

**STATE TANF DIRECTORS IN STATE ADMINISTERED STATES  
TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

*[Note: This guide is intended for respondents identified as State TANF Directors in State-Administered TANF programs. Respondents will be familiar with the issues, complexities, and realities administering TANF programs.]*

Date of Interview:  
Interviewer (s):  
State:  
Respondent Name:  
Title:  
Respondent Affiliation:  
E-Mail:  
Phone:  
Address:  
Fax:

**Introduction/Purpose of the Study**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a researcher from the [Urban Institute, a non-profit research organization OR ICF International, a consulting firm] located in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. On the phone with me today is [name and affiliation].

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (ACF/OPRE) is conducting a study of County versus State-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs. The study is not an audit or evaluation of any single program. Rather, the purpose of this study is to provide information about the way the TANF program works, including:

- What do county-administered TANF programs look like?
- How do county-administered TANF programs differ from state-administered TANF programs in terms of program implementation, operations, outputs, and outcomes?
- What are unique technical assistance needs for county-administered TANF programs versus state-administered programs?

A Descriptive Study of County- versus State-Administered TANF Programs

Survey of STATE Administered TANF Programs

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We will be conducting site visits in 6 states with county-administered TANF programs and are conducting phone interviews, like this one, with states that do not have county-administered programs. We will be writing a report summarizing what we learned in the study. This report will help policymakers and others understand more fully the issues, complexities, and realities of county and state-administered TANF programs. The study will be completed by the summer of 2014.

### Privacy Statement

This data collection effort is intended for the purpose of describing county-administered TANF programs' operations and needs, and comparing these with state-administered TANF programs. When we write our reports and discuss the study findings, information from all informants is compiled and presented so that no one person is identified. However, although individuals will not be cited as sources, information will be presented in our reports that may enable a user to infer the identity of the information source. Providing information for this study is voluntary. We know that you are busy; we anticipate this interview will take about 30 minutes.

[IF WE WOULD LIKE TO RECORD THIS SESSION:] We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we capture all of it. So, with your permission, we will be recording the session and/or [name of person] will be taking notes on a laptop computer. However, we will destroy the recordings as soon as we have made complete notes of the meeting. Do you have an objection for us to proceed with recording?

Many of the questions I will be asking you are multiple-choice questions, to help the interview move quickly, but if none of the choices fits your state's situation, please explain your state's situation so we can best understand how your state administers TANF.

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[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Use the checkboxes to guide the interview and to record simple responses. Any additional explanatory or clarifying information from the respondent should also be fully noted.]

### I. History of TANF Program Administration

*We would like to know some key features that have influenced TANF program administration in your state over time. Some state administered programs delegate governance of TANF implementation to regional or sub-state entities. We want to know if this applies to your state.*

- 1) Thinking about the current roles of states and sub-state entities (e.g. counties or regions) in administration of TANF, are these

- similar to their roles under AFDC, or
- did the state change the administration type when it implemented TANF, or
- did the state change the administration type sometime after implementing TANF?

- 2) What is the historical relationship between the state government and county governments in the administration of human service programs?

### II. Financial Management and Fiscal Reporting

*Financial management and fiscal reporting responsibilities are central components of administering a TANF program. We would like to know about how this component is carried out in your state administered structure.*

- 3) [For states using regional or sub-state entities to implement TANF]
- a) Are there standard processes and protocols for reporting cash assistance for each local entity? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
  - b) For reporting non-cash expenditures? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
  - c) If reporting processes differ between cash and non-cash assistance, please describe.
- 4) How does your state use administrative funds: (Check all that apply)

- Program oversight and monitoring
- IT systems
- Data based reporting systems
- Assessment and referral process
- Staff training

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€Other (specify)

- 5) When funds are allocated to local state offices or sub-state entities are they differentiated for administrative dollars and program dollars? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 6) Does the state allocation of program or administrative funds to local state offices or sub-state entities vary year to year?
- a) Yes
- €Program fund allocations vary
  - €Administrative fund allocations vary
  - €Both allocations vary
- b) No
- 7) Do any of the allocations vary month to month?
- a) Yes (please specify reasons for allocation changes)
- €Caseload changes
  - €Local economic conditions
  - €staffing changes
  - €other (please specify)
- b) No
- 8) Has there been any adjustment to funding levels for local state offices or sub-state entities due to the economic recession? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No; or state budget issues \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No?
- 9) Is the MOE requirement met only by the State or is that passed down to sub-state entities, such that the sub-state entities are required to contribute to MOE requirements?
- 10) When funds are used for TANF purposes 3 and 4 (reducing non-marital childbearing and promoting two-parent families) who makes those allocation decisions?
- €State legislature
  - €Human services department
  - €TANF Director
  - €Local office administrators
  - €Other (specify)

### III. State - Sub-State Bureaucratic Structure and Communication

*State administered TANF programs are structured in a variety of ways. We want to know how your state TANF program is structured.*

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- 11) How is information communicated between state and county entities?
- a) Who is responsible for managing communication?
  - b) How does communication occur (meetings, written memoranda, other vehicles)?  
Frequency?
  - c) Are any formal or informal reporting functions in place?
- 12) For the following aspects of managing and implementing TANF programs, does responsibility rest at the state level or is responsibility delegated to local offices or a regional or a sub-county entity? (check all that apply)

