

Department of Health and Human Services

**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE
FOR NEEDY FAMILIES**

Educating Clients about Sanctions



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To determine how States inform clients about sanction policies under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

BACKGROUND

In 1996, Congress significantly overhauled the Federal welfare system with the passage of the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* (PRWORA, P.L. 104-193), eliminating Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The TANF program replaced AFDC with State block grants, giving States more authority to design programs that move clients from welfare to self-sustaining employment. Except where expressly provided under PRWORA, the Federal Government may not prescribe State spending on TANF.

Clients who fail to comply with program rules and requirements face sanctions, including cash assistance reductions ranging from \$25 to lifetime ineligibility. The TANF law provides States flexibility to define client sanctions and penalties, as well as “good cause” reasons for work exemptions. The TANF law requires States to provide clients the option to appeal sanction decisions and to have a fair hearings system to resolve the appeal. However, States decide the specifics of their appeals and fair hearings policies and processes.

States also can decide how to inform clients of TANF program policies and procedures. States can conduct orientation sessions, provide orientation packets, or instruct caseworkers to inform clients about TANF during screenings and interviews.

We purposefully selected an 8-State sample from which we visited a total of 26 TANF offices in both urban and rural areas. At most sites, we conducted separate focus groups with TANF caseworkers and clients in addition to meeting individually with TANF office directors and selected TANF caseworkers who assisted us with limited case-file reviews of recently sanctioned clients. We also collected and reviewed State and county policies, publications, and notices from each TANF office. In each of the sample States, we interviewed staff from at least one private client advocacy group.

The methods we used during this study pose some distinct advantages and disadvantages for the scope of our findings. The purposeful sample allowed us to examine sanction

implementation in States with widely varying attributes. We also gained a thorough understanding of our respondents' relationships with and attitude towards sanctions. Our methodology precludes us, however, from commenting on the extent to which our findings and observations are representative nationwide. We also cannot evaluate direct outcomes of sanction policies, procedures, and practices on clients and the program.

FINDINGS

TANF offices explain sanctions to clients repeatedly, using diverse methods

Some TANF offices communicate sanction information to clients at multiple times and with a variety of media. For example, offices conduct orientation classes, show instructive videos, and issue packets of information. Caseworkers frequently discuss sanctions with clients throughout the process.

Orientation materials commonly lack information about the amount of the sanction and the definition of good cause

More than two-thirds of TANF offices do not provide clear and complete information about the amount of sanctions and the definition of "good cause" exemptions from work requirements.

Most States describe other vital information about sanctions completely and present it in a logical format

The reasons for and durations of sanctions and client appeal rights are explained clearly in most written material provided to clients. About half of the TANF orientation materials present information in a well-labeled packet and in a logical format.

TANF clients do not fully understand sanctions and, according to caseworkers, are not concerned about sanctions until they are imposed

Clients rarely had more than a superficial understanding of sanctions. Regardless of the State's sanctions policy, clients often reported that they would be "cut off" if they violated program rules. In addition, caseworkers told us that a sanction is not often a concern to clients until it is imposed.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Administration for Children and Families encourage States to provide complete, correct, and understandable information to clients on: the causes of sanctions; the amounts of sanctions; the duration of sanctions; “good cause” reasons for work exemptions; and client appeal, fair hearing, and, if applicable, conciliation rights.

AGENCY RESPONSE

We received comments on the draft report from the Administration for Children and Families. The agency concurred with our recommendation and stated that it is committed to working with States to improve State sanction information. As an initial step, it will provide States with examples of effective sanction information and facilitate networking among States interested in improving their sanction information. We made changes to the report based on the technical comments we received from the agency and clarified that we do not project our findings beyond the sample sites.

This is one of three OIG reports on how States administer client sanctions under TANF. One companion report, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Client Sanctions* (OEI-09-98-00290), provides a broad overview of State administration of client sanctions. The other, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Improving Client Sanction Notices* (OEI-09-98-00292), reviews State methods for informing clients of sanction decisions via written notices.

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

To determine how States inform clients about sanction policies under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

BACKGROUND

In 1996, Congress significantly overhauled the Federal welfare system with the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* (PRWORA, P.L. 104-193), ending federally-funded welfare entitlements. When President Clinton signed the bill into law in August 1996, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was replaced with TANF, a block grant program that gives States more authority and flexibility to design programs that move clients from welfare to self-sustaining employment. Except where expressly provided for under PRWORA, the Federal Government may not prescribe State spending of TANF block grant funds.

