



TIPS FOR FUNDERS:

Understanding the connections between family homelessness and TANF policies

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) serves very few poor families — only one in four families living in poverty. Furthermore, TANF payments are very low and their value has eroded over time as most states have not adjusted TANF payments to account for inflation.

Today, in every state, a family that relies entirely on TANF for income cannot cover the cost of fair market rent. Often public policies, government programs, research and advocacy focused on family homelessness are not connected with policies, programs, research and advocacy focused on welfare to work programs or poverty.

Funders can, however, play an important role in addressing the gap between state TANF benefits and Fair Market Rents, as well as strengthening the relationship between state TANF programs and housing programs.

Now is the time to build coalitions linking advocates working to end homelessness with advocates working to strengthen the safety net TANF payments and other benefits can provide for needy families.

What can funders do?

EDUCATE

Educate state policymakers and the public about the connections between family homelessness, housing costs, and inadequate TANF benefits for families with children

CONVENE

Provide meeting space, host forums, and help facilitate public education and coalition building to build shared knowledge and effective advocacy for changes in TANF policies

MATCH

Provide challenge grants to match investments of TANF funding in programs designs to help prevent and end family homelessness, including rapid re-housing, housing stabilization supports, and subsidized jobs

SUPPORT

Support research and evaluations to measure the impact of TANF-funded programs that provide assistance tailored to the needs of homeless families

What state-level changes to TANF can funders support?



Increase TANF payments to recover the lost value and to cover the cost of rental housing, which will protect families from homelessness. States should also establish cost of living adjustments based on inflation so benefits do not lose their value



Use TANF funds to provide rapid re-housing assistance and housing stabilization support services for families experiencing homelessness



Reduce or remove administrative barriers and modify work participation requirements and other program rules that can result in the exclusion of the most vulnerable families from TANF programs



Create or expand subsidized and transitional jobs that provide meaningful opportunities for work and the development of skills and experience that can lead to better employment opportunities



Provide more flexible work supports tailored to the needs of families experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including childcare, transportation assistance, and services to address employment barriers related to limited education and the effects of trauma, mental health, and substance use disorders



Strengthen the connections among welfare-to-work, job training, and homeless assistance programs to facilitate linkages for families in need

*Still have questions about your role as a funder?
Contact Anne Miskey, Executive Director of Funders
Together to End Homelessness at 617.245.0314 or
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To learn more about TANF policies and why the safety net for poor families has weakened in recent years, we recommend:

- ◇ [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration's TANF Information Memorandum](#)
- ◇ [TANF Cash Benefits Continued To Lose Value in 2013](#)
- ◇ [TANF Emerging from the Downturn a Weaker Safety Net: State-By-State Fact Sheets](#)
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