

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the requirements of Block Grant for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), 42 U.S.C. SEC. 402 and P.L. 97-35, Chapter 73 Administering Block Grants, the TANF State Plan has been developed for the period of 2011 - 2013.

RENEWAL OF STATE PLAN

**TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
TITLE IV-A OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT**

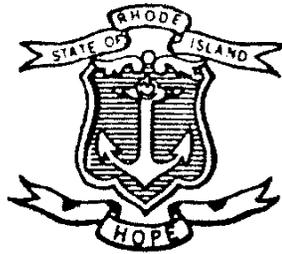
2011 - 2013

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services will conduct a public meeting to allow interested groups, organizations and all segments of the public an opportunity to comment on the TANF State Plan. The meeting will provide a forum to provide input to the State Plan.

The proposed State Plan is accessible on the DHS website (www.dhs.ri.gov) or available in hard copy upon request (401 462-2018 or RI Relay, dial 711). A public meeting will be held to consider the proposed TANF State Plan on Friday, January 6, 2012 at 9:00 AM at the Goodwill on 100 Houghton St., Providence. Persons wishing to testify may do so by signing up at the meeting or by submitting written testimony by Friday, February 3rd, 2012 to Kimberly Merolla-Brito, Office of Policy Development, RI Department of Human Services, Louis Pasteur Building, 57 Howard Avenue Fl # 1, Cranston, RI 02920.

The Department of Human Services does not discriminate against individuals based on race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religious belief, political belief or handicap in acceptance for or provision of services or employment in its programs or activities.

Rhode Island
Department of Human Services



Renewal of State Plan for
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
TITLE IV-A OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

2011 - 2013

Effective ~~October 1, 2011~~

Lincoln D. Chafee, Governor

Sandra M. Powell, Director

RHODE ISLAND STATE PLAN

BLOCK GRANT FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) 42 U.S.C. SEC. 402

1. OUTLINE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(A) General Provisions.

(i) Conduct a program, designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner), that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with the job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient.

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) is the state agency responsible for administration of the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. DHS is also responsible for implementation of the Rhode Island Works Program of 2008, the State's new welfare reform legislation. Together, these federal and state programs provide essential services for low-income families throughout the state to assist them in meeting their basic family needs while at the same time providing parents with a range of work supports to help them prepare for and access the job market.

In accord with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the State of Rhode Island has developed its TANF State Plan based upon the four major purposes of TANF, which are to:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in his or her own home or in the home of a relative;
- End dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

Rhode Island Works Program

The Governor of the State of Rhode Island proposed new welfare reform legislation in January 2008 which was ultimately enacted by the R.I. General Assembly in June 2008. The Rhode Island Works law (RIGL 40-5.2) represents changes which are intended to help low income families toward independence while at the same time improve the State's efforts to achieve the required 50% TANF Work Participation Rates.

Most significant among the changes are: new time limits on receipt of cash assistance, new work activities which are consistent with TANF requirements, full engagement of families in activities leading to economic independence from public assistance {including appropriate and realistic employment plans for individuals with disabilities}; and a formal collaboration with the R.I. Department of Labor and Training which operates the one-stop career centers to which most RIW/TANF parents are directed for job search activities.

Eligibility for R.I. Works/TANF Program:

A "family" is defined for the RI Works/TANF cash assistance program as (a) a pregnant woman from and including the seventh month of her pregnancy; or (b) a child and the following eligible persons living in the same household as the child: (A) each biological, adoptive or stepparent of the child, or in the absence of a parent, any adult relative who is responsible, in fact, for the care of such child, and (B) the child's minor siblings (whether of the whole or half blood): provided, however, that the term "family" shall not include any person receiving benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. _ 1381 et seq. A family may be the same as the Assistance Unit.

A low-income family includes a child under the age of 18, or 19 if a full-time student, and family income is 225% of the federal poverty level or below.

An eligible family must meet age, relationship, citizenship/alienage, residency, and cooperation requirements, as well as remain within the income and resource limits of the program. As long as single parents and two (2) parent families meet income and resource limits of the program and are otherwise eligible, they qualify for cash assistance, child care, supplemental food assistance (formerly referred to as food stamps); and health care coverage.

Eligibility is limited to families whose available resources (reduced by any obligations or debts with respect to such resources) total less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000). With regard to vehicle ownership, the State has chosen to exclude as a resource, one (1) vehicle for each adult household member, not to exceed two (2) vehicles per household. Eligibility is denied or terminated if the value of non-exempt resources exceeds the one thousand dollar limit.

To determine eligibility for cash assistance, the total of a family's countable earned income (after disregards) and unearned income is compared with the appropriate assistance payment standard for the unit. The payment standard is equal to the sum of the following:

- For the first person: three hundred twenty-seven dollars (\$327) or two hundred seventy-seven dollars (\$277) for a family residing in subsidized housing;

- For the second person: one hundred twenty-two dollars (\$122)
- For the third person: one hundred five dollars (\$105) AND
- For each additional person: eighty dollars (\$80) for each additional person.

Cooperation with the child support enforcement agency is required as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance.

To continue to be counted as a family member for the purpose of cash assistance, a child is allowed temporary absences from the home for no more than ninety (90) days per episode, with a second ninety (90) day renewal authorized only through supervisory approval. The program requires minor parents to live with a parent, relative, or in a supervised setting and remain in school, unless otherwise authorized by the Department for specific good cause reasons and the minor resides in an approved supervised supportive living arrangement.