Client Sanctions under TANF

Clients who do not follow program rules and requirements face “sanctions,” including cash assistance reductions ranging from \$25 to lifetime ineligibility. States have increased authority to define sanctionable offenses and determine specific penalties. Federal TANF law directs States to sanction clients for not cooperating with child support enforcement efforts and/or not participating in work activities. States also may sanction clients for testing positive for controlled substances, not following an “Individual Responsibility Plan,” refusing to work towards achieving a high-school diploma or the equivalent, failing to attend school, and/or failing to attend required meetings or to attend other program activities (e.g., training sessions).

The law mandates a minimum benefit reduction for some sanctions (e.g., a 25 percent cash assistance reduction for failure to participate in child support enforcement efforts), but States can set a maximum sanction, ranging from a pro rata sanction to a “full family” sanction that eliminates all cash assistance to the entire family. States also may increase sanctions for clients who repeatedly fail to comply with the program rules and requirements. For example, some States incrementally decrease cash assistance to families each time they fail to comply, sometimes leading to the loss of the entire cash grant.

The TANF law also allows States flexibility in determining the duration of sanctions. States must, at a minimum, reduce the cash grant pro rata for each month the client receives aid and is not in compliance. States can set maximum sanction duration. Some States increase the duration of the sanction each time the client does not comply, which sometimes results in lifetime ineligibility.

“Good Cause”

If a TANF client refuses to participate in work activities or comply with other TANF program requirements, the State must sanction the client, except where “good cause” or other exceptions apply. The TANF law directs that States exempt from work requirements single custodial parents of children under the age of six who cannot obtain child care. States also can define “good cause” and other exceptions as they deem appropriate. Although State definitions vary, they commonly allow “good cause” for: lack of transportation, victims of domestic violence, lack of suitable employment, and illness of the participant.

Appeals and Fair Hearings

States are required to provide clients the option to appeal sanctions and must have a fair hearings system to resolve the appeal. State appeals and fair hearings policies and procedures may vary since TANF requires only that States certify that they have a fair hearings process in place and describe it.

Informing Clients of Program Rules

States decide how and when to inform clients of their sanction policy, the conciliation process, how to restore benefits once sanctioned, and the appeals and fair hearings process. States can, for example, conduct individual or group orientation sessions or provide all clients with packets of written materials including policy information.

METHODOLOGY

We purposefully selected an eight-State sample based on:

- ▶ percent reduction in TANF recipient populations,¹
- ▶ State policies on TANF client sanctions (e.g., full-family versus partial grant reduction),
- ▶ percent of national TANF recipient population, and
- ▶ geographic diversity

Since our sample was purposeful, we do not project our findings. We visited offices in the following States: California, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, and Texas. In each State, we visited at least two offices — an urban and rural office. We conducted preinspection research in July and August 1998 in Maryland and Nevada prior to conducting our formal fieldwork which we concluded in November 1998.

In total, we visited 26 TANF offices in 22 counties. In each office, we conducted a focus group with caseworkers. The focus groups varied in size from 2 to 15 workers. We also interviewed some caseworkers individually and conducted limited case-file reviews of recently sanctioned TANF clients. We interviewed the director of the TANF office in each county and clients in 19 of the 26 offices. The client interviews ranged in size from a single client to a group of more than 20. The clients were selected either in advance by the TANF office or while they were present for other business during our visit. We also collected and reviewed State and county policies, publications, and notices from each TANF office.

In each State visited, we interviewed staff from at least one client advocacy organization. In total, we conducted 9 interviews with 15 advocacy groups.

The methods we used during this study pose some distinct advantages and disadvantages for the scope of our findings. The purposeful sample allowed us to examine sanction implementation in States with widely varying attributes. We also gained a thorough understanding of our respondents' relationships with and attitudes towards sanctions. Our methodology precludes us, however, from commenting on the extent to which our findings and observations are representative nationwide. We also cannot evaluate direct outcomes of sanction policies, procedures, and practices on clients and the program.

¹The primary factor for State selection was TANF recipient population reduction rates since TANF was implemented. Based on the reduction rates, States were stratified into four groups, from which we chose two States from each group. While we would have preferred to use State sanction rates, reliable client sanction data for all 50 States did not exist at the time we selected the sample. We felt that caseload reduction rates were the most reasonable proxy for sanction rates in selecting this purposeful sample.

