

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

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N.D. receives \$1.3 M TANF performance bonus

Bismarck, N.D. – The federal government awarded the North Dakota Department of Human Services a \$1.3 million high performance bonus for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides assistance to low-income families to help them gain employment and meet their basic needs.

The federal government recognized the state for job entry rates and growth in the enrollment of eligible low-income families into health coverage programs. North Dakota ranked 10th in job entry, and 6th among states for increasing the number of former TANF families participating in Medicaid and the Healthy Steps State Children’s Health Insurance Program.

This is the second consecutive year that North Dakota received the maximum allowable bonus. The state has received bonuses each year since they became available in 1999. To date, North Dakota has received a total of \$7.45 million in TANF bonuses.

Gov. John Hoeven said, “The job entry rate confirms that North Dakotans are benefiting from increased job growth. State, county, and tribal employees are also doing an outstanding job of supporting clients in their efforts to become employed and self-sufficient.”

According to John Hougen, director of public assistance, North Dakota can use the bonus for TANF benefits for low-income families as well as family preservation services provided by the child welfare system. In North Dakota, the TANF program is locally administered by county social service offices. Job Service North Dakota and the Tribal NEW program provide employment services.

Welfare reform legislation authorized bonuses for achieving desired outcomes in job entry, job retention, increased earnings, and work-related measures. States and territories also earn bonuses for linking TANF families with other resources and for increasing the proportion of children in TANF cases who are living in married couple families. Bonuses recognize federal fiscal year outcomes, or performance improvements from previous fiscal years and are based upon a formula tied to state TANF grant amounts.

North Dakota’s welfare caseload peaked in 1994 at 6,500 cases. In July 1997, when the state implemented welfare reform, 3,859 families were receiving TANF assistance. In September 2005, the number of North Dakota families receiving TANF totaled 2,806 including 5,095 children. The average monthly TANF benefit for a qualifying North Dakota household is currently \$329.

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