Background

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families (ACF), provides temporary income support (i.e. cash payments) to low-income families with children as well as a wide range of services (e.g., work-related activities, child care, and refundable tax credits) designed to accomplish the program’s broad purposes—including helping parents access job preparation and work to move toward economic stability.\(^1\) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a food-based safety net program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). FNS also administers the SNAP Employment and Training Program (SNAP E&T), which helps SNAP participants gain the skills, education, and work experience to help them become economically self-sufficient and reduce their need for SNAP. Additionally, E&T programs help SNAP participants meet the work requirements stipulated in the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, which requires that all non-exempt SNAP participants register for work.\(^2\)

Most families receiving TANF cash assistance are eligible for and receive SNAP. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, 84 percent of TANF families received SNAP benefits.\(^3\) While recipients of TANF cash assistance are not eligible to receive SNAP E&T services, the common goals of these two employment-focused programs safety net programs provide opportunities for coordination that can foster improved outcomes for families.
As families leave TANF due to earnings, federal or state time limits, or other reasons, many continue to receive SNAP although they are no longer eligible for TANF cash assistance. Even families leaving TANF because of employment may still be far from economic stability as many are in entry-level positions earning low wages that are insufficient to support their families. These families can benefit from ongoing supportive services (e.g. child care and transportation), and employment and training programs that can help facilitate their retention and advancement in the labor market.

As per the Vice President’s Job-Driven Training report, “Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and Opportunity,” and the priorities outlined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), increasing the availability and accessibility of job-driven employment and training programs can help low-income individuals secure jobs with family-sustaining wages. In many areas, there are limited resources for employment and training programs designed to serve low-income, lower-skilled individuals. Nationwide, although families may receive employment and training services through TANF, only seven percent of TANF and state maintenance-of-effort funds were put towards these programs in FY 2014, meaning that programs often lack the resources to be comprehensive job-driven programs that meet existing needs.

By coordinating employment and training services between TANF and SNAP E&T, states can connect more families to high-quality employment and training programs and supportive services, leverage greater resources to ensure robust program models, and promote the long-term economic security of low-income families. This issue brief outlines opportunities and provides specific examples of coordination between the two programs.

**SNAP E&T Program and Funding**

Each state is required to operate a SNAP E&T program, though state agencies have a great deal of flexibility in designing the services delivered, geographic coverage, and target population of their program. SNAP E&T programs must include at least one of the following:

- Job search activities;
- Job search training, including skills assessments, job finding clubs, training in employability techniques, and job placement services;
- Workfare programs;
- Programs designed to improve the employability of eligible individuals through actual work experience, training, or both;
- Educational programs to improve basic skills and literacy;
- Programs designed to increase an individual’s self-sufficiency through self-employment;
- Programs to provide job retention service for up to 90 days following employment; or
- Other employment, educational, or training programs approved by the Secretary of Agriculture or the state.

SNAP E&T programs have three primary sources of federal funding: annual SNAP E&T program grants, Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) “pledge state” grants, and 50 percent reimbursement grants. As noted previously, SNAP E&T funds may not be used on recipients of TANF cash assistance. Furthermore, SNAP E&T funds must not supplant non-federal funds used for existing services and activities, and can instead be used to supplement non-federal funding for existing education services or activities.
### SNAP E&T Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E&amp;T Program Grant (100 Percent) Funds</th>
<th>50 Percent Reimbursement (50-50) Funds</th>
<th>ABAWD “Pledge State” Grant Funds</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Formula-based grants to states to plan, implement, and operate SNAP E&amp;T services.</td>
<td>• Reimbursement grants (50 cents per dollar obligated) for SNAP E&amp;T program costs exceeding those covered by 100 percent funds or for supportive services provided to participants.</td>
<td>• Grants for states pledging to offer qualifying E&amp;T services to ABAWDs at risk of losing SNAP eligibility due to time limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Total funding available in FY 2016: $90 million.</td>
<td>• Funds eligible for reimbursement can include state or local funds OR non-federal funds contributed by “third-party” providers contracted by states to offer E&amp;T services.</td>
<td>• Funds currently capped at $20M annually for all pledge States, allocated based on size of ABAWD population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All states receive 100 percent funding. Some states do not spend their full allocations; remaining dollars may be reallocated to other states.</td>
<td>• States may request 50-50 funds from FNS, and these funds are not capped.</td>
<td>• States may request to be a “pledge” state and thus, receive these funds.</td>
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### Coordination Between TANF and SNAP E&T Programs

Although SNAP E&T funding cannot be used to provide services to those receiving TANF cash assistance, increased state coordination between TANF and SNAP E&T programs could expand access to high-quality employment, training, and supportive services as individuals work to obtain jobs with family-sustaining wages. States may want to consider the following strategies:

- **Coordinating funding streams to provide more comprehensive services**: For states that provide non-recurrent short-term benefits to low-income families through TANF, training and supportive services can be funded through SNAP E&T.