This is one of three OIG reports on how States administer client sanctions under TANF. One companion report, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Client Sanctions* (OEI-09-98-00290), provides a broad overview of State administration of client sanctions. The other, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Improving Client Sanction Notices* (OEI-09-98-00292), reviews State methods for informing clients of sanction decisions via written notices.

FINDINGS

TANF offices explain sanctions to clients repeatedly, using diverse methods

Some TANF offices use multiple media to explain sanction policies to clients. They conduct thorough orientation classes, show instructive videos in the waiting rooms, host on-site legal representatives, and issue well-labeled handouts and pamphlets. The best offices have bi-lingual caseworkers, screeners, and translators to explain TANF policies and to answer client questions.

Most caseworkers said they frequently discuss sanctions with clients. They tell clients about sanctions during the screening process, at the orientation session, during one-on-one interviews and appointments, when reviewing the rights and responsibilities form, and while setting up individual responsibility plans. A few caseworkers said they inform clients about sanctions only at a later time, usually when a client is not cooperating or is in the initial stages of the sanction process.

More than two-thirds of TANF offices omit vital information about sanctions from their written client material

In addition to providing clients with sanction information orally during interviews and group meetings, all TANF offices provide written materials that explain most facets of the State's sanction policy. Vital information about the sanction policies include:

- ▶ causes for sanctions,
- ▶ amounts of sanctions²,
- ▶ durations of sanctions,
- ▶ “good cause” reasons for work exemptions, and
- ▶ client appeal rights.

Only 31 percent of TANF offices provide clear and complete information on all of the above areas of vital information.

² By ‘amounts of sanctions,’ we mean either the formula used to calculate the benefit reduction or a fixed monetary penalty. A 25 percent cash assistance reduction is an example of the former, and a set \$75 penalty is an example of the latter.

Orientation materials commonly lack information about the amount of the sanction and the definition of good cause

Approximately half of the TANF offices do not provide clients with complete, correct, and precise information on the amount of sanctions. For example, one orientation flyer read, “If you refuse to participate in a [job search program] without good cause, you may lose all or part of your public assistance benefits until you agree to cooperate or for a period up to six months.” That State’s sanction policy does not include a full family sanction, although the passage implies that it does. Although the minimum duration of the sanction in that State is indeed six months for the third instance of noncompliance, clients can be sanctioned indefinitely if they persist in not complying. The passage implies that the sanction lasts six months, at most. Nowhere else in the State’s orientation materials are sanctions explained in any more detail than the above passage. In addition, the State’s orientation material addressing sanctions for not cooperating with child support enforcement includes only the following passage, “Non-cooperation without good cause could result in the termination of [cash assistance] benefits.” Again, the material incorrectly implies that the State has a full-family sanction.

Orientation materials frequently lack definitive information about “good cause” reasons for not complying with work requirements. Many State and county materials use the phrase “good cause” to denote the legitimate reasons for exclusion from work requirements, but often do not actually define the term or give concrete examples. For instance, one office’s material reads, “You have the right to claim good cause for not complying with a program benefit...,” but nowhere on the document is there a definition or examples of what constitutes “good cause.”

Most States describe all other vital information about sanctions completely and present it in a logical format

Client orientation materials contain clear and complete information about most sanction details. Approximately two-thirds of the TANF orientation materials we reviewed (1) include specific examples of reasons why a client may be sanctioned, (2) list the duration of sanctions, and (3) explain client appeal rights (see appendix A). Some States successfully use their rights and responsibilities document to outline program requirements, compulsory activities, and potential consequences (i.e., namely sanctions).

Some TANF offices effectively present information about the reasons for and the duration of sanctions in the orientation packets, on the TANF application, and in individual responsibility plans. The most informative documents explicitly describe each of the reasons for which a client may be sanctioned. For example, an excerpt from one county’s orientation packet reads, “...[if you] refuse to agree to a welfare to work plan, or fail to show proof of satisfactory progress in your activity, or quit or refuse a job, then the

county can sanction you.” Materials often specify the duration of each level of sanction (See appendix A for an example).

Most TANF offices provide clients with clear and complete information about client appeal rights in rights and responsibilities documents, on the TANF applications, and in booklets about TANF rules and policies. Figure 1 illustrates one of the best documents we reviewed. In it, the terms “conciliation” and “fair hearing” are defined explicitly and the processes and policies for both forms of dispute resolution are explained. (See appendix B for the complete document.) The document also advises clients in seven languages that the information contained is important.

