



Reshaping TANF: Can We Make a Case for Change?

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Goals for Reshaping TANF

- ***Access:*** Increase TANF's effectiveness as a safety net for deeply poor families
- ***Responsiveness:*** Improve TANF's ability to respond to changes in the economy
- ***Focus:*** Reduce emphasis on obligation; increase emphasis on opportunity
- ***Targeting:*** Encourage implementation of effective work programs for hard-to-employ
- ***Innovation:*** Encourage entirely new approaches

Obstacles In the Way of Progress (1)

- **Misinformation:** Welfare today is NOT welfare as it was in 1996; no acknowledgement of the emphasis on work requirements, sanctions and time limits
- **Politics:** Welfare bashing continues; increase in TANF caseloads is perceived as a bad thing even in this economy
- **Weak up-to-date knowledge base:** Limited research available to answer questions on the characteristics and experiences of the current caseload; very limited post-DRA information; limited knowledge available to inform the front line

Obstacles In the Way of Progress (2)

- **Limited financial resources:** In the face of limited (or no) additional funding, are there ways to use existing resources more effectively?
- **Constrained Flexibility:** Are there ways to provide states with more flexibility than they now have, possibly in exchange for a focus on outcomes instead of process.
- **Limited “ties that bind”:** Diversity of state approaches and circumstances makes consensus for major change hard to come by
- **Who cares?:** Not on many policymakers’ agendas