

IN THE FIRST TWENTY TWO MONTHS OF THE RECESSION CASELOADS INCREASED 35% IN FOOD STAMPS BUT JUST 12% IN TANF

HHS recently updated the national TANF caseload data reported on its web site to include the third quarter of calendar year 2009. The reported total excluded Michigan, which had not yet filed its caseload report for this quarter.

The number of persons receiving TANF increased just 12% over the first twenty two months of the recession, rising from 3,833,449 in December 2007 (excluding Michigan) to 4,286,905 in September 2009 (excluding Michigan).¹ This 12% TANF increase was far less than the growth in the real need for assistance implied by the increase over this same twenty two month period of 35% in the number of Food Stamp recipients (from 27.56 million to 37.18 million) and of 96% in the unemployment rate (from 5.0% to 9.8%).²

Even before the recession began, TANF was reaching only a minority of eligible families and an even smaller minority of poor families.³ It is likely that participation rates have declined even further during the recession. The new caseload figures underscore the urgent need for federal action to make TANF more accessible and responsive. Last December, Legal Momentum joined with the Center for Community Change, Jobs with Justice, and the Institute for Policy Studies in issuing a report, *Battered by the Storm: How the Safety Net is Failing Americans and How to Fix It*⁴, offering a comprehensive relief plan of job creation, state and local fiscal relief, and safety net improvement. With respect to TANF, the report calls upon Congress to act immediately to allocate an additional \$16.5 billion a year in federal funds, with no requirement for additional state spending, to be used for the limited purposes of cash assistance, creating subsidized jobs, sustaining current TANF-funded child care, or emergency payments.

(January 22, 2010.) Contact Timothy Casey, tcasey@legalmomentum.org, for further information.)

¹ The TANF figures were derived from the HHS tables at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/caseload_current.htm. The figures include recipients in separate state programs funded with maintenance of effort dollars.

² Food Stamp receipt figures are from USDA table titled "SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM", available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/34SNAPmonthly.htm>.

³ See Legal Momentum, *The Bitter Fruit Of Welfare Reform: A Sharp Drop In The Percentage Of Eligible Women And Children Receiving Welfare*, (2009), available at <http://www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/lm-tanf-bitter-fruit.pdf>.

⁴ *Battered by the Storm* is available at <http://www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/battered-by-the-storm.pdf>.