Figure 1 Appeal rights information excerpt

This form has important welfare information. If you can't understand it, get help now.

អ្នកប្រយោជន៍ត្រូវតែអានព័ត៌មានសំខាន់ៗស្តីពីសេវាសង្គមរបស់យើង។ ប្រសិនបើអ្នកមិនយល់បានទេ សូមសុំជំនួយ។

အသိအမြင်အရေးကြီးအားဖြင့် အသိပေးချက်ကို ဖတ်ရှုပါ။ မသိဘူးဆိုရင် အကူအညီတောင်းခံပါ။

Lus tseem ceeb txog kev dab (welfare). Nrlav neeg bwm thiab txhais rau koj kom sal kawg nkaus.

Tin tức quan trọng về chương trình an sinh (welfare). Xin nhờ thông dịch tức khác.

Información importante de welfare. Hagála traducir inmediatamente.

Это важная информация о welfare. Если вы не поняли, обратитесь за помощью

YOUR RIGHT TO DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If you have a disagreement with your counselor, there are two ways to settle the disagreement.

- **Conciliation Conference.** This is an informal meeting, where you and your counselor try to reach a mutual agreement about how to settle the disagreement. The counselor's supervisor must review the outcome of this meeting.
- **Fair Hearing** means a legal process where an appeals referee will settle the disagreement.

You can request [redacted] conciliation when:

1. You have a disagreement over the contents or meaning of your plan, or
2. Your job counselor sends you this Notice of Intent to Sanction.

You can request a fair hearing when:

1. You believe the action of the agency or county adversely affects you; or
2. You do not reach agreement with your job counselor in [redacted] conciliation; or
3. A job counselor sends you a Notice of Intent to Sanction, and you do not want [redacted] conciliation; or
4. The county sends you a Notice of Adverse Action.

HOW TO REQUEST A DISPUTE RESOLUTION

You can request [redacted] conciliation from the employment services agency by phone, in writing, or in person. If you call, you still must send a written request. You must make your request within 10 days of the date on this Notice of Intent to Sanction.

If you get a Notice of Intent to Sanction or a Notice of Adverse Action, you can request a fair hearing. To do this, you must write the county agency or the State Appeals Office at the Department of Human Services, [redacted]. You must mail the request within 30 days of getting the notice. If you have good cause and cannot send the request in 30 days, you may have 90 days to submit it. You have the right to bring an attorney to a fair hearing. If you want help from Legal Aid, you can call Legal Aid of [redacted] at the following numbers:

North and Northeast [redacted]
South [redacted]
Downtown, S.E. [redacted] and [redacted] County suburbs [redacted]

“Conciliation” and “fair”

Seven languages are used to explain the form's importance.

Phone numbers for free legal aid are provided.

Instructions on how to request a conciliation conference and fair hearing are

Orientation materials often present information in a logical format. About half of the orientation materials we reviewed include a separate packet that clearly distinguishes TANF sanction information from Medicaid or food stamps. The language is clear and the terminology is well-defined (see appendix A). The TANF offices often effectively emphasize sanction information by using large, bold fonts, printing the material on brightly colored paper, or repeating the information in several places throughout the orientation packet.

Clients and advocates contend that TANF offices provide limited information about sanctions

Clients commonly reported that they receive insufficient sanction information, and only in written form. Almost half said they learned about sanctions through either orientation packets or written documents received in the mail. Some explained that they only acquire information about sanctions from fliers and other clients. Few clients said that they had received sanction information in both written and oral forms (e.g., from caseworkers or TANF office staff).

Several advocacy groups explained that clients often are not well-informed about sanction policies. The information provided to clients is frequently neither clear nor complete. One advocacy group explained, “The only thing clients know is what’s in the guidebook. The guidebook tells them that the grant will be reduced, but it doesn’t tell them by how much.” They also criticize TANF offices for failing to educate clients who do not speak English or who are illiterate. One advocacy group claimed, “If you can’t read at all or if you speak a different language, then you’re sanctioned.”

