

How extremely poor families fared in the 2016 Legislative Session....and the impact of Senate Bill 24 (2015)



*Four Names.....One Mission: for 100+ Years ;
Advocating for Justice | Empowering Change*

- Founded in 1901, Empower Missouri advocates for the well-being of all Missourians through civic leadership, education and research.
- Our members work regionally in chapters and by issue areas in task forces: Affordable Housing & Homelessness, Criminal Justice, Economic Justice, Health/Mental Health, Human Rights, and Hunger.
- Our focus is on policies that impact the 40% of Missouri non-elderly households with annual incomes of less than \$39,000 annually.

2016 Bills Impacting Families in Deep Poverty

Positive

- **HB 1565** – sponsor Kevin Engler (R-Farmington) - updates asset limits for those applying for Medicaid.

Negative

- **HB 1631/HJR 53** – voter photo ID; could cause 200,000 Missourians to lose the right to vote (many of them persons in poverty).
- **SB 607** – Third Party Verification (vendor gets huge contract to try to sniff out fraud. Small positive– A Joint Committee on Public Benefits was established. (We were able to add outcomes on poverty and hunger to the language and that public testimony will be taken.)
- **SB 608** – fees and fines for using the Emergency Room inappropriately or missing medical appointments. Please ask Gov. Nixon for a veto.
- **SCR 46** – cancelled a raise for home health workers. Veto overridden.
- No expansion of Medicaid eligibility for low-wage workers. (300,000 are in the coverage gap.)

Reorganization of Family Support Division Offices Has Not Proceeded Smoothly

- Less contact with a designated caseworker with whom you can build trust
- Call Center contract issued; then cancelled and call center function brought back in-house
- Many reported their applications had been lost
- Many received letters with appeal dates that had already passed
- A backlog of applications caused many to wait long periods to be approved for TANF, SNAP (food stamps), child care and Medicaid
- We are receiving fewer problems calls now, but continue to monitor and communicate concerns

Of special concern – Implementation of Senate Bill 24 from 2015

- Sponsored by Sen. Sater (R-Cassville); heard Jan. 20.
- Voted Do Pass out of Committee on Feb. 12.
- Passed by the full Senate on Feb. 23 on a largely party-line vote.
- Heard on March 9 in the House Children and Families Committee. Women in poverty who traveled from Operation Breakthrough in Kansas City were each given only two minutes to speak in the hearing.
- Passed both House committees over the next two weeks.
- Passed by House of Representatives on March 18.
- Conference Committee Reports passed in April.
- Gov. Nixon vetoed on April 30.
- Senate overrode on May 4, and House overrode on May 5.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Children (TANF)

Even before Senate Bill 24, we already had several concerns:

- Benefits have not gone up since 1991
- When raised in 1991, there was a \$3 increase from 1975
- Current maximum monthly payments are –
 - \$234 for a family of two
 - \$292 for a family of three
 - \$342 for a family of four (90%+ have fewer than three children)
- Standard of need (the income guideline for the program) is \$846 per month for a family of three – not updated since mid-1990's – only the desperately poor can qualify; also hurts work participation rate; just a little paid work ends eligibility
- Missouri spent only four percent of its TANF Block Grant on work activities – yet lack of participation in work could cause the family to lose benefits

Components of Senate Bill 24

- Uses “full family sanctions” – taking money away from the child/children too, not just the parent - to attempt to force work compliance – yet removing the family’s full check also creates barriers to work participation (lack of money for rent, utilities, soap, transportation, etc.)
- Blocks MO from applying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program waivers (SNAP, commonly known as food stamps)
- Reduces 60-month time clock for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families down to 45-months
- Lump sum diversion are allowed to address an emergency if the family agrees not to go on cash aid

Advocates have met regularly to monitor implementation & look for ways to protect families

- Missouri Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence has trained domestic violence shelter staff on the new law
- SB 24 contained this exemption language: “if the family includes an individual who has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty....” But the number of persons granted exemptions is capped at 20% of families on TANF – and with dropping caseload, that number also declines
- Advocates advised DSS on wording of flyers to TANF and SNAP recipients; is the language easily understood by an audience with high rates of limited reading abilities?
- Empower Missouri continues to report outcomes to appropriate House and Senate Committee members and to call for changes to reduce harm

Do You Get Temporary Assistance?

Read about Changes Due to a New Law!



What are the changes?

- **As of August 28, 2015:** Your benefits will be cut in half and then stopped if you do not participate in work activities.
- **As of January 1, 2016:** Your lifetime limit drops from 60 to 45 months.
- These changes affect most TA recipients, with few exceptions.



Does this impact other benefits?

- No. This only affects Temporary Assistance benefits. It does not apply to Food Stamp, MO HealthNet (Medicaid) or other benefits.

We can help.

- Contact your Missouri Work Assistance (MWA) provider to participate in eligible activities.
- Go to dss.mo.gov/fsd/missouri-work-assistance.htm to find the nearest MWA office or see listing on back of this flyer.
- Search for job openings based upon your individual skills and download the mobile app at jobs.mo.gov.



