

CHAPTER 1053-B**TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES****§3762. Temporary assistance for needy families; promotion of economic self-support**

The department shall promote family economic self-support in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

1. Definitions. As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "ASPIRE-TANF" means the ASPIRE-TANF program established in section 3781-A. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

A-1. "Culturally and linguistically appropriate services" means services that are designed to serve culturally diverse populations in their preferred languages; function effectively within the context of cultural beliefs, behaviors and needs presented by TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants and their communities; contribute to a work environment that supports diversity; promote community engagement; build trust and relationships with TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants; actively support and enable TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants to make informed choices; and value and facilitate the exchange of information with TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants. [PL 2021, c. 648, §5 (NEW).]

B. "Domestic violence" has the same meaning as provided in Section 408(a)(7)(C)(iii) of PRWORA. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B-1. "DRA" means the federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, Public Law 109-171, 120 Stat. 4. [PL 2009, c. 291, §4 (NEW).]

C. "Federal poverty level" means the nonfarm income official poverty line for a family of the size involved, as defined by the federal Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with the United States Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Section 673, Subsection 2. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

D. "PRWORA" means the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Public Law 104-193, 110 Stat. 2105. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

E. "TANF" means the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, under the United States Social Security Act, as amended by PRWORA. "TANF" provides temporary assistance to needy, dependent children and their parents or caretaker relatives. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

F. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program" or "SNAP" means the statewide food supplement program administered by the State pursuant to section 3104. [PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §20 (NEW).]

G. "Trauma-informed services" means services that acknowledge and are informed by the widespread impact of trauma and recognize the potential paths for recovery; recognize the unique signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families and staff; respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices; and seek to actively avoid retraumatization. [PL 2021, c. 648, §6 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 648, §§5, 6 (AMD).]

2. Collaboration. The department shall work collaboratively with the following agencies and entities to provide efficient and effective services that lead to self-support for Maine's families receiving TANF assistance:

- A. The state agency responsible for child care services; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
 - B. The Department of Labor for services including employment and job training partnership services and vocational services; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
 - C. [PL 2005, c. 397, Pt. A, §23 (RP).]
 - D. The Department of Transportation; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
 - E. The Department of Education and local providers of programs under the federal Adult Education Act, 20 United States Code, Section 1201 et seq. and the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, 20 United States Code, Section 2301 et seq.; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
 - F. The Department of Economic and Community Development; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
 - G. Statewide organizations that work with women on self-sufficiency and employment opportunities, including a statewide nonprofit corporation that provides training and placement in trade and technical occupations that are not traditional for the persons served; [PL 2005, c. 397, Pt. C, §14 (AMD).]
 - H. The municipalities of the State both individually and collectively; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
 - I. The Maine Community College System; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 20, Pt. OO, §2 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 20, Pt. OO, §4 (AFF).]
 - J. The University of Maine System; and [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
 - K. Local service providers appropriate for TANF participants. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]
- [PL 2005, c. 397, Pt. A, §23 (AMD); PL 2005, c. 397, Pt. C, §14 (AMD).]

3. Administration. The department may administer and operate a program of aid to needy dependent children, called "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families" or "TANF," in accordance with the United States Social Security Act, as amended by PRWORA and DRA, and this Title.

A. The department shall adopt rules as necessary to implement and administer the program. The rules must include eligibility criteria, budgeting process, benefit calculation and confidentiality. For the purpose of determining eligibility for TANF, the department shall impose an asset limit of \$10,000 per family and must exempt from the asset limit one vehicle for each licensed driver in the family. The confidentiality rules must ensure that confidentiality is maintained for TANF recipients at least to the same extent that confidentiality was maintained for families in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program unless otherwise required by federal law or regulation. [PL 2023, c. 366, §1 (AMD).]

B. The department may use funds, insofar as resources permit, provided under and in accordance with the United States Social Security Act or state funds appropriated for this purpose or a combination of state and federal funds to provide assistance to families under this chapter. In addition to assistance for families described in this subsection, funds must be expended for the following purposes:

- (1) To continue the pass-through of the first \$50 per month of current child support collections and the exclusion of the \$50 pass-through from the budget tests and benefit calculations;
- (2) To provide financial assistance to noncitizens legally admitted to the United States who are receiving assistance under this subsection as of July 1, 2011. Recipients of assistance under this subparagraph are limited to the categories of noncitizens who would be eligible for the TANF programs but for their status as aliens under PRWORA. Eligibility for the TANF

program for these categories of noncitizens must be determined using the criteria applicable to other recipients of assistance from the TANF program. Any household receiving assistance as of July 1, 2011 may continue to receive assistance, as long as that household remains eligible, without regard to interruptions in coverage or gaps in eligibility for service. A noncitizen legally admitted to the United States who is neither receiving assistance on July 1, 2011 nor has an application pending for assistance on July 1, 2011 that is later approved is not eligible for financial assistance through a state-funded program unless that noncitizen is:

- (a) Elderly or disabled, as described under the laws governing supplemental security income in 42 United States Code, Sections 1381 to 1383f (2010);
 - (b) A victim of domestic violence;
 - (c) Experiencing other hardship, such as time necessary to obtain proper work documentation, as defined by the department by rule. Rules adopted by the department under this division are routine technical rules as defined by Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A; or
 - (d) Unemployed but has obtained proper work documentation, as defined by the department by rule. Rules adopted by the department under this division are routine technical rules as defined by Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A;
- (3) To provide benefits to 2-parent families with children using the same eligibility requirements as apply to families headed by a single custodial parent or caretaker relative;
 - (4) To provide an assistance program for needy children, 19 to 21 years of age, who are in full-time attendance in secondary school. The program is operated for those individuals who qualify for TANF under the United States Social Security Act, except that they fail to meet the age requirement, and is also operated for the parent or caretaker relative of those individuals. Except for the age requirement, all provisions of TANF, including the standard of need and the amount of assistance, apply to the program established pursuant to this subparagraph;
 - (5) To provide assistance for a pregnant woman who is otherwise eligible for assistance under this chapter, except that the individual has no dependents under 19 years of age. An individual is eligible for the monthly benefit for one eligible person if the medically substantiated expected date of the birth of the individual's child is not more than 90 days following the date the benefit is received;
 - (6) To provide a special housing allowance for TANF families whose shelter expenses for rent, mortgage or similar payments, homeowners insurance and property taxes equal or exceed 50% of their monthly income excluding any income disregarded pursuant to subparagraph (7-D), divisions (a) and (b). The special housing allowance is limited to \$300 per month for each family. For purposes of this subparagraph, "monthly income" means the total of the TANF monthly benefit and all income countable under the TANF program, plus child support received by the family, excluding the \$50 pass-through payment;
- (7-C) In determining financial eligibility for applicants who have earnings from employment, the department shall disregard from monthly earnings the following:
- (a) One hundred and eight dollars;
 - (b) Fifty percent of the remaining earnings that are less than the federal poverty level; and
 - (c) All actual child care costs necessary for work, except that the department may limit the child care disregard to \$175 per month per child or \$200 per month per child under 2 years of age or with special needs;

REVISOR'S NOTE: Subparagraph (7-C) as enacted by PL 2019, c. 485, §3 is REALLOCATED TO TITLE 22, SECTION 3762, SUBSECTION 3, PARAGRAPH B, SUBPARAGRAPH (7-F)

(7-D) In determining benefit levels, the department shall disregard the following amounts from the monthly earnings of recipients:

(a) One hundred percent of:

- (i) All earned income received for the first 3 months of employment that began while participating in TANF; or
- (ii) The first 3 months of any increase in earned income received while participating in TANF.

Any month in which the disregard under this division does not increase the recipient's benefit above that which the benefit would be if the disregard in division (c) is applied does not count as a month in which earned income is disregarded under this division;

(b) Seventy-five percent of:

- (i) All earned income received for the 4th to 6th months of employment that began while participating in TANF; or
- (ii) The 4th to 6th months of any increase in earned income received while participating in TANF.

Any month in which the disregard under this division does not increase the recipient's benefit above that which the benefit would be if the disregard in division (c) is applied does not count as a month in which earned income is disregarded under this division;

(c) One hundred and eight dollars and 50% of the remaining earnings that are less than the federal poverty level for any month of employment in which a disregard in division (a) or (b) is not applied; and

(d) All actual child care costs necessary for work, except that the department may limit the child care disregard to \$175 per month per child or \$200 per month per child under 2 years of age or with special needs;

(7-E) For any period during which a household's SNAP benefit is reduced as a result of earnings and receipt of the earned income disregard applied under subparagraph (7-D), division (a) or (b), the household must receive additional SNAP benefits in an amount that will, in addition to the SNAP benefits for which the household remains eligible, provide the household with a minimum of \$50 in SNAP benefits. Additional SNAP benefits under this subparagraph are a noncash benefit and may be used to purchase only those food items permitted under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;

(7-F) **(REALLOCATED FROM T. 22, §3762, sub-§3, ¶B, sub-¶(7-C))** In determining financial eligibility and benefit levels for TANF applicants and TANF recipients, the department shall deduct the income less any applicable income disregards from the standard of need and may not apply any other income test;

(8) In cases when the TANF recipient has no child care cost, the monthly TANF benefit is the maximum payment level or the difference between the countable earnings and the standard of need established by rule adopted by the department, whichever is lower;

(9) In cases when the TANF recipient has child care costs, the department shall determine a total benefit package, including TANF cash assistance, determined in accordance with subparagraph (7-D) and additional child care assistance, as provided by rule, necessary to cover the TANF recipient's actual child care costs up to the maximum amount specified in section

3782-A, subsection 5, paragraph B. The benefit amount must be paid as provided in this subparagraph.

