ALABAMA

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

STATE PLAN RENEWAL

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STATE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
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I. MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

A. Mission

The mission of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, known as the Family Assistance Program (FAP) in Alabama is to encourage the care of children in their own homes or in the homes of relatives by furnishing temporary financial assistance and services to needy families with children so as to: provide a reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and health as far as practicable under the conditions in the State; help maintain and strengthen family life; and help such parents or relatives to attain or retain capability for the maximum self-support and personal independence consistent with the maintenance of continuing parental care and protection.

B. Vision

The statutory purposes of TANF are the cornerstone of the program vision we have for Alabama's families. That vision is expressed in the following primary objectives:

- Increase Personal Responsibility
  Alabama public assistance policy reflects the expectation of responsible behavior by parents. Public assistance policy supports the formation and maintenance of two-parent families and the prevention and reduction of out of wedlock births.

- Target Support
  Parents are primarily responsible for supporting their children. Child support is the "stepping off" point for families requesting help. Families should have the opportunity and responsibility to support their children before seeking public governmental support.

- Encourage Self-Sufficiency
  Beginning with the first agency contact, cash assistance is presented as a temporary remedy and self-sufficiency through employment is emphasized. The administrative structure focuses on outcomes for families rather than simply efficient technical processes, i.e., the structure must support personal and parental responsibility. Guidelines in department program manuals and staff training continues to ensure the program philosophy to support work and self-sufficiency.

- Optimize Agency Resources
  The administration of agency programs must maintain the highest standards of integrity and fiscal accountability. There must be clear expectations of all levels of

administration as well as of the clients we serve. There will be fair and objective methods to measure performance against those expectations.

- Involve Communities in the Solution
  County developed community involvement plans will educate citizens on the population served and ways to offer extra-agency support. Local agreements between the public and private sector, to include community based and religious organizations will maximize rational and compassionate efforts and resources to promote self-sufficiency to assist families in avoiding or leaving welfare. Existing community JOBS Task Forces will play a key role in helping families gain independence.

- Protect Children
  The agency has a responsibility to design and administer programs with the essential integral goal of protecting children.

C. Values

The overall values of the Department are equally applicable to the Family Assistance Program as they reflect a general approach to service. These values are as follows:

- Integrity
  We are dedicated to act in a manner that merits the trust of out clients, stakeholders, and fellow employees.

- Respect
  We believe every individual has worth and potential and is deserving of being treated with dignity

- Commitment
  We are dedicated to providing the highest quality services and support to our clients.

- Accountability
  We are responsible for the policies, standards, and decisions that frame our service to our clients.

II. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. OVERVIEW

The State will conduct the Family Assistance Program designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner) to provide assistance and/or services to needy families with children through County Departments of Human Resources located in the 67 counties in Alabama. Activities of these offices related to the Family Assistance Program include: accepting and processing applications for assistance; and as appropriate conducting reviews and redeterminations of eligibility,

providing child support enforcement services and managing a program of work activities and requirements.

The Family Assistance Program has four components:
- Temporary Cash Assistance (limited to 5 years)
- TANF Emergency Assistance (formerly EA) known as TANF EA
- TANF (Direct) Child Welfare
- Special Projects

Financial thresholds are provided for each in Attachment E. Program component general descriptions are in Section F below.

Program operating guidelines which include all policies, procedures, etc., for the determination of initial and continuing eligibility for each program will be issued to the County Departments of Human Resources from the State Department of Human Resources as needed. Such operating guidelines contained in department program manuals or other correspondence is binding on the County Departments of Human Resources. See Attachment A.

B. TIME LIMITED ASSISTANCE

The Family Assistance Program will provide cash assistance pursuant to 45 CFR 260.31 on a time limited basis (time limit is 5 years) consistent with provisions in section 408, Part A, Title IV of the Social Security Act (and supportive services to enable families to become self-sufficient) to eligible families. In order to receive past 60 months the grantee or spouse of the grantee must have a circumstance/situation which creates a barrier to self sufficiency known as a hardship and s/he must be cooperating with child support and complying with JOBS as appropriate. See Attachment F.

C. NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. Work Program-The parent(s) and/or stepparent(s) of a dependent child(ren) receiving assistance are required to participate in work activities designed to result in gainful employment unless the parent(s)/stepparent(s) is deferred or has good cause for not participating as specified in department program manuals. See Attachments B and C. The penalties for failure to comply are as follows:

Applicants:

Upon overt refusal of the grantee relative or other member(s) of the assistance unit required to participate in JOBS activities, the application will be denied and entitlement to benefits for the month of application through the month of application disposition is lost even if reapplication is made in the month of the original application disposition.

Recipients who have received for less than 24 months:

For the first three months of non-compliance (consecutive or not), the grant amount is reduced by 50% of the payment standard for the assistance unit size. For a month of non-compliance in excess of three months, the assistance unit is disqualified for a one-

month period for the first disqualification. For a month of non-compliance following the first disqualification, the assistance unit is immediately disqualified for a six-month period. For a month of non-compliance following the second and subsequent disqualifications, the assistance unit is immediately disqualified for a twelve-month period.

Recipients who have received for 24 months or more or who voluntarily terminate employment or refuse employment without good cause (regardless of the number of months or receipt of assistance):

The assistance unit is immediately disqualified for a one-month period for the first instance of non-compliance; a six- month period for the second instance of non-compliance and a twelve-month period for the third and subsequent instances.

2. Child Support Enforcement Program-Individuals receiving assistance are required to cooperate in child support enforcement activities unless good cause as defined in department program manuals exists not to do so. See Attachment D. The penalties for failure to cooperate are as follows:

Applicants:

Upon overt refusal of the grantee relative or other member(s) of the assistance unit required to cooperate with child support enforcement, the application will be denied and entitlement to benefits for the month of application through the month of application disposition is lost even if reapplication is made in the month of the original application disposition.

Recipients:

For the first three months of non-cooperation (consecutive or not) the grant amount is reduced by 50% of the payment standard for the assistance unit size. For months of non-cooperation in excess of three months, the assistance unit is disqualified for a one-month period for the first disqualification. For a month of non-cooperation following the first disqualification, the assistance unit is immediately disqualified for a six-month period. For a month of non-cooperation following the second and subsequent disqualifications, the assistance unit is immediately disqualified for a twelve-month period.

D. PAYMENT ACCURACY AND PROGRAM INTEGRITY

The program is supported by an automated system known as the Family Assistance Certification, Employment and Training System (FACETS) operational in all counties of the State. An Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) as required by Section 1137 of the Social Security Act for persons receiving assistance is operational in all counties of the State.

Methods are in place to ensure payment accuracy to eligible families which includes mandatory case record reviews by county office supervisory staff with a re-review of a sample of those records by state office field supervisors. Identified deficiencies require corrective action. State statistics about payment accuracy are published to the Directors, County Departments of Human Resources monthly. Payment accuracy is a component of County Director evaluations. The state is subject to Federal and State Audits.

Program operating guidelines contain provisions to strengthen and maintain program integrity from fraud prevention actions to recovery of erroneously paid benefits. Benefit recovery activities are supported through the Comprehensive Claims System (CCS) which interfaces with the program certification system, FACETS. Individuals found guilty of committing an intentional program violation by a court of competent jurisdiction in Alabama will be disqualified from participation in the cash assistance component of the Family Assistance Program as follows: for a period of 6 months upon the first occasion of any such offense; or a period of 12 months upon the second occasion of any such offense and permanently upon the third or subsequent occasion of such offense.

E. CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

The Family Assistance Program, like all programs and services of the Department of Human Resources, is administered in full compliance with Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and all other Federal and State civil rights laws.

Language assistance so as to ensure meaningful access to all Department programs, services and benefits is provided to individuals needing such services consistent with the Department's Language Assistance Plan first issued on August 24, 2005.

Reasonable accommodations are provided to enable full use of existing programs and services to those individuals who tell us (or for whom we determine) they have a physical, mental or learning disability that limits a major life activity. Client case action notices provide information about the availability of reasonable accommodations. Departmental program operating manuals for the TANF Program contain guidelines for county staff in this regard as well as information about language assistance.

F. PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Program descriptions for the components of the Family Assistance Program are as follows:
Cash Assistance: Financial assistance to meet basic needs is available to a family with a dependent child under age 18 or under age 19 if s/he is a full time student in a secondary school or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training and whose income does not exceed established agency standards and who are otherwise eligible. Non parent adult caretaker relatives may not be included in the Family Assistance unit.
Funding Source: Federal Funds.

