

CASH AND FOOD BENEFITS FOR LOW-INCOME OREGONIANS

1. INTRODUCTION

There are many programs that help low income Oregonians meet their daily needs. This flyer will mention some of the state and federal benefits that are available to low income people.

2. TANF

TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) is cash assistance given to families to pay for rent, utilities and other necessities.

To qualify for TANF, you must be caring for your child or a child that you are related to. The family must be low income, either due to unemployment, low wages, disability or absence of one parent.

Most people who receive TANF will be required to participate in the JOBS Program. That is a program that will prepare you for employment and help you to find a job.

If you want more information about the TANF Program, call the **Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292)** or your local Legal Aid Services Office for advice or possible representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs and for additional written information about the TANF program.

3. PRE-TANF PROGRAM

You will most likely be placed in the Pre-TANF Program if you are applying for TANF. The purpose of the Pre-TANF Program is to help you find work before being put on a monthly cash grant, and to assess whether you have special needs that keep you from working. The Pre-TANF Program lasts for up to, but not more than, 45 days.

While you are in the Pre-TANF Program, you can get cash to help you and your family meet your basic living expenses. These expenses include: rent, utilities, diapers, toiletries, etc. There is a limit to how much money you can receive for basic living expenses while you are in the Pre-TANF Program. It is equal to twice the monthly grant amount you would receive if you were on a cash grant.

But, if you need extra help, you may be able to get more money as a “support service payment”.

This is extra money you need for your job search and other activities listed in your case plan. It includes money for childcare and transportation. There is no limit to the amount of money you can receive as a support service payment.

In order to receive a basic living expense or support service payment, you should request it in writing. Let your case manager know what

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you need the money for and how much you need. Be specific. If possible, include copies of the bills you are asking to be paid. Keep a copy of your request.

OAR 461-135-0475

If you are denied payment for a basic living expense or a support service payment, either in writing or verbally, you may request a hearing. You may also request a hearing if your case manager doesn't make a decision on time for you to pay your bills. In most cases, you will have a right to an expedited hearing, which must occur within 5 working days of your request.

OAR 461-025-0310(1)(j), 310(1)(b)(B), 315(1)(e)

If you want information about the Pre-TANF Program, call the **Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292)** or your local Legal Aid Services Office for advice or possible representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.

4. PRE-SSI PROGRAM – “SFPSS” PROGRAM

If you are receiving TANF benefits and you are disabled, you or another adult on your grant may be eligible for a special TANF program call the “State Family Pre-SSI/SSDI Program” or “SFPSS” program. This program is intended to help people who cannot work and will be applying for Social Security Disability benefits or SSI.

To qualify for this program, you must have a disability that is severe enough to meet the disability requirements for SSI or Social Security Disability. You must also apply for Social Security and SSI. You can stay in the SFPSS program while you are waiting for your Social Security or SSI to be approved.

The SFPSS program benefits are higher than the TANF grant. But, to be in the program, you must sign an “interim assistance agreement”. That means that you agree to pay back your portion of the SFPSS grant once your SSI is approved. The state will take part of your SSI back award if you win your SSI case.

If your SSI is not approved, you do not have to pay back your SFPSS. Although it seems like you will lose some money this way, that will not happen. That is because when the Social Security Administration approves your SSI, they reduce your back benefits by the amount you receive from the regular TANF program.

People who are in the SFPSS program will not have to participate in most TANF JOBS activities. But, you will have a case plan and you must cooperate with DHS by applying for Social Security Disability and SSI.

OAR 461-135-1195

5. JOBS SUPPORT PAYMENTS AND COOPERATION INCENTIVE

Once you are in the Pre-TANF or TANF program, and you participate in the JOBS program, or if you are in the Post-TANF program (see below), you are eligible to receive support payments to enable you to find work and keep your job. Payments may be made for:

- child care
- transportation
- tools
- fees
- clothing
- a telephone or message system
- purchase of a vehicle

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- eyeglasses
- dental work
- counseling
- anything else that you need in order to work

The payments must be reasonable, necessary and cost-effective. Also, there must be no other lower cost alternative.

