



RANDOLPH COUNTY
Department of Social Services

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PRESS RELEASE

“What Does TANF Look Like After 20 Years?”

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 replaced the previous welfare system with *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families*, labeled *TANF*. The *TANF* program is designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. States receive funding in the form of block grants to design and operate programs that accomplish one of the purposes of the TANF program which are to:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes
- Reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

In North Carolina, the TANF program is designed and labeled as *Work First* and was built upon the premise that "all people have a responsibility to their families and communities to work and to provide for their children." The Work First Program represents a significant departure from the traditional roles of public assistance clients and programs. *Work First* establishes two significant concepts: that the family has a larger responsibility in achieving self-sufficiency and that services from a local agency are short-term and directed toward a quick return to the local labor market.

Under *Work First*, Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) benefits provide only short-term services while the family builds their own "safety net." Families are expected to work actively toward and share in the responsibility of becoming self-sufficient. In order to receive WFFA there must be a child living in the home 18 years old or under. Every person who is on the Work First case must either be a U.S. citizen or an otherwise qualified immigrant. According to federal law, all applications for Work First must be made face to face. In Randolph County that is done at the Department of Social Services.

Parents can receive WFFA benefits for themselves and their children if they meet the eligibility requirements. Parents must participate in work related activities unless they have a verifiable disability. Adults, other than parents, can receive WFFA benefits for a child to whom they are related or for whom they have court ordered custody or guardianship. In most cases benefits are time limited. The amount of the WFFA benefit payment in North Carolina hasn't changed since 1997.

If you have questions about the Work First Program, call or visit your local county DSS. In Randolph County, call 336-683-8009. You can also visit: <http://www.co.randolph.nc.us/dss/> or the state web site at: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dss> .

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