



## TANF AT 15: A SHREDDED SAFETY NET

August 22, 2011 – Today marks the fifteenth anniversary of the enactment of the [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\) program](#). On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, replacing Aid to Families with Dependent Children with TANF as the national welfare program for needy Americans.

Fifteen years later, the truth is that [TANF has shredded the safety net](#). It has been a disaster for poor families, the majority of whom are headed by single mothers. Benefit receipt has fallen from three-fifths of poor children pre-reform to just one-fifth of poor children post-reform, and benefit amounts have plummeted to less than five dollars a person a day in most states.

The shriveled safety net condemns millions of women and children to poverty so extreme that many are deprived sufficient food, housing, and utility services. Inaccessible or inadequate TANF aid has been shown to deter domestic violence victims from fleeing their abusers.

Today, as TANF turns 15, the Administration and Congress must work together to restore an adequate safety net. Benefits must be raised and steps must be taken to ensure that aid is provided promptly to all those who are eligible. Education and training for living wage employment must be encouraged and funding for child care and subsidized employment must be increased.

For more information, see Legal Momentum's report, "[Welfare Reform at Age 15: A Vanishing Safety Net for Women and Children](#)."

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