In some cases, you may be able to get help with your basic living expenses, such as rent and utilities. It may be hard to get if you are on TANF because DHS expects you to use your TANF grant for those needs.

OAR 461-190-0211

While you are in the TANF program, you will be eligible for a cash cooperation incentive as part of your grant, as long as you are progressing in the JOBS Program. The amount depends on your family size.

OAR 461-135-0210
OAR 461-155-0035

6. POST-TANF PROGRAM and JOB TRANSITION SERVICES

- The **Post-TANF program** provides cash benefits to people who have left the TANF program because they have become employed and earn too much money for TANF. This program pays \$100 per month for up to 12 months to each parent who qualifies. That means that a two parent household can receive \$200 per month if both parents are working. People who are in the Post-TANF program may receive JOBS support service payments in addition to the Post-TANF grant.

In order to receive these benefits, the household income must be 250% of the federal poverty

level, or less. The person must meet federally required JOBS participation rates (usually 30 hours per week) through paid work or a combination of paid work and other JOBS activities.

OAR 461-135-1250

- **JOBS Transition Services** are available to clients who are no longer eligible for TANF or Pre-TANF benefits. You may receive transitional benefits and services for up to 12 months if the you become employed and lose eligibility due to income. The benefits that are available are jobs support service payments of up to \$1000 during the 12 month period.

If a you lose TANF eligibility for reasons other than employment while you are participating in a specific JOBS activity, transitional benefits and services remain available only to complete the JOBS activity.

OAR 461-190-0241

7. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE – TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS (TA-DVS)

Emergency Assistance is no longer funded as of May 1, 2004. But, if you are a victim of domestic violence you may still get up to \$1200 in emergency assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) program.

OAR 461-135-1200 to -1235

If you want information about the Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) program, call the **Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292)** or your local Legal Aid Services Office for possible advice or representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.

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8. CHILD CARE

Child care payments are available through the JOBS, TANF childcare and Employment Related Daycare (ERDC) programs handled by DHS. Read more about JOBS program support payments above.

Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) pays a portion of child care expenses for low-income parents who do not receive TANF. Beginning on October 1, 2010, this program will only be available for people who have left the TANF program. DHS will have a waiting list for other parents.

Apply for this or any of the other child care programs at your DHS office.

OAR 461-160-0193; OAR 461-135-0400

9. SSI FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

SSI (Supplemental Security Income) is a federal program for disabled adults and children. If someone in the household receives SSI, that person will not receive TANF, although other people in the household may still be eligible for TANF.

SSI benefits do not count as a resource or income when DHS determines if other people in the household are eligible for TANF.

SSI will affect the amount of food stamps the household receives. If you have disabled children or if you are disabled, contact your local Social Security office to apply for SSI.

10. SPECIAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE

Individuals who receive cash or medical assistance may be entitled to supplemental cash benefits known as “special needs”. These are

needs that are not met with the cash grant, such as moving costs, transportation costs and special diets.

Some of the special needs are given on a one-time basis only and some are given on an ongoing basis. Some may be available through TA-DVS and the JOBS Programs.

The following are some of the special needs which can be met through additional cash benefits.

<u>Need</u>	<u>Program that Provides for the Need:</u>
Special Diet Allowance	TANF, Refugee, OSIP, OSIPM, MAA, MAF, EXT, SAC, SFPSS, SSI
Telephone Allowance (Needed for Medical Reasons)	SSI, OSIPM, (Individuals who qualify for SSI receiving in home services.)
Moving Costs	OSIP, OSIPM,
Delinquent Property Taxes	OSIP, OSIPM,
Restaurant Meals	OSIP, OSIPM, SSI
Laundry Allowances	OSIP, OSIPM
Home Repairs	OSIP, OSIPM
Room & Board	OSIP, OSIPM,
Food for Guide Dogs and Special Assistance Animals	OSIP, OSIPM

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Home Adaptations to Accommodate a Client's Physical Condition	OSIP, OSIPM
Transportation Allowance	OSIPM

OAR 461-155-500 through 690

There are other special needs allowances. For more information, ask your caseworker or call the Public Benefits Hotline at (800) 520-5292.

