

State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Case Studies

What is the background for the study?

Moving toward self-sufficiency can be daunting for low-income individuals and families. In addition to dealing with serious barriers to employment, such as limited education, poor work history, or health issues, they also frequently need to interact with complex TANF, workforce, and support systems in their efforts to obtain and maintain employment. States and localities have increasingly pursued innovative approaches to help these individuals obtain success in the workforce and increase their overall stability. Such approaches can involve employment and training strategies, such as apprenticeship and career pathways programs, subsidized and transitional employment, vocational training, and goal-setting and executive function skills coaching. To be successful, these approaches also require effective coordination with providers of wraparound services, including child care, transportation, and homeless and emergency assistance, to provide the critical supports families need for long-term success.

What is the study's focus?

Through this study, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in collaboration with the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) in the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services seeks to expand the knowledge base of innovative employment and training programs for low-income individuals, including TANF recipients. The study will also examine the ways programs provide or link families to wraparound services. The project will result in up to 12 qualitative case studies of innovative programs to showcase promising approaches. OPRE has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research and its partner, MEF Associates, to design and conduct the study.

How will the study be conducted?

The State TANF Case Studies project will involve several phases:

- Identifying innovative programs through a scan of the field and engagement with stakeholders
- Visiting selected programs to interview program staff and participants, conduct structured case reviews, and observe program activities
- Writing up to 12 case studies to enhance policymakers' and other stakeholders' understanding of programs helping low-income individuals to succeed

When will the study happen?

The study began in September 2018 and will continue through September 2021.

What will the study produce?

The study team will develop case studies of selected innovative programs for low-income individuals and families that will be easy for policymakers, researchers, and program implementers to understand. The team will also produce a final report that compiles all completed case studies and discusses the study's approach, data collection, and contributions to the field.

To find out more

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