TANF EA (Formerly AFDC-EA with provision date of August 21, 1996): Assistance with paying for shelter or other emergency living expenses and (non-assistance) services which include information and referral, case planning and case management, counseling and other support activities to normalize family functioning to or on behalf of a needy child 1) who is under the age of 21 and to any other member of the household in which

he is living provided that such child is (or, within 6 months prior to the month in which such assistance is requested, has been) living with any of the relatives specified in section 406(a) (1) of the Act and further clarified in 45 CFR 233.90(c)(1)(v) in a place of residence maintained by one or more of such relatives as his or their own home; 2) who has been removed from his/her home or is at risk of such removal and 3) whose emergency did not arise from his refusal or refusal of such relative with whom he lives without good cause to accept employment or training for employment. Refer to Section VII, Attachment E for financial criteria.
Funding Source: Comingled State and Federal Funds.

TANF Direct Child Welfare: Non-assistance expenditures for payment of specific services for department child welfare cases such as counseling, case management, peer support, childcare information and referral, transitional services and non-recurrent, short-term benefits as discussed in 45 CFR 260.31. An individual is certified if that individual meets either of the following: 1) a child resides in his/her own home; 2) a child is in out-of-home placement and has a permanency goal to remain at home, return home, or live permanently with relatives. Refer to Section VII, Attachment E for financial criteria.
Funding Source: Federal and State funds.

Special Projects: 1. Eligible Families: Assistance and non-assistance expenditures for services including information and referral to needy parents/families such as short-term non-recurrent benefits as discussed in 45 CFR 260.31, day care, transportation and work and training services, statewide food distribution network activities and pro family activities expected to prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock births as well as encourage the formation and maintenance of healthy two parent families including after school activities for teens, fatherhood and healthy marriage initiatives, mentoring and literacy programs and domestic violence/drug abuse/prevention/education programs. Refer to Section VII, Attachment E for financial criteria. Additional non-financial criteria, if any, are dependent on the project plan.

2. Pro Family Activities for Other Than Eligible Families: Non-assistance in the form of non-federal cash and in kind qualified expenditures by third parties for individuals and families pursuant to 45 CFR 263.2(a) (4) (ii) as well as the Departmental service of information and referral. Program specifics including non-financial eligibility criteria, if any, are contained in written agreements/contracts between the Department of Human Resources and the third party and in project plans as applicable. Projects provided may not be available on a statewide basis but will be provided as determined appropriate by the state.
Funding Source: Eligible Families: Commingled State and Federal funds, Federal funds dependent on the project; State MOE; Pro-Family Activities for other than Eligible Families: State MOE.

G. WORK PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, ACTIVITIES, DEFINITIONS AND DISPLACEMENT PROVISIONS

1. Requirements and Activities

The State will operate a welfare work program in compliance with Section 407 of Title IV-A of the Social Security Act and consistent with Alabama's approved Work Verification Plan. All parents/stepparents, including teen parents, who are receiving assistance are referred to the JOBS Unit for assessment in regard to their skills, prior work experience and employability. The assessment process includes screening for disability and language assistance needs. An Individual JOBS Participation (IJP) and Family Responsibility Plan (FRP) will be developed for these individuals. Individuals determined to be ready to engage in work will be immediately placed in work or work-related activities for up to 40 hours per week. After receipt of assistance for 24 months, all individuals not already participating in such activities will be required to engage in work activities, as defined in state policy.

The FRP is developed jointly by the FA grantee relative and the JOBS case manager. It outlines the responsibilities of the FA grantee in regards to the participation of all required family members and includes a copy of the IJP for each required family member. The IJP outlining work activities, supportive services and other family needs is developed jointly by the recipient and the JOBS case manager. Support services such as childcare, transportation, and work/participation expenses will be made available as needed to enable recipients to participate in work or work-related activities. The individual will receive reimbursement or payment of agreed upon expenses directly related to participation in such activities. Each recipient will be informed of the work requirements, what constitutes noncompliance, and the sanctions for non-compliance. If a recipient refuses or fails to cooperate with work requirements as set forth in his/her IJP, the family's benefits will be reduced or terminated as set forth in state policy unless good cause for the non-compliance, as defined in state policy, is established. No sanction for failure to work or participate in work-related activities will be imposed on any single custodial parent caring for a child under age 6 if the individual proves that s/he has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care.

