used to finance certain administrative and systems costs associated with the TANF program.

CERTIFICATION BY THE MAYOR OF
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN SUPPORT OF THE TANF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
STATE PLAN

The District of Columbia will operate a program to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) so that the children may be cared for in their own homes or in homes of relatives or caregivers and to end dependence of needy able-bodied adults on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and self-sufficiency.

The plan includes all required assurances and provisions to be implemented by the District of Columbia Department of Human Services. The named District Government agency has been given authority to administer and supervise the activities referenced in the state plan.

I hereby approve this TANF State Plan for the District of Columbia and submittal of this plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

_____ Date	Signed: _____ Vincent Grey Mayor
---------------	--