Rhode Island Works Program Time Limits: The Rhode Island Works law (RIGL 40-5.2) provides cash assistance for twenty-four (24) months in any sixty (60) month period with a maximum total of forty-eight (48) months on cash assistance. The new R.I. Works time limits applied 7/1/2008 to all new applicants, but recipients on 7/1/2008 were given a one-year grace to 7/1/2009 at which time the time limits were to take effect. The exception was that any recipient who sooner than 7/1/2008 reached their respective 60 months of cash assistance would have his/her cash assistance case closed at 60 months. In June 2009, the General Assembly amended RIGL 40-5.2 to set the effective date for “24 months in 60 months” time limit to begin at 7/1/2008, therefore, no family reached this 24 month time limit until 6/30/2010.

Time limits begin with the first issuance of cash assistance. An applicant is required to sign an Employment Plan as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance. Some recipients are exempted from immediate work activities such as parents who are waived under the Domestic Violence Waiver process.

Time limits apply to families in which citizen children receive assistance although their non-citizen parents do not.

Exceptions to time limits apply in the instances of: (1) a minor child(ren) living with a single parent who receives SSI benefits, or with two-parents who both receive SSI benefits, and (2) a minor child(ren) living with a legally responsible non-parent caretaker relative who is not in the cash assistance payment.

Hardship Extension to Time Limit: Any individual approaching either time limit is notified that s/he may request a reassessment to determine whether or not s/he meets the criteria for an extension to time limit. Additionally, any parent who has met or exceeded the time limit may reapply and be assessed to determine if s/he meets any of the criteria for an extension beyond the time limit.

A parent who is undocumented, who has received benefits for his/her citizen child(ren), may request a hardship extension for the child(ren) at either time limit. A parent who does not meet the alienage requirements required for eligibility for cash assistance under federal PRWORA (e.g., those Legal Permanent Resident families in which the parent has been in the United States less than five (5) years), who has received benefits for her/his citizen child(ren), may also request a hardship extension for the child(ren).

A hardship extension may be granted to all otherwise eligible families who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- has a documented significant physical or mental incapacity and can verify/document a pending application for SSI or SSDI and have submitted an application for or be active and making progress in her/his Employment Plan with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS); or
- is caring for a significantly disabled family member who resides in the home and requires full time care; or
- is homeless—meaning a lack of a fixed and regular nighttime residence or a primary nighttime residence, such as a supervised shelter, a halfway house, a temporary residence, a temporary accommodation (e.g., hotel/motel) a residence if another for not more than ninety days, or a place not designed for regular sleeping accommodations (e.g., bus station);
- is unable to pursue employment because of a current, documented domestic violence situation; or
- is unable to work because of a critical other condition or circumstance, other than citizenship or alienage status.

For TANF program purposes, families extended beyond sixty (60) months of TANF cash assistance under the categories listed above will be included in the federally-funded twenty percent (20%) hardship exceptions.

(ii) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program to engage in work (as defined by the State) once the state determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months (whether or not consecutive), whichever is earlier.

Work Requirements and Participation Requirements under R.I. Works Program

All parents, and caretaker relatives (including those who are acting in loco parentis, if they are included in the cash assistance grant), who request and receive assistance are required to enter into an employment plan and participate, unless temporarily exempt, in DHS-approved work-related activities.

One Parent Family

Single parents shall participate for a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week for parents whose youngest child in the home is under the age of six (6), and for a minimum of thirty (30) hours per week for parents whose youngest child in the home is six (6) years of age or older, in one or more of the following work activities, as appropriate, in order to help the parent obtain stable full-time paid employment. For teen parents, the first activity must be secondary education or completion of a GED program, if either certificate has not yet been obtained.

Core Activities for One Parent Families:

- Unsubsidized employment;
- Subsidized private sector employment;
- Subsidized public sector employment;
- Work experience. A parent participating in a work experience or community service program for the maximum number of hours per week allowable by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will be considered to have met their required twenty (20) core hours if actual participation falls short of the required minimum hours per week (RI has a mini-simplified Food Stamp waiver). For parents whose youngest child is six (6) or more years old and whose required minimum hours per week are thirty (30), any hours permissible by FLSA that are short of thirty (30) hours must be satisfied in some other TANF work activity;
- On-the-job training;
- Job search and job readiness. Except in the context of rehabilitation employment plans, job search and job readiness activities are limited to 4 consecutive weeks, or for a total of 6 weeks in a twelve-month period.

The DHS, in consultation with the DLT, shall extend job search and job readiness assistance for up to twelve (12) weeks in a fiscal year if RI has an unemployment rate at least fifty percent (50%) greater than the United States federal unemployment rate, if the state meets the definition of a needy state under the contingency fund provisions of federal law;

- Community Service;
- Vocational educational training not to exceed twelve (12) months. Participation in a two-year degree program, a vocational certificate program, or a BA degree or advanced degree program may count as vocational educational training. Those participants who are in programs longer than twelve (12) months may use this activity as counting toward participation in a non-core job skills training, if they meet the requirement for a different core activity for sufficient hours.

All supervised homework plus up to one hour of unsupervised homework per each hour of class time may count as meeting part of the total hours required for compliance with the RI Works employment plan. However, total homework time cannot exceed the hours required or advised in writing by the educational program;

- Adult education in an intensive work readiness program not to exceed six (6) months; and
- Child care for an individual participating in a community service program.

Non-core Activities for One Parent Families:

- Job skills training directly related to employment (allowable in addition to participation for twenty (20) hours per week in one of the above core activities);
- Education directly related to employment (allowable in addition to participation for twenty (20) hours per week in one of the above core activities); and
- Satisfactory attendance at a secondary school or in a course of study leading to a GED. In the case of a parent under the age of 20, such satisfactory attendance in secondary school or in a GED program is countable as a core activity.