- **Enhancing program communication and coordination**: Increased program coordination between TANF and SNAP E&T, through strategies such as integrated case management, use of one-stop career centers, community college coordinators, and staff training can better support participants whose eligibility for TANF and SNAP changes as their circumstances change.

- **Supporting non-custodial parents and guardians in child-only TANF families**: Several states have used SNAP E&T funding to provide education and training to non-custodial parents, with the goal of increasing the long-term economic stability of these individuals as well as their children, who may be in TANF families.
Coordinating TANF and SNAP E&T Funding Streams to Provide More Comprehensive Services

TANF and SNAP E&T resources can play a significant role when used together to serve low-income families. The following strategies have been used by states to leverage both funding streams:

- **Providing a non-recurrent short-term cash benefit with TANF, and E&T services with SNAP E&T**: TANF-funded temporary support programs provide low-income families with up to four months of assistance within a 12-month period. These programs are short-term, are intended to address a crisis or immediate needs, and are considered “non-assistance” for the purposes of TANF. Temporary support programs, therefore, do not count toward TANF time limits or work participation rates. As such, the SNAP E&T restriction on serving families receiving TANF assistance does not apply to these families.

- **Providing child care or other supportive services to SNAP E&T participants with TANF funding**: While states are required to provide SNAP E&T participants with supportive services (also known as “participant reimbursements”) necessary for participation, those supportive services can be provided using non-SNAP E&T resources. For instance, states could use TANF funds to provide child care for SNAP E&T participants with children. Utilizing TANF funds to provide child care could make employment and training programs more accessible to low-income parents and enhance services for jurisdictions with limited SNAP E&T funds for participant reimbursements.

**Minnesota**

Minnesota’s Diversionary Work Program (DWP) relies on TANF funds to provide short-term cash aid to needy families and provides employment services funded with state dollars used to draw down the SNAP 50 percent reimbursement. The DWP provides a one-time cash payment to families applying for cash assistance who have not been served by the state’s TANF program in the previous 12 months. Currently, the 50 percent reimbursement is returned to the state’s general fund, but the state is exploring options for directing the funding so as to provide additional federal funding to expand current SNAP E&T programs. The draw down is done under a state statute that expires at the end of 2016. The state legislature will determine in its next session whether that authority continues and whether the match would help expand the current SNAP E&T program.

**Washington**

Washington’s Diversion Cash Assistance program for families provides a maximum benefit of $1,250 for families that meet the income requirements and who can also prove that they expect to have income and resources to meet their long-term needs. Washington pays for this program with state funds counted toward its TANF maintenance-of-effort requirement. These families are eligible for SNAP E&T services through Washington’s Basic Food Employment and Training Program (BFET) program, in addition to their diversion cash payment.

BFET offers a variety of supportive services to participants of qualifying employment and training activities, and utilizes SNAP E&T 50-50 funding to reimburse contractors for providing those supports. Fifty percent of child care, transportation, clothing, and housing costs are reimbursable, as long as these are directly connected to helping the recipient complete the education and training program.
Enhancing Program Communication and Coordination

In recent years, TANF agencies have begun exploring ways to enhance coordination between TANF and SNAP E&T programs. The following examples illustrate a few of the ways in which the two programs can work together to support low-income families.

Orange County, North Carolina

Cross-Training Staff to Build Up New E&T Programs

North Carolina’s Orange County Department of Social Services serves as an example of a program that is just beginning to build up its coordination between TANF and SNAP E&T. As the county developed a SNAP E&T program, they cross-trained existing TANF staff so that they could also administer the SNAP E&T program. As a result of this cross-training, staff have a strong understanding of what both TANF and SNAP E&T programs can offer participants, while using limited resources to expand services.

Washington

Washington’s extensive SNAP E&T program, BFET, provides a model for how TANF and SNAP E&T can be coordinated to support long-term family economic security. The BFET program leverages community-based organizations (CBOs) and community colleges to draw down a SNAP 50-50 match. At community colleges around the state, BFET funds are used to provide case management to students, cover tuition and other expenses, and provide supportive services for low-income students.

