

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Statutory Authority: 31 Delaware Code, Section 512 (31 Del.C. §512)

FINAL

ORDER

Delaware Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) State Plan Renewal

Nature of the Proceedings

Delaware Health and Social Services (“Department”) / Division of Social Services (DSS) initiated proceedings to renew Delaware’s eligibility status for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provided for in the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), (P.L. 104-193). The Department’s proceedings to amend its regulations were initiated pursuant to 29 **Delaware Code** Section 10114 and its authority as prescribed by 31 **Delaware Code** Section 512.

The Department published its notice of proposed regulation changes pursuant to 29 **Delaware Code** Section 10115 in the December 2005 *Delaware Register of Regulations* requiring written materials and suggestions from the public concerning the proposed regulations to be produced by December 31, 2005 at which time the Department would receive information, factual evidence and public comment to the said proposed changes to the regulations. Additionally, Delaware’s TANF State Plan can be viewed on the Department’s website at:
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/index.html>.

Summary of Proposed Changes

Title of Notice

Delaware TANF State Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2006 – 2008

Background

The State Plan outlines the provisions under which the State will administer the TANF program for Federal Fiscal Years 2006-2008. Under Section 402 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193), the State is required to submit the TANF State Plan to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) biennially in order to receive certification to be eligible for continued Federal TANF funding. In order to continue to receive TANF funding, Delaware must file for renewal with the DHHS by December 31, 2005.

One of the requirements of the grant application is that the public submit comment on the plan and its design of services. All comments received during the comment period will receive consideration for the development of the TANF State Plan.

Summary of Proposed Changes

- Delaware has been operating its TANF program under Section 1115 waivers from the Social Security Act, as approved on December 12, 1995, and amended on September 27, 1996.
- DSS is not making any program “changes” but added information about the new E&T system and made minor updates to the language on pages 3, 4, 6, 7, 24, and 32.
- Please note that DSS has updated Exhibit 1 on page 9 and Exhibit 2 on page 10 to reflect the implementation of the self-employment standard deduction. **[Bracketed Bold type]** indicates the text added at the time the final order is issued.

Summary of Comments Received with Agency Response

No public comments were received.

Findings of Fact

The Department finds that the proposed changes as set forth in the December 2005 *Register of Regulations* should be adopted.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED, that the proposed regulation to renew Delaware's eligibility status for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is adopted and shall be final effective February 10, 2006.

Vincent P. Meconi, Secretary, DHSS, January 13, 2006

DSS FINAL ORDER REGULATION #06-03

RENEWAL:

DELAWARE STATE PLAN FOR TANF

This new State Plan is submitted to renew Delaware's eligibility status for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provided for in the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), (P.L. 104-193).

Delaware has been operating its TANF program under Section 1115 waivers from the Social Security Act, as approved on December 12, 1995, and amended on September 27, 1996. The waiver expired on September 30, 2002.

The current short-term reauthorization of TANF leaves much unknown about the future of the program, and Delaware is unwilling to make major changes to our TANF program without full knowledge of new federal requirements. Enactment of either the House or Senate Finance Committee Reauthorization Bill would make many changes in TANF, but Delaware cannot build such changes into this Plan without knowing which of the many conflicting provisions will prevail.

Delaware's TANF program requires immediate work from caretakers in time-limited families; those who cannot secure unsubsidized employment immediately are placed in a Work for Your Welfare component.

Since Delaware is unable at this time to plan what alternative provisions might be required by enactment of long-term reauthorization legislation, we have opted to continue operating Delaware's TANF program as it is currently designed with minor changes to be in compliance with certain TANF requirements.

Delaware is closely watching the progress of federal TANF reauthorization and will submit any needed Amendments to this State Plan as quickly as possible after new legislative requirements become known.

GOALS, RESULTS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Goals

The goal of Delaware's TANF Program is to provide a welfare system based on a philosophy of mutual responsibility. In working toward that goal, the State will strive to place individuals in private or public sector unsubsidized employment that enables them to enter and maintain meaningful jobs and interrupts the intergenerational welfare dependency cycle. To that end, TANF creates positive incentives for families to become employed, and expects families to accept responsibility to become self-supporting.

Five key principles form the foundation of TANF:

1. Work should pay more than welfare.
2. Welfare recipients must exercise personal responsibility in exchange for benefits.
3. Welfare should be transitional, not a way of life.
4. Both parents are responsible for supporting their children; and
5. The formation and maintenance of two-parent families should be encouraged, and teenage pregnancy and unwed motherhood should be discouraged.

Involvement of Local Governments, the Public, and Private Sector Organizations

Welfare Reform in Delaware has a long history of active involvement and partnership between and among state and local governments and the private sector. Over a multi-year period, Delaware has engaged government, the public and the private sector in dialog about the welfare system and ways to change it.

Since its introduction in January of 1995, in the form of a waiver request, all sectors have had the opportunity to influence Delaware's welfare reform program in a series of public meetings and forums.

A collaborative partnership among the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Department of Labor (DOL), and the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO) worked to develop Delaware's original TANF program; and the Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) has joined these components in planning any changes required.

From 1995 to the present, the TANF collaborative team has involved other stakeholders in a number of ways. Community partner involvement runs the gambit from support letters for TANF-related grants, to participating in the resultant project planning and implementation, to membership on an initiative's advisory/oversight council. Partnerships include the City of Wilmington's HOPE VI subsidized housing project; the Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families' rural outreach project; the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's employment efforts with people with disabilities; the National Corps/VISTA welfare-to-work mentoring program; and the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health's Youth Offender Re-entry initiative. Presentations on TANF are ongoing by request to the various Section 8 and Public Housing entities; to non-profits such as the First State Community Action Agency and the Latin American Community Center; and to local churches, healthcare centers, childcare providers, schools and youth centers (e.g., Boys & Girls Club).

The Social Services Advisory Council, consisting of educators, health professionals, religious leaders, representatives of community-based organizations, advocates, and government leaders, all appointed by the Governor, continues to provide advice on improving the delivery of Delaware's social programs. In addition, the Division of Social Services has regularly conducted focus groups with clients in all counties of the States, most recently in 2000 and 2001.

The requirement for a 45 day public comment period was accomplished by making the plan available for public review and comment through the following means:

- The original State Plan was published in the Delaware Register on October 1, 2002;
- The State Plan was published on the Delaware web site at <http://www.state.de.us/dhss/dhss.htm> on September 15, 2002; and
- Stakeholder groups as represented by the Social Services Advisory Council, the TANF Employer Committee, and TANF program contractors were provided with individual copies of the Plan.
- This State Plan is being published in the Delaware Register and on the Delaware web site.

Delaware is proud to say that the administration addressed and continues to build on the themes the public identified not only in TANF but in many other areas of public policy that support low income families, including the Administration's economic development, education, and family policies. A brief summary of where public policies intersect with welfare system change include:

- easing transition from welfare to work by:
 - passing through to TANF recipients a portion of the child support collected
 - enhancing child support collection strategies and achieving record child support collections
 - changing the way the welfare system budgets income so that families go off assistance only after achieving income at 75 percent of the federal poverty level
 - increasing Delaware's investment in child care so that there is no subsidized child care waiting list for eligible working families with income up to 200% of the federal poverty level
 - increasing the income threshold below which individuals are not required to file personal income tax returns to \$15,449 for married couples and \$9,399 for single individuals; increasing the personal credit from \$100 to \$110; and reducing the tax rate for all individuals, other than the top tax bracket, by .4 percentage points
 - increasing the State minimum wage to \$6.15 an hour as of September, 2000.
 - increasing the earnings potential of TANF individuals through a State Earned Income Tax Credit for 2006.
- ensuring access to health care for Delaware families through:
 - providing Medicaid coverage to uninsured adults as well as all children in families with income at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level
 - providing medical coverage for uninsured children in families with income up to 200% of the federal

- poverty level, through the Delaware Healthy Children Program (DHCP)
- providing transitional Medicaid for two years for families with children who exit welfare, at incomes up to 185% of poverty.
- improving education for children by:
 - expanding access to the Early Childhood Education Program (ECAP)
 - providing extra instructional time for low-achieving students
 - operating the Parents as Teachers program statewide
 - operating the Mentoring for Students program for students who need an adult role model
 - implementing a comprehensive program to ensure safe, disciplined schools
 - raising academic standards and graduation requirements and pushing for school choice and charter schools
- recruiting, through the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO), new companies and maintaining existing employers with good jobs that provide career opportunities
 - strengthening Delaware's families by:
 - helping many thousands of welfare recipients go to work, and providing continuing supports to working families
 - initiating voluntary paternity establishment
 - providing transportation support for job seekers and new workers
 - establishing more effective welfare to work programs with a work first approach to employment and training services, while providing opportunities for educational advancement
 - enabling families with both parents to receive benefits and services
 - participating with community-based organizations and the faith community to support targeted, fragile populations
 - discouraging teen pregnancy through the Alliance on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention
 - extending home visits to all first time parents following a child's birth
 - cracking down on domestic violence to protect vulnerable women and children
 - enforcing the Sexual Predator Act to protect vulnerable youth and prevent teen pregnancy.