(a) Before the first month in which child care assistance is available to an ASPIRE-TANF recipient under this paragraph and periodically thereafter, the department shall notify the recipient of the total benefit package and the following options of the recipient: to receive the total benefit package directly; or to have the department pay the recipient's child care assistance directly to the designated child care provider for the recipient and pay the balance of the total benefit package to the recipient.

(b) If an ASPIRE-TANF recipient notifies the department that the recipient chooses to receive the child care assistance directly, the department shall pay the total benefit package to the recipient.

(c) If an ASPIRE-TANF recipient does not respond or notifies the department of the choice to have the child care assistance paid directly to the child care provider from the total benefit package, the department shall pay the child care assistance directly to the designated child care provider for the recipient. The department shall pay the balance of the total benefit package to the recipient;

(10) Child care assistance under this paragraph must be paid by the department in a prompt manner that permits an ASPIRE-TANF recipient to access child care necessary for work; and

(11) The department shall adopt rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375 to implement this subsection. Rules adopted pursuant to this subparagraph are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. [PL 2023, c. 29, §§1, 2 (AMD).]

[PL 2023, c. 29, §§1, 2 (AMD); PL 2023, c. 366, §1 (AMD).]

4. Promoting support by both parents. The department shall enforce laws and establish policies to ensure that both parents contribute to the economic support of their child or children and to promote every child's right to economic support from both parents. Applicants for and recipients of assistance may refuse to cooperate in the establishment of paternity or child support enforcement for good cause related to domestic violence, including situations when cooperation may result in harm to the parent or child, or when the child was conceived as a result of incest or rape. Evidence supporting a good cause determination includes, but is not limited to, the evidence specified in section 3785, subsection 13. The department shall notify all applicants and recipients orally and in writing of the availability of this determination. When a determination of good cause is made by the department, the department may not impose sanctions or penalties against the applicant or recipient or engage in any other activity that could subject any member of the family to harm.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

5. Move to sustainable employment. The department shall assist parents who receive TANF assistance to move as quickly as possible into employment that will sustain the family.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

6. Training; partnerships. The department shall increase the employability of parents who receive TANF assistance through on-the-job training and strengthening the public and private workforce partnership by developing training sites and jobs for those parents.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

7. Teenage pregnancies; minimization. The department shall provide education and services to minimize teenage pregnancies with special attention paid to the role of the male.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

8. Transitional support services. The department shall administer a program of transitional support services in accordance with PRWORA, DRA and this subsection.

A. [PL 2019, c. 485, §4 (RP).]

B. The department shall provide limited transitional transportation benefits to meet employment-related costs to ASPIRE-TANF program participants who lose eligibility for TANF assistance due to employment and to employed families with children with income less than 200% of the federal poverty level. The department may also make transitional transportation benefits available to families in which one or both adults are working and who, although they remain financially eligible for TANF benefits, request that their benefits be terminated. Benefits may be provided for up to 18 months. The department may adopt rules that impose a weekly limit on available transitional transportation benefits and that require a contribution from each participant toward the cost of transportation. For the purposes of employed families whose household income is less than 200% of the federal poverty level and who do not qualify based on the loss of TANF eligibility due to earnings or are a 2-parent household who request termination of TANF benefits when at least one adult is working, the department may use up to \$1,400,000 annually from the federal TANF block grant for expenditures under this program. [PL 2021, c. 1, Pt. N, §1 (AMD).]

C. The department shall make available transitional child care services to families who lose eligibility for TANF as a result of increased earnings or an increase in the number of hours worked. The department shall make available transitional child care services to families who lose eligibility for TANF as a result of increased earnings or an increase in the number of hours worked and whose gross income is equal to or less than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines. The department may also make transitional child care services available to families in which one or both adults are working and who, although they remain financially eligible for TANF benefits, request that their benefits be terminated. The family shall pay a premium, which may be waived but may not exceed 10% of gross income, based on the family's gross income compared to the federal poverty level in accordance with rules adopted by the department. Parents must have a choice of child care within the rate established by the department. [PL 2021, c. 534, §1 (AMD).]

D. [PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. S, §1 (RP).]

E. The department shall establish payment rates for child care services that are up to the 75th percentile of local market rates for the various categories of child care services. The payment rates for child care services for children with special needs may be higher than the 75th percentile of local market rates. [PL 2017, c. 412, §3 (RPR).]

F. The department may provide limited transitional food benefits to meet the needs of SNAP benefit recipients living with one or more dependent children under 18 years of age who are working at least 30 hours per week or who are working at least 20 hours per week if one or more dependent child is under 6 years of age. The benefit may not exceed \$100 per month per family. [PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §22 (AMD).]

[PL 2021, c. 534, §1 (AMD).]

