



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

2008 TANF Task Force Annual Report

2008 Activities

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program was reauthorized as part of the Deficit Reduction Act (P.L. 109-171) in 2006. The TANF program provides critical income and work support to very low income families with children. Research indicates that families that include a person with a disability are at higher risk of losing the income supports. TANF work requirements and supports often fail to meet the needs of families that include a person with a disability.

The reauthorization of TANF under the DRA is likely to have exacerbated as opposed to alleviating these concerns. The legislation conveyed authority to HHS to clarify the work participation activities that states could engage families in to meet their required work participation rate or face financial sanctions. Interim final regulations were released on June 29, 2006 which imposed narrow definitions on acceptable work activities. The regulations do not allow states to receive appropriate credit for engaging families that include a person with a disability in activities that would help them address challenges and prepare for greater economic self-sufficiency. States can receive credit for providing a person with a disability with rehabilitative services, mental health, or substance abuse counseling, however, this is limited to no more than four weeks consecutively or six weeks in any given year. Also, the regulations do not provide sufficient flexibility for parents who are caring for a child with a disability.

The Pathways to Independence Act of 2007 (S. 1730) was introduced to allow states to receive credit for modified employability plans for families on TANF that include a person with a disability. Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) introduced S. 1730 in June 2007. Senators Stabenow (D-MI), Conrad (D-ND) and Collins (R-ME) joined Senator Smith as original cosponsors. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Senator Tom Carper (D-DE) have also cosponsored.

There was limited focus on TANF in Congress in 2008. The Task Force engaged in some exploration of proposals for the 2010 reauthorization which Congress will be working on towards the end of 2009. This included meeting with representatives of state-affiliated advocacy organizations to explore areas of overlapping interests. There was also discussion by the Task Force and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities on other poverty alleviation policies that would benefit families that include a parent or child with a disability that may emerge as a priority for the new Administration and Congress.

2009 Goals and Priorities

The Task Force's goals for 2009 include:

- Coordinating with partners in the substance abuse treatment and child welfare advocacy communities to develop strategies to address the economic and family well-being of families that include a person with a disability who are dependent or eligible for TANF benefits.
- Working with state agencies and state advocates on strategies to ensure that people with disabilities in the TANF program are receiving the services and supports they require to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency and access work opportunities that will help them transition from poverty.
- Ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are addressed in legislative proposals to reduce poverty.
- Re-writing the overly restrictive regulations that limit states ability to receive credit for providing a wider array of services to support employment of people with disabilities.
- Requiring states to invest more resources into thorough assessments of clients needs in order to more accurately define the employment support needs of the individual.
- Requiring states to develop modified employability plans for TANF recipients who have been determined to have a disability or to be caring for someone with a disability
- Educating Members of Congress about these issues and seek support for legislative provisions to address our concerns.

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