Results to be Measured and Methods for Measuring Progress

Delaware has committed to evaluate its welfare system. The State had a multi-year contract with Abt Associates to evaluate TANF. We measured:

- the number of individuals working;
- the number of individuals sanctioned;
- the caseload size; and
- the number of months of receipt of TANF.

Recent reports by the evaluator include:

- *The ABC Evaluation - A Better Chance for Welfare Recipients? What the Public Thinks*, March, 1999;
- *The ABC Evaluation - Enrollment of Families in Delaware's A Better Chance Program: A Report on the First Three Years*, March, 1999
- *The ABC Evaluation - Carrying and Using the Stick: Financial Sanctions in Delaware's A Better Chance Program*, May, 1999.
- *Will Welfare Reform Influence Marriage and Fertility? Early Evidence from the ABC Demonstration*, June, 1999.
- *The ABC Evaluation - Verifying School Attendance of Welfare Recipients' Children*, June 2000
- *The ABC Evaluation – Impacts of Welfare Reform on Child Maltreatment*, August 2000
- A report, *Turning the Corner -- ABC at 4 Years*, November 2000
- The *DABC Evaluation How Have They Fared? Outcomes After Four Years for the Earliest DABC Clients*, August 2001
- The *DABC Evaluation Institutional Aspects of Welfare Reform in Delaware*, August 2001

These reports can be located at <http://www.abtassoc.com/reports/welfare-download.html>. Note that at one time, Delaware's TANF program was known as A Better Chance or ABC.

Delaware is was also one of four states participating in a Welfare Reform and Family Formation research project designed to provide an increased understanding of how changes in welfare policies have affected childbearing, marriage, and other family structure factors. Abt Associates is ~~teaming~~ teamed with a University of California research team in analyzing random assignment data collected in Delaware.

Ensuring Accountability

TANF is administered by the Division of Social Services (DSS), State of Delaware Department of Health and Social Services. While DHSS is the lead agency, program administration is accomplished through a partnership of DSS, Department of Labor (DOL), Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO), and the Delaware Transit Corp (DTC).

Delaware completed a massive automation enhancement effort, to incorporate new technology in a complete redesign of DCIS. DCIS II is a large-scale, client/server, interactive eligibility determination and benefit issuance system. DCIS II automates: client registration, application entry, eligibility determination, benefit calculation, benefit issuance and work programs for more than 100 variations of cash, Medicaid, child care and food stamp programs, administered by the Delaware Division of Social Services. DCIS II provides automated program support and supports the information needs at the state and local office level. DCIS II also incorporates program changes required by P.L. 104-193.

The most recent enhancements to DCIS II provide for on-line real-time communications between DSS workers and Employment Connection contractors. DSS now provides automated referral of non-exempted individuals to contractors, contractor staff are now able to send automated alerts to DSS workers, and contractors and DSS workers are able to share case notes about participants. In addition, contractors now directly enter hours of work participation into the system, facilitating the computation of grants for Work for Your Welfare participants.

Delaware is participating in the income and eligibility verification system (IEVS) required by section 1137 of the Social Security Act.

In addition, the State operates a fraud control program and will disqualify individuals found to have committed an intentional program violation based on findings of administrative disqualification hearings and findings of prosecution or court actions. Delaware has adopted the penalties for intentional program violations used by the Food Stamp Program; 12 months for the first offense and 24 months for a second instance. An individual committing a third offense is permanently disqualified.

NEEDY FAMILIES

Definition of Needy Families

For program purposes, needy families are a child and or child(ren) and caretaker relatives whose combined income and financial resources are not equal to or higher than the standards established by the State. The following sections describe these standards and how they are applied to applicants and recipients.

Income and Resource Rules for Determining Need

For purposes of determining need Delaware will continue to utilize the already established income and resource rules of the TANF program. The following specific features of Delaware's TANF program shall continue to apply:

- The equity value of a primary automobile up to \$4,650 is excluded in determining the household resources.
- The cash value of a life insurance policy will be excluded.
- In addition to the current resource limit, families will be allowed to establish special Education and Business Investment Accounts (EBIA) of up to \$5,000.00, including interest.
 - Families will contribute directly to their EBIA.
 - Funds in such accounts will not be considered as a resource. Withdrawals from such accounts must be for approved purposes, as defined in TANF. If funds are withdrawn for non-approved purposes, the money will be counted as a resource in the month received. Approved reasons for withdrawal of funds for self-sufficiency needs include, but are not limited to: dependent care expenses, security deposit for an apartment or house, or vehicle repair costs.
- Financial Assistance received from school grants, scholarships, vocational rehabilitation payments, JTPA payments, educational loans, and other loans that are expected to be repaid will not be counted as

- income for TANF program purposes. Also, other financial assistance received that is intended for books, tuition, or other self-sufficiency expenses will be excluded.
- Earnings of dependent children, regardless of student status, will be disregarded in determining the family's eligibility and the amount of TANF benefits.
- A one-time bonus payment of \$50.00 will be paid from TANF funds to eligible teens who graduate from high school by age 19. This bonus, which will be paid directly to the high school graduate, will be disregarded as income.

Income Tests to Determine Eligibility

There are two income tests to determine financial eligibility. The first test is a gross income test, and the second is a net income test.

- Comparing the family's income to 185% of the applicable standard of need is the gross income test. Both applicants and recipients must pass this income test.
- The other income test compares a family's income, after applying certain disregards, to the applicable standard. This is a net income test.
 - For applicants, defined as families who have not received assistance in at least one of the four months immediately preceding the application, the net income is compared to the payment standard.
 - For recipients, defined as families who have received assistance in at least one of the four months preceding the application or are current recipients, the net income is compared to the standard of need.
 - A family's income must be less than the gross and net income limits to be financially eligible for TANF. Once eligibility is established, the grant amount is determined.
 - Gross income is the total of the earned and unearned income.
 - Wages and self-employment income are examples of earned income.
 - Social Security benefits, child support, and stepparent income are examples of unearned income. Stepparent income will be included if the child's natural parent lives in the home.

Exhibit 1 contains the calculation steps for TANF applicants.

Exhibit 1: Determining Applicant Eligibility for TANF Benefits

Step 1) The gross income will be compared to 185% of the applicable TANF standard of need. [If the case has self-employment income subtract the self-employment standard deduction, if applicable, from the gross self-employment income. Add to that any other earned income.] Assistance will be denied if the income exceeds 185% of the applicable TANF standard of need.

Step 2) The standard work deduction (\$90.00) and child care expenses will be subtracted from each wage earner's earnings. The applicant's net earned income will be added to unearned income to determine the net family income. The net income will be compared to the payment standard. Assistance will be denied if the income exceeds the payment standard.

If the income is less than the payment standard,

Step 3) The standard work deduction (\$90.00), child care, and the \$30 plus 1/3 disregard (if applicable) will be subtracted from each earner's earned income. This net earned income will be added to the unearned income to calculate the family's net income. The net income will be subtracted from the applicable standard of need to obtain the deficit. The deficit will be multiplied by 50%; the number calculated is the remainder. The grant is either the remainder or the payment standard whichever is less.

Exhibit 2 provides the calculations for TANF recipients.

Exhibit 2: Determining Recipient Eligibility for TANF Benefits

Step 1) The gross income will be compared to 185% of the applicable TANF standard of need. [If the case has self-employment income subtract the self-employment standard deduction, if applicable, from the gross self-

employment income. Add to that any other earned income.] Assistance will be denied if the income exceeds 185% of the applicable TANF standard of need.

Step 2) The standard work deduction (\$90.00), child care, and the \$30 plus 1/3 disregard (if applicable) will be subtracted from each earner's earned income. The net earned income will be added to unearned income to calculate the family's net income. Assistance will be denied if the income exceeds the standard of need.

If the income is less than the standard of need,

Step 3) The net income will be subtracted from the applicable standard of need; the number calculated is the deficit. The deficit will be multiplied by 50%; the number calculated is the remainder. The grant is either the remainder or the payment standard whichever is less.

The TANF standards apply to all benefits and services provided to needy families except for Emergency Assistance, discussed on page twelve (12) and **Attachment A**; and child care, described on pages three (3), twelve (12), and twenty-four (24). Delaware has established separate need standards for these programs.

Fill-the-Gap Budgeting

Fill the Gap budgeting will be used for recipient families to determine continued eligibility and the amount of TANF benefits, so that families can retain more of their income. By having a standard of need which is greater than the payment standard a "gap" is created. The difference between the family's income and the need standard is called the deficit. The state pays a percentage of the deficit up to a maximum benefit level or payment standard.