Each non-deferred recipient will be placed in a work-related activity consistent with his/her IJP. Work activities may include:

Subsidized/Unsubsidized employment
On the job training
Job Search
Job Readiness Activities
Community Employment Placement (work experience)
Vocational education activities
Job skills training
Satisfactory attendance in high school or a course of study leading to a GED
Education directly related to employment

For the duration of the recipient's involvement in work activities, the JOBS case manager will monitor component participation and provide assistance to participants with any problems or barriers.

Individuals who agree to treatment programs for drug, alcohol, or mental health reasons may be temporarily deferred from a work activity when the person is making a serious attempt to recover. Domestic violence victims will be deferred from a work activity when they are at risk of endangerment.

2. Definitions

a. **Unsubsidized Employment:** This is paid employment for either wages or salary where no part of the pay is subsidized by TANF or any other public programs. In order to be countable under federal requirements the employment must be equal to an average of 30 or more hours per week.

b. **Work Experience:** In Alabama this activity is called Community Employment or CEMP. CEMP is a work activity, performed in return for welfare that provides an individual with an opportunity to acquire the general skills, training, knowledge, and work habits necessary to obtain employment. Placements are designed to help prepare the client to obtain unsubsidized employment by allowing him/her to develop a current work history and establish references for future employment seeking efforts as well as develop and improve marketable skills. Placements will be in both non-profit and for-profit businesses. Placement in for-profit businesses will have shorter time frames (maximum of three months) than placements in non-profit businesses (maximum of six months).

c. **On-the-Job-Training:** In this component a public or private employer hires the TANF client full-time where part of the wages are subsidized, usually by a governmental entity such as Department of Labor. While employed in the OJT position, the client engages in productive work while receiving training in knowledge and skills essential for adequate job performance. The client is compensated at a rate comparable to that of other employees performing the same or similar jobs, but at no less than minimum wage.

d. **Job Search and Job Readiness:**

1. Job Search is assigned in increments lasting no more than two weeks. The client is expected to complete a number of serious contacts with potential employers and must also register with the Employment Service. The daily number of required contacts is determined by the case manager based on the client's specific circumstances and the geographic area. The case manager will randomly contact employers turned in as job contacts to verify that an application was submitted and/or an interview was conducted.

2. Job Readiness is an intensive, short-term component, consisting of formal classroom training designed to prepare the client for successfully seeking and maintaining employment. Activities focus on pre-employment preparation and are aimed at helping the client overcome barriers that might preclude employment. Typical activities include application completion, interview skills, ways to locate job openings, general workplace expectations, and the behaviors and attitudes necessary to compete successfully in the labor market. This activity also includes substance abuse, mental health and rehabilitation counseling for clients who are otherwise employable.

e. **Vocational Educational Training:** This is organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations requiring training including a baccalaureate or advanced degree. These courses should provide individuals with technical skills and academic knowledge needed for success in current or emerging employment sectors. It also includes any formal instruction in a skill or trade traditionally referred to as job skills training, determined by the JOBS staff to be other than purely academic in nature, that prepares the client for a vocation. For example, technical programs designed to prepare a client for a specific occupation, including nursing, plumbing, electrical, auto mechanics, welding and barbering.

   The training is limited to education that leads to useful employment in a state recognized occupation. Training is available to clients through WIA, vocational/technical schools and some colleges and universities. Training includes courses for any state licenses, certificates, and/or degrees.

f. **Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment:** This is training or education for job skills required by an employer to provide an individual with the ability to obtain employment or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace. It includes training or education required as a prerequisite for employment or to advance or adapt to changing demands of current employment. Such training and education will be provided through educational and training organizations. This activity also includes all activities described above as vocational education and any four-year bachelor's or advanced degree programs at any State certified college or university.

g. **Education Directly Related to Employment for Individuals with No High School Diploma or Certificate of High School Equivalency:**
   This is education related to a specific occupation, job, or job offer. It includes basic education and ESL, and where required as a prerequisite for employment, education leading to a GED or high school equivalency diploma in any educational program approved by the Alabama Department of Education.

h. **Satisfactory School Attendance for Individuals with No High School Diploma or Certificate of High School Equivalency:**

Individuals in this activity must be attending an educational facility with the goal of achieving a high school diploma or certificate of high school equivalency. In addition, the student must be considered a "student in good standing". The student must have regular attendance and the activity must be considered feasible for the student.

i. **Subsidized Public or Private Sector Employment:** This is full-time, paid employment funded with TANF dollars in the public or private sector. In all cases, the employer is reimbursed by DHR for the gross wages paid by the employer to the employee. The subsidy period may be for up to 6 months. In addition, subsidized public and private sector employment in Alabama may be provided through college work study programs that meet the guidelines.