Other Required Work Activities for One Parent Families:

- Up to ten (10) hours of activities as defined in a DCYF service plan may substitute for meeting an equivalent number of hours toward the twenty (20) hour requirement for parents with a child under age six (6), or for an equivalent number of hours toward the thirty (30) hour requirement for parents whose youngest child is age six (6) or older. The DCYF Social Caseworker II provides the actual number of hours of participation per week required in order for the parent to comply with their service plan. The RI Works Social Caseworker then makes these hours part of the total hours required for compliance with the RI Works employment plan.

Temporary Exemption for Single Parents

Work requirements outlined above shall not apply to a single parent if (and for so long as) the Department finds that s/he is:

- Caring for a child below the age of one, provided that a parent may opt for deferral for a maximum of twelve (12) months during any twenty-four (24) months in sixty (60) month period of eligibility for cash assistance, but noting that a minor parent without a high school diploma or the equivalent, shall not be exempt for more than twelve (12) weeks from the birth of the child;
- Caring for a child or family member with a significant documented disability who resides in the home and requires full-time care;

- A recipient of SSI or RSDI/SSDI or other disability benefit that has the same standards of disability as defined by the Social Security Administration;
- An RIW applicant or recipient who has completed an application for SSI or SSDI who has been determined by a designated DHS provider to be likely to become eligible for SSI or SSDI;
- An individual receiving assistance who is a victim of domestic violence; and
- An applicant for assistance in her third trimester of pregnancy or a pregnant woman in her third trimester who is a recipient of assistance and who has medical documentation that she cannot work.

Two Parent Family Requirements

In families consisting of two parents, one parent is required and shall be engaged in work activities as defined below, for at least thirty-five (35) hours per week during the month, not fewer than thirty (30) hours per week of which are attributable to one or more of the following listed work activities. Two parent work requirements shall be defined as follows:

Core Activities for Two-Parent Families:

- Unsubsidized employment;
- Subsidized private sector employment;
- Subsidized public sector employment;
- Work experience;
- On-the-job training;
- Job search and job readiness. Except in the context of rehabilitation employment plans, job search and job readiness activities are limited to 4 consecutive weeks, or for a total of 6 weeks in a twelve-month period. The DHS, in consultation with the DLT, shall extend job search and job readiness assistance for up to twelve (12) weeks in a fiscal year if RI has an unemployment rate at least fifty percent (50%) greater than the United States federal unemployment rate, if the state meets the definition of a needy state under the contingency fund provisions of federal law;

- Community service program;
- Vocational educational training not to exceed twelve (12) months;
- The provision of child care services to a participant individual who is participating in a community service program;
- Adult education in an intensive work readiness program not to exceed six (6) months.

Above thirty (30) hours per week, the following three (3) activities may also count for participation:

Non-Core Activities for Two-Parent Families:

- Job skills training directly related to employment;
- Education directly related to employment; and
- Satisfactory attendance at secondary school or in a course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalence. Satisfactory attendance in secondary school or in a GED program is countable as a core activity in the case of a parent who is married and is under twenty (20) years old.

Other Required Work Activities for Two-Parent Families:

- Up to ten (10) hours of activities as defined in a DCYF service plan may substitute for meeting an equivalent number of hours toward the thirty-five (35) hour requirement. The DCYF Social Caseworker II provides the actual number of hours of participation per week required in order for the parent to comply with their service plan. The RI Works Social Caseworker then makes these hours part of the total hours required for compliance with the RI Works employment plan.
- Housing search, if the family is homeless (or about to become homeless), may be approved for the second parent in a two parent family, if the first parent is participating in a core activity at least thirty (30) hours per week. This activity may be approved for the first parent, if the second parent receives SSI/RSDI/SSDI. Housing search is classified as job readiness, which is a core activity.

In a two parent family in which one (1) parent is engaged for at least thirty-five (35) hours per week in the work activities specified above, the other, second, parent may also participate in and have an assessment completed. The second parent must sign the employment plan.

A family with two parents, whether or not receiving child care, in which one or both parents participate in a work experience or community service program for the maximum number of hours per week allowable by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will be considered to have met their required thirty (30) core hours if actual participation falls short of the required minimum hours per week (RI has a mini-simplified Food Stamp waiver). For families that need additional hours beyond the core activity requirement, these hours must be satisfied in some other TANF work activity.

Except in the instance of a work experience or community service program which must meet the requirements of the FLSA as described above, if the family receives child care assistance and an adult in the family is not disabled or caring for a severely disabled child, then the work- eligible individuals must be participating in work activities for an average of at least fifty-five (55) hours per week to count as a two-parent family engaged in work for the month. At least fifty (50) of the fifty-five (55) hours per week must come from participation in the activities listed in the Core Activities above. Above fifty (50) hours per week, the three (3) activities listed in Non-Core Activities above may also count as participation,

Teen Two-Parent Family Requirements

In a two-parent household in which both parents are under age twenty (20), the DHS social caseworker should assess the educational history of both parents. For either parent who has not completed high school or obtained a GED, as a first activity in the RI Works program the screening social caseworker should approve an employment plan and enter an EASC for that parent (or for both parents if neither have the high school diploma or GED) that shows full time attendance in secondary education (high school) or completion of a GED program as the first activity. When both have either reached the age of twenty (20) or completed the first activity of education as described above, all two parent family rules will come into full force and effect.