- Three standards will be used in financial eligibility calculations: 185% of the standard of need, the need standard and the payment standard. 185% of the standard of need will be used in the gross income test.
- The standard of need used is 75% of the Federal Poverty level. This includes allowances for food, clothes, utilities, personal items, and household supplies.

Diversion Assistance Program

Delaware operates a Diversion Assistance program intended to help a family through a financial problem which jeopardizes employment and which, if not solved, could result in the family needing regular ongoing assistance. The Diversion Assistance payment will not exceed \$1,500 or the financial need resulting from the crisis, whichever is less. Diversion Assistance, which is available to both applicant and recipient families, is not a supplement to regular assistance but is in place of it.

Eligibility requirements for Diversion Assistance are as follows:

- the parent must be living with his/her natural or adopted children;
- the family has not received a Diversion Assistance payment in the past 12 months;
- the Diversion Assistance amount will alleviate the crisis;
 - the parent is currently employed but having a problem which jeopardizes the employment or has been promised a job but needs help in order to accept the job;
 - the family's income would qualify the family for TANF as a recipient household. (When calculating eligibility for Diversion Assistance the family is given the \$30 plus 1/3 disregard, if applicable, and the family's net income is compared to the Standard of Need.);
 - the family's resources would qualify for TANF.

The Diversion Assistance payment may be used for items and/or services such as but not limited to:

- transportation (such as vehicle repairs, tires, insurance, driver's license fee, gas);
- clothing such as uniforms or other specialized clothing and footwear or other employment-related apparel;
- tools and equipment;
- medical expenses not covered by Medicaid (e.g., eye glasses);
- union dues, special fees, licenses or certificates;
- up-front costs of employment such as agency fees and testing fees;
- unpaid child care expenses which, if they remain unpaid, preclude the provision of future child care;
- relocation expenses for verified employment in another county or state. These expenses may include moving equipment rental, gas, and lodging for the days of the move and the first month's rent, rental and utility deposit.

Diversion Assistance payments will be made to a third party vendor, not the parent. When the parent receives Diversion assistance (s)he agrees to forego TANF cash assistance as follows:

- \$0 through \$500.99 for 1 month;
- \$501 through \$1,000.99 for 2 months;
- \$1,001 through \$1,500 for 3 months.

The once a year limitation on Diversion Assistance and the period of ineligibility can be eliminated when good cause exists. Good cause exists when circumstances beyond the client's control make re-application for Diversion Assistance for TANF necessary. Examples of good cause are the employer lays off the parent or a serious illness forces the parent to stop working.

The family is eligible for TANF related Medicaid in the month in which the diversion Assistance payment is made. The family would remain eligible for Section 1931 Medicaid (TANF related Medicaid) until the family's income exceeds the Standard of Need. If the family's income exceeds the standard of need because of increased earnings or loss of the \$30 plus 1/3 disregard and the parent is working, the family may be eligible for Transitional Medicaid.

Diversion Assistance does not count as income in the child care programs, and families receiving Diversion Assistance may also be eligible to receive child care under Delaware's working poor child care program if their income does not exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Receipt of Diversion Assistance would not bar receipt of Food Stamp benefits, and Food Stamp applications will be actively solicited from individuals requesting diversion assistance.

Diversion Assistance does not count against the time limit on receipt of assistance.

The family will not have to assign child support to the state. Child support received by the parent or the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) will belong to the family. DCSE will not use child support to offset or reimburse the Diversion Assistance.

Diversion Assistance is not intended to replace TANF's Emergency Assistance Program or Supportive Services payments, which will continue. The TANF Emergency Assistance Program provides identical benefits that were provided under Delaware's State Plan in effect on August 21, 1996. (See Attachment A) Rather, Diversion Assistance expands the opportunities to access as well as the value of services to support employment.

ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE UNDER THE TANF PROGRAM

Conditions of Eligibility

If the income tests described above are met, a family will be eligible to receive TANF assistance subject to the following conditions.

Relationship/Living Arrangements

A child must be living in the home of any relative by blood, marriage, or adoption who is within the fifth degree of kinship to the dependent child or of the spouse of any person named in the above group even though the marriage is terminated by death or divorce.

The caretaker of a teen parent who is not a parent must demonstrate valid circumstances why the teen is not living with a parent and must agree to be a party to the Contract of Mutual Responsibility and fulfill the same responsibilities thereunder as a parent.

Fugitive Felons; Individuals Convicted of Drug Related Felonies

Fugitive felons and parole violators are ineligible for TANF assistance. In addition, as of August 22, 1996, individuals convicted of drug related felonies are permanently barred from the date of conviction.

Family Cap Provision

No additional cash benefits will be issued due to the birth of a child, if the birth occurs more than ten (10) calendar months after the date of application for benefits under TANF.

The family cap will not apply:

- when the additional child was conceived as a result of incest or sexual assault,
- to children who do not reside with their parents

- to children born prior to the period identified above who return or enter the household
- to a child that was conceived in a month the assistance unit (i.e., the entire family) was not receiving TANF, but this does not apply in cases that close due to being sanctioned.

The family cap will apply to children who are the firstborn of minors included in a TANF grant, except that the family cap does not apply to firstborn children of minors where the child was born prior to March 1997, the date that Delaware began its TANF program.

The additional child(ren) is included in the standard of need for purposes of determining eligibility; and the income and resources of the child, including child support, is included in determining the family's income and resources. However, the child(ren) is not included in determining the payment standard for the family.

- The additional child(ren) is considered a recipient for all other purposes, including categorical Medicaid coverage, TANF child care, and Food Stamp benefits.
- Child support received for capped children is passed directly through to the family.

Denial of Benefits to Babies Born and Residing with Unmarried Teen Parents.

Cash assistance is not provided to babies born on and after January 1, 1999 to unmarried minor teen parents. This applies to both applicants and recipients. For all other purposes, these babies will be considered TANF recipients. They may also be eligible to receive Food Stamps, Medicaid and child care as well as vouchers for the baby's needs. This provision applies as long as the teen parent resides in the home with the baby, is unmarried or less than eighteen (18) years of age.

Denial of Benefits for Fraudulent Misrepresentation to Obtain Assistance in Two States

Any individual who misrepresents residence to receive TANF, Medicaid, or Food Stamp benefits in two states shall be subject to a ten-year bar if convicted in a state or federal court.

Treatment of Eligible Non-Citizens

Qualified non-citizens who enter the United States before August 22, 1996 shall be eligible to receive the same benefits and services and shall be subject to the same conditions and requirements as all other applicants and recipients.

Qualified aliens entering the United States on or after August 22, 1996, who are exempt from benefit restrictions as specified in Federal law, are eligible to receive the same benefits and services and shall be subject to the same conditions and requirements as all other applicants and recipients.

Qualified non-citizens who enter the United States on or after August 22, 1996 are, after five years, eligible to receive the same benefits and services and shall be subject to the same conditions and requirements as all other applicants and recipients.

Program Type

Depending on circumstances, families are placed in either the Time-Limited TANF program or the Non Time-limited TANF program.

Delaware's Time-Limited TANF Program has a work first approach. Participants are expected to meet immediate work requirements in order to receive benefits.

Effective October 1, 1998, Delaware began funding its two parent program with state only funds. The eligibility requirements, services and benefits for this state funded two-parent program are the same as the single parent Time-Limited program.

Time-limits for Delaware's Time-Limited TANF Program and the interactions between time-limits and work requirements are described in the sections entitled, Work: Time Limits and Work, and TANF Benefits to Needy Families: Time Limits.

Families with the following status will receive benefits in the Non Time-limited program:

- Families that the agency has determined are unemployable, either because a parent is too physically or mentally disabled to work in an unsubsidized work setting or because the parent is needed in the home to care for a child or another adult disabled to that extent;
- Families headed by a non-needy, non-parent caretaker;
- Families headed by a non-eligible non-citizen parent who is not eligible to receive TANF benefits;
- Families where the agency has determined that the adult caretaker is temporarily unemployable; and
- Families in which the adult files a claim or has a claim being adjudicated for SSI or disability insurance under OASDI. In this case, the family must sign an agreement to repay cash benefits received under the

Non Time-limited TANF program from the proceeds of the first SSI/DI check received. The amount repaid will not exceed the amount of the retroactive SSI/DI benefit.

Contract of Mutual Responsibility requirements and sanctions for noncompliance apply to families in the Non Time-limited TANF program. Recognizing that Delaware's exemptions from time-limits are broader than those prescribed by the current TANF legislation, we are prepared to provide some benefits utilizing state MOE funding if this later becomes necessary in order to remain within TANF's time limit requirements.

Contract of Mutual Responsibility

The caretaker of children in the TANF program enters into a Contract of Mutual Responsibility with the Division of Social Services (DSS) of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). Applicants and recipients have a face-to-face interview. During this interview, the DSS worker explains to the recipient the Contract of Mutual Responsibility (CMR) and those elements specific to the client.