3. Displacement Provisions

Pursuant to 45 CFR 261.70, no adult in a work activity as described in 45 CFR 261.30 will be employed or assigned to an employment when any other individual is on layoff from the same or an equivalent job in the company, or if the employer has terminated the employment of any regular employee or otherwise caused an involuntary reduction of the workforce in order to fill the vacancy so created with a recipient of Family Assistance. Aggrieved individuals may file a written complaint with the Family Assistance Division, State Department of Human Resources. All complaints are investigated. Complainants are advised of findings in writing. Corrective action is taken by the Department as appropriate.

H. PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Pursuant to Code of Alabama Title 38, Section 38-2-6 information/case records of program participants is considered confidential and shall not be subject to public use or inspection. The release and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance through the Family Assistance Program is limited in scope by the purpose/program for which it is released/disclosed. Such release/disclosure is only permissible as follows:

- in connection with programs operated under Title I - Aid to the Aged; Title IV-A - Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC); Title IV-A - Block grants to States for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Title IV-B - Child Welfare Services; Title IV-D - Child Support and Establishment of Paternity; - Title IV-E - Foster Care (FCMP) and Adoption Assistance; Title X - Aid to the Blind; Title XIV - Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled; Title XVI - Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled; Title XVI - Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Title XIX - Medicaid; or Title XX - Block Grants.

- in connection with services provided by other entities integral to and consistent with the administration of public assistance pursuant to state laws under written agreements with the Department of Human Resources.

- in connection with the administration of other federal or federally assisted programs providing assistance in cash, in-kind, or services, directly to individuals on the basis of need.

- at the request of state, local or federal law enforcement authorities searching for fugitive felons or individuals violating a condition of probation or parole imposed under federal or state law (current address only).

- in connection with a public audit.

- in connection with the investigation of problems related to misuse of funds issued by the Department of Human Resources.

- at the request of the client under certain limited conditions as specified in department program manuals.

- in connection with the investigation of program fraud under certain conditions as specified in department program manuals.

- at the request of grand juries.

I. PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES AND PREVENT AND REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF OUT OF WEDLOCK PREGNANCY

The Department of Human Resources partners with several state agencies and faith-based and community organizations to form the Alabama Fatherhood Initiative (AFI). Goals of the AFI are to strengthen families, to enhance child support collections, and to address the multi-faceted needs of children growing up without the involvement of natural fathers in their lives. The mission of the AFI is to help non-custodial parents to achieve these goals by providing counseling, education, short-term skills training and employment.

In addition, the Department of Human Resources partners with the Children's Trust Fund of Alabama to competitively award grants to community and faith-based organizations for fatherhood programs across the state. These programs offer a myriad of services to non-custodial parents, including parenting classes, male responsibility and other father involvement services. Also, a Healthy Marriage program is funded through this partnership.

The Department of Human Resources partners with the Alabama Department of Public Health which serves all women of child bearing age and the Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (ACPTP) for pregnancy prevention efforts. The mission of the

ACPTP is to "Provide statewide leadership on the issue of teen pregnancy prevention through collaboration, education, training, and advocacy; thereby reducing teen pregnancy and improving the well being of Alabama's children, families, and communities" and to further the mission, the ACPTP has adopted priorities. See Attachment G. for those priorities. Additional information about ACPTP can be found on their website at www.acptp.org.

Our goal specifically targeting teen pregnancy is to maintain out of wedlock teen births to at least 5% below the national average as published by the National Center for Health Statistics.

In regard to the overall issue of out of wedlock pregnancy prevention, as part of the JOBS Program client assessment the case manager provides discussion and information about the impact of additional children as it pertains to the goals of personal responsibility, parenting and family support. Through these discussions it is our goal to provide individuals with sufficient information and assistance to move families from welfare to work without additional pregnancies during receipt of assistance and until such time as the family is stable. These activities in conjunction with our fatherhood and healthy marriage initiatives provide the foundation for success in this area.