Exemptions for Two-Parent Families

The work requirements shall not apply if (and for so long as) the Department finds that:

- both parents receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); or
- both parents have completed applications for SSI or SSDI and both have been determined by a designated DHS provider to be likely to become eligible for SSI or SSDI; or
- one parent is caring for a child or family member with a significant documented disability who resides in the home, and who requires full time care and the other parent receives SSI/RSDI/SSDI and is medically documented to be unable to provide care for the disabled family member.

Description of Public Involvement in the Administration of Rhode Island TANF Program:

Since passage of PRWORA in August 1996 and the implementation of Rhode Island's own welfare reform legislation in May 1997, R.I. DHS has maintained a strong and viable partnership with the initial Welfare Reform Implementation Task Force (WRITF).

With the recently enacted Rhode Island Works Program, the WRITF group is now known as the Rhode Island Works Advisory Committee. The membership consists of representatives of state agencies, anti-poverty organizations, and community-based organizations that are committed to assisting the State and the Department in efforts to deliver an effective program for low-income families.

As defined by the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) and HHS Administration for Children and Families TANF State Plan requirements, draft rules on the R.I. Works Program were published on November 9, 2011, comments were formally heard and submitted to the Department for consideration by December 8, 2011. The Department has used the promulgation period to inform and supports updates to the TANF State Plan.

The Rhode Island Works Program Advisory Committee has met monthly or bimonthly and receives progress reports, reviews and comments on policy and regulations, and offers recommendations to the Director on best practices and effective solutions to challenges and opportunities facing the State of Rhode Island.

Through both the formal public hearing process as well as the ongoing advisory committee meetings, the State of Rhode Island continues its commitment of transparency and openness with regard to its public assistance programs. The Department will continue to work closely with the community to ensure continuous improvement in our progress toward helping families out of poverty.

Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Funded Services:

The State of Rhode Island expends funds to administer and support a range of benefits and services to assist low income needy children and families. For purposes of Rhode Island's TANF State Plan, the definition of low income needy family means a family which includes a dependent child(ren) under age 18, or 19 if full-time student, and a parent/caretaker relative with a gross household income level which is at or below 225% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). While it is recognized that income and resource limits may differ somewhat from program to program, in order to receive benefits or services through programs described in this section of the R. I. TANF State Plan, a family must meet this state's definition of low income.

For purposes of the subsidized employment programs supported by the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund under ARRA, or its successor legislation, a low-income family could also mean a non-custodial parent who is responsible for child support for a child under the age of 18 who is living in the home of the custodial parent or relative who is receiving some form of public support on behalf of the child, including cash assistance, SNAP, Medical Assistance, or Child Care subsidies. Both the non-custodial parent and the custodial family must be low-income. In addition, low-income family could also mean older youth, ages 18, 19, and 20, who are members of a low-income family which includes a child under the age of 18.

The following outlines those benefits and services which are/were funded as either a Segregated State Program or Separate State Program and meet/met one or more of the four purposes of TANF and thus qualify as state maintenance of effort (MOE) expenditures, claimable under TANF regulations.

Segregated and/or Separate State Programs:

- **Child Care Assistance for both cash assistance and non-cash low income working families** – Child care subsidies are provided to active R.I. Works parents engaged in work activities and for all low income working families engaged in employment for 20 or more hours per week. Current eligibility criteria for non-cash assistance parents who meet the income criteria are outlined in Rhode Island's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan.

Child Care Assistance ends dependence of needy families on government benefits by promoting job preparation and supporting working families. Consistent with TANF Purpose 2

- **State funded Head Start Services for low-income children** who are not able to be served through federally funded Head Start Programs - State-funded head start is a means tested program and accepts only those families who are determined low income needy as defined above. Children between 3 and 4 years of age benefit by school readiness programs and parent involvement which is required by all families and these parents gain information about adult education, job skills training and work opportunities, thus improving their ability to become economically independent. Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, 3, 4

- **Emergency Assistance and residential services for vulnerable youth, through the**

R.I. Department of Children, Youth and Families - Emergency Assistance as allowed under prior law supports the maintenance of services for those families who would have qualified for EA under the prior program as described in Rhode Island's State Plan in 1995. Services are provided to children who are victims of abuse and/or neglect, or at risk of abuse and neglect. EA is used for TANF MOE only to the extent that State-only dollars are expended to support the range of family intervention, counseling and case management services provided. State-funded residential services through DCYF, for those with active reunification plans, also provide a safe temporary environment for children as families seek stability. In such circumstances, children may be absent from the home for more than 180 days so long as reunification plans are maintained. These expenditures are not matched with any other federal or non-federal funding source. Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 3.

- **Child Support Pass-through payments to children** - The state pass-through of eligible payments to children of non-custodial parents increases the family's income and supports the likelihood that the custodial parent's household income will increase by both regular child support payments and with the TANF work program, their ability to prepare for and enter the job market. Consistent with TANF Purpose 2
- **Rental Assistance Payments through the State Community Action Fund** - Rental assistance may be provided through CAP agencies using state-only dollars. Low income families qualify if they can demonstrate an ability to maintain themselves in the home or apartment and have a short term need for special assistance. The rental assistance payment may not exceed the State's maximum payment which cannot exceed \$600 per month for a maximum of 2 months. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 4
- **State funded low income heating assistance** - Low income families may receive state funded heating assistance during the year. This is administered by the R.I. Community Action Programs. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 4
- **State funded Supportive Housing and Development Services for low income families administered through Office of Housing and Community Development and Rhode Island Housing** - The State of Rhode Island supports housing for low income families who need help in transitioning to permanent housing, who may be working toward qualifying for the purchase of affordable housing, or who need emergency intervention to prevent the loss of otherwise stable housing. Stable housing is a core need of families who are trying to prepare for or maintain themselves in a job.- Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, and 4.
- **Governor's Workforce Board job training and education for disadvantaged youth and adults** – The R.I. GWB has funded a significant number of programs throughout Rhode Island which are designed to provide low income youth and adults with job training and access to employment resources. Services include job finding skills and for many in Rhode Island, skill upgrading programs. Both youth and adults are either unemployed or underemployed and are held to a means tested application process. Some programs are geared to meet the special needs of young parents, both custodial and non-custodial parents. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, 3, and 4

