

# TANF and MOE Spending on Fatherhood in FY 2022 Remains Extremely Limited

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The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) statute at 42 U.S.C. 601(a)<sup>1</sup> and 604(a)(1)<sup>2</sup> requires that TANF grants be used in any manner reasonably calculated to accomplish one or more of the following four purposes:

1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
2. End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
3. Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

Fatherhood advocates have looked to purpose 4 of the statute to justify state expenditures of TANF and state maintenance-of-efforts (MOE) monies on fatherhood programs and other father-supportive services to enhance the economic and parenting potential of fathers, particularly those who are low-income and non-residential. MOE is the amount a state is required to spend on TANF activities based on their spending on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) prior to the creation of the TANF program.

States are not required to spend all their annual TANF block grant allocation each year and many states have accumulated carry-over funds as their TANF caseloads have dropped which they can use for other purposes or save as a "rainy day fund" to help when needs arise during recessions.

1 Subchapter IV – Grants to States for Aid and Services to Needy Families with Children and for Child-Welfare Services, Title 42 U.S.C., Chapter 7, Section 601. <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter7/subchapter4&edition=prelim>.

2 Subchapter IV – Grants to States for Aid and Services to Needy Families with Children and for Child-Welfare Services, Title 42 U.S.C., Chapter 7, Section 604. <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter7/subchapter4&edition=prelim>.

As summarized in Chapter 11 of *Policies and programs affecting fathers: A state-by-state report*,<sup>3</sup> the state percentage of expenditures on fatherhood and two-family formation and maintenance activities in fiscal year (FY) 2020 ranged from 0-20% and the national spending average was 0.5% of total TANF and MOE transfers. While 22 states used at least some funds for fatherhood and two-parent family formation and maintenance programs, the actual spending for fatherhood was substantially lower since some states include afterschool care programs and other initiatives to support two-parent families in that funding category. Additionally, in FY 2020, 40 states and the District of Columbia failed to spend their TANF money and ended FY 2020 with \$5.2 billion of unobligated balances.



New data from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) on how states spent their TANF and MOE funds in FY 2022 similarly shows that very little of the \$31.3 billion expenditures and transfers made by states during the year supported activities dealing with TANF purpose 4 dealing with fatherhood and two-parent family programs.<sup>4</sup> Although expenditures for fatherhood and two-parent family programs in 2022 were 7.3% higher than FY 2021 expenditures (\$118,017,254) and they totaled \$126,604,275, they comprised only 0.4% of all TANF/MOE dollars spent. In FY 2022, total TANF and MOE expenditures amounted to \$31,342,645,652.

Percentages of expenditures on fatherhood and two-parent family formation and maintenance activities made by states in FY 2022 ranged from 0% to 25.1% with 30 states and the District of Columbia spending nothing and 20 states spending at least something. The percentage of TANF expenditures on fatherhood and two-parent family formation in FY 2022 compared to FY 2021 increased in 14 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Utah. In six states, the percentages declined: Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, Texas, and Wisconsin.

The new data released by OFA also reports on unspent TANF funds.<sup>5</sup> In FY 2022, 40 states and the District of Columbia had unobligated TANF balances that totaled to \$6.5 billion, and 16 states had TANF reserves that equaled or exceeded their annual TANF block grant. These were: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Table 1 shows state percentages of expenditures on fatherhood and two-parent family formation and maintenance activities in FY 2022 and unobligated TANF balances at the end of FY 2022.

3 Pearson, J., & Wildfeuer, R. (2022). *Policies and programs affecting fathers: A state-by-state report* (Chapter 11: Responsible Fatherhood). Center for Policy Research and Fatherhood Research & Practice Network. <https://www.frpn.org/asset/policies-and-programs-affecting-fathers-state-state-report-chapter-11-responsible-fatherhood>.

4 Office of Family Assistance. (2024). *TANF and MOE spending and transfers by activity, FY 2022*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/data/tanf-and-moe-spending-and-transfers-activity-fy-2022>.

