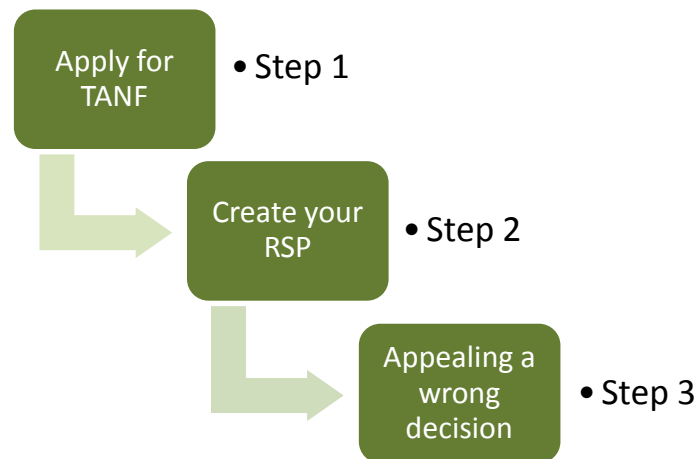


You CAN receive TANF and get your GED, here's how...



Step 1: Apply for TANF

If you are not already employed, you MUST sign up for your Responsibilities and Service Plan (RSP). If you don't agree with it, sign the form and then appeal **AFTER**. If you don't sign the RSP you will be terminated from TANF all together, **so always sign**. (WAG 21-02-06-h)

Step 2: Create your RSP and follow through with it

** If you are applying for TANF for children ONLY (not yourself) you don't need an RSP. (WAG 02-09-01) You can only do this if you are ineligible to get TANF and have not used up your TANF clock.

How to Create your Responsibilities and Service Plan (RSP):

You can choose to get work experience **or** enter the Basic Education Program! You are entitled to have your input with your caseworker on what the proper plan is for you! If your caseworker makes you sign a RSP plan that you do not agree with you can file an appeal and try to change it.

You can be in Basic Education if:

1. You don't have your GED or high school diploma
2. You have limited English skills
3. You don't read above 9.0 grade level
4. You need remedial education at the high school level or lower
5. You need the program to meet an employment goal (this can apply to ANYONE! Most jobs that we want require some type of education so choosing to get an education rather than working is your choice!)

To get work experience, you can do the following things:

- Employment (includes self-employment, work-study, VISTA and Job Corps) (WAG 25-03-15)
- Job skills training directly related to your employment
- Education directly related to your employment if you don't have a GED or high school diploma (WAG 25-03-15)
- 1 hour per week of study time for each credit hour of class time if the RSP includes vocational training, basic education, or job skills training. (if the class has no credit hours, you can count 1 hour of studying for every hour of classroom time) (WAG 21-02-06-e)
- Satisfactory attendance at a secondary school that leads to a GED or high school diploma (WAG 25-03-15)
- Community Service (WAG 25-03-15)
- Job search and job readiness for up to 6 weeks in a 12 month period (no more than 4 consecutive weeks) (WAG 25-03-15)
- Job Retention (PM 21-02-03)
- Work Experience (PM 21-02-05)
- Vocational training (no more than 12 months) (WAG 25-03-15)
- Child care services to someone doing community service (WAG 25-03-15)
- Teen Parent Programs (WAG 25-03-15)
- 5 hours of work preparation time if the RSP includes a work assignment (WAG 21-02-06-e)

You can also be required to participate in other Supplemental activities that take you over 30 hours if it is necessary to meet your RSP. (WAG 21-02-06-b)

If you participate in the following activities, you will not be required to do anything else: (WAG 21-02-06-b)

- Alcohol and Substance Abuse treatment (PM 21-04-01)
- Mental Health treatment (PM 21-04-03)
- Domestic Violence services (PM 21-04-02)

If you fall into one of these exemptions, you don't have to perform any work or training activities: (PM 21-01-03)

- Personally providing care for a child under age 1 living in the home
- You are a child who is not a parent
- You are a person over the age of 60

If you fall into one of these exemptions, you don't have to participate in activities if the exemption prevents you from doing the activity and you try to overcome the barrier:

- You have a medical condition (21-01-04-a)
- You have a child living at home that is approved under the Home & Community based Care Program (WAG001-04-b)
- You are approved to provide full-time care to a related child under 18 or a spouse living in the home due to their medical condition (WAG 21-01-04-c)
- Approved to care for someone with a medical condition that is not a related child or spouse that is referred to the Office of Rehabilitation Services or the Department of Aging. (WAG 21-01-04-d)
- You are experiencing a current domestic violence or sexual violence crisis, or have experienced domestic violence and the effects make it difficult to participate in the activities or you qualify for the Family Violence Exclusion (PM 21-01-05)

Special Rules for teen parents

- If you don't have your GED, your RSP plan only needs to include keeping an appointment with Teen Parent Services while you work on your GED. (PM 14-12-01)
- A teen parent under the age of 20 without a GED or high school diploma must attend elementary school, high school, literacy training, ESL or GED classes. (WAG 14-12-01)
- If you do have a GED or high school diploma, you have a normal RSP that includes a referral to Teen Parent Services, but it's not a requirement (PM 02-09-01)
- TPS providers are supposed to serve as advocates for teen parents during the period of time when their cash application is pending. They are supposed to help teens navigate the application process, provide working knowledge about the DHS programs and services and provide encouragement. (WAG 14-12-06)

Step 3: Appealing a wrong decision

- You can appeal any decision or inaction of DHS that you think is wrong. Even when your application was denied because of a missed interview or failure to provide proof of information, you should appeal the denial.
- There is a limited time period to file an appeal. For SNAP (food stamps), an appeal is timely if filed within 90 days of the decision you are appealing (the "Date of Notice"). For TANF, the time limit is 60 days. If you are appealing a failure to act, there is no time limit.
- One way to file an appeal is by phone. To do so, you can call the Bureau of Assistance Hearings (BAH) at 312-793-2618 or 800-435-0774 between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm. Sometimes you may have to wait five minutes or more before someone answers the phone, and even then you may be asked to hold. If possible, try to have your DHS case ID number on hand. Also, be sure to ask for the appeal registration number. Keep track of the date you file your appeal.
- You can also file a paper appeal, either by filling out DHS' appeal form or by writing a statement that you would like to file an appeal. You can hand in a paper appeal in person, by mail, or by fax. If you choose to file the appeal in person at your local DHS office, ask for a stamped (and dated) copy of the document you give them. If by mail (to your local office), try to send it certified and keep a copy for

yourself. If by fax (to BAH at 312-793-3387 or to your local office), save a copy of the fax confirmation page.

- The advantage of filing an appeal with your local office is that your caseworker's supervisor will know about the appeal sooner.

When filing an appeal, you should try and contact an attorney to guide you through the process. You can contact the Legal Assistance Foundation at (312) 422-1240 or come into the office at 120 S. LaSalle St. 900, Chicago, IL 60603.

If you decide not to get an attorney, see the sheet "Tips for Navigating the DHS Appeal Process" for assistance appealing on your own.

Re-determination every 6 months

Every 6 months, you will be required to do a "re-determination." The re-determination will determine if the RSP is still appropriate. Steps 1-3 will be repeated and changes may be made to the RSP. The re-determination will also determine whether you have followed the RSP. If you didn't follow the RSP, TANF benefits may be taken away unless you can prove good cause. Look at WAG 02-09-01 for a list of good cause reasons.

Rules for DHS Offices Reporting your activities

- By the 5th of each month, your DHS office must report your activities for the previous month to the Billing Unit of the Bureau of Employment Development Services. (BEDS) (WAG 21-02-06-i)
- BEDS enters the information by the 10th of the month.

Your local office is required to provide you the following support services:

- Temporary child care for up to 30 days (PM 21-05-01)
- School expenses (mandatory fees, books and supplies) (PM 21-05-04)
- Transportation (PM 21-05-05)
- Job Search Allowance (PM 21-05-06)
- Background checks (PM 21-05-09)
- Eyeglasses (PM 21-05-10)
- Dental Services (PM 21-05-11)