NASW
National Association of Social Workers

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Reauthorization

TIMELINE

» TANF expires on September 30, 2015.

» Congress must act to reauthorize or extend TANF by September 30, 2015. If TANF is not reauthorized, over 3.5 million people would go without benefits.

BACKGROUND

» TANF provides basic cash assistance to families who live well below the federal poverty level (FPL). It is a safety net program that meets the needs of the nation's most vulnerable people. Its overall goal should be poverty reduction.

» TANF benefits low income families that have no other source of income. It allows them to meet their basic needs such as housing.

NASW RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase supports for working families through TANF.

» In all but a few states, the amount of the TANF benefit is less than half the official poverty line. The federal government should increase the floor for TANF benefits to 100% FPL.

Eliminate education barriers

» Currently, TANF defines countable work activities too narrowly. In TANF reauthorization the definition of work should be expanded to include higher education, ESL, literacy, vocational training and elementary and secondary education.

Address employment barriers

» TANF must address physical and mental illness, disability, substance abuse and domestic and sexual violence issues as being barriers to employment.

Provide child poverty reduction bonus

» TANF should include financial incentives to states that significantly reduce child poverty, and to those that lift sanctions denying aid to children whose parents engage in conduct that is deemed inappropriate.

Restore immigrant eligibility

» Federal funding for assistance to documented immigrant populations needs to be fully restored.

Enhance the capacity of the welfare system infrastructure

» The additional tasks for service provision being placed on frontline workers, such as social workers, calls for a significant investment in training to enhance their capacity to responsibly serve vulnerable families.

Expand other programs supporting low-income families

» Further expenditures are called for under the Child Care Development Block Grant. Expansion of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit and making the federal Child and Dependent Care Credit refundable is necessary.

» Suspend, at least until recovery has been achieved, the five year time limit on receipt of TANF benefits.

» The interest and involvement of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in the reauthorization of TANF is rooted in the mission and core values of the social work profession. These core values, which include social justice and belief in the dignity and worth of each person, have been embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history and are the foundation of social work's purpose and perspective.

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