The Contract lists the responsibilities of the family and the supports the State will provide. The family's responsibilities include, but are not limited to: employment-related activities, school attendance and immunization requirements for children, family planning, parenting education classes, and substance abuse treatment requirements. The State provides supports to families including but not limited to: employment-related activities, training activities, child care, Medicaid, and other services identified during the development of the Contract of Mutual Responsibility.

The Contract is designed to be individualized to the specific needs and situation of each family. Therefore, the exact requirements within the Contract may vary from family to family. This document can be revised as the needs and the situation of the family evolve.

Services related to these CMR requirements will be available to the participant. If the services specified in the CMR are not reasonably available to the individual, the participant will not be sanctioned for failure to comply and the Contract will be modified to reflect that the service is currently unavailable.

It is mandatory that all caretakers enter into a Contract of Mutual Responsibility. Contracts are completed for families in the Time Limited TANF Program and the Non Time-limited TANF program as well as for teen parents. Both caretakers in an assistance unit and non-needy caretaker payees are required to develop and comply with CMRs. Other family members within the assistance unit may be required to comply with provisions of the Contract, and are subject to sanction for non-compliance.

If the caretaker is a non-needy caretaker relative, the individual would not be required to participate in employment-related activities but will be required to participate in other Contract activities.

If a caretaker objects to certain aspects of the Contract, the caretaker needs to present these objections up front, at the time of the initial Contract. If good cause can be demonstrated, the Contract can be amended to rectify the objections.

When staff has reason to believe that the family needs other services to become employed or to increase work hours and wages, these services will be identified and specified in the Contract of Mutual responsibility.

The fiscal sanction for not cooperating, without good cause, in development of the Contract will be an initial \$50.00 reduction in benefits. This reduction will increase each month by \$50.00, either until there is compliance or the case is closed. The sanction will end with demonstrated compliance.

Individuals from Another State

All families meeting the status eligibility requirements set forth above shall be eligible for TANF benefits using Delaware rules, regardless of how long they have been residents of the State.

Statewideness

All definitions and determinations of need shall be applied on a statewide basis.

Protection of Privacy of Assisted Families

31 Delaware Code, Chapter 11, Section 1101 provides that public assistance information and records may be used only for purposes directly connected with the administration of public assistance programs. Thus, all information gathered regarding individuals for public assistance purposes is considered confidential and will be safeguarded by DSS. By safeguarding public assistance information, DSS protects its clients from being identified as a special group based on financial needs and protects their right to privacy.

General information regarding expenditures, numbers of clients served, and other statistical information is a matter of public record and may be made available to any interested party. Other than the exceptions noted below, DSS will not release any information regarding a particular individual without the individual's written consent.

- DSS Regional Operations Managers have the authority to disclose the address of a recipient to a Federal, State or local law enforcement officer at the officer's request if the officer furnishes the agency with the name of the recipient and notifies the agency that the recipient:
 - is fleeing to avoid prosecution; or
 - is a fleeing felon (or in the case of New Jersey is fleeing from conviction of a high misdemeanor); or
 - is violating a condition of probation or parole; or
 - has information that is necessary for the officer to conduct his or her official duties; and
 - the location or apprehension of the recipient is within such official duties.
- If a law enforcement officer requests information that does not meet the guidelines indicated above, a subpoena from a court of law is required before the information can be released.
- DSS is required to report to the Division of Family Services in situations where it believes a home is unsuitable because of neglect, abuse or exploitation of a child.
 - A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is given permission to inspect and/or copy any records relating to the child and his or her family guardian without their consent. The CASA has the authority to interview all parties having significant information relating to the child. The CASA must also be notified of any staffing, investigations or proceedings regarding the child, so that (s)he may participate and represent the child.
 - If information is released under the procedures applying to CASA, pertinent details of the reasons for the release shall be documented and written notification of this release shall be sent to the last known address of the individual to whom the record refers.
- DSS has the authority to disclose information concerning applicants and recipients provided it pertains to:
 - 1) an investigation, prosecution, or criminal or civil proceeding conducted in connection with public assistance programs.
 - 2) the administration of any other Federal or federally assisted program which provides assistance, in cash or in kind, or services, directly to individuals on the basis of need. The agency must assure DSS that such information will remain confidential and will be used only to pursue services for the individual. Other means tested programs include the Supplemental Security Income Program, School Lunch and Breakfast Program, the Energy Assistance Program, and the Low Income Housing Program.
- Other agencies (such as Family and Children Services of Delaware, Inc., Catholic Social Services, Legal Aid, etc.) must provide written permission from the recipient before public assistance information may be released.
- Other governmental agencies may obtain lists of recipients from DSS if the information will be used to perform services for DSS, and the agency can assure DSS that the lists will remain confidential.

APPEALS PROCESS

DSS will provide timely and adequate notice for actions taken which affect eligibility or benefit level. Adequate notice means a written notice that includes a statement of what action the agency intends to take, the reasons for the intended agency action, the specific regulations supporting such action, explanation of the individual's right to request a fair hearing, and the circumstances under which assistance may be continued if a hearing is requested.

Timely notice means a notice which is mailed no later than 10 days before the date of action (i.e., 10 days before the intended change would be effective). When DSS learns of facts indicating that assistance should be discontinued, suspended, terminated, or reduced because of the probable fraud of the recipient, and, where possible, such facts have been verified through secondary sources, notice of a grant adjustment is timely if mailed at least five days before the action would become effective.

An opportunity for a hearing will be granted to any applicant who requests a hearing because his/her claim for assistance is denied or is not acted upon with reasonable promptness and to any applicant or recipient who is aggrieved by any Agency action.

To be considered by the Agency, a request for a hearing must be a clear expression in writing by the appellant or his/her representative to the effect that (s)he wants the opportunity to present his/her case to higher authority. The freedom to make such a request will not be limited or interfered with in any way and the Division will assist the appellant in submitting and processing his/her request. A hearing need not be granted when either State or Federal law requires automatic grant adjustments for classes of recipients, unless the reason for an individual appeal is incorrect grant computation.

WORK

Goals for Work

Delaware's TANF program is based on the belief that assistance provided is transitional and should not become a way of life. The State maintains that the way for persons to avoid dependency on welfare is for them to find and maintain employment. Thus the primary goal of TANF is to help recipients find private sector work and to help them keep such work by providing them with necessary supports.

To assist families in obtaining and maintaining employment, the State will engage the efforts of the Departments of Health and Social Services, Labor and Economic Development and Delaware's private sector to provide job readiness and placement opportunities, health and child care, the EITC, and family services. In turn, TANF recipients who have the capacity to work will be required to accept work, to keep their children in school, to cooperate with child support, to bear the costs of additional children they conceive while on welfare, and to leave the welfare rolls after a defined time period.

State Agencies Involved

Delaware Health and Social Services, Labor, and Economic Development have a unique partnership. All three agencies are responsible for moving welfare clients to work. These three agencies have collaborated in developing Delaware's TANF program, in public information, in implementation, and continue to collaborate in managing the initiative.

The Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) in the Department of Transportation has joined the TANF collaborative team, and has assisted to develop a statewide transportation system plan for TANF, using vans and other vehicle sources.

Minutes for the TANF collaboration team for the previous six months are included as **Attachment B**.

In May 2001, the Business Planning Committee, a subcommittee of the TANF collaborative team that deals with transportation initiatives, sponsored a transportation forum in each of the three counties. The purpose of the forums was to bring together businessmen, community leaders and other stake holders to develop and advance innovative, non-traditional solutions to varying transportation problems faced by each county.

Transportation forum highlights were a panel discussion by the lead agencies that shared some "points of pride" in the program and gaps and needs in transportation, Best Practices Ideas and Transportation Information, Employer Recognition of Innovative Success Solutions and brain-storming sessions to identify transportation issues and to gather ideas for further development. Each forum was designed to highlight transportation problems that were county specific. Sussex County Government, represented by the Sussex County Administrator, was particularly effective in explaining the population growth, the economic growth and the problems created by their largely rural area.

As a result of the forums, the Business Planning Committee has been able to identify some cross-cutting themes statewide as well as county specific. They have also been able to identify ideas that need further development and which will be used as the Committee continues to find innovative solutions to transportation problems. One overriding theme from the forums was the lack of knowledge of the current transportation options available. This has led to the production of a transportation video which highlights all the options available to assist individuals as they move from dependency to self-sufficiency.

Another special partnership is that between the Division of Social Services and the Division of Child Support Enforcement. Both agencies are part of Delaware Health and Social Services. This close linkage has enabled them to partner throughout TANF development and implementation.

Involvement of Community, Education, Business, Religious, Local Government and Non-Profit Organizations to Provide Work

As noted in the discussion on page 2, every sector has been actively involved in the development of Delaware's TANF program and continues to be involved.