- **State funded Adult Literacy Services** - Rhode Island has in effect adult education programs through Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). Additionally, RIDE has worked very closely with the TANF Program to create contextualized learning opportunities for low income families. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- **Youth exiting the Juvenile Justice system and/or foster care system** - Intervention and Treatment Services administered by R.I. Family Court and/or Department of Children Youth and Families are essential services which help vulnerable youth to move into productive life skill/management programs. Services provided to youth are designed to insure that they avoid early pregnancy, graduate high school, follow appropriate healthy living habits, and have access to responsible and supportive adults either within their respective families or through mentorships provided by programs paid for with state-only dollars. - Consistent with TANF Purposes 3, and 4
- Under the category known as short-term, non-recurrent benefit programs, funds may emanate from state general revenue, charitable organizations, non-profit, or local government resources. Programs may include a benefit to a custodial parent in lieu of child support, a one-time benefit to those who qualify for Rhode Island's Earned Income Tax Credit or to any low-income family, including those receiving some form of public support, and one-time benefits may take any form, including but not limited to, food, restoration of utilities or avoidance of utility shut-offs, appliance replacement to enable food storage or meal preparation, auto repairs, or other basic necessities - Consistent with TANF Purposes 1 and 2.
- State-funded higher education grants to low-income youth helps families prepare older youth for careers - Consistent with TANF Purposes 2 and 3.

Systems for tracking and managing funding streams, beneficiary education, training, work activities, and other child and families support programs are in place as well as data reporting to meet requirements outlined in Final TANF Regulations. Administrative costs for technology would also be claimable as MOE under the State's TANF Program.

Non-Assistance

The state supports several other MOE-funded services for low-income needy families including, but not limited to, recurring short-term benefits, as noted below.

1) Short-term Cash Assistance or Benefit Programs

Under R.I. Works Program, the state may implement a short term (not more than 4 consecutive months) cash payment or benefit program for qualifying applicants for cash assistance and low-income families. The state may also provide non-recurrent, short-term benefits to low-income families while TANF Emergency Contingency Funds, or its successor legislation, is available to these families.

2) State Earned Income Tax Credit

The Rhode Island State Earned Income Tax Credit (SEITC) has both a non-refundable as well as a refundable tax credit which is based upon twenty-five (25%) percent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. Consistent with R.I.G.L. 44-20-2.6 (d) and 44-30-98, Article 30, Rhode Island taxpayers filing for State EITC who meet both financial eligibility criteria as defined by federal tax law to claim EITC, and who have at least one (1) dependent child in their family, will receive a refundable amount equal to up to twenty-five (25%) percent of the federal EITC. The Rhode Island General Assembly may legislatively adjust, from time to time, the percentage of the federal rate used by this state, to determine the State EITC amount refunded to low-income working families.

3) Disaster Relief

The State of Rhode Island provides short-term non-recurring benefits to victims who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina and/or Hurricane Rita and other officially declared disasters from time to time.

4) Property Tax Relief for Income Eligible Home Owners and Renters

The State of Rhode Island provides property tax relief in the form of tax refunds to individuals 65 and older, disabled individuals as well as non-disabled/non-elderly individuals and families who meet income eligibility requirements and who file for such tax refunds. Consistent with R.I.G.L. 44-33, the refundable tax credit is based upon the amount that property taxes or rent constituting property taxes exceeds the amount of the low income thresholds established in law and for purposes of TANF MOE, the State would only claim expenditures paid to low income families.

5) Community-based Work, Training, Housing, Food Assistance, Emergency Needs, and Family Support and Development Programs for low income parents and children funded through state and local non-profit funding streams such as

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rhode Island Foundation, the United Way of Rhode Island, which collectively support a wide range of employment and training, shelter, food assistance, emergency needs and community development initiatives targeted to improve outcomes for youth and families in the areas of economic self-sufficiency. Only non-matched qualifying funds and services may be claimed toward Rhode Island's TANF MOE, including third-party and charitable contributions supporting the RI Community Food Bank's distribution of food to low-income Rhode Island families.

6) State-funded Programs for Youth and Families administered through the Community Action Network.

Programs and services funded through the R.I. Community Action Network assist children and families throughout the state. These state funded programs and services meet at least one or more of the four purposes of TANF and include but are not limited to youth development, state funded nutrition programs, energy, early childhood programs, housing services programs.

7) State funded legislative grants to community based special programs and services.

The State legislature funds a wide range of programs and services which benefit the needs of families, children and the community. Family intervention services, truancy intervention, substance abuse counseling, transportation, youth mentoring, parenting, and other types of special programs are delivered to at-risk youth, children, and/or parents. These services meet at least one of the four purposes of TANF.