9. Procedures. The following procedural requirements apply to the program:

A. The department shall make information on the program available to the public in written form understandable at the 6th-grade reading level and orally, as needed. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B. The department shall take written applications for assistance, which must be available on request. The department shall provide the applicant written notice of the granting or denial of assistance within 30 days of application. If the family is granted assistance, the notice must state the amount of the benefit. Assistance must be provided promptly to an eligible family without any delay attributable to the administrative process and must be continued regularly to all eligible individuals until they are found to be ineligible. Applicants and recipients must be provided with timely and adequate notice of any intended action to discontinue, terminate, suspend or reduce assistance or to change the manner of paying cash assistance to a protective payee, vendor or

through a 2-party payment. Notices under this paragraph must inform the applicant of the right to a fair hearing before an impartial hearing officer and also inform the applicant how to request a hearing. Hearing requests may be made orally or in writing. Hearings must be conducted pursuant to the Maine Administrative Procedure Act. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

C. The department shall establish uniform statewide eligibility criteria and benefit levels under the TANF program except as provided in this chapter or chapter 1054-A. Eligibility criteria and benefit levels may not result in cash assistance levels below those in effect on June 1, 1997. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

10. Domestic violence. The following provisions apply with regard to victims of domestic violence.

A. The department shall provide all applicants for assistance under this chapter with information both orally and in writing of the availability of services for victims of domestic violence and of the good cause determination for victims of domestic violence under section 3785, subsection 13. If an applicant requests a good cause determination under section 3785, subsection 13, the department shall promptly determine whether the applicant qualifies for good cause. An individual may not be required to participate in any TANF activity including orientation until the good cause determination is made. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B. When a determination of good cause is made under section 3785, subsection 13, the ASPIRE-TANF program may contact the individual and offer domestic violence victim services or other appropriate services on a voluntary basis. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

11. Treatment of lump sum income. For the purpose of determining eligibility for assistance under TANF, the department shall treat any nonrecurring lump sum income received by a family as an asset, and not as income, in the month the lump sum payment is received. To the extent that any nonrecurring lump sum income remains after the month it was received, the department shall continue to consider the income as an asset in accordance with this section.

A. Nonrecurring lump sum income includes, but is not limited to, personal injury awards, lottery winnings, inheritances and similar nonrecurring forms of income. It does not include income earmarked by the payor for particular expenses such as awards or insurance proceeds earmarked for medical expenses, attorney's fees or the replacement of lost property. Proceeds from the conversion of a nonliquid asset to a liquid asset must be treated as an asset and not as nonrecurring lump sum income. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B. [PL 2023, c. 366, §2 (RP).]

C. [PL 2023, c. 366, §2 (RP).]

D. [PL 2023, c. 366, §2 (RP).]

[PL 2023, c. 366, §2 (AMD).]

12. Information about and application for Parents as Scholars. When there are fewer than 2000 enrollees in the Parents as Scholars Program under chapter 1054-B, the department shall inform all persons applying for TANF assistance and all recipients reviewing or requesting to amend their participation in the program of the Parents as Scholars Program and shall offer them the opportunity to apply for the program.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

13. Reports to Legislature. The department shall provide information annually to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters in order to allow the Legislature to evaluate the TANF program. Such information must include but is

not limited to the number of TANF households and family members, a comparison of TANF eligibility levels with the federal poverty level, the number of TANF participants in training, education and work activity components and the rates at which individuals who have found employment through ASPIRE-TANF return to the TANF program. The information must include a summary of any federal laws enacted in the previous fiscal year that may require changes in the ASPIRE-TANF program. The information of the federal law changes must include a summary of any potential positive or negative impact on the TANF program and the ASPIRE-TANF program.

[PL 2007, c. 282, §1 (AMD).]

14. Notification to Legislature. The department shall notify the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters of any request for waivers from the United States Department of Health and Human Services or any other federal agency concerning the implementation of chapters 1053-A, 1054, 1054-A and 1054-B.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

15. Conditions of continued assistance.

[PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. PP, §1 (RP).]

16. Authorization of fund transfer. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the department is authorized to transfer to the TANF account any funds available in the ASPIRE-TANF account necessary to meet the purposes of TANF, including the purposes established in subsection 3, paragraph B.

[PL 2001, c. 338, §4 (NEW).]

17. Prohibition against denial of assistance based on drug conviction. A person who is otherwise eligible to receive TANF may not be denied assistance because the person has been convicted of a drug-related felony as described in Section 115 of PRWORA.

[PL 2001, c. 598, §2 (NEW).]

18. Lifetime limit on assistance. Beginning January 1, 2012, a family may not receive TANF assistance for longer than 60 months except in those cases in which the department has determined that the family qualifies for an exemption or extension under rules adopted by the department. When an adult has received TANF assistance for 60 months, unless the adult has been exempted or granted an extension by the department, the family unit in which the adult is a member is ineligible for assistance. The department shall consider conditions or situations beyond the control of the adult recipient, including but not limited to a physical or mental condition that prevents the adult from obtaining or retaining gainful employment, being a victim of domestic violence, participating in good standing in an approved education program or a program that is expected to lead to gainful employment, being the caretaker relative in the household who is not the parent of the child or children in the assistance unit and who is required to remain at home to care for a dependent in the assistance unit and loss of employment by the adult following termination of TANF under this subsection. The department shall grant an extension to a household for each month in which a family received TANF assistance and an earnings disregard under subsection 3, paragraph B, subparagraph (7-D), division (a) or (b). This extension does not apply to a TANF recipient who has reached the 60-month time limit prior to October 1, 2019.

