

TANF RECEIPT FALLS TO LESS THAN ONE THIRD OF ELIGIBLE FAMILIES

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A new report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) shows a continuous decline under TANF in the percentage of eligible families who actually receive benefits.¹ As shown in the table below, the eligible family participation rate has fallen from 78.9% in 1996, the year in which TANF was enacted, to 32.3% in 2009, the most recent year covered by the HHS report. By contrast, in SNAP, the new name for Food Stamps, the participation rate for eligible families with children was 85.0% in 2009, over 2.6 times the TANF rate.²

TANF PARTICIPATION OF ELIGIBLE FAMILIES 1996-2009			
	Eligible Families (millions, avg. monthly)	Participating Families (millions, avg. monthly)	Participation Rate
1996	5.6	4.4	78.9
1997	5.4	3.7	69.2
1998	5.5	3.1	55.8
1999	5.1	2.7	52.3
2000	4.4	2.3	51.8
2001	4.6	2.2	48.0
2002	4.6	2.2	48.1
2003	4.8	2.2	45.7
2004	5.2	2.2	42.0
2005	5.3	2.1	40.4
2006	5.4	2.1	39.0
2007	5.3	1.9	36.0
2008	5.2	1.7	33.0
2009	5.7	1.8	32.3

Although more families were eligible for TANF in 2009 (5.7 million) than in 1996 (5.6 million), 2.6 million fewer families received TANF in 2009 (1.8 million) than in 1996 (4.4 million). TANF eligibility standards are far below the poverty level.

(April 2013. Contact Timothy Casey, tcasey@legalmomentum.org, for further information.)

¹ HHS, *Indicators of Welfare Dependence – Twelfth Report to Congress* (2013), available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/13/Indicators/rpt.pdf>.

² United States Department of Agriculture, *Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2009*, available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Trends2002-09.pdf>.