



Guiding Principles for TANF Spending

With more than \$700 million in unspent federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, Tennessee has a unique opportunity to make a substantial long-term contribution to the lives of children living in families with the lowest incomes. The Tennessee Disability Coalition and Tennessee Justice Center have convened a group of organizations and experts to look closely at the surplus and establish a list of Guiding Principles that the State should use as it moves forward to ensure that these funds are used effectively and have the greatest impact possible in reducing child poverty and assisting low-income families to meet basic needs. The organizations listed below support the following Guiding Principles and urge the State to apply these principles as they develop a plan to allocate the current surplus and future TANF funds.

1. Diverse views and voices should be involved, including those families most affected.
2. Spending should prioritize reducing the number of children living in deep poverty.
3. Spending decisions should be based on evidence of effectiveness in meeting objectives.
4. Spending decisions should reduce, not increase, racial disparities in measures of child well-being.
5. Funds should go to those interventions and services that have the greatest impact for the families served.
6. Spending decisions should reflect varying circumstances and needs of different communities across the state.
7. Barriers to participating should be removed, and funds should be used flexibly to enhance economic mobility.
8. Funds should be used to grow the capacity of families to achieve economic mobility and end intergenerational poverty.
9. Funds should be invested in very young children to break cycles of intergenerational poverty.
10. A strategic plan should be developed to ensure that the amount of reserves is based on the best evidence of likely needs in a recession.
11. The strategic plan should result in expenditure of federal reserve funds effectively for one-time expenditures and reserve funds and recurring funds in ways that build capacity for sustainable programs.

12. The strategic plan should ensure that the state makes full use of its annual allocation of TANF funds and that spending decisions are re-evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis.
13. Child Care and Development Block Grant funds should be fully utilized each year, and if necessary, TANF funds should be used to address the substantial barrier quality child care presents to economic mobility.

Tennessee Justice Center

Tennessee Disability Coalition

National Association of Social Workers, Tennessee Chapter

United Ways of Tennessee

Tennessee After School Network

The Urban Child Institute

ACE Awareness Foundation