TANF clients do not fully understand sanctions and, according to caseworkers, are not concerned about sanctions until they are imposed

Clients rarely had more than a superficial knowledge of sanctions

Clients in almost half of the focus groups did not completely understand the sanction policies imposed by their TANF offices. In eight of the nineteen focus groups, clients were unclear about the amounts, durations, causes, and remedies of sanctions under TANF. Clients said they would most likely be “cut off” if they failed to participate in the TANF program. This was a common response, even in States and counties in which TANF offices impose partial sanctions. Some clients had more incorrect information about sanctions. For example, they reported that “after awhile” the sanction affects Medicaid, while in actuality the State’s sanction policy allows only for the removal of the

adult from the TANF cash assistance. A few clients knew most or all of the details about client sanctions under TANF.

Caseworkers in a quarter of the focus groups confirmed that clients often do not comprehend sanction information. Although caseworkers repeatedly inform clients about sanctions, many clients still do not understand. Some clients often act like they don't care about sanctions when, in reality, they do not understand the information because of language barriers.

A sanction often is not a concern to clients until it is imposed, according to caseworkers

When a majority of caseworkers tell clients about sanctions, they are faced with clients who simply “don't care.” While many caseworkers said that clients “don't pay attention” to the sanction details, other caseworkers echoed the sentiment that, “Some clients say, ‘Go ahead. You can't sanction my kids.’” Clients also can become angry when they are first faced with the new sanction policies during orientation, according to some caseworkers. “Ninety percent of the clients I see to make the personal responsibility contract are mad. It's a real escalated, emotional situation,” one caseworker explained.

Clients more frequently pay attention or react once they are sanctioned. Most caseworkers reported that although clients will react when sanctions are imposed, their reactions are mixed. Some clients call immediately after the sanction has been imposed, while others are never heard from again. Most caseworkers agreed, however, that “the first sanction gets [clients'] attention.”

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Inspector General recognizes that the TANF block grant program gives States broad authority to design programs that quickly move welfare clients to self-sustaining employment. There is a role for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), however, in providing guidance to States.

We recommend that ACF encourage States to provide complete, correct, and understandable information to clients on:

- ▶ *the causes of sanctions,*
- ▶ *the amounts of sanctions,*
- ▶ *the duration of sanctions,*
- ▶ *“good cause” reasons for work exemptions, and*
- ▶ *client appeal, fair hearing, and, if applicable, conciliation rights.*

AGENCY RESPONSE

We received comments on the draft report from the Administration for Children and Families. The agency concurred with our recommendation and stated that it is committed to working with States to improve State sanction information. As an initial step, it will provide States with examples of effective sanction information and facilitate networking among States interested in improving their sanction information. We made changes to the report based on the technical comments we received from the agency and clarified that we do not project our findings beyond the sample sites.

ORIENTATION INFORMATION WITH CLEAR, COMPLETE AND CONCISE INFORMATION ON SANCTIONS, FAIR HEARINGS, AND GOOD CAUSE

Section 9

Good Reasons for Not Participating

We recognize that you may have a good reason for not signing your Welfare-to-Work Plan, for not taking part in one of your activities, for not accepting a job offer or job referral, for quitting a job, or for reducing your earnings. Some of these reasons are related to you personally, and some are related to the assignment.

REASONS RELATED TO YOU:

- ◆ You need transportation or work- or training- related expenses paid to participate, and these have not been provided.
- ◆ You are the victim of domestic violence and participating would be harmful to you or your family.
- ◆ Licensed or exempt child care is not reasonably available during your training, employment or travel time for:
 - A child 10 years old or younger; or
 - A child who is in foster care or is a SSI recipient, but who is not included in the assistance unit.

REASONS RELATED TO ACTIVITY ASSIGNMENT OR JOB:

Discrimination at the job or training because of age, sex, race, color, religion, national or ethnic

origin, physical or mental disability, political affiliation or marital status.

- ◆ Travel to work or training from your home is more than two hours round trip by car, bus or other means of transportation, or more than two miles round trip if you have to walk because other transportation is not available. The limit on travel and mileage does not include transportation time or mileage to take family members to and from school or to and from other care providers.

NOTE: If you do not take a job or participate in an assigned activity because of this reason, you will have to participate in Community Service.

- ◆ The job requires more daily or weekly hours than is normal or customary.
- ◆ Conditions at the job or training site violate health and safety standards or could cause you serious injury or death.
- ◆ The job or work activity does not provide Worker's Compensation Insurance.
- ◆ Accepting a job or work activity would interrupt or interfere with an approved education or training assignment, except Work Experience or Community Service.
- ◆ Accepting a job or work activity would cause you to violate the terms of your union membership.