A TANF Employer Committee, consisting of representatives of both the public and private sector, assists in placing welfare recipients in unsubsidized jobs and provides advice on direction, policy, and implementation of welfare-to-work efforts. This committee was established through HB 251. A major accomplishment of the Employer Committee in conjunction with DEDO and the Department of Education was the development of a program, Career Soft Skills Essentials for employers, which is now posted on the internet at www.delawareworkforce.com. The committee regularly advises the collaborative team about TANF employment issues. Minutes of committee meetings for the prior year are included as **Attachment C**.

To further promote employer interest in hiring TANF recipients, the Departments of Labor and Economic Development meet with members of the business community at regularly scheduled events like monthly Chamber of Commerce meetings as well as at special events. For example, to roll out Career Soft Skills Essentials, DEDO hosted two conferences to link employers with trainers.

The Social Services Advisory Council is established by executive order. The Governor appoints council members to advise the directors of both the Division of Social Services and the Division of Child Support Enforcement on matters related to public assistance and child support services. Council members represent the community, advocates, non-profit providers, educators, and interested citizens.

DSS and DCSE management regularly meet with the Social Services Advisory Council to discuss TANF and other Social Services and Child Support programs. Minutes of Social Services Advisory Council meetings in 2005, along with information on current Council members, are attached. (**Attachment D**)

Client specific focus groups were also conducted by the Director of DSS in 2000 and 2001. The 2000 focus groups, held in different locations throughout the state from May through November, asked recipients a series of questions about the TANF program, to ascertain their knowledge of various program requirements, and their experiences obtaining assistance from DSS workers and contractors. The 2001 client focus groups were held from June through October. They asked a series of questions about client work and sanction experiences, and ascertained information about specific services that had been of assistance and obstacles that clients had to overcome to obtain and retain employment. (**Attachment E**)

Based on these focus groups, there seemed to be a solid majority opinion that people understood the rules, that sanctions are appropriate, and that some people do need a push to get motivated to get back into the job market. However, clients did wish for more flexibility for individual circumstances, and requested more assistance with transportation and in juggling schedules so that program requirements could be met.

Special interest groups such as One Church, One Family and New Pathways have chosen to focus their resources on welfare families and provided mentoring support to welfare families.

Role of Public and Private Contractors in Delivery of Services

Delaware has contracted with private for-profit and non-profit providers and the local community college network to provide job readiness, job placement and retention services to welfare clients since 1986. These contractual arrangements continue under TANF. Contractors include community and faith-based social services agencies and organizations offering specialized services.

A number of community providers across the state provide academic remediation to TANF recipients.

Who Must Participate

All adult caretakers and other adults in the time-limited assistance unit who are not exempt must participate in TANF employment and training related activities. The two exemptions are: 1) a parent caring for a child under 13 weeks of age; and 2) an individual determined unemployable by a health care professional.

Teen parents are required to attend elementary, secondary, post-secondary, vocational, or training school, participate in a GED program or work. Delaware will use state MOE funds for benefits we provide to unmarried non-graduate teen parents who are working, rather than in an educational or training activity.

Services to Move Families to Work

Delaware's goal is to place the adult recipient in unsubsidized employment as quickly as possible. To accomplish this goal, the current menu of services includes:

- Work readiness/Life skills
- Job search/Job placement
- Job retention
- Work Experience/OJT

- Education, including vocational education, as described in SB 101, effective July 2, 1999
- Provide financial management training.
- Work-related activities that assist in obtaining or maintaining employment or improve work performance.

Non-exempt TANF participants will participate in the job search program, consisting of job readiness classes and supervised job search activity. Unsuccessful job search participants can be placed in another job search sequence or another work-related activity such as an alternative work experience, OJT, remediation or a skills training program.

Clients must keep appointments with Employment and Training staff, cooperate in the development of the employment activities included in their Contract of Mutual Responsibility, and participate in employment and training activities. The penalty for non-compliance with any of the above client responsibilities will be subject to sanctions as described in “Sanctions: Failure to Comply with the Contract and Imposition of Sanctions” on page 29.

The State implemented a new Employment and Training Management Information System (ETMIS) July 2005 that was incorporated into the existing Delaware Client Information System (DCIS). This new ETMIS can track referrals, hours of participation, and sanctions. The ETMIS provides greater accountability and tracking of participants to ensure the highest possible work participation rates. While an excellent management evaluation tool, it will also provide Delaware with the ability to determine where changes need to be made to ensure the success of the individuals in meeting program goals.

Work

Until January 1, 2000, one-parent families in the Time-Limited Temporary Program were required to immediately engage in meaningful job search and comply with conditions set forth in their Contract of Mutual Responsibility including work, education, and training activities. Failure to comply with the work requirements resulted in the imposition of an employment and training sanction. Recipients who were unable to locate private sector jobs despite good faith efforts to do so, were eligible to receive Work For Your Welfare payments, for participating in a workfare job, for a maximum of two more years.

Effective January 1, 2000, families initially applying for or reapplying for benefits can only receive benefits if they are employed or immediately participate in a Work For Your Welfare position. Failure to comply with the work requirements contained in their Contract of Mutual Responsibility results in the imposition of an employment and training sanction.

Single parent households are required to participate in Work for Your Welfare up to 30 hours per week, determined by dividing TANF and Food Stamp benefits by the minimum wage. If the hours determined by dividing the grants by the minimum wage exceed 30 hours per week, participants are to complete no more than 30 hours maximum participation hours. In addition to participating in Work For Your Welfare, individuals must participate in 10 hours of job search, education or a vocational activity per week.

Participants who fail to complete the hours required by dividing their grant by the minimum wage will have their grant adjusted. For each hour not worked, participants will have the grant adjusted downward by the amount of the minimum hourly wage. Participants who fail to complete the 10 hours of job search, education or a vocational activity per week are subject to employment and training sanctions.

In two parent households, one parent must participate in Work For Your Welfare and the second parent must participate in a work-related activity, including child care. The requirements for parents in two-parent households are unchanged.

The January 1, 2000 change in the work requirements for one-parent families means that, to receive Time-Limited TANF benefits in Delaware, both one-parent and two-parent families must either be employed or participate in a Work For Your Welfare position with supplementary activities as required. Delaware's requirement for immediate work activities exceeds the federal TANF mandate.

An individual enrolled in the TANF Time-Limited Program who, in accordance with the requirements in their Contract of Mutual Responsibility, participates in unsubsidized employment of at least twenty-five hours per week is not required to participate in Work for Your Welfare. Individuals participating in a combination of such employment and education of at least twenty (20) hours per week are also not required to participate in Work For Your Welfare. TANF Contracts of Mutual Responsibility are designed to fit individual circumstances. It is possible for an individual enrolled in the TANF Time-Limited Program who is engaged in at least twenty (20) hours of combined work and

allowable education activities to meet work requirements, if their Contract of Mutual Responsibility contains such an activity agreement.

Recognizing that Delaware's hourly requirements for participation in work and work-related activities are broader than those prescribed by the current TANF legislation, we are prepared to provide some benefits utilizing state MOE funding if this later becomes necessary in order to continue to meet TANF work participation requirements.

Time limits for Delaware's Time-Limited TANF Program are described in the section entitled, TANF Benefits to Needy Families: Time Limits.

Protecting Current Workers from Displacement

Regarding the Work for Your Welfare program, DSS conforms to Section (a)(5) of the Federal Unemployment Tax Act which requires that a job offered cannot be available as a result of a strike or labor dispute, that the job cannot require the employee to join or prohibit the employee from joining a labor organization, and that program participants are not used to displace regular workers.

In addition DSS ensures that no participants, including but not limited to those placed in either a Work For Your Welfare placement or a community work experience program, displace regular paid employees of any of the organizations providing either the placement or the community work experience. Such assurance complies with State law contained in 31 **Delaware Code**, Chapter 9, Section 905(b). This assurance also complies with Section 407(f) of TANF, which requires that DSS will not use federal funds under TANF to place individuals in a work activity when:

- any individual is on a layoff from the same or a substantially equivalent job;
- the employer has terminated any regular employee or otherwise caused an involuntary reduction of its workforce in order to fill the vacancy created with an adult receiving TANF benefits.

In addition, DSS has established a grievance procedure, in conformance with Section 407(f)(3) of TANF, for resolving complaints for any alleged violation of nondisplacement requirements. Employees or their representatives who believe that their jobs are being displaced or infringed upon shall present their complaint to the employment contractor with authority over the placement. If the contractor is unable to resolve the problem within 15 days, the employee or representative may file a formal grievance in writing to the DSS Director's Office, who will hear a formal grievance. The employee will have an opportunity to: present his/her grievance on the record; present evidence; bring witnesses and cross examine witnesses; be represented by counsel; and receive a written decision.

Grievance hearings will be scheduled within 30 calendar days of receipt of the formal grievance, and a written decision will be issued within 30 days of the hearing. If either party is dissatisfied with the State's written decision, they may appeal the decision to the U.S. Department of Labor within 20 days of receipt of the written decision. The procedures for appeal, which must be sent to the Office of Administrative Law Judges, in the U.S. Department of Labor, will be provided in writing with the decision.