	State	Local office/Sub-state Entity
Financial management		
Policy		
Administrative responsibilities		
Performance measurement		
Staff hiring		
Staff training		
Contracting for services (e.g., privatization, local WIB)		
IT and Data Management systems		

- 13) If any of the above aspects are checked “yes” under “local office/sub-state entity”:
- a) Are the sub-state entities enabled to be fully autonomous in carrying out these responsibilities? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 14) We are interested in how these responsibilities are governed and where these entities derive their authority/responsibility. To what extent are responsibilities governed by: (Check all that apply)
- € Federal policy
  - € State legislative mandates
  - € State policies/procedures
  - € County rules/regulations
  - € Other governing authorities or mandates (e.g., court orders)

- 15) Over time, has the relationship between the state and sub-state entities changed? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- a) If these relationships have changed over time, please describe ways in which they have changed.

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**IV. Policy Development**

TANF programs are regulated by a variety of policy mandates. This section examines the ways policy is used in your state.

16) Please indicate whether the following policy decisions relating to TANF implementation are made at the state level or are delegated to a sub-state entity:

	State	Sub-state Entity
Determining eligibility requirements		
Determining asset and earned income disregards		
Setting benefit levels		
Determining appropriate work requirements		
Determining recipient sanctioning procedures and processes		
Determining time limits		
Responsible for family cap determinations		
Responsible for determining child support pass-through		
OTHER, please describe:		

17) Is there variation in the implementation of policy at the local/sub-state level? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No  
 a) If yes, please describe.

18) How does your state communicate policy decisions to regional/sub-state entities and to the counties? (Check all that apply)

- € Policy memos or summaries
- € Policy manuals or directives
- € Legislative concept proposals and memos
- € Committee reports or memos
- € Public speeches or public testimonies
- € Electronic mail or electronic bulletin boards
- € Functional documents like legislation, regulations, procedures, or agreements
- € Statewide training

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- € Newsletter
- € Other, please describe

19) In your state, do regional/sub-state entities have autonomy to privatize services in their region, area or county? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

### V. IT and other resources

*Technology and data infrastructure are key components of administering TANF programs. We want to know how technology is used in your state for TANF programming.*

20) Does your state use a centralized IT system for collecting TANF data? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

a) If no, please explain how TANF data are collected)

21) Is the data system TANF only? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

a) If no, is it connected with other programs (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, Child Care)? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

### VI. Program Oversight and Monitoring

*We want to learn about the systems your state uses to oversee and monitor TANF programs.*

22) Does your state monitor participation in work activities at the local or sub-state level? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

23) Are there penalties when a local area or sub-state entity does not meet its work participation rate? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

24) Are local or sub-state entities held accountable for any other measures beyond the WPR? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

If yes, please list other measures.

25) If the Federal government levies a penalty against the State does that penalty flow down to local or sub-state entities?

### VII. Service Delivery and Staffing

*Service delivery and staffing for TANF programs can be different in state administered TANF programs. We want to know how these processes are conducted in your state program.*

26) Which of the following TANF services to clients are the same across your state:

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- € In-take and access (i.e., same screening and assessment tool for determining eligibility? Making referrals? Program and service eligibility?)
- € Service delivery (i.e., referral mechanisms and co-location of staff, on-site supports, job support service referrals, employment supports like child care referrals and transportation vouchers)
- € Work supports (i.e., job club, job readiness training, components of work support)

- 27) Do your local offices or sub-state entities have discretion over how non-recurring, short-term assistance (e.g. TANF emergency assistance) can be used? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 28) Do local offices or sub-state entities in your state have discretion in making staffing decisions regarding caseload standards or how many staff to have? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 29) Are qualifications and job descriptions determined at the state level? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 30) Are hiring decisions made at the state level? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 31) Are salaries set at the state level? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 32) Are service integration and cooperation between TANF and other work support programs (SNAP, child care, DOL-sponsored training) standardized across the state? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- If no, are they unique to each local area or sub-state entity? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
- 33) If families needing services move from geographic area to another within your state, are their cases transferred between offices, or do they need to reapply in the new location? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

### VIII. Variation Across State and Over Time

*We are interested in your perceptions of how administration of TANF programs varies, if at all, across your state.*

- 34) Are there any other specific differences in how TANF programs are implemented across the state? If so, please describe briefly what the differences are.
- 35) Have these differences changed over time? If so, how?

### IX. Technical Assistance

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Finally, would like to ask about any TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES that would benefit your state's TANF program administration.

36) Are there any types of technical assistance that you feel are needed to administer TANF programs in your state? (Check all that are needed)

- Financial Management and Fiscal Reporting
- Communication
- Policy
- Information Technology (IT)
- Data Management
- Program monitoring
- Service delivery
  - On boarding materials
  - Training tools
  - Recruitment strategies
  - Retention strategies
  - Effective screening and assessment protocols
- OTHER, please describe

37) Is there anything else we should understand about how TANF is administered in your state?

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Thank you so much for sharing this information with us. If we have any follow-up questions as we write our report, may we contact you again? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

Thank you.

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