

MDHS

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

TANF and Non-Parent Caretaker Relatives



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Children who do not live with their parents, but are under the care of a **non-parent caretaker relative** may be eligible to receive TANF benefits through a child-only TANF case if their situation meets program criteria.

What is TANF?

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides cash assistance and services to families with children under the age of 18. In Mississippi, this program is administered by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS).

Who is a non-parent caretaker relative?

A non-parent caretaker relative:

- Is an **adult relative** who is 18 years old or older and who exercises control and supervision over the child(ren).
- Must be within a **“specified degree of relationship”** to the children. The following are **SOME** of the relatives who meet the requirement:
 - Grandparents, great grandparents, great-great grandparents
 - Great aunts and uncles, and great-great aunts and uncles
 - Uncles or aunts
 - Brothers, sisters, half-brothers or half-sisters
 - First cousins, first cousins once removed (also known as second cousins)
 - Nephews or nieces
- Must be able to establish that **the children are living in the home**, not just temporarily visiting for a specified period of time.
 - For example, children staying with a grandparent over the summer break would **NOT** be considered to be “living in the home” as their primary residence if the plan is for them to return home when school starts. Instead, the children would be considered to be on a “temporary visit” and the grandparent would NOT meet the definition of a non-parent caretaker relative.

What is a child-only TANF case?

- A child-only TANF case counts only the child or children in the “assistance unit.” Child-only TANF cases are only allowed under certain circumstances.
- When a child is living with a non-parent caretaker relative and no parent is present in the household, the child may be eligible to receive TANF benefits through a child-only TANF case.
- Because the nonparent caretaker relative is not included in the “assistance unit” the caretaker relative is not subject to TANF work requirements.
- The income and assets of the non-parent caretaker relative **are not included** in determining eligibility for child-only TANF cases.
- While many children have no income or assets, the income and assets of the child in a child-only TANF case **are included** in determining eligibility for TANF. A child’s income or assets could include:
 - Child support
 - Foster care board payments
 - Social security payments, such as survivor benefits or disability benefits
 - Trust funds that the household has the ability to access
- Children who receive Social Security Income (SSI) are not eligible to receive TANF benefits.

What is the monthly benefit amount?

- The maximum monthly benefit amount for the first child in a child-only TANF case with no income is **\$200 per month**.
- The maximum monthly benefit amount increases based on the number of children who are part of the case.
- Some cases will qualify for a lower benefit amount based on the child’s income and assets.

Number of Children	MAX Monthly Benefit AMT
1	\$200
2	\$236
3	\$260
4	\$284
5	\$308
6	\$332
7	\$356
8	\$380

What other benefits may be available to a child who receives TANF benefits?

Childcare – Assistance paying for childcare may be available to relative caregivers who are employed. This can be requested once the TANF case is approved.

Food Assistance – One in three Mississippians is eligible to receive food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)¹. The income and expenses of every member of the household must be included in determining eligibility for SNAP.

Other Need-Based Programs - A child receiving TANF may also be eligible for other need-based programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program, Medicaid, free or reduced-price school lunch, etc.

How does a non-parent caretaker relative apply for TANF benefits?

1. Complete an application for benefits.

- Go online to www.access.ms.gov and complete the application.
OR
- Visit a local MDHS county office and request an application. Information about county office locations is available at www.mdhs.ms.gov.
- When completing the application, the non-parent caretaker relative should list themselves as the Head of Household and list all of the household's income and expenses.

2. Complete an interview.

- After submitting an application, you will be interviewed by a caseworker. You should share that you are a non-parent caretaker relative during the interview.

3. Agree to cooperate with the collection of child support.

- Cooperating with child support includes proving information about the child's parents to help the state establish paternity and court-ordered child support.
- If establishing paternity or collecting support could harm you or the children, and you can provide information about the safety risk(s), the law allows you to apply for good cause to not cooperate in the child support program.

¹Based on U.S. Census Bureau Estimates