Percent of Children Receiving TANF

Comparative Norm
U.S.: 4.7%
MO: 5.4%
IL: 2.3%


Since the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program began in 1996, the number of children receiving welfare had dropped by more than half. The steady decrease in enrollment had resulted in a decline from 13 percent of children receiving welfare in 1995 to 4.0 percent in 2008, the lowest rate since the program's inception. Nearly 60 percent of TANF caseload decline reflects fewer eligible families receiving assistance due to stricter work and eligibility requirements, not a decline in the families who need assistance.

Cash assistance has not kept pace with inflation. Even in the most supportive states, maximum benefits are just over 50 percent of the poverty line.1 Late in 2008, with economic conditions worsening, monthly estimates of TANF enrollment began to increase. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, established the Emergency Contingency Fund for State TANF Programs, which provides up to $5 billion to help states with increases in caseloads or subsidized employment in 2009 and 2010.2