cant meets the citizenship, age, income, and asset criteria. When
disability or blindness is involved, medical determinations of eligibil-
ity are generally made by Disability Determination Services, which
are agencies of each individual State. Computation of federally
administered benefit amounts is made through SSA’s central
computer operations and certification is then made to the Treasury
Department for the issuance of monthly checks.

SSA field offices may make emergency payments of up to $484
to an eligible individual and $726 to a couple (plus the federally
administered State supplementary payments, if any) if severe
financial difficulty is evident.

If a State chooses to administer its own supplementation, it
processes applications and makes eligibility determinations sepa-
rately from the Federal Government. As of December 1996, about
half the States were administering their own supplementary
payments.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides
assistance and work opportunities to needy families. It replaced
the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC) as
soon as the State submitted a complete plan implementing TANF,
but no later than July 1, 1997. AFDC provided cash assistance
based on need, income, resources, and family size.

TANF was created by The Personal Responsibility and Work
Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-193). The
law contains strong work requirements, a performance bonus
to reward States for moving welfare recipients into jobs, State
maintenance of effort requirements, comprehensive child support
enforcement, and supports for families moving from welfare to work,
including increased funding for child care and guaranteed medical
coverage.

Nearly all recipients must work after 2 years of assistance.
Each State is required to have a fourth of families working or off the
rolls by September 30, 1997, and half by 2002. Parents must work a
prescribed number of hours per week: single parents, 20 hours the
first year and 30 by 2000; couples, 35 hours. Work can be
unsubsidized or subsidized employment, on-the-job training, work
experience, community service, 12 months of vocational training, or
child care provided to individuals participating in community ser-
vice. Exceptions are allowed for 6 weeks of job search time, parents
with a child under age 6 who cannot find child care, and single
parents with children under age one.

States must make an initial assessment of recipients’ skills, and
can develop personal responsibility plans that identify needed
education, training, and job placement services. Various incentives
are provided to States to encourage maintaining program spending levels. Families cannot spend more than five cumulative years on TANF. States can specify fewer years, and exempt up to 20% of the caseload from the time limit. After the time limit is exceeded, they can elect to provide noncash assistance and vouchers to families using Social Services Block Grant or State funds.

Child care funding is provided to help more mothers move into jobs. Women on welfare continue to receive health coverage for their families, including a year or more of transitional Medicaid when they leave welfare for work.

To be eligible for TANF block grants, States must operate a child support enforcement program meeting Federal requirements. The Federal Case Registry and National Directory of New Hires will be used to track delinquent parents across State lines. Child support can be withheld directly from wages, and paternity establishment is streamlined; cash assistance will be reduced by at least 25% in cases of failure to cooperate with paternity establishment. The law establishes uniform interstate child support laws, central registries of child support orders and collections, and toughened enforcement of child support.

Unmarried minor parents are required to live with a responsible adult or in an adult-supervised setting and participate in educational and training activities in order to receive assistance. Efforts are to be undertaken to prevent nonmarital teen pregnancy.

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**Food and Nutrition Assistance**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides children and needy families access to a more healthful diet through its food assistance programs and comprehensive nutrition education efforts, and provides farmers an outlet for the distribution of food purchased under farmer assistance authorities.

USDA’s Food and Consumer Service administers 15 Federal food and nutrition assistance programs. These programs serve 1 in 6 Americans. This section describes the Food Stamp program, the cornerstone of the USDA food assistance programs; the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, which provide pre-school and school-aged children with nutritious meals that are free or provided at a greatly reduced price; and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), which provides food supplements, nutrition education, and health care referrals.

FCS programs are operated in a State-Federal partnership, in which the Federal Government is generally responsible for food costs for the programs and shares administrative costs with the States. FCS is responsible for interpreting Federal statutes,