Section 10

What Happens If You Do Not Participate?

Participation in the [REDACTED] program is mandatory for all [REDACTED] applicants and recipients. Exemptions are listed in the section "Who Doesn't Have to Participate."

If you do not do what the [REDACTED] program requires, the following steps will be taken:

CAUSE DETERMINATION AND COMPLIANCE – If you do not meet [REDACTED] program requirements, we will send you a notice. You will have 20 calendar days after the date of the notice to meet with or call your Employment Specialist to explain why. (See "Good Reasons for Not Participating.")

- ◆ If the county decides you have a good reason for not doing what the [REDACTED] program requires, your Employment Specialist will try to help you so that you can meet [REDACTED] requirements. If changes can't be made so that you are able to meet [REDACTED] requirements, you will not be required to participate in the [REDACTED] program.

- ◆ If the county decides you do not have a good reason for not doing what the [REDACTED] program requires, you will need to sign a compliance plan to do what is required. If you meet the requirements of the plan, no penalties will be applied to you.

FINANCIAL SANCTIONS – If you are a mandatory participant (see "Who Must Participate"), your family's cash aid will be lowered if you fail or refuse to meet [REDACTED] requirements without a good reason and do not resolve the problem by signing and completing a compliance plan. The person who gets a financial sanction will not receive cash aid for a period of time, as specified below.

- ◆ The first time you are sanctioned, your family's aid will be lowered until you do what the [REDACTED] program requires and apply again for cash aid.
- ◆ The second time you are sanctioned, your family's cash aid will be lowered for at least three months. After three months, the sanction will stop if you apply again for cash aid and do what the [REDACTED] program requires.

- [REDACTED]
- ◆ The third or additional time you are sanctioned, your family's aid will be lowered for at least six months. After six months, the sanction will stop if you apply again for cash aid and do what the [REDACTED] program requires.

If your family is a two-parent family getting cash aid because of unemployment, there are special rules for financial sanctions. If a parent who must participate in the [REDACTED] program causes a financial sanction, both parents will lose their cash aid. But the

parent who did not cause the sanction can keep his or her cash aid if he or she participates in the [REDACTED] program, has good cause for not participating, or is exempt from participation requirements.

PENALTIES FOR VOLUNTEERS – If you are a voluntary participant in the [REDACTED] program, and fail to meet [REDACTED] requirements without a good reason, you may not be allowed to participate in the [REDACTED] program for a period of time.

Section 11

Your Child's School Attendance

If your child(ren) must attend school and we decide that he or she does not do so regularly, (unless he or she is eligible to participate in the [REDACTED] Program), your family's cash aid will be lowered. You must show proof that your child is attending school regularly, if we ask for it.

- ◆ If your child is under 16 years old and does not attend school regularly, all adults in the assistance unit will lose their part of the cash grant.
- ◆ If your child is 16 years or older and does not attend school regularly, he/she will lose his/her part of the cash grant.
- ◆ Teens age 16 and 17, who are not attending school, will be required to participate in [REDACTED] program activities.

**Employment Services
RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

If you ask, we will give you this information in another form, such as Braille, large print, or audiotape.

This is important information. If you do not understand it have someone translate it for you now.

Información importante. Si no la entiende, haga que alguien se la traduzca ahora.

ນີ້គឺជាຂໍ້ព័ត៌មានសំខាន់ណាស់។ ប្រសិនបើអ្នកមិនយល់ ត្រូវសុំឲ្យអ្នកដទៃបកប្រែឲ្យអ្នកស្រាប់។

Nov yog ntaub ntauv tseem ceeb. Yog koj tsi to taub, nriav neeg pab txhais rau koj kom sai sai.

ប្រសិនបើអ្នកមិនយល់ ត្រូវសុំឲ្យអ្នកដទៃបកប្រែឲ្យអ្នកស្រាប់។

Đây là tin tức quan trọng, nếu bạn không hiểu, hãy tìm người thông dịch giúp ngay.

Это важная информация. Если Вы её не понимаете, обратитесь за помощью немедленно.

Job Search Support Plan/Employment Plan

I have read my [redacted] Job Search Support Plan/Employment Plan. My job counselor and I must complete activities in the plan to help me reach my goals.

