

Pass SB 267

Make TANF/NM Works Work for Families

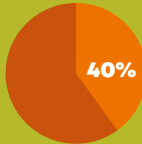
Sponsored by Sen. Lopez, Sen. Ortiz y Pino, & Rep. Rubio

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is New Mexico's only source of cash assistance for low-income families with children that helps pay for housing, utilities and clothing costs. TANF provides a federal block grant to states with significant flexibility on how the program operates. The NM Legislature implemented TANF by passing the NM Works Act.



The program has not been updated since 1996.

The NM Works program is only reaching 40% of families who qualify.



Harsh penalties cut or reduce benefits for 30% of families, threatening the welfare and long-term outcomes of children on the program. At the same time, the benefit level is so low that children who get TANF are still living in deep poverty.

Modest increases in income, especially in homes with babies and toddlers, are proven to dramatically increase the immediate well-being of families while supporting long term educational and economic opportunities.

A 10% increase in TANF benefit levels for a family of four is predicted to reduce foster care placements by 8%.

SB 267 would increase opportunity for families with children by implementing the following evidence based changes to the NM Works program:

1.

Stop Cutting Benefits for Children. NM currently cuts benefits (sanctions) to the whole family when an adult member is alleged to violate a program rule, leaving children without money for basic needs.

An additional \$1.6m to HSD would fund this change.

2.

Ensure children who get TANF receive Child Support. NM HSD currently retains child support paid to support children who get TANF.

An additional \$2.2M would fund this pass through

3.

Ensure families with significant barriers to employment, like domestic violence or disability get the help they need and are exempt from unnecessary "work requirements." HSD's current budget request supports this change.

4.

Allow TANF participants to pursue their GED, vocational education, or certificate program through the Education Works Program. Education Works is only available for participants who seek 4-year college degrees, but there is a greater need for families to pursue GED, certificate and vocational programs. *The bill expands educational options for families and has no budget impact.*

5.

Provide ongoing opportunities for families to correct alleged program violations.

