

MAXIMIZING AIAN HEAD START ELIGIBILITY THROUGH TRIBAL TANF FLEXIBILITIES



FOUR PURPOSES OF TANF

1. Provide assistance to **needy** families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
2. End the dependency of **needy** parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.
3. Prevent and reduce the incidences of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Only purposes #1 and #2 include the term **needy**. Eligibility for purposes #3 and #4 need not be restricted by income.

TRIBAL TANF: ELIGIBILITY & SERVICE AREA FLEXIBILITIES

- Tribes can define their service area (can extend beyond reservation)
- Tribes have flexibility to establish eligibility criteria
 - In Alaska tribal TANF programs must have eligibility criteria comparable to state TANF
 - Tribal TANF that receive state MOE funds may also be required to align eligibility criteria to the state
- Tribal TANF plans may be amended to expand eligibility

TANF AND HEAD START ELIGIBILITY

If families are **eligible** for **benefits** and **services** funded by tribal TANF, then they also meet categorical eligibility requirements for Head Start. (Sec. 645(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Head Start Act)

- This includes **all** TANF benefits and services, not just cash assistance (i.e. workforce training, counseling, case management, transportation, adolescent pregnancy prevention, and healthy marriage education)
- Families need only to be **eligible** for services – they don't have to be receiving them

Documenting Eligibility for Tribal TANF

Possible approaches to documenting eligibility for tribal TANF to show categorical eligibility for Head Start:

- A copy of the section from the tribal TANF plan that describes eligibility criteria
- A one-page statement from the tribe confirming the eligibility criteria for tribal TANF and therefore meeting eligibility requirements for Head Start services
- A letter issued from the tribal public assistance agency (either directly to the family or a template at the Head Start program)
 - The letter must include the beneficiary's name, the tribe's name, and confirmation that the beneficiary receives or is eligible to receive tribal TANF benefits or services per the tribal TANF plan

NEXT STEPS FOR HS/EHS DIRECTORS

- Meet with your tribal TANF administrator to review eligibility criteria and service area for **all** TANF benefits and services.
- Work with tribal leadership and tribal TANF administrator to amend plan if necessary.
- Review Head Start internal ERSEA policies and procedures regarding tribal TANF categorical eligibility and related verifying documentation. Also include a plan for notifying families who are unaware of their eligibility through tribal TANF.