



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES

2009 TANF Task Force Annual Report

Background:

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant program was most recently reauthorized as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2006. Reauthorization of the block grant program is scheduled to occur in 2010.

The TANF block grant provides critical income and work support to very low income families with children. Research indicates that approximately 40 percent of the adults served in the TANF person have a disability that impedes employment. Many state programs are not providing adequate supports to families that include a child or a parent with a disability that would maximize their ability to participate in the workforce or in employment development programs. Further, research indicates that families that include a child or a parent with a disability are disproportionately likely to lose the income support from the program which puts families at greater risk of falling further below the poverty level.

The TANF Task Force is committed to ensuring that families that include persons with disabilities are afforded equal opportunities to engage in TANF programs – including both receipt of cash assistance and employment-related services that can help parents find and retain jobs – and appropriate accommodations in those programs and TANF-related requirements.

2009 Activities:

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) included \$5 billion for the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund that can be used to reimburse states for up to 80 percent of additional costs they spend on providing cash assistance, short-term benefits, and subsidized employment. The TANF Task Force hosted a webinar on how the TANF Emergency Contingency Funds can be used to support families that include persons with disabilities for state and local partners of the national CCD members. Over 500 individuals participated in the webinar.

The TANF Task Force outlined two guiding principles for TANF reauthorization that was included in a letter to Secretary Sebelius:

- The TANF program must offer states *incentives* to engage individuals with disabilities in activities that will allow them to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency and provide adequate *flexibility* to ensure that work activities are tailored to the unique needs of families.
- States should take measures to ensure that needy, eligible low-income families, particularly families that include a person with a disability, receive the benefits they are eligible for and do not fall into deeper poverty.

The TANF Task Force participated in meetings with other national partners to work toward consensus on recommendations for the overarching structure of TANF reauthorization and to educate partners on the prevalence of people with disabilities on TANF.

2010 Activities:

TANF is scheduled to be reauthorized in 2010. Should the Administration and Congress actively pursue reauthorization of the TANF program, it will be a very busy year for the TANF Task Force as there is much broader recognition today that the program must be modified to better serve families that include persons with disabilities. There is, however, growing skepticism that this Congress will be able to reauthorize the program before the end of the session which would result in a much lighter workload for the Task Force.

In 2010, the TANF Task Force will:

- Support efforts to extend the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund to ensure states have access to additional resources that can be used to provide cash assistance, subsidized employment, and short-term assistance to families;
- Educate the Administration and Congress about the prevalence and needs of families that include persons with disabilities and how policy proposals for reauthorization will impact parents and children with disabilities;
- Develop legislative proposals for TANF reauthorization to improve how the programs serves parents and children with disabilities; and
- Work collaboratively with national partners to advance a broader TANF agenda that better serves low income families with children, including families that include people with disabilities.