8) Adult Literacy and Job Training Development funded by the Governor's Workforce Board

State funded programs which target youth as well as custodial parents and non-custodial parents are provided throughout the state for those who need basic education, GED, and job skills in order to compete in the Rhode Island job market. Such programs improve the economic well-being of youth and families by assisting both unemployed, under-employed individuals, some of whom may be transitioning from youth training school or adult correctional institution and need re-entry services. These programs are administered through the R.I. Department of Labor and Training, Department of Corrections, as well as the R.I. Department of Education. These goals are consistent with all four purposes of TANF and thus meet the requirements for TANF-MOE.

9) State funded Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

In accord with DHS Policy Section 0402.10, Standards of Assistance, SSI State Supplements paid to children and parents receiving Supplemental Security Income. These payments augment the federally funded SSI payments and assist families who are typically unable to improve their household resources because they are either unable to work themselves or must remain in the home to care for a disabled child(ren).

(iii) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance under the program engage in work activities in accordance with section 4071.

Work Participation Requirements

Non-Compliance with Work Requirements

All parents and caretaker relatives not specifically exempted are required to participate in appropriate work activities. Failure to do so may result in a penalty if good cause is not provided for the non-participation. Current policy states: During the first three (3) months of noncompliance with work requirements, the amount of cash assistance to which an otherwise eligible family is entitled shall be reduced by the portion of the family's benefit attributable to any parent who, without good cause, has failed to enter into an individual employment plan or has failed to comply with his or her individual employment plan; provided that the reduction shall be applied during the first three (3) months, whether or not consecutive, of such failure or non-compliance by the parent.

For a family size of two (2), the benefit reduction due to noncompliance with the employment plan shall be computed utilizing a family size of three (3), in which the parent's portion equals one hundred five dollars (\$105).

After three (3) months of noncompliance, the Department shall terminate cash assistance to a family if any parent in the family has failed, without good cause, to enter into an individual employment plan, or to comply with his or her individual employment plan and has been penalized for three (3) months, whether or not consecutive.

The penalty becomes effective on the next payroll date after the adverse action period. The participant is notified of the penalty by an INRHODES-generated notice.

If the family's benefit has been reduced for less than three (3) months, whether or not consecutive, due to the parent's failure to enter into an individual employment plan or failure to comply with the terms of his or her individual employment plan, benefits shall be restored to the full amount beginning with the initial payment made on the first of the month following the month in which the parent (1) enters into an individual employment plan and demonstrates compliance with the terms thereof, or (2) demonstrates compliance with the terms of his or her existing individual employment plan, as such plan may be amended by agreement of the parent and the Department.

If the family's benefit has been terminated due to the failure by one or more parents to enter into an individual employment plan or failure to comply with the terms of his or her individual employment plan and has been penalized for three (3) months, the family may re-apply for benefits and benefits shall be restored to the family in the full amount the family is otherwise entitled to under this chapter beginning on the first of the month following the month in which all parents in the family who are subject to the employment plan requirements (1) enter into an individual employment plan and demonstrate compliance with the terms thereof, or (2) demonstrate compliance with the terms of his or her existing individual employment plan, as such plan may be amended by agreement of the parent and the Department, i.e., the parent must sign a new Employment Plan, demonstrate compliance with the Plan for at least two (2) weeks, and continue to participate, for the penalty to be considered cured and the case accepted beginning with the first of the month following the month that she or he began to comply.

(iv) Take reasonable steps, as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

In accordance with the General Laws of Rhode Island 40-6-12 all records pertaining to the administration of public assistance are declared to constitute confidential matter. It is unlawful for any person to make use of, or cause to be used, any information contained in these records for purposes not directly connected with program administration, except with the consent of the individual concerned. Any person violating any provisions of this state law, or the lawful rules and regulations made there under will be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and fined not less than two hundred dollars (\$200) or will be imprisoned for not more that six (6) months or both.

(v) Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies and establish numerical goals for reducing the illegitimacy ratio of the State (as defined in section 403(a)(2)(B) for calendar years 1996 through 2005.

Rhode Island's Comprehensive Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Plan

In accordance with the requirements of State PL 97, Chapter 176, DHS has had an active role in a formal partnership called the Rhode Island Teen Pregnancy Prevention Partnership with the Department of Health, Department of Education, and the Department for Children, Youth and Families which was originally formed to address the complex issues of teenage pregnancy and to develop Rhode Island's Comprehensive Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Plan. The Plan, which was completed in June 1999 and revised in 2004 is based on research findings, results of community forums, and professional expertise in teenage pregnancy prevention. The Plan was distributed to members of the R. I. Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition, Governor's Office, General Assembly. The Plan contains information on federal and state funding sources, programs that educate at-risk teens, programs that provide pregnancy prevention education, a review of current literature pertaining to this topic, state level initiatives and financial resources for teach training.

The updated Prevention Plan continues with its original nine (9) recommendations along with progress achieved to date and updated strategies to successfully implement the recommendations. Data reflects that the state exceeded its initial numerical goals for calendar years 1999 through 2004, and as a result this TANF State Plan defines new numeric goals for calendar years 2005 through 2008. The new goals, which are based upon, the statewide pregnancy rate per one thousand (1,000) girls, 15-17 years' old are as follows:

Numeric Goals

Calendar Year – 05	31.0
Calendar Year – 06	30.5
Calendar Year – 07	30.0
Calendar Year – 08	29.5

Youth Responsibility and the Adolescent Self-Sufficiency Collaborative became the Youth Success Program