Shared Case Management Systems

In Washington, coordination allows clients who are pursuing education and training through community colleges and other means to receive consistent funding for their programs regardless of changing TANF eligibility. Washington’s shared case management system originally was started through the state’s TANF program and was repurposed to also serve SNAP E&T participants, which allows for the two programs to be closely aligned. The case management system, eJAS, allows contractors, case managers, CBOs, and community colleges to share information about clients. Case managers can add case notes and document activities for both TANF and SNAP E&T participants, and this case management system interfaces with Washington’s eligibility system. The eJAS system allows providers to know when they will be reimbursed, and helps prevent disallowed costs. If an individual’s eligibility changes, the case management system allows for the individual to transition between receiving TANF and receiving SNAP E&T while remaining in employment and training programs.

Staff Training and Integrated One- Stops

Washington has trained TANF case managers so that they understand the opportunities offered by SNAP E&T. Case managers are trained on how SNAP E&T could be used and how it could support low-income families, such as by providing services as a pre-TANF diversion program or as a transitional support when moving off TANF cash assistance. SNAP E&T and TANF services are also successfully colocated in some parts of the state. For example, the Opportunity Center for Employment and Education located on the North Seattle Community College Campus is an integrated community center where the Washington Department for Social and Human Services provides integrated educational, vocational, employment and supportive services through a partnership of multiple community-based agencies and community colleges.
Community College Access Points for TANF and SNAP E&T

Washington has an online tool called “Start Next Quarter” that students can use to see all of the workforce opportunities in the state, including TANF and SNAP E&T. This computer-based program allows students to enter their information to determine the different supports they are eligible for as they pursue postsecondary education.

Community College Coordinators

Washington’s community colleges have on-campus coordinators for students that can help them navigate their benefits and academic experience. These coordinators are funded through both TANF and SNAP E&T funds. In some locations, this means there is one employee who completes time and effort reports for both TANF and SNAP caseloads, while in other locations these are two employees that work closely together on the community college’s campus (one for TANF students and one for SNAP E&T students). As students experience difficulties, whether they are academic or otherwise, the coordinators can offer assistance to them. Community colleges are able to leverage SNAP 50-50 funding to support these coordinators when serving SNAP E&T recipients. The presence of these coordinators on campus ensures that TANF and SNAP recipients can have a strong point of contact that can connect them to supportive services as they complete postsecondary education.

Supporting Non-Custodial Parents and Guardians in Child-Only TANF Families

Connecting non-custodial parents of children in TANF families to employment and training services can be instrumental in ensuring family economic stability. TANF funds can support a variety of services to a low-income non-custodial parent, including job skills training or re-training activities, subsidized employment, employment counseling services, assistance with child support arrearages, and financial counseling services.

SNAP E&T programs can also be considered a resource for providing services to non-custodial parents. Several states provide employment and training services specifically for non-custodial parents through SNAP E&T funding. Many non-custodial parents in TANF families are considered ABAWDs by SNAP because they do not live in the same household as their child, and thus are subject to SNAP ABAWD time limits that make it even more urgent to connect these individuals to employment and training activities.

In child-only TANF families, such as in cases when a non-parent relative is caring for a child, the adult family member could receive SNAP E&T services. TANF agencies could consider referring non-custodial parents and non-parent relatives in child-only TANF cases to SNAP E&T programs.

Conclusion

These are only a few examples of practices and partnerships. There are a number of other opportunities states could explore to increase coordination between TANF and SNAP E&T programs and thus better support the long-term economic security of low-income families.
Resources


For additional resources from the Office of Family Assistance Peer TA Resource Library on career pathways approaches to employment and training, visit: [https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/103](https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/103)

For more information on SNAP to Skills, the technical assistance project funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service that is designed to provide States the tools and resources they need to build more effective and job-driven SNAP E&T programs, visit: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap-skills](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap-skills)

For additional resources from the Food and Nutrition Service on designing SNAP E&T programs, visit FNS’s E&T Policy and Guidance hub, at: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/ET-policy-guidance](http://www.fns.usda.gov/ET-policy-guidance)

For more information on the Vice President’s review of federal training programs, including the Job-Driven Checklist, visit: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/ready_to_work_factsheet.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/ready_to_work_factsheet.pdf)
Endnotes

i. The four purposes of the TANF program are to: 1) Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes; 2) Reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage; 3) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; 4) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

ii. SNAP rules require all participants to meet work requirements unless they are exempt because of age, disability, or another specific reason. Children, seniors, and people with disabilities make up almost two-thirds of all SNAP recipients, and are exempt from work requirements.


vi. While this is true in general, The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 permits Vermont, Wisconsin, Colorado, and Utah to spend a capped amount of E&T funds on TANF recipients.