

§3109. Promoting accountable public programs that reduce poverty, alleviate hardship and increase sustainable employment for low-income families with children

The department shall implement a system of accountability to measure access to and the performance of certain programs administered by the department under this Subtitle to ensure that those programs are working effectively to improve the health and well-being of program participants. [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Federal poverty level" has the same meaning as in section 3762, subsection 1, paragraph C. [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

A-1. "ASPIRE-TANF" means the Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program established in section 3781-A. [PL 2021, c. 648, §1 (NEW).]

B. "SNAP" means the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the State as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program pursuant to section 3104. [PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §16 (AMD).]

C. "TANF" has the same meaning as in section 3762, subsection 1, paragraph E. [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

D. "WIC" means the Women, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Food Program described in section 3107. [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]
[PL 2021, c. 648, §1 (AMD).]

2. Identify measures of child and family economic security. Beginning January 15, 2023 and biennially thereafter, the department shall obtain and compile the following data for the State regarding child and family economic security from those sources reasonably available to the department, including, but not limited to, data collected and maintained by the department, data available from the Department of Labor and the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Revenue Services or other state or federal agencies and such other data as can reasonably be obtained from other public or private sources upon request. The data must include:

A. The ratio of families with children receiving TANF cash assistance to the number of families with children and income at or below 100% of the federal poverty level in the current year and in the previous 4 years; [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

B. The percentage of children under 5 years of age receiving TANF cash assistance that also receive assistance from WIC in the current year and in the previous 4 years; [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

C. The percentage of children under 5 years of age receiving SNAP benefits that also receive assistance from WIC in the current year and in the previous 4 years; [PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §17 (AMD).]

D. For all families for whom TANF cash assistance has terminated:

(1) The number and percentage of families with no quarterly earnings from unsubsidized employment:

(a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;

(b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and

(c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated;

- (2) The number and percentage of families with quarterly earnings from unsubsidized employment that are below 50% of the federal poverty level:
 - (a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;
 - (b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
 - (c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated;
- (3) The number and percentage of families with quarterly earnings from unsubsidized employment that are at least 50% but below 100% of the federal poverty level:
 - (a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;
 - (b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
 - (c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated;
- (4) The number and percentage of families with quarterly earnings from unsubsidized employment that are at least 100% but below 150% of the federal poverty level:
 - (a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;
 - (b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
 - (c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated;
- (5) The number and percentage of families with quarterly earnings from unsubsidized employment that are at least 150% but below 200% of the federal poverty level:
 - (a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;
 - (b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
 - (c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated;
- (6) The number and percentage of families with quarterly earnings from unsubsidized employment that are at least 200% of the federal poverty level:
 - (a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;
 - (b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
 - (c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated;
- (7) The mean and median income of families with no quarterly earnings from unsubsidized employment:
 - (a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;
 - (b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
 - (c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
- (8) The number and percentage of families receiving income from the federal supplemental security income program or federal social security disability benefits:
 - (a) At the time participation in the program was terminated;
 - (b) During the 2nd quarter after participation in the program was terminated; and
 - (c) During the 4th quarter after participation in the program was terminated; [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

E. Cumulative data on the highest level of educational attainment of adult parents or caretaker relatives receiving TANF cash assistance and cumulative data on the highest level of educational

attainment of adult parents or caretaker relatives whose participation in the program was terminated in the prior year; [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

F. The ratio of persons receiving SNAP benefits to the total number of potentially eligible persons; the ratio of persons 60 years of age or older receiving SNAP benefits to the total number of potentially eligible persons 60 years of age or older; the ratio of nonelderly persons with a disability receiving SNAP benefits to the total number of potentially eligible nonelderly persons with a disability; and the ratio of children under 18 years of age receiving SNAP benefits to the total number of potentially eligible children under 18 years of age; [PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §18 (AMD).]

G. The number and percentage of adult parents or caretaker relatives who have children in the household and who are receiving SNAP benefits, grouped by highest level of educational attainment of the adult parent or caretaker relative; [PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §19 (AMD).]

H. The ratio of people participating in the MaineCare program, by eligibility group, to the total number of potentially eligible persons within each group; [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

I. The number and percentage of applications received by the department for the MaineCare program and the children's health insurance program as defined in section 3174-X, subsection 1, paragraph A, by eligibility group, that are processed in less than 24 hours; that are processed within one to 7 days; that are processed within 8 to 30 days; that are processed within 31 to 45 days; and that are processed more than 45 days after receipt; [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

J. The average waiting times, by month, for a person calling the department's call center to speak to a person, not including an interactive voice response system; and [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

K. The number and percentage, by month, of telephone calls to the department's call center that are terminated by a caller prior to the caller's speaking to a person, not including an interactive voice response system. [PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 648, §2 (AMD).]

2-A. Survey experiences of TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants. Beginning in calendar year 2024 and biennially thereafter, the department shall conduct a survey of TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants and compile the answers to include in its biennial report for the following year pursuant to subsection 3. The department shall select a representative sample of current TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants and a representative sample of TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants whose participation in TANF was terminated in the previous year and whose contact information remains available to the department's office for family independence. The department shall survey the selected samples of participants using an anonymized survey. The department shall provide the opportunity to respond orally to the survey for participants who request interpreter services or another reasonable accommodation. Information about the participants is confidential. The department may use funds from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant to contract for this work. The survey topics must include, but are not limited to:

A. Administrative burdens faced by ASPIRE-TANF participants; [PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]

B. Availability of interpretation and translation services; [PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]

C. Experiences of discrimination based on racial or ethnic identity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability or disability status, religion, national origin or marital status; [PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]

D. Availability of education and training programs, including postsecondary programs, and staff knowledge of and referrals to appropriate programs and services; [PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]

E. Availability of adequate support services, including but not limited to child care and transportation, and recommendations for other support services needed but not available; [PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]

F. Overall experiences and recommendations for improvement of ASPIRE-TANF; and [PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]

G. Optional demographic questions, including but not limited to geographic location, racial or ethnic identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, national origin, marital status and need for interpretation and translation services. [PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]
[PL 2021, c. 648, §3 (NEW).]

3. Measuring the effect of department initiatives to improve child and family economic security; reports. The department shall submit biennial reports, in accordance with this subsection, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters that analyze TANF's and ASPIRE-TANF's impact on family economic security, including increased ability to meet basic needs, improved education levels and increased income.

A. [PL 2021, c. 648, §4 (NEW); MRSA T. 22 §3109, sub-§3, ¶A (RP).]

B. Beginning January 15, 2025, and biennially thereafter, the department shall present the data collected pursuant to subsection 2 and the survey responses compiled pursuant to subsection 2-A along with an assessment of how these data measures can be improved. The department shall also identify any obstacles to improving economic security for children, families and individuals and make recommendations for addressing those obstacles, which may include improved coordination between state agencies. The department shall convene a representative group of current and former TANF and ASPIRE-TANF participants who volunteer to review the data collected pursuant to subsection 2 and the anonymized survey data collected pursuant to subsection 2-A. This group must have the opportunity to create a separate report making recommendations to improve economic security for children, families and individuals, which may also be presented by the group to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters. [PL 2021, c. 648, §4 (NEW).]

For all reports required pursuant to this subsection, the joint standing committee's review must include the opportunity for public comment, and the joint standing committee may introduce any legislation that is considered necessary to address barriers faced by the department in improving economic security for children, families and individuals in this State.

[PL 2021, c. 648, §4 (RPR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2019, c. 485, §1 (NEW). PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. OO, §§16-19 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 648, §§1-4 (AMD).

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