J. EDUCATION AND TRAINING INITIATIVES ON THE PROBLEM OF STATUTORY RAPE

The Department of Human Resources has developed and issued pamphlets containing information regarding the legal definitions and consequences of statutory rape to be distributed by Alabama Fatherhood Programs administered by the Children's Trust Fund of Alabama as part of the educational activities of these programs which are specifically targeted at non-custodial males. Fatherhood programs now number 23 throughout the state. Additionally, these materials are used in the educational activities of the Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Further, these pamphlets are generally available in Alabama Departments of Public Health statewide. These pamphlets are offered to the Alabama Departments of Youth Services (DYS) and Education. DYS has used the pamphlet to raise awareness about the age of an individual's girlfriend in their educational programs for males prior to their release from the juvenile detention facility at Mt. Meigs, Alabama. Staff of the Department of Human Resources distributes the pamphlets as appropriate to individuals applying for or receiving Family Assistance and in other program areas as deemed necessary.

TANF workers are required to report cases of suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate service staff. This activity specifically includes the circumstances of girls under the age of 16 having sex with males who are at least 16 years old and at least two years older than the female.

The Department of Human Resources continues its association with the Council on Violence Against Women. This council whose membership includes judicial, law enforcement, prosecution, health care, education, social services and mental health

representatives, develops the Alabama State Plan, Responding to Domestic and Sexual Violence, to assist in promoting systemic change and improving responses to victims and perpetrators of such violence. The State Plan can be viewed at www.acadv.org.

III. SPECIAL PROVISIONS

A. TREATMENT OF FAMILIES MOVING TO ALABAMA FROM ANOTHER STATE

Families moving into the State from another State will be treated the same as other families under the program. Therefore, the policies and procedures of the Family Assistance Program applicable in a county will be applied uniformly to all residents of the State (County) whether current or new.

B. CITIZENSHIP AND NONCITIZEN ELIGIBILITY

Citizens and qualified non-citizens are eligible to the extent permitted under federal law, Title IV of Public Law 104-193, as amended. Recipients must be citizens, qualified aliens who entered the United States before August 22, 1996, qualified aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 who are excepted from the 5-year bar or aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 and have been in "qualified alien" status for at least 5 years. Victims of severe forms of trafficking are eligible for federally-funded TANF benefits to the same extent as refugees. Aliens who (or whose child or parent) have been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty in the U.S. are eligible under certain circumstances consistent with Federal law as specified in program operating manuals.

C. GENERAL GUIDELINES AND STIPULATIONS

Eligibility rules of the Department of Human Resources will be uniformly applied in all cases in a county. The determination of need and amount of assistance for all applicants and recipients will be made on an objective and equitable basis and all types of income and potential income will be taken into consideration in the same way except where otherwise specifically authorized by State or Federal law or the Administrative Code of the Department of Human Resources or as stated in program operating guidelines issued by the State Department of Human Resources, Family Assistance Division. The State will adhere to prohibitions and requirements of Section 408 of Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act. Pursuant to subparagraph (B) of Section 408(a)(10) Good cause exceptions to subparagraph (A) of Section 408(a)(10) include absence due to medical reasons, school attendance, visits, conducting business, participating in Job Corps or vocational training.

1. Financial Responsibility for Program Benefits

Financial responsibility for needy children includes parents and stepparents (cash assistance only) in the home. All income of members of the assistance unit will be evaluated to determine eligibility of the assistance unit for benefits under the Family

Assistance Program. Income of parents and stepparents ineligible due to alien status, disqualification for fraud, exclusion as a parole violator, or for a conviction of a felony or for fraudulently misrepresenting residence will also be used to determine eligibility if appropriate and applicable according to department operating manuals or other instructions. Earned income from new employment may be disregarded for the first twelve months wages are received if timely and accurately reported and the individual is otherwise eligible for the disregard pursuant to Family Assistance Program guidelines.