The Department has contracted since 4/1/09 with an association of nine (9) community-based organizations to provide an intervention program for at-risk and pregnant/parenting populations, called the Youth Success (YS) Program. All contracted organizations have either their own

educational (GED) program or access to each others' programs, should a teen not remain in high school, which is the primary educational goal. Academic instruction leads to a high school diploma or its equivalent, pregnancy prevention education, skills development, service learning, and career exploration/work experience. The Youth Success program provides case management services, ensures health and dental care needs are met, improves teen character development and increases life skills, especially academic and parenting skills. Substance abuse services, domestic abuse/trauma services, mental health services and coordination with the Office of Child Support Services are all present in-house in these nine member agencies. The Family Needs Assessment used by YS is in compliance with the ACFs Teen Parent Responsibility Plan. As partner agencies may also operate Early Head Start, Head Start and licensed child care centers, participating youth receive priority for Head Start and child care services when appropriate. Further, as three of these agencies are regional leads in the Family Care Coordinating Program (FCCP) operated by RI's Department of Children, Youth and Families, outreach is coordinated with the FCCP to reduce instances of teen pregnancy. An example of this Department's partnership with the FCCP is the joint effort to add resources to the newly funded Nurse-Family Partnership Program. Using strategies scientifically proven effective to reduce initial and repeat pregnancy, the YS works with teens, individually or in groups, in schools, in community sites, and/or in the teens' own homes. The YS also tracks, monitors, and reports to DHS each pregnant and parenting teen's school attendance, and works to resolve issues of non-compliance with DHS requirements, such as attending school.

Minor parents are required to live at home with their parents, with a relative, or a legal guardian in order to be eligible for cash assistance through the R.I. Works Program. Unless otherwise authorized, the cash assistance is issued to the parent, relative, or the legal guardian on behalf of the minor parent. When there is good cause for a minor parent to live outside the allowable living arrangements above, and there is no suitable relative or legal guardian, the minor parent must live in an adult-supervised supportive living arrangement which ensures regular adult supervision and which requires the minor parent to participate in secondary education and the Youth Success program. Youth may be placed at state-developed New Opportunity Homes, as appropriate.

New Opportunity Homes

New Opportunity Homes (NOH) are a key component of DHS' teen parent programs. The New Opportunity Homes are supervised living arrangements which offer an alternative option for pregnant and parenting minor R.I. Works Program applicants/recipients who are unable to remain at home with their own parents or guardians. The two (2) New Opportunity Homes provide minor teens with a positive environment that is safe and nurturing. A multi-disciplinary team reviews prospective residents to determine the appropriateness of a NOH, using screening criteria and assessments to assure that minor teen's needs may be met by a NOH. Moreover, each resident is assigned a case manager. Together, the NOH and the case management agency offer each resident educational supports and opportunities to develop social and life skills, including parenting skills, necessary to become positive parents and self-sufficient, productive adults.

(vi) Conduct a program, designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on

the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded in scope to include men

Statutory Rape

Rhode Island's Comprehensive Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Plan recommends that "Rhode Island should clarify, communicate, enforce and strengthen existing statutory rape and child molestation laws." A collaborative effort has existed with each ASSC, now Youth Success (YS), and the DHS funded Domestic Violence Prevention program which provides education and training on the problems of statutory rape and child molestation to state and local law enforcement officials, educators, and adolescent counselors, all of whom are required to notify the R.I. Department of Children, Youth and Families when sexual abuse of a child is suspected. Further, the YS Program has been expanded to outreach and enroll 100% pregnant and parenting teens and a minimum of 330 males and 300 females who are considered at-risk youth. The YS Program will outreach to fathers in an effort not only to establish paternity and child support, but to encourage them to maintain an emotional relationship with their child.

(B) SPECIAL PROVISIONS

(i) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to treat families moving into the State from another State differently than other families under the program, and if so, how the State intends to treat such families under the program.

The State of Rhode Island does not intend to treat families moving into the state differently than established residents.

(ii) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to provide assistance under the program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States, and if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

The R.I. Works Program has adopted the provisions in section 402 (b) of PRWORA with regard to legal non-citizens. This requirement to comply with PRWORA will remain in effect according to all applicable changes made to the federal law, as that Act may hereafter be amended. Legal non-citizens must meet income and resource criteria including their sponsor's income and resources. Such individuals will be eligible for cash assistance at the same levels and under the same rules as citizens. In order to be eligible, the non-citizen must be:

- A qualified non-citizen who entered the U.S. prior to 8/22/96; or
- A qualified non-citizen who entered the country on or after 8/22/96 and is exempt from the five (5) year ban as defined below; or
- After the five (5) year ban, a qualified non-citizen who entered the U.S. on or after 8/22/96.

Qualified non-citizens who are exempt from the five (5) year ban include:

- Refugees, under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA);
- Asylees, under section 208 of the INA;
- Amerasian entrants as defined under section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 1988;
- Cuban or Haitian entrants under section 501 (e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980;
- Lawfully residing honorably-discharged veterans (except one discharged for reasons of immigration status), and the unremarried widow or widower of the veteran;
- Non-citizens on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, their lawfully residing spouses and unmarried dependent children;
- Battered victims with a petition pending under 204 (a) (1) (A) or (B), or 244 (a) (3) of the INA; or
- Victims of human trafficking in accordance with section 107 (b) of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000.

Qualified non-citizens who entered the U.S. on or after 8/22/96, who are subject to the five (5) year ban include:

- Lawful permanent residents (LPR)
- Parolees for at least one (1) year under 212 (d) (5) of the INA
- Conditional entrants under 203 (a) (7) of immigration law in effect before 4/1/80
- Certain American Indians born outside the U.S.

