



## **TANF Dollars for School-Based Health Centers**

It may be possible for school-based health centers (SBHCs) to access state and federal dollars for the purpose of delivering comprehensive reproductive health services to adolescents. County Departments of Human Services\* receive state and federal dollars to help families prepare for self-sufficiency. The departments may use these funds to support programs that prevent unintended pregnancy.

### **Background: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

In Colorado, the federal program called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, is known as "Colorado Works" and replaces older programs known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS), and Emergency Assistance (AE). TANF is a federal block grant given to states and tribes to support programs that move people of extremely limited means into the work force. It has changed the older welfare entitlement program into one of temporary assistance. TANF pays for direct benefits, administrative costs, and community-based services. In 2005, Congress reauthorized the TANF legislation of 1996 when it passed the Deficit Reduction Act. This act requires states to increase the number of TANF beneficiaries engaged in productive work activities with the goal of attaining self-sufficiency. (1)

There are four stated goals for TANF:

- to provide assistance to needy families
- to end dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage
- to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families (2)

The TANF block grant requires states to contribute a minimum amount of money to help TANF eligible families in ways that are consistent with TANF goals. The state contribution to TANF is called Maintenance of Effort, or MOE. Failure of states to use MOE funds consistent with TANF regulations can cause a reduction in the size of the federal block grant. (1) It is possible for counties to also contribute funds to achieve TANF goals. (3)

Each of these three sources of funding (federal, state, and local) may have unique restrictions or limitations on its use. In Colorado, funds from the three sources may be segregated from one another so that dispersal is not limited by the most restrictive regulation of the three funding sources. Segregation of funds by counties must be approved by the Colorado Department of Human Services. (3) Segregation of federal, state, and local funds may increase flexibility in several program areas, including medical services. Segregation may also remove federal time limits and work requirement restrictions. (2) (3) In fact, if an agency wishes to provide reproductive health services to adolescents without regard to TANF's income and family composition eligibility tests, then it is required that

federal dollars be segregated from state and/or local MOE dollars. If co-mingled dollars are used, then eligibility testing is required. (2)

It is important to note that TANF funds may not be used for Medicaid or for providing medical services. (2) States can, however, define what constitute non-Medicaid medical services. For example, medical services may be defined in such a way that screening, counseling and referral carried out by non-medical personnel are permitted. (2) Both sources of money (federal and MOE) may be used for family planning. (5) (6)

Aspects relevant to adolescent reproductive health are specifically mentioned in TANF legislation. These are:

- national goals for preventing and decreasing teen pregnancy
- statutory rape law enforcement
- the abstinence-only education fund
- coverage of family planning services and supplies

## Unspent TANF Money in Colorado Counties

A recent article in *The Denver Post* identified Colorado counties that currently have excess TANF dollars which, if not spent by July, 2009, may have to be returned to the state. The article stated that counties must not accumulate over 70% of their annual TANF allocation. (4)

Federal TANF regulations clearly permit, if not encourage, the reproductive health services provided by school-based health centers. We urge you to contact the director of your local Department of Human Services\* to find out whether funds are available to support comprehensive reproductive health services, including human sexuality education, behavioral risk assessment, counseling, pregnancy testing, contraception or referral for contraception, and diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infection. School-based health center programs clearly support national goals for preventing teen pregnancy and enforcing statutory rape laws. Even if there are no funds available at this time, a conversation with the local Department of Human Services may uncover opportunities for future collaboration.

(1)US Dept of Health & Human Services, Fact Sheet: Office of Family Assistance (TANF). URL = [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opa/fact\\_sheets/tanf\\_factsheet.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opa/fact_sheets/tanf_factsheet.html)

(2)The National Conference of State Legislatures, Providing Reproductive Health Services for Adolescents: State Options. URL = <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/forum/pub6768.htm#intro>

(3)Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Self-Sufficiency, Agency Letter TCW-02-12-A, November 15, 2002.

(4)Denver Post, Welfare Money Sits in Coffers, July 6, 2008. URL = [http://www.denverpost.com/ci\\_9796872?IADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com](http://www.denverpost.com/ci_9796872?IADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com)

(5)The National Conference of State Legislatures, Opportunities under TANF for Serving Refugee and Immigrant Families: A Checklist for State and Local Policymakers, February 2001. URL = <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/TANFcheck.htm>

(6) Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Self-Sufficiency, Agency Letter TCW-01-6-A, April 5, 2001.

\* may also be called County Departments of Social Services

***Researched and written by Todd Soderberg – August, 2008***