

WorkFirst for Working Families

Should I read this?

Yes, to learn how working affects your eligibility for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and other public benefits.

I just got a job. Can I still get TANF?

Maybe. You can still get a partial grant if your “countable income” (see box below) is less than the TANF grant amount for your family size. Once your countable income is equal to or more than the grant amount for your family size, DSHS ends your grant.

❖ **Countable income** is your income after DSHS deducts half your earnings and some other kinds of income they do not count.

How will working affect my TANF grant?

DSHS looks at the income you expect to get in the following month to figure out your benefits for that month. DSHS can count only half of your gross earnings against your TANF grant. DSHS subtracts your countable income from the amount of your regular grant.

Example: for a family of three with anticipated gross earnings of \$1,000 in April:

\$1,000	gross earnings expected in April
X .5	50% of gross income counted
\$500	countable income for April
\$546	regular grant
<u>-500</u>	countable income for April
\$46	grant provided in April

Is it worth it for us to keep getting just a small amount of TANF?

Maybe not. Even with a small grant amount, the 60-month lifetime limit on your TANF benefits is running. You must decide if it is better for your family to go off TANF at that point.

If you go off TANF, you and your children may still be eligible for medical, food stamp, and childcare benefits. These do not count toward the 60 months.

What if do not earn what I told DSHS I would?

DSHS must add to your grant if it made a mistake calculating your earnings or grant amount.

- **If you make less than you had expected:** DSHS does not have to add to your grant.
- **If you earn more than you expected:** you will not have to pay DSHS back if you correctly reported what you expected to earn.

When do I have to report changes in my income to DSHS?

Your reporting responsibility starts on the date you get the paycheck showing the change of income. You must report any changes in your income, up or down, by the tenth of the month after the change. DSHS will adjust your TANF grant for the following month.

Does child support affect my TANF grant?

When you get TANF, you assign the State your right to child support. If the other parent pays more support than the amount of TANF you get, you get the remainder directly. It will not count against your TANF.

If child support is more than your TANF for two months in a row, your TANF benefits will end at the end of the third month. Then all child support goes directly to you. Depending on how much you get, you may still be able to get food and medical assistance.

Do other types of income affect my TANF grant?

DSHS does not count other kinds of income when figuring your TANF grant. These include:

- work study income
- bona fide loans
- federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) payments
- DSHS emergency cash grants under the Additional Requirements for Emergent Need (AREN) program

I have gone back to work. Can I still get subsidized childcare?

Maybe. The amount you can earn and still get childcare help is higher than the amount you can earn and get TANF.

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) is the DSHS program that helps pay childcare expenses for low-income families. You are eligible if your gross income (both earned and unearned) is below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) for your family size. WCCC is available for:

- children under age 13
- children between 13 and 19 if a medical provider gives a statement that the child is physically, mentally, or emotionally unable to care for themselves
- children between 13 and 19 under court supervision

You must pay a “co-payment” for part of the childcare costs based on your income level. The minimum co-payment is \$15. You must pay it even if you are getting full TANF.

Does working affect my other benefits?

Food assistance: For every three dollars you earn, DSHS cuts your food stamps by about one dollar. If your income goes up so much that DSHS stops your food stamps, you must reapply if your income goes down again.

Medical: If you are on Apple Health, you may have to report your change in income. More income may make you ineligible. Call Healthplanfinder Customer Support Center (HPF CSC) at 1-855-923-4633 for more info.

I got a job. Can I get any other help from DSHS?

Maybe. For the first twelve months after your TANF ends, you can get **WorkFirst support services**. DSHS can pay for support services and goods when you need them to be able to look for, prepare for, or keep work.

Examples include:

- money for vehicle liability insurance
- car repair
- work tools
- clothes for work

[DSHS Support Services for WorkFirst Participants](#) has more info.

You can get **post-employment services** for twenty-four months after leaving TANF if your region funds this. Contact your local DSHS office to ask about:

- “employment retention services” (to help you keep your job) like job coaching
- “wage and skill progression services” like job and career counseling
- “training and skill progression services” like vocational education training, Adult Basic Education (ABE), or English as a Second Language (ESL)

What if my job ends?

Fill out a “stop work” form at DSHS right away. This written statement from your employer says:

- the last day you worked

- the date and amount of your last paycheck

If your earnings cause you to lose TANF and then you lose your job, you can reapply for TANF. DSHS may consider why you stopped working. It may recommend **diversion** cash assistance (DCA) instead of TANF.

What is diversion assistance?

This grant gives your family up to \$1,250 to help tide you over until you are working again. You can get it only once in a twelve-month period. You must pay it back if your family goes back on TANF within twelve months of getting the diversion grant.

If you are eligible for TANF or State Family Assistance (SFA), you can get DCA but you must choose between getting TANF or SFA, and DCA. Read [Diversion Cash Assistance](#).

What if I need legal help?

- Apply online with CLEAR*Online - <https://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help> or
- Call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014

CLEAR is Washington’s toll-free, centralized intake, advice and referral service for low-income people seeking free legal assistance with civil legal problems.

- Outside King County: Call 1-888-201-1014 weekdays 9:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
- King County: Call 211 for info and referral to an appropriate legal services provider weekdays 8:00 am – 6:00 pm. You may also call (206) 461-3200, or toll-free 1-877-211-WASH (9274). You can also get info on legal

service providers in King County at www.resourcehouse.com/win211/.

- Persons 60 and Over: Persons 60 or over may call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, regardless of income.

Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers can call CLEAR or 211 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) using the relay service of their choice.

CLEAR and 211 will conference in free interpreters when needed.

Free legal education publications, videos and self-help packets covering many legal issues are available at www.washingtonlawhelp.org.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

This information is current as of October 2018.

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