Who can qualify for the allowance is noted after each need item. Special rules apply for each program.

11. FOSTER CARE PAYMENTS

Non-parent caretakers of children may qualify for foster care payments for those children. The benefits are higher than TANF benefits and may have little or no affect on the TANF grant. Also, the caretaker may elect to have the child be considered separately for food stamp purposes so the payments will not affect food stamps for the family.

Apply for foster care payments through DHS.

12. LOW-INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIEAP)

LIEAP is available to low-income families to help with winter utility expenses. LIEAP does not count against any public assistance benefits.

Apply for LIEAP at a community action office. To find the name and telephone number of your local community action office, go to:

<http://www.oregon.gov/OHCS/CRD/CSS/docs/HomelessReferralList.xls>

13. EARNED INCOME CREDIT (EIC)

Low-income families with earnings qualify for the federal and state Earned Income Credit. You may be able to receive EIC in two ways:

1. An advance in your paycheck
2. One annual payment received at the time of tax returns

A family can even get retroactive federal EIC's for the last three tax years if they have not already filed tax returns for those years.

EIC is not counted for TANF or food stamps.

OAR 461-145-0140

Apply for EIC by filing a 1040, 1040EZ or 1040A federal income tax form. If you have children, you will also have to fill out "Schedule EIC".

Apply for your Oregon tax credits by filling out the Earned Income Credit and working family audit lines of your Oregon tax return.

14. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES (OVR) PAYMENTS

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVR) can provide payments to the client it serves. OVR may be able to help you with some of the costs of items that are directly related to getting and maintaining employment. Some examples are:

- Training
- Education
- Transportation

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depending on each individual's need. Talk to your OVRS counselor about these payments.

OAR 461-145-0585

15. YOUR FOOD STAMP (SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, "SNAP") ALLOTMENT

If you are not already receiving the maximum allotment, you may be able to increase the amount you receive.

1. Medical Deductions

- a. If you are over 60 or disabled, you may deduct medical expenses that exceed \$35 per month.
- b. If costs can be estimated, you can average them over the redetermination period.
- c. Medical costs cannot be deducted if they are past due or if they are reported in the last month of your redetermination period and after your food stamps have been mailed out.

OAR 461-160-0415; 461-160-0430(1)(d)

2. Utility Deduction

- a. The standard utility allowance is a standard amount based on the average utility costs for an Oregon household. This allowance is a year-round allowance.
- b. You may qualify for one of four different allowances, depending on which utility bills you pay and how many different utility bills you pay. You will get the full utility allowance if you pay for heating or cooling separately from your rent. If you only pay for water, sewer, garbage or telephone, you will get one of the lower utility allowances.

- c. You will also get the full utility allowance if you receive a Low Income Energy Assistance Payment (LIEAP).

OAR 461-160-0420

Family Services Manual Food Stamps F-23

3. Child Support Payments

- a. If you have a child support order and you are making payments, either on current amounts or arrearages, make sure to inform your worker. You will get a deduction from your income, and that will increase your food stamps.

OAR 461-160-0430(1)(e)

4. Child Care Deductions

- a. If you have out of pocket childcare costs, you can get a deduction of up to \$200 per month for each child under age 2, and up to \$175 per month for older children.
- b. These costs must be related to your work or job training.

OAR 461-160-0430(1)(c)

If you want information about these or other benefits programs, call the **Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292)** or your local Legal Aid Services Office for advice or possible representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.

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