TANF needs a tune-up

No child in WA should live in deep poverty

While broader poverty has seen some declines in WA in recent years, **deep poverty has been steadily increasing.** This means more families live under 50% of the Federal Poverty Level.

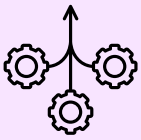
Our safety net is intended to protect children from the lasting effects of deep poverty, but **it needs to be modernized to be a more effective pathway out of poverty.**

Here's three ways we should modernize TANF:

Keep up with the cost of living

The current TANF cash grant is only **7.4 - 11.8%** of the Needs Standard depending on family size. That's only 30% of the Federal Poverty Level.

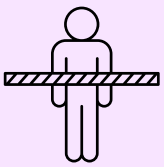
Tying the cash grant to 16% of the Needs Standard would ensure that direct cash accomplishes its goal of raising families out of deep poverty.



Simplify TANF eligibility

The small number of families that have persistent need after the 60-month limit must navigate more than 14 exceptions to determine eligibility. This leads to **families who qualify being cut off** due to verification errors, **increased error rates and administrative burden** on agency staff, and **racially inequitable outcomes** with Black, Indigenous, and multiracial families denied access at higher rates.

Our state should **simplify eligibility so that any family who financially qualifies can access TANF.**



Remove barriers to Support Services

Support Service dollars are intended to help families overcome barriers to work like paying for uniforms or car repairs. Every adult on TANF is **eligible for up to $5000 per year** to cover these costs, but **99% of the TANF caseload does NOT receive ANY Support Services** because there is inadequate administrative infrastructure in place to deliver the benefits.

Making support services accessible would allow families to take advantage of the benefits they are entitled to and build a stronger pathway out of poverty.