

Nebraska's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Pilot Frequently Asked Questions

In September 2025, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) chose Nebraska as one of five states to improve the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program through participation in the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 TANF Pilot. This six-year pilot program began October 1, 2025, with a planning year.

A parent or relative caregiver receiving Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) must participate in the Employment First (EF) program if they are eligible to work.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has updated the EF program for the TANF pilot. This program helps families overcome obstacles and connect with long-term job paths that lead to high-paying, in-demand jobs.

Q: When does the TANF pilot start, and how will it affect current EF participants?

Starting October 1, 2026, participants currently in the Employment First (EF) program will start moving to the new program. They will complete a new Individualized Employment Plan (IEP). An IEP is part of the EF Self-Sufficiency Contract. It describes the activities and goals that individuals must follow to achieve economic self-sufficiency and family stability.

EF Career Coaches, previously called EF Case Managers, will contact current participants to begin the transition process. All EF participants will complete their transition by the end of 2026.

Q: Will EF participants still be required to complete a specific number of work participation hours?

No, EF is moving away from tracking hours and requiring a specific number of hours each week. Instead, the career coach will work with the individual to identify specific goals they need to achieve to make progress toward their career objectives, which will be added to the IEP and reviewed regularly.

Q: Will participants still be required to use time sheets to track EF activities?

No. Participants will no longer use time sheets to track their EF work activities. Instead, they will stay in regular contact with their EF Career Coach and provide necessary information and reports to show how they are doing with their IEP goals. The EF Career Coach will explain how to verify this progress based on the activities outlined in the IEP.

Q: Will both parents be required to participate in EF?

Yes. Every person in the family's household who is eligible to work must create an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) to help them move to employment and become self-sufficient. This applies to both parents in a two-parent household.

Q: Will the required EF components remain the same?

Participants will receive a copy of the EF Handbook, which outlines the components and example activities that can be included on their IEP. The participants will work with their EF Career Coach to identify their goals and what activities can be included in their IEP. With the Pilot, they will have more activity options within each component.

Q: What are some examples of the new allowable activities in the Pilot?

Work Preparation Activities:

- Career exploration;
- Foundation Skills Instruction, including GED, ABE, and ESL instruction;
- Gaining work experience;
- Internships;
- Job skills training, such as resume development and interview preparation; and
- Job search.

Education and Training:

- Associate and bachelor's degree programs;
- Job certification training programs, such as welding certification; and
- Registered Apprenticeship programs.

Employment Activities:

- Apprenticeships;
- On-the-job training; and
- Job progression (advancement).

Help with Barriers:

- Family stabilization services, including assistance with housing, legal, and transportation issues;
- Disability Support Services help people address health-related challenges and find jobs.
- Fatherhood Program referrals to support two-parent family stability.

Q: Will the EF sanction policy remain the same?

If EF participants do not follow their IEP and do not have a good reason, they may lose their ADC benefits for a period of time. This is called a sanction. The length of time they will be ineligible for ADC due to a sanction is as follows:

- 1st Sanction: No ADC grant for 1 month;
- 2nd Sanction: No ADC grant for 3 months; and
- 3rd Sanction: No ADC grant for 12 months.

Q: Has the 60-month limit for receiving ADC changed under the pilot?

EF participants can receive ADC for up to 60 months, or five years. This period counts the months a participant receives federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in any state or tribe. The goal is to help participants work toward economic self-sufficiency.