The department shall adopt rules to implement this subsection. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[PL 2019, c. 484, §3 (AMD).]

REVISOR'S NOTE: Subsection 18 as enacted by PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. LL, §1 is REALLOCATED TO TITLE 22, SECTION 3762, SUBSECTION 20

19. Pretermination notice process. No later than 120 days prior to the end of a family's 60th month of receiving assistance, the department shall offer the adult recipient an opportunity to hold a meeting to review the family's case and:

- A. Explain the exemption and extension criteria established in subsection 18 to the family and determine if those criteria apply to the family; and [PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. PP, §2 (NEW).]
- B. Explain that any determination made pursuant to this subsection may be appealed in accordance with the hearing process established in subsection 9, paragraph B. [PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. PP, §2 (NEW).]

For a family whose assistance is to be terminated, a supervisory review by the department is required. The review must include but is not limited to an evaluation of the need for additional information to determine if cause for an exemption or extension exists. If the conclusion of the evaluation determines additional vocational, health, mental health or other information is necessary, the department shall work in collaboration with the adult recipient in the development of the information prior to the determination of status or termination.

For a family whose assistance is to be terminated pursuant to this subsection, the department shall provide information to the family regarding any other resources that may be available to help meet that family's basic needs.

[PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. PP, §2 (NEW).]

20. (REALLOCATED FROM T. 22, §3762, sub-§18) Denial of assistance based on positive drug test.

[PL 2019, c. 343, Pt. CCC, §1 (RP).]

21. Duty to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate and trauma-informed services.

The department shall work with all TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and trauma-informed services to assist each family in obtaining the services and skills necessary to sustain economic stability and opportunity after leaving TANF. Each TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participant must be screened to identify any need for culturally or linguistically appropriate or trauma-informed services. If such a need is identified, the department shall use appropriate methods and techniques to work with the participant to develop goals that reflect, to the greatest extent possible, the preferences of the participant and individualized plans that address the participant's situation and barriers to sustained economic stability. The department shall work with TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants to connect them with appropriate programs and services available to help the families attain and sustain economic stability and to ensure the well-being of the children.

[PL 2021, c. 648, §7 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW). PL 1997, c. 695, §1 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 795, §7 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 383, §1 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 401, §§3 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 731, §OO2 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 338, §§1-4 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 354, §3 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 598, §2 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 20, §OO2 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 20, §OO4 (AFF). PL 2005, c. 397, §§A23,C14 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 282, §1 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 539, Pt. XX, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 291, §§4-6 (AMD). RR 2011, c. 1, §33 (COR). PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. KK, §4 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. LL, §1 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. PP, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. S, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 97, §1 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §3 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. UUU, §1 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. UUU, §2 (AFF). PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. RRRR, §§2, 3 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 256, §1 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNN, §10 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 290, §1 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §80 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 412, §§2, 3 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 343, Pt. CCC, §1 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 484, §§1-3 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 485, §§3, 4 (AMD). RR 2019, c. 2, Pt. A, §27

(AMD). PL 2021, c. 1, Pt. N, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §§20-22 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 534, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 648, §§5-7 (AMD). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §176 (COR). PL 2023, c. 29, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 366, §§1, 2 (AMD).

§3763. Program requirements

1. Family contract. During the TANF orientation process, a representative of the department and the TANF recipient shall enter into a family contract. The family contract must state the responsibilities of the parties to the agreement including, but not limited to, cooperation in child support enforcement and determination of paternity, the requirements of the ASPIRE-TANF program and referral to parenting activities and health care services. Except as provided in section 3762, subsection 4, refusal to sign the family contract or to abide by the provisions of the contract, except for referral to parenting activities and health care services, will result in termination of benefits under subsection 1-A. Failure to comply with referrals to parenting activities or health care services without good cause will result in a review and evaluation of the reason for noncompliance by the representative of the department and may result in sanctions. Written copies of the family contract and a notice of the right to a fair hearing must be given to the individual. The family contract must be amended in accordance with section 3788 when a participant enters the ASPIRE-TANF program and when participation review occurs.

Benefits that have been terminated under subsection 1-A must be restored once the noncomplying adult recipient signs a new family contract and complies with its provisions.

[PL 2021, c. 97, §1 (AMD).]

1-A. Partial termination of benefits. Benefits under this chapter must be terminated by the department under the provisions of subsection 1 and sections 3785 and 3785-A in accordance with this subsection. If an adult recipient fails to meet the conditions of a family contract, the department shall reduce the family's amount of assistance by terminating benefits that apply to that noncomplying adult.

