

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

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ND Performing Well: Public Assistance Program's Work Participation Rate Exceeds Federal Requirement

BISMARCK, N.D. – The Federal Administration for Children and Families has notified the N.D. Department of Human Services that North Dakota was one of 43 states and territories to meet or exceed the federally-required work participation rate for its welfare program in 2008.

North Dakota's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program achieved a 50.2 percent work participation rate before adding in the caseload reduction credit, which is like a bonus that factors in the decline in each state's welfare caseload following welfare reform. After adding the credit, North Dakota's overall work participation rate for 2008 was 77.1 percent.

States and territories failing to meet federally-required work participation rates may be subject to penalties. Early indications are that North Dakota's 2009 work participation rate without the credit will be even better at 60.2 percent.

"This accomplishment is really shared by the parents who are striving to provide for their children and the professionals we contract with to help them find jobs, overcome barriers to employment, and develop the skills they need to obtain work and stay employed," said agency Executive Director Carol Olson.

In 2007, North Dakota achieved an overall work participation rate of 58.7 percent. The year before, the state's overall work participation rate was 45.3 percent.

Olson said childless adults do not qualify for the TANF program. It provides temporary help to families with children who are deprived of the support of at least one parent due to a parent's absence or disability.

1996 federal welfare reform legislation required many participating adults to work or take part in approved work-readiness activities in order to receive TANF public assistance. It also placed a 60-month lifetime limit on benefits.

The N.D. Department of Human Services contracts with Community Options, a private company, Job Service North Dakota, and the Tribal Employment and Training in Belcourt, N.D., to provide work readiness, job placement and support services for TANF clients.

In February 2010, 5,097 North Dakotans received TANF public assistance; 3,879 of them were children. Participating families often qualify for other economic assistance programs because they tend to have incomes of about 29 percent of the federal poverty level. The average monthly TANF benefit per family was \$314.93 in February 2010.

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