Supportive Services

Delaware recognizes the importance of available child care in helping recipients participate in work-related activities, and securing and retaining unsubsidized employment. To that end, the financial resources provided for child care have been significantly increased from the FY95 child care funding level to the current request for funding.

Supportive Services, such as child care, and TANF provided assistance with other work-related expenses, such as eye examinations and corrective lenses, dental, and physicals not covered by Medicaid, transportation, fees, training, and work-related equipment, uniforms, shoes, and supplies will be available where possible. Services are provided by voucher or directly. In addition, TANF will, on a case by case basis, pay fees to purchase certificates, licenses, or testing needed to obtain employment. Medical services are not part of these supportive services. DSS will determine when such services are necessary for a TANF recipient to participate. The services shall include:

- Support provided by contractors to retain employment for one (1) year
- Health care for Delaware citizens through:
 - providing Medicaid coverage to uninsured adults with income at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level
 - providing medical coverage for uninsured children in families with income up to 200% of the federal poverty level, through the Delaware Healthy Children program
 - providing transitional Medicaid via 1931d program effective October 1, 2002, for two years for families with children who exit welfare, at incomes up to 185% of poverty.

Subsidized child care for families who leave TANF to go to work for a period of two years, as long as family income remains below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition, to help individuals retain unsubsidized employment beyond two (2) years, Delaware also provides subsidized child-care to other low income working families until the family's income exceeds 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

- Job search programs and other assistance from the Department of Labor to find a job; and
- ongoing job retention assistance.

Additional Targeted Support

Family Development Profile

The Family Development Profile is used by Delaware to identify possible social, familial, and emotional barriers to self-sufficiency, insofar as they impact an individual's ability to obtain and retain employment. Participants who complete the Profile answer questions about their self-esteem and health, and relationships with family members and other individuals. The Profile includes the capacity to identify mental health problems.

DSS workers report that the Profile frequently surfaces major domestic issues which participants need to resolve. By utilizing the Profile, workers are able to refer participants for assistance in resolving domestic violence and other abuse situations. Further efforts to assist individuals to resolve domestic violence and other abuse situations are described in a later section: Parental Responsibility: Addressing Problems of Statutory Rape and Domestic Violence.

Substance Abuse

As part of the application and redetermination processes, workers ask clients a series of questions, called the CAGE questions, to identify substance abusers for referral to appropriate services. Through the Bridge Program and referrals to the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH), Delaware's TANF program offers assessment and non-medical treatment services for all substance abusers identified through this and other methods. DSAMH and the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) will ensure that if medical treatment services are needed they are paid from other than TANF funds.

Supporting Teens

Delaware is targeting youth by providing special services. Through the Department of Education, Delaware provides a family literacy program which includes parenting skills training and other services to teen parents and their children to prevent repeat pregnancies.

Beginning with FY 1999 funds were allocated for Delaware's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, Teen Hope, to support activities for at-risk teens in six School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and one community site. The program, utilizing the Transtheoretical Behavior Change Model, helps youth develop skills to make better sexual and health related decisions. Initial programs have been very successful. In addition, wellness centers located in 27 high schools provide medical, health and counseling services to high school students.

Several other initiatives are being operated. The AmeriCorp Grant partnership grant with DHSS as lead was awarded in 1999. Under this grant, Planned Parenthood is managing an effort to have AmeriCorp members provide a responsible adult presence and a structured environment for youth to learn, as a strategy to prevent teen pregnancy, in the lives of at-risk teens in selected target areas. The Abstinence Education Grant currently provides mini-grants to agencies providing skills building community programs for teens.

Delaware has undertaken, through an Alliance on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (AAPP), a grassroots community and media outreach campaign to convince teenagers to postpone sexual activity and to avoid becoming or making someone else pregnant. AAPP works directly with parents in this initiative to improve communication between parents and children around sexuality and pregnancy prevention. In addition, AAPP provides preventive education and distributes information on preventing teen pregnancy, utilizing a number of kinds of interventions. For example, two full-time community educators visit schools, community centers, churches, and camps; and provide workshops/training to parents and children around sexuality and teen pregnancy prevention. AAPP also maintains a resource center for the community and lends or gives away brochures, videos, curriculum, posters, books, and other communications about teen pregnancy prevention and sexuality.

The Wise Guys initiative is an adolescent male responsibility program that uses an established Wise Guys curriculum over a ten-week period. The program, operating in six high school based health centers, promotes

character development and prevention of adolescent pregnancy by teaching young males self-responsibility in several areas.

Delaware's teen pregnancy prevention campaign also uses billboards to convey the message, and statewide conferences to provide assistance implementing prevention activities.

Delaware's TANF program provides a positive incentive to teenagers to graduate high school by age 19 by awarding a one-time \$50 bonus. Additionally, TANF requires teenage mothers currently on welfare to live with their parent(s) or a responsible adult, stay in school, immunize their children and participate in parenting education.

Services to teens are also discussed in the Section entitled Parental Responsibility: Efforts to Reduce Out-Of-Wedlock Births.

Delivery of Services Across State

Delivery of services will be consistent across the State

TANF BENEFITS TO NEEDY FAMILIES

Computing the Benefit

Eligibility will be determined prospectively. After establishing eligibility, benefits will be computed prospectively. Income per time period will be converted to a monthly income figure by utilizing the following conversion factors:

Weekly	4.33
Bi-weekly	2.16
Semi-monthly	2.00

EXAMPLE: Given a weekly income of \$85, multiply by 4.33 to arrive at a monthly income of \$368.05.

The benefit amount will be determined by using prospective budgeting and the best estimate of earned and unearned income for the assistance unit. The payment will not be changed until the next eligibility determination, unless the recipient reports a change that would result in an increase in the benefit or there is a significant change in circumstances as defined below.

- A significant change is defined as any of the following:
- change in household size;
- new source of employment;
- loss of unsubsidized employment or a change in employment status from full time to part time which was beyond the recipient's control;
- an increase of forty (40) hours or more in unsubsidized employment per month;
- receipt of a new source of unearned income; or
- increases or decreases in existing sources of unearned income totaling \$50.00 or more per month.

The recipient needs to verify all changes in circumstances.

EXAMPLE: An applicant applies in May. The applicant is employed. The applicant is working 20 hours per week and earns \$5.65 per hour. The best estimate of wages is calculated by multiplying 20 hours times \$5.65 (\$113.00 per week), then multiplying the weekly figure by 4.33 to determine the monthly income of \$485.90.

Redeterminations

At least one redetermination is required every six (6) months. TANF emphasizes work and work related activity. Mandating face-to-face redeterminations might undermine that goal. Therefore, mail-in redeterminations, with a telephone interview are used as an option to encourage recipients to continue participating in employment and training activities or to keep working.

When a redetermination is due, the recipient must complete a new DSS application form or a DSS renewal form. The redetermination could be completing a paper form or participating in an automated interactive interview. A redetermination is complete when all eligibility factors are examined and a decision regarding continuing eligibility is reached.

The assistance case will be closed if a recipient fails, without good cause, to complete the redetermination review. Likewise, the assistance case of a recipient who fails, without good cause, to provide requested information necessary to establish continued eligibility will be closed.

As part of the verification process for continuing eligibility, the person will provide verification that (s)he has carried out the elements of the individual Contract of Mutual Responsibility.

Time Limits

Under TANF, cash benefits are time-limited for households headed by employable adults age 18 or older who are included in the grant. Prior to January 1, 2000, Delaware limited receipt of TANF, for families in the Time-Limited Program, to twenty-four (24) cumulative months. During the time-limited period, employable adults received full benefits if they met the requirements of their Contract of Mutual Responsibility, including employment-related activities.

After the first 24 month cumulative period ended, families headed by employable adults could continue to receive cash benefits for an additional 24 cumulative months only as long as the adults participated in a Work For Your Welfare work experience program or they were working and family income was below the need standard of 75 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

Effective January 1, 2000 the time limit for receipt of TANF cash benefits is thirty-six (36) cumulative months.

During the time-limited period, employable adult recipients receive full cash benefits only as long as they meet the requirements of their Contract of Mutual Responsibility, including participation in employment-related activities. The ultimate goal of this time-limited period is to support the employable adult's search for, and placement in, an unsubsidized job. Time limits will not apply when Delaware's unemployment rate substantially exceeds the national average or is greater than 7.5 percent.

Individuals found eligible for TANF prior to January 1, 2000 will still have a forty-eight (48) month time limit even if they reapply for benefits on or after January 1, 2000.

DSS will track the time remaining before a family's time limits expire and notify families on a quarterly basis of the time they have remaining before the time limits expire. At least two (2) months prior to the end of the 36 or 48 cumulative months in which a family has received assistance, DSS will remind the family that assistance will end and notify the family of the right to apply for an extension.

