

An Introduction to TANF and Reach Up



Sean Brown, Deputy Commissioner
DCF, Economic Services Division, Reach Up Program

2/16/2016

What is TANF?

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

- States receive a fixed block grant from the federal government to fund their own welfare programs (VT receives \$47.4 million).
- States must also spend some of their own dollars on programs for needy families (Maintenance of Effort – MOE – requirement).
- Families must be financially needy and have a minor child to qualify for assistance; states determine the exact financial eligibility rules and benefit amounts.
- A state must meet the federal work participation rate or face fiscal penalties.
 - Half of *all* families receiving TANF assistance must be engaged in a work activity for at least 30 hours a week (20 hours a week for single parents with young children).
 - 90 percent of *two-parent* families must be engaged in work, generally for 35 hours per week.



Reach Up

Vermont's TANF Program



Reach Up Basics

- Reach Up has 2 components:
 - Financial assistance (grant)
 - Case Management Services
- A family's "family development plan" (FDP) sets forth each participating adult's employment goal and the plan and schedule of activities the participant must engage in to attain the goal
- Families must work towards self-sufficiency by participating fully in the services program; non-participation results in "sanction" or closure

Reach Up Work Requirements

- All participating adults, unless granted a deferral of their work requirement, must fulfill a work requirement.
- The number of hours the participant must work or engage in work activities depends on the configuration of the family.

Single Parents – 30 hours/week, or 20 if youngest child is under age 6

Two-parent households (both able to work) – 40 hours/week

Two-parent households (one able to work, other not able to work) – 30 hours/week

Time Limits:

- Families that have received 60 “countable” months or more of Reach Up benefits are not eligible for benefits unless:
 - The participating adult is deferred from his/her work requirement;
 - The participating adult is engaged in community service employment; or
 - The participating adult is employed and meeting his/her work requirement.

Reach Up Partnerships



- ❑ Parent Child Centers
- ❑ VRRP-Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program and AALV-Association for Africans Living in Vermont
- ❑ Housing Organizations (COTS, CVOEO, Samaritan House)
- ❑ Transportation Brokers (Good News Garage, Capstone)
- ❑ DMH and ADAP collaborative for substance abuse and mental health case management and clinical services for Reach Up participants.
- ❑ Substance abuse residential treatment for women and their children-Lund
- ❑ VABIR – Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation
- ❑ VAL – Vermont Adult Learning

2/16/2016

Related Programs

Reach First

Stabilizes families experiencing a short-term crisis by providing case management, financial assistance and support services within a four-month period.

Reach Ahead

Promotes financial stability after families have transitioned off of Reach Up by providing a food benefit for 24 months after a family has left Reach Up due to earned income.

Postsecondary Education (PSE)

Assists parents in eligible low-income families to obtain two- or four-year postsecondary undergraduate degrees in fields directly related to employment.

Changing Demographics

- ∞ There is no “typical” Reach Up family
- ∞ While caseloads are declining, the demographics of current caseload are changing and cases are more complex
- ∞ In three years (from 2012 to 2015), the average number of barriers to employment per participant have nearly doubled.
- ∞ In 2012 the average number of barriers per participant was 2.2
- ∞ In 2015 the average number of barriers per participant was 4

Most common barriers:

Transportation, Finances, Emotional and Physical Health, Employment History

Changes in Reach Up Population

An example of a Reach Up family in 2008:

- ☞ Parent with two children
- ☞ Parent has 2-3 barriers (transportation, emotional and physical health)
- ☞ Parent is medically deferred and attending doctor's appointments, meetings with case manager

Changes in Reach Up Population, cont...

An example of a Reach Up family in 2015:

- ☞ Parent with two children
- ☞ Parent has 4 barriers (transportation, emotional and physical health, poor credit history)
- ☞ Parent has a medical deferment or modification – in addition to attending doctor's appointments and meetings with case manager, parent is participating in job readiness activities one hour per week, and a Community Service Placement two hours per week

Reach Up Grant for Family of Three

	2008	2015
Basic Needs Standard (3)	891	891
Shelter Allowance (Standard)	450	450
Special Needs Housing Allowance (if housing costs exceed standard)	90	90
Ratable Reduction	X 49.6%	X 49.6%
Grant Amount	\$709	\$709
Fair Market Value Rent in Chittenden County (family's actual housing costs, for rent alone)	\$1013	\$1328
2/16/2016		

Reach Up Leavers

- ∞ Reach Up Leavers in 2013 fared better than leavers from 2008
- ∞ In the year following Reach Up closure:

2008 Leavers	2013 Leavers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one household member worked in 69 % of leaver families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one household member worked in 75% of leaver families
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 31% of families had no earnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25% of families had no earnings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 37% returned to Reach Up at least once	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 31% returned to Reach Up at least once

Post Secondary Education (PSE) Leavers

PSE Leavers fared better than the overall leaver population:

- ∞ In 2013, 84% of PSE leaver families, had at least one member working at some point in the year following closure
- ∞ This is an improvement from the PSE leavers in 2008, in which 72% had at least one member working in the year following closure.
- ∞ Median earnings of PSE leavers (\$20,703), are almost twice as high as Reach Up leavers (\$11,736)
- ∞ 19% returned to Reach Up at some point the following year, compared to 31% of Reach Up leavers

Who is Accessing the Vermont Reach Up Program?

- ∞ Available data shows that the vast majority of Reach Up applicants have established roots in Vermont
- ∞ Last year, there were 8821 Reach Up applications. Of those, only a reported 161 (1.8%)* had recently moved to Vermont from another state.
- ∞ This is consistent with other states in our region, who report migration into their state is no more than 2% of applicants.

* This number is drawn from numbers reported and entered into the ACCESS system.