Questions?

Visit dss.mo.gov/fsd or call 855-373-4636

Relay Missouri: 711
If you need help with a language other than English, call 1-855-373-4636 and tell the representative the language you need.
The Family Support Division is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Missouri Department of Social Services
FAMILY SUPPORT DIVISION

Proponents said at the time: If we reduce to a 45 month lifetime limit - 3,155 families or 9,465 people, including **6,310 kids**, will lose benefits.

What has come to pass?

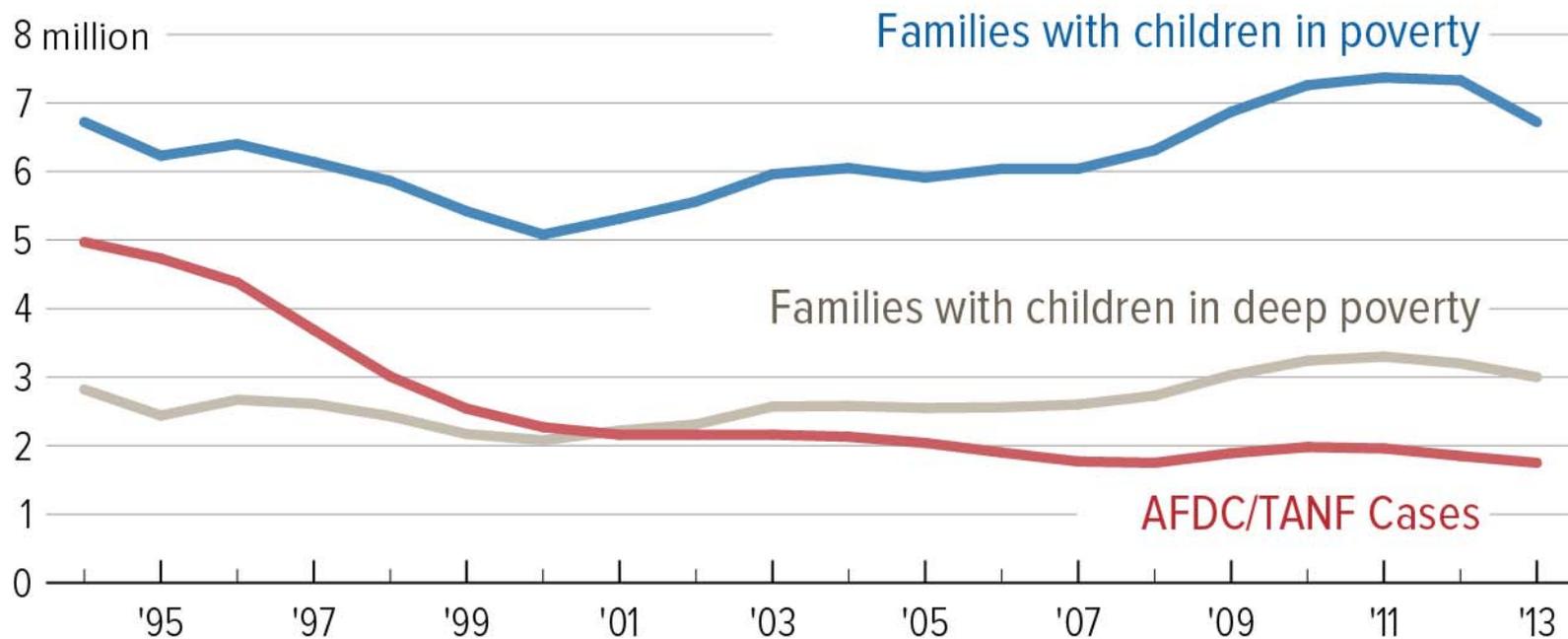
DSS Monthly Management Review shows:

- April 2015 – 28,658 Missouri families on TANF, including 49,614 children
- April 2016 – 16,923 Missouri families on TANF, including 29,010 children

A 41.5% reduction in children on the program – in one year.

But does leaving TANF mean parents move into living wage jobs? Employment data should be available within three months. We will know more then.

Missouri May Be Mirroring National Data: TANF Cases Have Declined Dramatically, Including in Years When Poverty Has Increased; Extreme Poverty Up.



Source: CBPP analysis of poverty data from the Current Population Survey and AFDC/TANF caseload data from Health and Human Services and (since 2006) caseload data collected by CBPP from state agencies.

We need your advocacy for extremely poor families:

- Become an Organizational Partner of Empower Missouri so that you know what is being proposed as laws and policies about extremely low-income families – we will call you to action at key times
- Write letters to the editor to educate the public about the impact of cuts and dangers in proposed policies
- Testify at hearings of the Joint Committee on Public Assistance (if bills calling for its creation become law) – mission of the committee includes researching poverty and hunger trends, caseloads of state workers, and how to improve services so families can become independent of safety net programs

Questions?

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