5 *Ibid.*

**Table 1. State Percentage of Expenditures on Fatherhood and Two-Parent Family Formation and Maintenance Activities in FY 2022 and Unobligated TANF Balances at End of FY 2022**

State	Percentage of Expenditures on Fatherhood & Two-Parent Family Formation and Maintenance Activities in FY 2022	Unobligated TANF Balances at end of FY 2022 (\$ in Millions)	State	Percentage of Expenditures on Fatherhood & Two-Parent Family Formation and Maintenance Activities in FY 2022	Unobligated TANF Balances at end of FY 2022 (\$ in Millions)
Alabama	2.1%	122.7	Montana	0.0%	60.7
Alaska	0.0%	0.55	Nebraska	1.7%	119.8
Arizona	0.0%	60.4	Nevada	0.0%	45.4
Arkansas	10.0 %	65.9	New Hampshire	0.0%	61.8
California	0.0%	0.0	New Jersey	0.4%	0.0
Colorado	0.2%	107.9	New Mexico	0.0%	0.0
Connecticut	3.0%	0.0	New York	0.0%	1,117.6
Delaware	0.0%	20.2	North Carolina	0.0%	0.004
DC	0.0%	31.6	North Dakota	0.0%	12.9
Florida	0.0%	221.9	Ohio	1.0%	0.0
Georgia	0.0%	160	Oklahoma	8.7%	294
Hawaii	0.2%	402.3	Oregon	0.0%	181
Idaho	0.0%	10.9	Pennsylvania	0.2%	776
Illinois	0.0%	0.0	Rhode Island	0.0%	82.4
Indiana	5.9%	113.9	South Carolina	1.5%	10.1
Iowa	0.0%	45.5	South Dakota	0.0%	24.5
Kansas	1.5%	64.6	Tennessee	0.0%	808.2
Kentucky	0.2%	107.9	Texas	0.0%	237.4
Louisiana	0.5%	0.0	Utah	0.8%	91.1
Maine	0.0%	89.1	Vermont	0.0%	0.0
Maryland	0.2%	54.4	Virginia	0.0%	56.2
Massachusetts	0.0%	0.0	Washington	0.0%	60
Michigan	0.0%	124.4	West Virginia	0.0%	117.2
Minnesota	0.0%	50.9	Wisconsin	0.3%	268.8
Mississippi	25.1%	145.9	Wyoming	0.0%	261
Missouri	3.9%	0.0			

Source: Office of Family Assistance. (2024). *TANF and MOE spending and transfers by activity, FY 2022*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/data/tanf-and-moe-spending-and-transfers-activity-fy-2022>.





Although TANF is the primary source of funding for states to provide basic cash assistance for families with children when they have very low incomes, only 23% of total TANF and MOE funds were used for basic assistance in FY 2022, with 34 states spending less than 20%.<sup>6</sup> In 1997, when the program replaced AFDC, 71% of TANF expenditures were on basic assistance. This spending pattern translates into extremely low benefit levels which affect the wellbeing of children, especially Black children who experience poverty at twice the rate of White children and often live in states with the weakest TANF programs and the lowest benefit levels.<sup>7,8</sup>

Spending on work activities, direct work support, and supportive services were also low in FY 2022. In FY 2022, 8.1% of total TANF and MOE funds were devoted to work, education, and training activities and 42 states and the District of Columbia spent less than 15% of their TANF and MOE funds on work, education, and training activities. Additionally, only 2.7% of total TANF and MOE funds nationally were dedicated to work supports and supportive services (e.g., transportation benefits, mental health services, and domestic violence services to support work activity).