A person who is not a United States citizen and does not meet the alienage requirements established in PRWORA, as amended, is not eligible for cash assistance. Those applicants who are ineligible include undocumented and/or illegal immigrants and persons documented as temporary visitors.

(iii) The document shall set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how the State will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process.

Rhode Island provides an objective process for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility, for fair and equitable treatment, and for complaints and an appeals process for those recipients that have been adversely affected. Specific details pertaining to the policy and

procedures are contained in Rhode Island DHS Manual Sections Civil Rights Compliance and Complaints and Hearings.

Furthermore, a parent or caretaker who requests assistance for a child shall meet with an agency representative as soon as possible and no later than five (5) days from the date of request for assistance. The application for assistance shall be accepted or denied by the Department no later than thirty (30) days following the date of application.

A family found by the Department to meet the eligibility criteria shall be entitled to receive cash assistance from the date of submitting a signed application. The family members shall be eligible for cash assistance for so long as they continue to meet the eligibility criteria and parents shall be eligible so long as they meet the terms and conditions of the work requirements.

Any applicant or recipient aggrieved because of a decision by the Department, including but not limited to, a decision regarding eligibility for benefits, the amount of benefits, terms of an Employment Plan or a delay in making a decision with respect to an application for assistance shall be entitled to an appeal. The Department shall provide an applicant with written notice of a decision to deny benefits and shall provide recipients written notice at least ten (10) days in advance of a decision to terminate or reduce benefits to the family. Notices shall be in easy to understand language and shall explain the reason for the department's decision and cite the relevant section of the department's regulations. The family may appeal the decision by filing a written request with the department within thirty (30) days of the date the notice was mailed. If the recipient files the request within ten (10) days of the date the notice was mailed, the recipient may receive benefits without reduction pending the outcome of the appeal. Hearings with respect to public assistance shall be conducted by the department.

(iv) Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, unless the chief executive officer of the State opts out of this provision by notifying the Secretary, a State shall, consistent with the exception provided in section 407(e)(2), require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving such assistance for 2 months is not exempt from work requirements and is not engaged in work, as determined under section 407(c), to participate in community service employment, with minimum hours per week and tasks to be determined by the State.

The State of Rhode Island through its chief executive officer opts out of the requirement that a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving such assistance for two (2) months is not exempt from work requirements and is not engaged in work, as determined under section 407(c), to participate in community service employment.

The following statements certify that the State of Rhode Island is operating those programs and requirements mandated by PRWORA.

(v) The document shall indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment (I) providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 1397j of this title); or (II) in other occupations related to elder care determined appropriate by the State for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

The TANF program has long included Certified Nursing Assistant training among those offered and funded by TANF for RI Works parents and is presently negotiating to add a Gerontology Certificate program at a state college expressly for the above purpose.

PART II

STATE PLAN CERTIFICATIONS:

The State of Rhode Island will operate a program to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; to end dependency of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families.

This program is known as the Rhode Island Works Program

The Chief Executive Officer of the State of Rhode Island is Governor Lincoln D. Chafee.

1. CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL OPERATE A CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The State is currently operating during this and subsequent fiscal years a child support enforcement program described in the State plan under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act.

2. CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL OPERATE A FOSTER CHILD AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The State is currently operating, and will continue to operate during this and subsequent fiscal years, a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State plan approved under part E. The State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State plan under Title XIX.

3. CERTIFICATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Department of Human Services will administer and supervise Temporary Assistance for Needy Families with minor children under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, in all political subdivisions of the State.

The State of Rhode Island assures that local governments and private sector organizations:

- (a) Have been and will continue to be consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations.
- (b) Will have had at least forty-five (45) days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services.

4. CERTIFICATION THAT THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INDIANS WITH EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE

Governor Lincoln D. Chafee, the chief executive officer of the State of Rhode Island certifies that, during the fiscal year, the State will provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

5. CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE AGAINST PROGRAM FRAUD AND ABUSE

The State has established and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage in accordance with RIGL 36-14-5.

6. OPTIONAL CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THAT THE STATE WILL SCREEN FOR AND IDENTIFY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The State of Rhode Island has adopted the Domestic Violence option.

- A. The State has established and enforced standards and procedures to:
1. Screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals;
 2. Refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and
 3. Waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, and child support cooperation requirements in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.

B. Domestic violence defined:

For purposes of this paragraph, the term "domestic violence" has the same meaning as the term "battered or subjected to extreme cruelty", as defined in PRWORA section 408(a)(7)(C)(iii).

7. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF THE STATE PLAN SUMMARY

Rhode Island will make available to the public a summary of any plan submitted by the State under this section.

CERTIFIED BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND:

Insert date here: _____

Lincoln D. Chafee

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES MANUAL
RHODE ISLAND WORKS PROGRAM**STANDARDS OF ASSISTANCE**

Payment to eligible families is made semi-monthly. The conversion of monthly dollar amounts to semi-monthly payment amounts is done automatically by INRHODES.

AMOUNT	PLAN SIZE	CASH ASSISTANCE MONTHLY STANDARD	CASH ASSISTANCE SEMI-MONTHLY
	1	\$ 327.00	\$ 163.50
	2	449.00	224.50
	3	554.00	277.00
	4	634.00	317.00
	5	714.00	357.00
	6	794.00	397.00
	7	874.00	437.00
	8	954.00	477.00
	9	1,034.00	517.00
	10	1,114.00	557.00
	11	1,194.00	597.00
	12	1,274.00	637.00
	13	1,354.00	677.00
	14	1,434.00	717.00
	15	1,514.00	757.00
	Add for each person over 15:	\$80.00	40.00