A. [PL 2021, c. 97, §2 (RP).]

B. [PL 2021, c. 97, §2 (RP).]

C. Prior to the implementation of a sanction, the department shall offer the adult recipient an opportunity to claim good cause for noncompliance as described in section 3785. [PL 2021, c. 97, §2 (AMD).]

Benefits that have been terminated under this subsection must be restored once the noncomplying adult recipient signs a new contract under subsection 1 and complies with the provisions of the family contract.

[PL 2021, c. 97, §2 (AMD).]

2. Participation. A recipient of TANF shall participate in an education, training or employment program pursuant to this chapter unless exempt under paragraph A, B or C. The following individuals are exempt:

A. A recipient who is the single custodial parent or a caretaker relative of a child under one year of age and is personally providing care for that child. This exemption is limited to no more than 12 months per single custodial parent or caretaker relative; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B. A recipient who is not a parent or a caretaker relative; and [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

C. A recipient who is a VISTA volunteer under the federal Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

3. Custodial parents not yet 20 years of age. A custodial parent under 20 years of age who is a recipient of TANF and has not completed high school or its equivalent shall participate in the ASPIRE-

TANF program regardless of the age of the youngest child and attend courses to complete high school, with an emphasis on education in a traditional high school setting.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

4. Households headed by minor parents. The following requirements apply to a custodial parent who is under 18 years of age and is not married:

A. The family must reside in the household of a parent, legal guardian or other adult relative of that minor parent or in an adult-supervised supportive living arrangement unless:

(1) The minor parent does not have a living parent or legal guardian whose whereabouts are known;

(2) A living parent or legal guardian of the minor parent does not allow the minor parent to live in the parent's or guardian's home;

(3) The minor parent lived apart from the minor's own parent or legal guardian for a period of at least one year before the birth of the dependent child or the minor parent's application for TANF;

(4) The physical or emotional health or safety of the minor parent or dependent child would be jeopardized if that minor parent or dependent child resided in the same residence with the minor parent's parent or legal guardian; or

(5) There exists other good cause, as defined by rule adopted by the department; and [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B. TANF benefits must be distributed in the form of vouchers. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

5. Home visit. The department may implement a home visit program in which a representative of the department may visit the homes of all applicants for and recipients of TANF for the following purposes:

A. To review the family contract; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B. To reinforce the reporting responsibilities of the family, including child support enforcement; [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

C. To verify information provided at the time of application, including checking social security numbers; and [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

D. To request and receive any additional information. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

6. Substantiation of eligibility. The department may appropriately substantiate the facts supporting eligibility stated in any application for TANF assistance. The department shall adopt rules for substantiating relevant facts. The rules must provide for assisting the applicant in obtaining substantiating information when necessary.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

7. Earned income tax credit. The department shall advise applicants and recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families regarding the federal earned income tax credit, including the opportunity to receive it as an advanced payment.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

8. Alternative aid. The department shall provide alternative aid to applicants who seek short-term assistance in order to obtain or retain employment. The applicants must meet the eligibility requirements established by rule adopted pursuant to section 3762, subsection 3, paragraph A. The

alternative aid may not exceed 3 times the value of the monthly TANF grant for which the applicant's family is eligible. An eligible applicant may receive alternative aid no more than once during any 12-month period. If the family reapplies for TANF within 3 months of receiving alternative aid, the family shall repay any alternative aid received in excess of the amount that the family would have received on TANF. The method of repayment must be the same as that used for the repayment of unintentional overpayments in the TANF program.

[PL 2005, c. 522, §1 (AMD).]

9. Emergency assistance. The department shall establish and operate a program of emergency assistance to needy families with children. This program must provide benefits to needy families with children in emergency situations in which the family is deprived of the basic necessities essential to its support, including but not limited to, fire and other natural disasters, terminations of utility service or lack of adequate shelter.

A. In determining what constitutes an emergency with respect to utility terminations, the department shall grant assistance when an otherwise qualified family has received a disconnection notice and has exhausted their ability to negotiate and pay the terms of a reasonable payment arrangement. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

B. The program may not be used to supplant local responsibility for operating or funding a general assistance program. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

C. The department may not expend more than \$750,000 annually of state general assistance funds for the purposes of covering the cost of services set out in this subsection. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

10. Home survival skills. The department shall provide and may contract with public and private nonprofit agencies to provide instruction and experiential education for TANF recipients in nutrition, food preparation and home and money management.

[PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

11. Restrictions on use of electronic benefits transfer system. A recipient of benefits under this chapter may not expend those benefits using the electronic benefits transfer system established in section 22 for the purchase of the following:

A. Tobacco products, as defined in section 1551, subsection 3; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

B. Imitation liquor or liquor, as defined in Title 28-A, section 2, subsections 13 and 16, respectively; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

C. Gambling activity, as defined in Title 8, section 1001, subsection 15; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

D. Lotteries conducted by the State pursuant to Title 8, chapter 14-A or the Tri-State Lotto Commission pursuant to Title 8, chapter 16; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

E. Bail, as defined by Title 15, section 1003, subsection 1; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

F. Firearms or ammunition; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

G. Vacation or travel services; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

H. Publications, services or entertainment that contain or promote obscene matter. For purposes of this paragraph, "obscene matter" has the same meaning as in Title 17, section 2911, subsection 1, paragraph D; [PL 2017, c. 208, §1 (AMD).]

I. Tattoos, as defined by Title 32, section 4201, or body art; or [PL 2017, c. 208, §1 (AMD).]

J. Adult use cannabis and adult use cannabis products, as defined by Title 28-B, section 102-A. [PL 2023, c. 679, Pt. C, §4 (AMD).]

A person who violates this subsection is subject to those penalties specified in subsection 12. [PL 2023, c. 679, Pt. C, §4 (AMD).]

12. Penalties. When the department determines based on clear and convincing documentary evidence that a recipient of benefits under this chapter has knowingly purchased a product or service in violation of subsection 11, that recipient is deemed to have received an overpayment in the amount of the prohibited purchase, which may be recovered by the department pursuant to chapter 1055-A. The recipient is also subject to the following additional penalties:

A. For the 1st offense, the recipient may be disqualified from receiving benefits under this chapter for a period that does not exceed 3 months; [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

B. For the 2nd offense, the recipient may be disqualified from receiving benefits under this chapter for a period that does not exceed 12 months; and [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

C. For the 3rd and subsequent offenses, the recipient may be disqualified from receiving benefits under this chapter for a period that does not exceed 24 months. [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

The department shall initiate an administrative hearing for a recipient of benefits who the department has determined has violated subsection 11. The notice and hearing must be conducted consistent with the department rules governing notice and hearing required for an intentional program violation. [PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW). PL 2005, c. 522, §1 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. PP, §§3, 4 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 588, Pt. D, §4 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 484, §1 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 208, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 409, Pt. A, §4 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 97, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 669, §5 (REV). PL 2023, c. 679, Pt. C, §4 (AMD).

§3764. Federal grants

The Treasurer of State is the appropriate fiscal officer of the State to receive federal grants on account of the TANF program and administration of those grants, in accordance with the United States Social Security Act, and the State Controller shall authorize expenditures as approved by the department. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW).

§3765. Payments to guardian or conservator

When a relative with whom a child is living is found by the department to be incapable of taking care of the child's money, payment may be made only to a legally appointed guardian or conservator and, notwithstanding Title 18-C, Article 5, Part 4, in the matter of infirmities of age or physical disability to manage the child's estate with prudence and understanding, the Probate Court may appoint any suitable person as a conservator. [PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. C, §58 (AMD); PL 2019, c. 417, Pt. B, §14 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW). PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. C, §58 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. F, §1 (AFF). PL 2019, c. 417, Pt. B, §14 (AFF).

§3766. Inalienability of assistance

All rights to public assistance are absolutely inalienable by any assignment, sale, execution, pledge or otherwise and may not pass, in case of insolvency or bankruptcy, to any trustee, assignee or creditor. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW).

§3767. Parental responsibility

The parents of a child receiving assistance under this chapter are responsible for partial or total support of that child, if they are of sufficient ability. In determining the ability of the parents, the department must consider the assets and income of the parent. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

The department may bring proceedings in the District Court or Superior Court in the county where the child resides or in the county where the parent may be found to compel any person liable under this section to contribute to the support of any child receiving that assistance if, after reasonable efforts on the part of the department, voluntary contributions have not been made. The department shall bring the action as a petition for support upon not less than 7 days' notice. The court may order either one or both parents of the child to contribute to the support of the child by paying money weekly or monthly as determined in accordance with Title 19-A, chapter 63 and may enforce obedience by appropriate decrees, execution issuing for that money when payable. An order for child support under this section may include an order for the payment of part or all of the medical expenses, hospital expenses and other health care expenses of the child or an order to provide a policy or contract for coverage of those expenses. When a parent is committed to jail as a defendant on execution under this section, the county having jurisdiction of the process shall bear the expense of the defendant's commitment and support. The defendant may petition the court issuing that execution for relief and the judge of the court, after due notice to the department and hearing on the petition, may order the defendant's discharge from imprisonment on the terms and conditions justice requires. [RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. A, §63 (COR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. A, §63 (COR).

§3768. Fraud in obtaining aid, civil recovery

Any sums paid to or in behalf of any person under sections 3762 to 3765, as a result of any false statement, misrepresentation or concealment of assets or income, may be recovered in a civil action brought by the department against the person to whom such money was paid. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW).