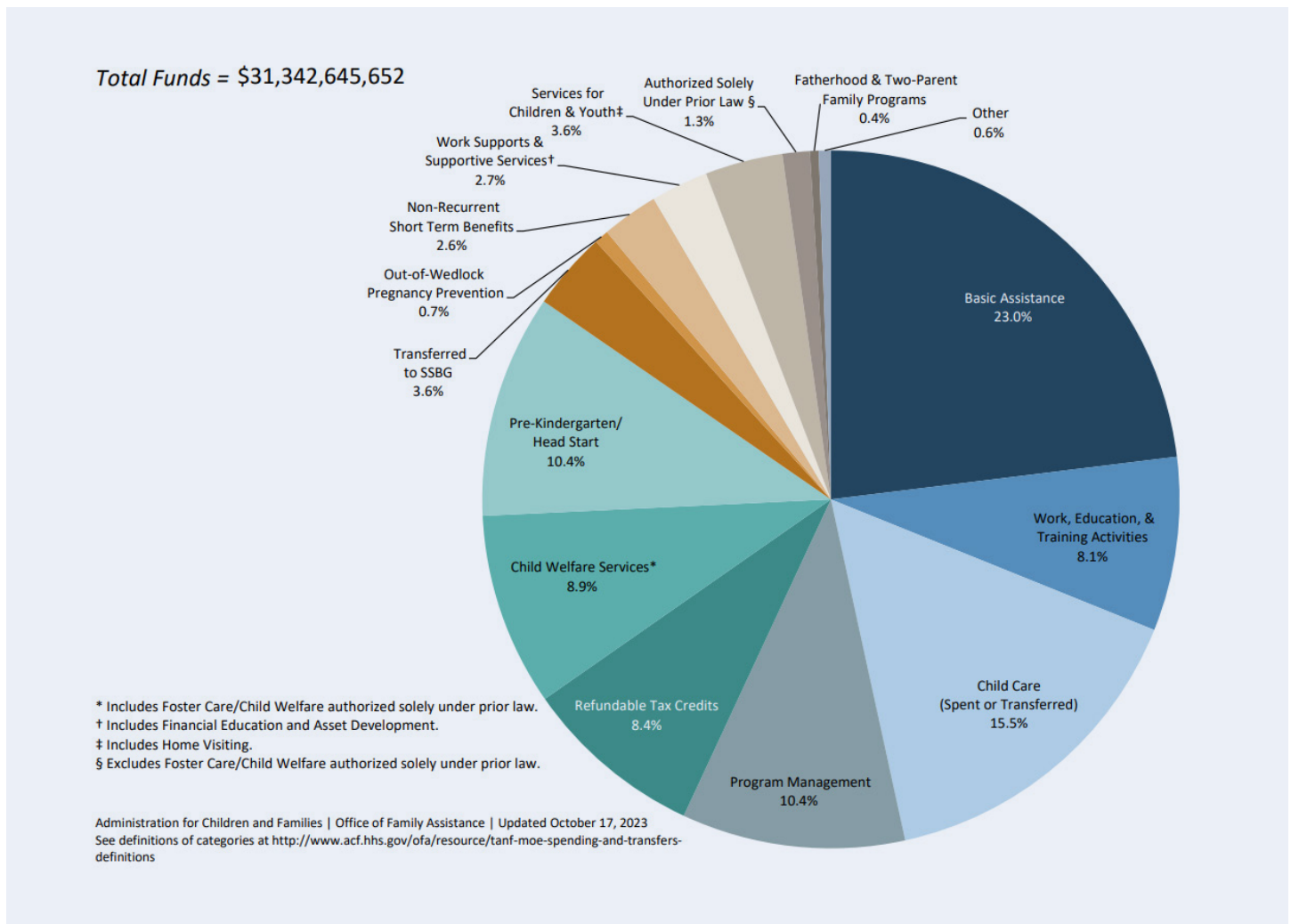
Figure 1, from OFA, shows the proportion of TANF and MOE spending in various categories in FY 2022. Taken together, national spending on TANF purpose 3: out-of-wedlock pregnancy prevention (\$208,961,072) and TANF purpose 4: fatherhood and two-parent family formation and maintenance programs (\$126,604,275) comprised 1.1% of total TANF and MOE activity in FY 2022.<sup>9</sup>