Extensions will be provided only to those families who can demonstrate that:

- the agency substantially failed to provide the services specified in the individual's Contract of Mutual Responsibility; the related extension will correspond to the time period for which services were not provided; or
- despite their best efforts to find and keep employment, no suitable unsubsidized employment was available in the local economy to the employable adult caretaker; the maximum extension under such circumstances will be 12 months.

Extensions may also be granted where other unique circumstances exist. Extensions will not be granted if the adult caretaker received and rejected offers of employment, quit a job without good cause, or was fired for cause or if the adult caretaker did not make a good faith effort to comply with the terms of the Contract of Mutual Responsibility.

Retroactively, starting October 1, 1995, Delaware exempted months in which a person worked twenty hours or more per week from counting toward the Delaware lifetime time limit when the countable income of the family is below the need standard. Beginning in May 2005, Delaware exempts months in which a person works twenty-five hours or more from counting toward the Delaware lifetime time limit when the countable income of the family is below the need standard. So that families who have not reached the State's 36/48 month time limit won't reach the Federal 60 month time limit, benefits for these families are provided under a segregated program using State MOE funding, beginning October 1, 1999. However, both the federal and Delaware time clocks continue to run for individuals who meet their work participation requirements by participating in a combination of employment and education for at least twenty (20) hours a week; and for individuals who meet their work participation requirements by participating in education for at least twenty (20) hours a week.

After the time limit has been reached, benefits will be provided to families that have been granted an extension only for a maximum period of 12 months and only in the Work For Your Welfare component. Thus, for Time-Limited families, unless the caretaker is employed at least twenty-five (25) hours per week, the maximum period for receipt of benefits to families enrolled in the Time-Limited TANF Program will be sixty (60) cumulative months for families with a forty-eight (48) cumulative time limit and forty-eight (48) months for families with a thirty-six (36) month

time limit. Delaware will comply with federal requirements so that no family receives more than sixty (60) months of TANF paid through federal TANF block grant.

Sanctions: Failure to Comply with the Contract and the Imposition of Sanctions

The Contract of Mutual Responsibility encompasses three broad categories of requirements: 1) enhanced family functioning; 2) self-sufficiency; and 3) teen responsibility requirements.

- 1) Enhanced family functioning requirements of the Contract include, but are not limited to, acquiring family planning information and attending parenting education sessions, ensuring that children are immunized, and participating in substance abuse assessment and treatment. Sanction for non-compliance with these requirements is an initial \$50 which will increase by \$50 every month until there is compliance with the requirement. The initial \$50 reduction will be imposed whether the family fails to comply with one, or more than one requirement. Clients will have to comply with all requirements before the sanction can end.
- 2) Self-sufficiency requirements of the Contract of Mutual Responsibility are employment and training, work-related activities, and ensuring school attendance requirements for dependent children under age 16.
 - The sanction for non-compliance with these requirements is a 1/3 reduction of the benefit for the first occurrence, 2/3 reduction for the second occurrence and a total and permanent loss of the benefit for the third occurrence for work related activities. A third occurrence of the penalty for a child under 16 not attending school is loss of all cash benefits but is curable when the parent demonstrates compliance. The duration of the first and second sanctions will each be two months or until the person complies. If, at the end of the two month period, there is no demonstrated compliance, the sanction will increase to the next level.
 - Clients will have to demonstrate compliance with all self-sufficiency requirements before all benefits are restored.
 - For the purpose of determining that the individual's failure to comply has ended, the individual must participate in the activity to which (s)he was previously assigned, or an activity designed by the Employment and Training provider to lead to full participation, for a period of two weeks before ending the sanction.
 - The penalty for individuals who quit their jobs without good cause and do not comply with subsequent job search requirements will be loss of all cash benefits. The penalty for individuals who quit their jobs without good cause, but who comply with subsequent job search requirements, will be:
 - for a first offense, a 1/3 reduction in TANF, to be imposed for a period of two months;
 - for a second offense, a 2/3 reduction in TANF, to be imposed for a period of two months;
 - for a third offense, a permanent loss of all cash benefits.
 - For dependent children under age 16, including teen parents, the sanction will not be imposed if the parent of the teen is working with school officials or other agencies to remediate the situation.
- 3) Teen responsibility requirements include maintaining satisfactory school attendance, or participation in alternative activities such as training or employment, for dependent children 16 years of age and older. The sanction for non-compliance with these requirements is to remove the needs of the teen from the TANF benefit and to remove the needs of the caretaker if the caretaker does not work to remedy the situation. Complying with the requirements ends the sanction.

Failing to comply with both the enhanced family functioning and self-sufficiency requirements will result in combined penalties. For example, both a \$50 reduction and a 1/3 reduction to the benefit could be assessed for first failures to comply in two areas. Demonstrated compliance will not excuse penalties for the period of noncompliance. Sanctions will be imposed for the full period of noncompliance.

Benefit Delivery: Direct Payments and Vouchers

Currently, Delaware uses check issuance as the payment method for TANF.

Delaware directly pays for center-based child care authorized for TANF participants, where the center agrees to accept the Delaware child care reimbursement rate. Some caretakers, however, receive vouchers to self-arrange and pay for their child care. Delaware will reimburse these caretakers, up to the rates published in the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plan, for the cost of child care provided by licensed and license-exempt child care providers.

STAFF TRAINING

TANF training has been incorporated into the Cash Grant training which is required for all new financial services staff. APHSA training has now been incorporated into Interviewing and Coaching training which is required for all new staff.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Adults and minor parent(s) are required to comply with parenting expectations outlined in the Contract of Mutual Responsibility.

Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement

Participants in TANF must cooperate with the Division of Child Support Enforcement as a condition of eligibility. In addition, all families are required to provide sufficient information to permit Delaware to obtain child support on behalf of the family. Exceptions can be made when the caretaker demonstrates that pursuit of child support would create a danger to the caretaker or the child(ren). It is the responsibility of the client to provide documentation to verify such a good cause claim.

Failure of a caretaker, without good cause, to cooperate with and provide information to the DCSE to permit the State to pursue the collection of child support on behalf of dependent children will result in a full family sanction, until compliance. Applicants who fail to provide information so that Delaware may pursue child support collections will be denied. To cure the child support sanction, the caretaker will provide sufficient information to permit Delaware to pursue child support collections on behalf of the needy children in the family.

When a child lives with both the natural father and the mother but paternity has not been legally established, the parents will be referred to the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) for a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity.

When a child lives with the natural father but paternity has not been legally established, the father will complete a declaration of natural relationship document and will provide acceptable verification of relationship.

When a child lives with a relative of the natural father but paternity has not been legally established, the relative must complete a declaration of natural relationship document and provide acceptable verification of relationship.

In Delaware, DCSE determines non-cooperation with child support requirements. In addition, effective January 1, 1999 DCSE began making the determination of good cause.

Distribution of Child Support Collections to TANF Recipients

Delaware, a fill-the-gap state in 1975, uses fill-the-gap to make sure that families do not experience a net loss of income due to the State retaining Child Support paid by absent parents. A portion of Child Support payments is not counted in calculating the grant.

Efforts to Reduce Out-of-Wedlock Births

Delaware believes that the number of out-of-wedlock births to teens must be reduced significantly to eliminate poverty and dependency. A study by Doble Research Associates commissioned by the Governor's Family Council, in June, 1998, concluded that Delaware's efforts to reduce teen pregnancy, including establishing more after-school programs, strongly enforcing child-support enforcement and the Sexual Predator Act, and making teen mothers ineligible for cash assistance, are solidly supported by public opinion. We are undertaking a number of statewide initiatives to reduce adolescent pregnancy. Many of these initiatives are being coordinated through the activities of the Alliance for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (AAPP). Ventures include the provision of adolescent health services through school-based health centers and improving teen utilization of our family planning centers.

The AAPP is a statewide public and private partnership charged with the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan to prevent adolescent pregnancy in Delaware. The organizational structure of the Alliance includes a 12 member advisory board appointed by the Governor and a statewide membership of over 200 schools, agencies, organizations, churches, and individuals concerned with teen pregnancy. Staff and program support for the Alliance is provided through a contract from the Division of Public Health (DPH) to the Medical Center of Delaware.

Since its inception, the AAPP has awarded mini-grants to non-profit youth organizations to provide community based teen pregnancy programs; implemented a statewide media campaign to increase community awareness; and worked with existing coalitions to establish teen pregnancy prevention programs. AAAP plans and activities include:

- statewide leadership to develop a visible, viable structure for mobilizing resources needed to impact the problem;
- data development to develop a methodology to monitor rates in real time;
- public relations efforts to increase community awareness and involvement; and
- identifying barriers to teen utilization of family planning services and developing solutions

The Division of Public Health has the lead responsibility in Delaware to implement initiatives to reduce teen pregnancy. Using the strategies and recommendations presented by AAPP, DPH activities include school based health centers, family planning clinics, parenting education, and the peer leadership program. The “teen friendly” services provided at Department of Public Health Units located at State Service Centers have resulted in a significant increase in use. In addition, all clients seen in Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic sites receive counseling on family planning, as well as pregnancy prevention supplies.

