
Massachusetts TANF Program Summary and Analysis of Engagement in Additional Activities April - June 2011 Sample

The federal Claims Resolution Act of 2010 instituted new reporting requirements for States about individuals' engagement in work under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. This is a summary and analysis of Engagement in Additional Work Activities by Work-Eligible individuals (WEI) who received TANF in Massachusetts in April - June 2011. This narrative will be posted on our internet site (www.mass.gov/dta), as well as being sent directly to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Report Intent:

For this report, Massachusetts analyzed the April - June 2011 data to better determine the extent to which work eligible individuals are engaged in activities that are directed toward attaining self-sufficiency. This includes:

- Tracking work-eligible clients participating in activities but whose total hours do not meet the federal participation requirements.
- Tracking work-eligible clients meeting the state requirements through activities such as housing search but not the federal requirements because the activities are non-countable under federal rules.
- Determining the principal reasons work-eligible clients did not have sufficient hours of participation.

TANF Data Reporting System:

The Massachusetts process for reporting into the Federal TANF Data Reporting System (FTDRS) is based on a randomly selected sample of the TANF universe of cases. The process is automated and many data fields are populated directly from the Department's eligibility system. Quality Control reviewers augment the data and correct the pre-filled information as necessary. This report is based on all the work-eligible individuals included in the April - June 2011 samples.

Work Participation Rate:

Federal law requires that states have a minimum of 50% of their work-eligible adults in federally-countable work activities in order to maintain compliance with program requirements and avoid federal penalties. The TANF Caseload Reduction Credit, however, allows for a reduction of the 50% Work Participation Rate, based on comparison of the prior year's caseload and expenditures to a base year. The caseload reduction credit application calculated Massachusetts' Work Participation Rate target for FFY2011 (including April - June 2011) to be 0%¹.

¹ The 0% target was calculated based on the caseload reduction credit application sent in December 2006. Subsequently, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)

The initial work participation rate for April - June 2011 is 11.8% before application of the TANF 30% cap on counting education and training activities toward the Work Participation Rate. Factoring in the 30% cap, the rate is 7.7%. However, an additional 52.2% were in compliance with state participation requirements, as detailed in Table 1 below.

Countable Work Activities:

TANF work activities require the following:

- Single parents with children six years or older are meeting the federal participation requirements if they participate in a countable core activity for 30 hours a week for each week they are receiving TANF benefits during the review month.
- Single parents with children five years old or younger meet the federal participation requirements if they participate in a countable core activity for 20 hours a week for each week they are receiving TANF benefits during the review month.

Core Activities include:

- Unsubsidized employment
- Subsidized employment (Private or Public Sector)
- Job Search and Job Readiness (time limited)
- Community Service
- Vocational Education Training (time limited)

Non-Core Activities include:

- Secondary School or GED program (Teen Parents)
- Job Skills Training directly related to employment
- Education directly related to employment

Activities and hours must be verified. All other activities are considered non-countable.

Summary and Analysis:

Massachusetts state law, Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1995, provides the requirements for participation for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children recipients.² As the implementation of welfare reform in Massachusetts preceded action on the federal level, there is not complete alignment between state and federal regulations. Clients comply with the state requirements whenever they differ from the federal rules and, as a result, many families that are complying with state requirements cannot be counted toward the federal participation rate.

The following table summarizes the engagement status of all work eligible individuals for the three months sampled. The percentage of work eligible individuals meeting their federal requirement, prior to implementing the 30% cap on education and training activities, was

implemented in part through TANF-ACF-PI-2009-02 allowed states to use the credit they qualified for in either 2007 or 2008, whichever was lower, and allowed for extending that credit through FFY2011.

² TAFDC is the program created by the Massachusetts version of federal welfare reform.

11.8%. For those work-eligible individuals without hours, Question 14b of the ACF-812 form detailed other possible statuses. By reviewing non-engaged work-eligible individuals, we get a better understanding of the role played by state exemptions in explaining why we will have a difficult time meeting our federal work requirement.

Table 1: April - June 2011 Sample Work Eligible Adults		% of Federally Required
	551	
Disregarded (from federal requirements)	78	
Meeting federal hours	49	11.8% ³
Complied with state but not federal requirements	258	52.2%
State disability exemption	131	
Non-verified hours	18	
Non-countable hours	18	
Other state exemption	91	
Insufficient hours	80	19.6%
Sanction in Progress	36	7.0%
First 30 days	16	1.0%
Assigned, activity has not begun	13	2.9%
Other	21	5.7%

Summary:

Based on these findings, 64% of Massachusetts federally-required TAFDC participants who are work-eligible under federal rules were in compliance with either their state (52.2%) or federal work requirement (11.8%). While our participation rate may be low, compliance with state requirements was much higher. Since the objective of the state requirements is also to move clients toward self-sufficiency, we believe the results are reflective of our commitment to the goals of welfare reform.

³ These percentages are not adjusted for the 30% cap on education and training. Imposing that cap would lower the “meeting federal hours” percentage to 7.7%.