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- 6 Office of Family Assistance. (2024). *TANF and MOE spending and transfers by activity, FY 2022*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/data/tanf-and-moe-spending-and-transfers-activity-fy-2022>.
  - 7 Azevedo-McCaffrey, D. & Safawi, A. (2022). *To promote equity, states should invest more TANF dollars in basic assistance*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/states-should-invest-more-of-their-tanf-dollars-in-basic-assistance>.
  - 8 Shrivastava, A. (2023). *To strengthen economic security and advance equity, states should invest more TANF dollars in basic assistance*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/policy-brief-states-should-invest-more-of-their-tanf-dollars-in-basic>.
  - 9 Office of Family Assistance. (2024). *TANF and MOE spending and transfers by activity, FY 2022*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/data/tanf-and-moe-spending-and-transfers-activity-fy-2022>.



Figure 1: TANF and MOE Spending and Transfers by Activity, FY 2022



The federal government has typically interpreted TANF purpose 4 to include marriage education, marriage and relationship skills programs, parent and co-parent skills workshops, and public awareness campaigns on the value of marriage and responsible fatherhood. Advocates and others, however, have urged states to use this funding source to support efforts to equip and empower residential and non-residential fathers with the skills (e.g., parenting, co-parenting, economic stability, etc.) necessary for them to achieve their best potential as a parent, partner/co-parent, and provider.

Some states have adopted this point of view too. For example, Ohio uses TANF funds to fund its Commission on Fatherhood.<sup>10</sup> Housed within the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, the mission of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood is to enhance the well-being of Ohio’s children by providing opportunities for fathers to become better parents, partners, and providers. Its activities include funding fatherhood programs throughout the state to improve the economic stability of fathers, foster responsible parenting and to promote healthy relationships.

10 Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. (2024). <https://fatherhood.ohio.gov/>.



Colorado uses TANF funds to finance its Improved Payments and Child Success (IMPACS) program. Under this program, interested county child support programs agree to partner with public or private employment and training programs to which they refer unemployed and underemployed parents who owe child support for help with employment. Once referred, job training partners are responsible for engaging parents, assessing their needs, helping them find and keep jobs, improving parent-child relationships and addressing the many challenges they face to working, earning, and paying child support. This includes providing sustained case management along with indirect financial support to stabilize their food, housing, and transportation situation.<sup>11</sup>

Pursuant to 2021 legislation enacted by the Tennessee legislature to cap its reserve at 100% of its annual block grant allocation, Tennessee used excess TANF funds in 2022 to award seven organizations \$25 million apiece for three-year, innovative, pilot projects aimed at helping TANF-eligible families achieve self-sufficiency.<sup>12</sup> In 2022, Tennessee also funded an initiative to create a statewide fatherhood grant program and is expected to fund an undetermined number of responsible fatherhood programs across the state in the next several years.<sup>13</sup> In FY 2022, Tennessee had an annual TANF block grant of \$190,891,768 and \$808,194,074 in TANF reserves.<sup>14</sup>



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- 11 Byrne, A., Thibodeau, H., & Lichota, A. (2023). *Colorado Improved Payments and Child Success (IMPACS): Evaluation of early program implementation and outcomes*. Center for Policy Research. Received from [https://centerforpolicyresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/CPR\\_IMPACS-FullReport\\_Dec-2023.pdf](https://centerforpolicyresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/CPR_IMPACS-FullReport_Dec-2023.pdf)
- 12 Tennessee Department of Human Services. (2022). *\$175 million in TANF funds awarded to seven groups across the state for 3-year pilot initiatives*. <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/news/2022/5/5/-175-million-in-tanf-funds-awarded-to-seven-groups-across-the-state-for-3-year-pilot-initiatives-html>.
- 13 Tennessee Department of Human Services. (2022). *Request for proposals for development of Tennessee fatherhood initiative* (RFP # 34513-862223). <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/generalservices/documents/cpo/rfp-updates/34513-86223/34513-86223%20Fatherhood%20Initiative%20RFP.pdf>
- 14 Office of Family Assistance. (2024). *TANF and MOE spending and transfers by activity, FY 2022*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/data/tanf-and-moe-spending-and-transfers-activity-fy-2022>.