Based on a report by Adolescent Health Survey Research (AHSR), which used a survey and focus groups with youth and their parents conducted early in 1999 to identify top strategies in pregnancy prevention, Delaware implemented a number of initiatives to prevent subsequent births, including:

- Smart Start, an enhanced prenatal program that attempts to decrease low birth weight babies, infant mortality, and maternal mortality, through social service, nutritional, and nursing support to at-risk pregnant women;
- Placing information on our combined Food Stamp/cash assistance/MA applications for the following telephone numbers: Planned Parenthood, AAPP and Delaware Helpline, to obtain information on pregnancy prevention/family planning.

In addition, family planning and reproductive health services are provided to adults in eight public health locations in Delaware; and similar services are provided to adults by Planned Parenthood of Delaware in five locations in the state. Minority populations are targeted through family planning and reproductive health services available at three Federally Qualified Health Centers in Delaware; and family planning and reproductive health services are available to Delaware State University students through the DSU health center.

These Delaware initiatives to reduce out-of-wedlock births are complemented and strengthened by the policies of TANF which:

- Require adults and minor parent(s) to obtain family planning information from the provider of their choice;
- Provide for a fiscal sanction of an initial \$50 reduction in benefits for failure, without good cause, to obtain family planning information. This reduction will increase each month by \$50.00, either until there is compliance or the case is closed. The sanction will end when the adult and/or minor parent(s) obtains the family planning information at the provider of their choice;
- Eliminate benefit increases for children conceived while a caretaker is receiving TANF, and apply this family cap to children who are the firstborn of minors included in a TANF grant where the children are born after March 1, 1997; and
- Treat two parent families the same as single parent families.

The goals for the Division of Public Health teen pregnancy prevention are mirrored in the ‘Responsible Sexual Behavior’ section of the Healthy Delaware 2010 guidebook. They include:

- a. By 2010, increase the proportion of teens who abstain from sexual intercourse or use condoms if currently sexually active from 79% to 85%.
- b. By 2004, implement an evidence-based media campaign to promote responsible sexual behavior
- c. By 2010, maintain the proportion of youth that report remaining abstinent before age 13 at 90%
- d. By 2005, reduce the birth rate for teenagers aged 15 through 17 from 39.2 to 33.3 per 1,000.

Goals a. and c. are measured through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey administered every two years by the Department of Education. Goal b. has been satisfied by the implementation of an ongoing teen pregnancy prevention media campaign managed by the Alliance for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention through Christiana Health Care under contract by DPH. Goal d. is measured by the Delaware Health Statistics Center.

DSS will see that TANF families receive education about the benefits of marriage and planning to have children when they can be best supported by both parents within the financial management component of their training. Our goal is to reduce the out of wedlock birth rate by 1% each year beginning with FFY 2004.

Initiatives to Promote Two-Parent Families

To provide broad-based support for working families, Delaware was one of the first States to recognize that the special eligibility requirements that applied to two-parent families contributed both to the non-formation and the break up of two-parent households. The six-quarter work history requirement was particularly responsible for non-marriage of teen parents, who had not yet worked enough to meet this qualification. The denial of benefits to two-parent families if one of the parents was working at least 100 hours a month also contributed to the low work rate of two-parent families which were receiving AFDC.

When Delaware eliminated these special deprivation requirements as part of our welfare reform waiver, the numbers of two-parent families receiving TANF soared, and we believe that, without the TANF change, many of these households would have applied for and been found eligible for benefits as single mother families. These never formed two-parent households would have had profound effects on the ability of the family to exit welfare and on the future success of the children. We have found that the average length of stay on TANF is much lower for two-parent families, reflecting the greater incidence of retained employment when two adults are able to engage in work and share child care duties.

Delaware has always allowed taxpayers to file separately and applied the progressive rate structure to each spouse's income separately, which avoided most tax increases resulting from marriage. However, a marriage penalty could still result from uneven standard deduction amounts. By increasing the standard deduction amount for married taxpayers to exactly twice the single standard deduction beginning January 1, 2000, enactment of HB 411 has effectively eliminated the income tax "marriage penalty" in the State of Delaware

Addressing Problems of Statutory Rape and Domestic Violence

Statutory Rape

The Sexual Predator Act of 1996 imposes more severe criminal sanctions on adult males who are significantly older than their victims and holds them financially accountable when children are born as a result of violations of this law.

The legislation requires a cooperative agreement as part of a multi-faceted effort to combat teenage pregnancy and reform welfare. Specifically, the law requires the Attorney General's Office, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Services to Children Youth and Their Families, the Department of Public Instruction and law enforcement agencies statewide to establish a cooperative agreement specifying the various roles of the agencies involved. The Memorandum of Understanding establishing the cooperative agreement, executed on December 10, 1996, and SB 346 are provided as **Attachment F**.

Victims of Domestic Violence

As required under the optional Certification of Standards and Procedures to Ensure that a State Will Screen for and Identify Domestic Violence, DSS will refer identified victims of domestic violence to appropriate services such as shelters and counseling and to Family Court. Under the Protection from Abuse Act (PFA), 10 **Delaware Code**, Chapter 9, Sections 1041-1048 (**Attachment G**), Family Court has the power and authority to expeditiously adjudicate all matters related to domestic violence including court ordered restraints, custody, property and financial resources.

Through this strong domestic violence Law, Delaware is clearly committed to assisting victims of domestic violence to overcome circumstances which put them in physical, emotional and/or financial jeopardy; and to assist them in seeking redress and a safe environment for themselves and their families. The Law is a strong deterrent to domestic violence, according to a study by the National Center for State Courts, released on December 2, 1996. The study reported that 86 percent of those who sought protection under the Law, which permits individuals in danger of serious physical abuse to obtain a protection order, were no longer being physically abused.

In addition, using our Family Development Profile, caseworkers ask a series of screening questions designed to identify victims of domestic violence. (**See Attachment H**) So that we are certain that workers can use this tool to effectively identify domestic violence issues, beginning 1998 all staff members at each of Delaware's 17 field sites receive a full day of Domestic Violence Training, focused on the impact of domestic violence on clients and their ability to abide by the conditions of the Contract of Mutual Responsibility. As part of this training, staff learn how to recognize and assist women who are victims of domestic violence. DSS has continued this training on an ongoing basis and now provides the training not only to field staff but to all staff.

We believe that our methodology of resolving domestic violence situations as quickly as possible, as provided for under a strong statute, is the most appropriate and best course of action to assist current victims and to prevent future violence where possible.

Delaware certifies that the Family Development Profile establishes a procedure that screens for domestic violence and that, pursuant to a determination of good cause, program requirements may be waived if it is determined that compliance would make it more difficult for individuals to escape violence. However, decisions to waive compliance with TANF requirements will be made on an individual, case by case basis, and will not endorse an individual's failure to behave proactively to ameliorate destructive domestic violence situations. For our program to work, domestic violence victims must take actions to recover their lives, using the relief provided by the domestic violence statute and the other resources Delaware makes available.

TRIBES

Delaware has no federally recognized tribes.

ADMINISTRATION

Structure of Agency

The Department of Health and Social Services is the cabinet level agency designated by the State as responsible for Delaware's public assistance programs as allowed under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act. Within the Department, the Division of Social Services administers these programs. (Organizational chart included as Attachment I to State Plan.)

Administrative Spending

Delaware will comply with federal requirements.

Compliance With Participation Rates

Delaware intends to meet the participation rate requirements set forth in the TANF legislation. Recognizing that Delaware's hourly requirements for participation in work and work-related activities are broader than those prescribed by the current TANF legislation, we are prepared to provide some benefits utilizing state MOE funding if this later becomes necessary in order to continue to meet TANF work participation requirements. Delaware will comply with federal requirements.

Maintenance of Effort

Delaware is aware of and intends to fully comply with the requirements of the law (P.L. 104-193) to maintain a prescribed level of historic state expenditures. Delaware will ensure that expenditures of state funds for benefits and services ("Qualified State Expenditures" as defined in the law) for TANF participants (either in the Part A federally funded program or non-Part A state funded program) who are TANF eligibles will equal or exceed the required annual spending level.

As a 1975 fill-the-gap state, Delaware has opted to continue to use fill-the-gap for the issuance of child support disregard and child support supplemental payments to TANF clients. Delaware considers these payments to be "cash assistance" to eligible families and therefore to be within the definition of "Qualified State Expenditures".

Financial eligibility criteria for MOE-funded assistance or services are the same as for other TANF assistance or services, except that MOE claimed for child care under the provisions of section 263.3 will follow the financial eligibility criteria established in the CCDF State Plan and associated State regulations.

Implementation Date and Plan Submittal Date

The plan is submitted for certification of completeness on December, 2005. The implementation date for the provisions of this plan is October 1, 2005. Any subsequent amendments to this Plan will be indicated by amending the page of the Plan that describes the program or function being changed.