I understand that I must:

- Tell my job counselor as soon as possible when something stops me from following through with my plan. We will meet to revise my agreement if this happens.
- Tell my job counselor about any changes to my employment status within three working days.
- Tell my job counselor if I plan to move to another county.
- Make satisfactory progress and follow through with the Job Search Support Plan/Employment Plan. If I am a mandatory participant I must attend scheduled meetings.

I understand that if I do not make satisfactory progress and follow through with the Job Search Support Plan/Employment Plan:

Mandatory Participants

- My grant may go down by 10% or more of the transitional standard.
- My rent and/or utilities may be vendored.
- My help with child care and transportation may go down or stop.

Voluntary Participants

- My help with child care and transportation may go down or stop.
- My employment services case may close.

Dispute Resolution

What is dispute resolution?

If you have a disagreement with your job counselor, you can ask for a meeting with the job counselor and another person in the agency. There are two ways to settle the disagreement.

- **Conciliation** means an informal meeting where my job counselor and I meet with another employment services staff person to try to settle the disagreement. The purpose of this meeting is to try to reach a mutual understanding about how to settle the disagreement.
- **Fair Hearing** means a legal process where an appeals referee will settle the disagreement. If the referee does not decide in my favor a sanction and/or loss of support services could result.

Mandatory Participants

I can request [redacted] Conciliation when:

1. I disagree with the contents or meaning of my Job Search Support Plan/Employment Plan; or
2. My job counselor sends me a Notice of Intent to Sanction.

I can request a Fair Hearing when:

1. I believe the action of the agency or county adversely affects me; or
2. I do not reach agreement with my job counselor in [redacted] Conciliation; or
3. My job counselor sends me a Notice of Intent to Sanction and I do not want [redacted] Conciliation; or
4. The county sends me a Notice of Adverse Action.

■■■■ BILL OF RIGHTS

Prepared by ■■■■ Legal Assistance

- 1. RIGHT TO APPLY.** All families in ■■■■ have the right to apply for ■■■■. Apply in writing, even if someone says you're not eligible. If you are eligible for ■■■■-diversion, you can choose between ■■■■ and ■■■■-diversion. Ask for help in comparing the two programs before you choose.
- 2. RIGHT TO ASK FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION.** You have the right to propose an education or training plan of up to one year -- instead of an immediate job search. Also, if you would not be able to find a job with your current skills, you have the right to training and education before you do a job search.
- 3. RIGHT TO FAIR AND SAFE WORK CONDITIONS.** You have the right to a job free from discrimination based on race, sex, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, receipt of public assistance, or religion. You have the right to safe, sanitary work conditions. Any job must pay at least the minimum wage: \$4.90 - 5.15 per hour.
- 4. RIGHT TO HELP GETTING A JOB AT A LIVING WAGE.** You have the right to help finding a job that pays enough to move you off welfare. You have the right to know how much per hour you would have to earn to make more than your cash grant. You have the right to know how much your child care and medical benefits are worth.
- 5. RIGHT TO BE EXCUSED FROM WORK REQUIREMENTS.** You don't have to get a job if you are disabled, seriously ill, taking care of a seriously ill or disabled family member, age 60 or older, unable to get transportation, or having a crisis.
- 6. RIGHT TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.** If you are experiencing domestic violence, you have the right to help in planning for your safety. While you are on a safety plan, your time on ■■■■ does not count towards your 60 months lifetime limit, and you can be excused from work requirements for up to twelve months.
- 7. RIGHT TO CHILD CARE.** The county should help you find decent child care. The county should pay for all child care charges, except \$5 per month. The county can't make you leave your child with an unwilling friend or relative. You don't have to work if no decent child care is available.
- 8. RIGHT TO MEDICAL CARE.** If you are eligible for ■■■■, you are automatically eligible for Medical Assistance (MA), which means free medical care and preventive services. If you are not eligible for ■■■■, or you choose not to get the cash portion, you could still be eligible for MA. Also, ask about ■■■■; it means free child and teen check-ups, and help from the county in scheduling and getting to appointments.
- 9. RIGHT TO PRIVACY.** Fraud investigators need your permission to enter your home without a search warrant. Before entering, they must give you a warning, explaining what they are looking for and why. You have the right to provide the necessary information in other ways, without a home visit.
- 10. RIGHT TO APPEAL.** You have the right to appeal any ■■■■ decision you think is unfair. The county must tell you, in writing, any time it makes a negative decision about you. Usually, you must file a written appeal within 30 days.

Call your local legal aid office for more information. In ■■■■ County, call ■■■■.