§3769. Disbursements

1. Payment priority. Payments made on behalf of the department for TANF assistance, the Parents as Scholars Program under chapter 1054-B and for foster care have priority over other payments and must be made without delay whether or not they are pursuant to a state plan or contract. The department shall cooperate with other state agencies to accomplish priority payments. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

2. Transfer of funds.
[PL 2007, c. 282, §2 (RP).]

3. Balances of funds not to lapse. Any balances of funds appropriated for TANF or ASPIRE-TANF may not lapse but must be carried forward from year to year to be expended for the same purposes.
[PL 2009, c. 571, Pt. XX, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW). PL 2007, c. 282, §2 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 571, Pt. XX, §1 (AMD).

§3769-A. Rulemaking

The department shall adopt rules to implement this chapter. Except as specifically provided, rules adopted pursuant to this chapter are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter II-A. [PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §16 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 530, §A16 (NEW).

§3769-B. Assistance in meeting basic needs

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 643, §VV1 (NEW). PL 1999, c. 401, §S4 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 485, §5 (RP).

§3769-C. Adjustment to amount of assistance; report

1. Amount of assistance. It is the goal of this section to provide low-income families with children sufficient income to meet their most basic needs. If the commissioner determines that unexpended funds are available within the Department of Health and Human Services state or federal ASPIRE or TANF accounts, the commissioner may, by rule, use those funds to increase the maximum levels of assistance in the TANF program.

A. [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §11 (RP).]

B. [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §11 (RP).]

C. Beginning October 1, 2024, the department shall increase the maximum amount of monthly TANF assistance by an amount equal to 20% of the maximum payments that were in effect on January 1, 2024 and shall increase the standard of need to maintain the same differential between the maximum payment and the standard of need that was in effect on January 1, 2024. [PL 2023, c. 622, §1 (AMD).]

D. Beginning October 1, 2024 and for each year thereafter, the department shall increase the maximum amount of monthly TANF assistance by an amount equal to the increase, if any, in the cost of living and shall increase the standard of need to maintain the same differential between the maximum payment and the standard of need that was in effect on January 1, 2024. The increase in the cost of living for each year must equal the percentage increase, if any, in the federal supplemental security income program for that year. [PL 2023, c. 622, §2 (AMD).]

[PL 2023, c. 622, §§1, 2 (AMD).]

2. Report required.

[PL 2009, c. 291, §7 (RP).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1999, c. 461, §1 (NEW). PL 2001, c. 439, §CC1 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 689, §B6 (REV). PL 2009, c. 291, §7 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §11 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 622, §§1, 2 (AMD).

§3769-D. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant; family development accounts

In fiscal year 2016-17 and annually thereafter, the Department of Health and Human Services may use \$500,000 in funds provided under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant to promote financial literacy and healthy savings habits of families with income less than 200% of the

federal poverty guidelines through the placement of funds in family development accounts established pursuant to Title 20-A, chapter 412-B. [PL 2019, c. 239, §5 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. RRRR, §4 (NEW). PL 2019, c. 239, §5 (AMD).

§3769-E. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant; increased heating assistance

In fiscal year 2017-18 and annually thereafter, the Department of Health and Human Services shall provide \$3,000,000 in funds provided under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant to the Maine State Housing Authority to provide heating assistance for low-income families with children. [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §12 (NEW).]

Funds provided under this section must be used to supplement funds available under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program administered by the federal Department of Health and Human Services and must be made available to families with children at or below 170% of the federal poverty level that qualify for that program under rules established by the Maine State Housing Authority. [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §12 (NEW).]

The Maine State Housing Authority may retain what the department determines to be a reasonable administrative fee from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant for the cost of administering the heating assistance available under this section. [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §12 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §12 (NEW).

§3769-F. Working Cars for Working Families Program

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. NNNNNNN, §12 (NEW). PL 2021, c. 1, Pt. O, §1 (RP).

§3769-G. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant; whole family economic security initiatives

1. Use of block grant funds. In fiscal year 2020-21 and annually thereafter, the department shall provide up to \$2,000,000 in funds provided under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant to community action agencies designated pursuant to section 5324 or other community-based organizations the department finds qualified pursuant to subsection 3 to assist parents with children as the parents pursue stable employment or education intended to lead to employment. The block grant funds must be used to administer services to families with children with income less than 200% of the nonfarm income official poverty line. [PL 2019, c. 484, §4 (NEW).]

2. Required services. Services provided by a community-based organization the department finds qualified pursuant to subsection 3 must include education, including, but not limited to, assisting family members to acquire postsecondary degrees or other credentials, and the provision of health, social and economic support. [PL 2019, c. 484, §4 (NEW).]

3. Qualifications. In order to be qualified under this section, a community action agency designated pursuant to section 5324 or a community-based organization must demonstrate to the department that it has the resources and capacity to implement evidence-based practices to provide the services required under this section. The department shall annually review contracts awarded under

this section on the basis of tangible performance measures; participant satisfaction and well-being; and fiscal and administrative accountability.

[PL 2019, c. 484, §4 (NEW).]

4. Rules. The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[PL 2019, c. 484, §4 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2019, c. 484, §4 (NEW).

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