2. Summarized Eligibility Rules

In order to be eligible families must:

- meet component specific conditions including the following if applicable
- be U.S. citizens (or meet alienage requirements in Title IV of P.L. 104-193 and/or be a legal immigrant residing in the U.S. prior to August 22, 1996).
- be residents of Alabama.
- be in need by agency financial standards. See Attachment E.
- cooperate in self-sufficiency requirements including work and child support enforcement activities unless deferred from work requirements or unless good cause exists not to cooperate with child support if applicable.
- provide or apply for a SSN for each member of the assistance unit
- not be on strike (applicable to cash component only)

3. Medical Services

Federal law prohibits the use of federal funds to provide medical services and states that the term "medical services" does not include pre-pregnancy family planning services. In addition to pre-pregnancy family planning services for purposes of federal expenditures, the following activities/services that are consistent with a TANF purpose and related to employment and/or work participation activities for cash assistance recipients are not considered medical services:

- pre-employment physical examination by a health professional that does not include treatment.
- payment to a health professional for completion of Department forms. (Used for eligibility determinations related to time limits which constitutes an administrative cost and for work activities).
- payment to a health professional or entity for administration of a pre-employment drug test or TB test.
- assessment, testing or other determinations of modification by a health professional needed for reasonable accommodation related to a participant's incapacity/disability. Excludes treatment.
- dental services (cosmetic, extractions, filings, etc.) needed to eliminate a barrier to participation or employment. The service may not be of a surgical or other medical nature.

D. DELIVERY OF BENEFITS

Delivery of benefits is dependent on the component program of the FA Program and includes delivery by Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), by vendor payment, cash payments or provision of services.

E. NOTICE AND TIMELY ACTION (applicable to cash component only)

Applications will be acted on in a timely manner. Department rules provide that not more than 30 days shall elapse between the date of application and the date the first benefits are made available or the notice of denial is mailed. The number of applications that exceed such standard is kept to a minimum. The standard of promptness is monitored and reported to County Directors of Human Resources monthly.

Applicants and recipients are notified in writing of actions taken in their case.

F. CLIENT OPPORTUNITY FOR REVIEW OF ACTION TAKEN

Procedures for client review of case action taken provide for three options for review (1) a conference with the County Department of Human Resources, (2) a State Department of Human Resources case record review and (3) a fair hearing conducted by the State Department of Human Resources. A request for options 2 and 3 must be in writing and submitted to either the County or State Department. Information about these opportunities as well as instructions regarding how to request and where to send the request is provided to clients as general information on all automated system notices generated and mailed to clients at award, termination or change in circumstances. If a system notice is not sufficient to explain case action a manually prepared case action form is completed and mailed which also contains the general information in regard to a review of case action described above. The summarized eligibility requirements pamphlet for the Family Assistance Program contains similar language and is required to be given and explained to all applicants and as needed to recipients during the interview process. Rules of review for special projects may vary dependent on the project and would be included in informational materials as appropriate.

G. SCREENING AND IDENTIFICATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Procedures are in place through the statewide Special Assessment, Intervention and Liaison Project (SAIL) for eligibility workers to routinely screen and identify domestic violence for individuals applying for or receiving cash assistance. JOBS case managers include questions on domestic violence as part of the JOBS assessment as well. For those identified as victims of domestic violence, referrals are made to the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence for a variety of services including development of a safety plan, information and referral, supportive services, counseling and case management, etc. Certain program rules are waived for those individuals identified as in imminent danger and include child support enforcement activities, time limits and work participation requirements (although the client may volunteer to participate).

H. ELDERCARE WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

The State does not intend to fund a special initiative for training/employment of individuals providing direct care in a long term facility or in other occupations providing eldercare. However, on a case by case basis FA cash assistance recipients can receive assistance/services while pursuing training/employment to provide such eldercare as part of their IJP and FRP as discussed in Section II G.1 of the plan. Assistance/services in this regard include payment for short term training to obtain classification as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), supplies, uniforms, equipment, etc. Further, the Department has partnered with a centrally located technical school and Baptist Health to provide support for a grant to fund such training. If awarded, referrals from our JOBS client pool can be accepted from 24 surrounding counties.

I. ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) CARD SPENDING RESTRICTIONS POLICIES AND PRACTICES, BENEFIT ACCESS AND FEE INFORMATION

1. Spending Restrictions Policies and Practices

Statement of Policy: Use of an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to withdraw FA benefits or process a payment for merchandise or a service from an automated teller machine (ATM) or point of sale (POS) device physically located in a liquor store, gambling establishment or strip club is prohibited. Such use constitutes an unauthorized EBT transaction. Definitions: A liquor store is an establishment selling exclusively or primarily intoxicating liquor; a gambling establishment is an establishment offering casino, gambling or gaming activities as the primary purpose of the establishment; a strip club is any retail establishment providing adult oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment. Practices: Educate clients; investigate reported violations; and impose financial penalties on FA recipients.

a. Client Education

Clients are educated about the new spending restrictions as follows: mandatory discussion of the prohibition by the eligibility worker with all new applicants; public information materials which state the prohibition to include program summarized eligibility rules, client EBT brochures (under revision), automated client notices of case action, the program applicant/recipient affirmation and agreement statement which requires client certification of understanding and agreement to adhere to the prohibition in writing. The prohibition language is posted on the Department website and is being added to the EBT client portal in the future. Further recipient grantee relatives must acknowledge in writing understanding of the rule as part of the Family Responsibility Plan (FRP) under the JOBS Program as discussed in TANF State Plan Section II G.1.

b. Financial Penalty

(1) The FA grant amount in cases in which the grantee relative is determined by the eligibility worker to be accessing benefits through unauthorized EBT transactions without good cause will be reduced by 50% of the payment standard for the assistance unit size for each month such a transaction(s) occurs. For example, the grant amount for an assistance unit of three, i.e. $215.00, will be reduced to $107.00 for each month it has been determined the grantee relative accessed benefits through an unauthorized EBT transaction.

(2) Good Cause-Examples of good cause for unauthorized EBT transactions are as follows: lack of transportation or lack of free transportation to non-prohibited locations; emergencies; lack of or limited access to non-prohibited locations in the community/area of residence; and other similar circumstance determined by the worker and approved by his/her supervisor.

(3) Client Opportunity for Review of Case Action- See TANF State Plan Section III F.

2. Benefit Access and Fee Information

a. Benefit Access-Recipients can access FA benefits at any ATM or POS device at any location with such a device other than the prohibited locations with the exception of state owned liquor stores. (EBT cards are not accepted in such stores known as Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) stores.) Good cause provisions under the client penalty section above assure benefit access in remote locations and under other conditions so that the spending restrictions are not unduly burdensome in those situations. To ameliorate an identified situation, the client will be referred to the Client Help Desk provided by our Contractor who is required to provide Customer Service, toll free via a 1-800 number for benefit access information as well as other account information. As part of the delivery of Customer Service, our Contractor is required to provide information 24/7 about POS/ATM site locations where benefits can be accessed. The Contractor must provide general information to clients regarding stores and ATMs. In order to do this the Contractor maintains a database and tracks retailers providing cashback and ATMs that accept the Alabama EBT cards. The Contractor must ensure that no cash client travel any further than 15 miles to any cash access location (either retailer or ATM). Further, if the Contractor is informed of the fact that there is no location within 15 miles or less to provide cash services they will make an effort with assistance from the Department to look into the businesses that are in the area and see if a location is willing to provide the service. If there are no businesses that can or will do so, then the Contractor would inform the Department of why and provide the closest business that will. According to information from the Department EBT Office, to date there has not been an instance where the 15 miles or less rule could not be met. Our Contractor is fully aware of the TANF spending restrictions and continues to be part of our discussion and research into this matter as well as part of the National discussion in this regard.

Information about benefit access, lost and stolen cards, customer service, pin numbers, etc. is explained to clients during the application interview and is provided in EBT client materials and on the EBT client website. Other Department materials contain customer service contact information.

b. Fee Information-The first two cash ATM withdrawals in a month are free. Any subsequent ATM withdrawals in the same month incur a fifty cents ($.50) fee. Recipients can receive cash back when using their EBT cards for purchases and incur no transaction fee. Information regarding fees is provided in EBT client materials and on the EBT client website.

IV PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Pursuant to Title IV-A, Section 402, Alabama's TANF State Plan is published and maintained on the Department of Human Resources website. Written comments on this plan were solicited and a period of 45 days was provided for such comments. Further Alabama law at Section 41, Chapter 22 Administrative Procedure, provides for the promulgation of program rules on requirements to receive assistance. Two of the stated purposes of that Act are to increase public access to governmental information as well as to increase public participation in the formulation of administrative rules. The law requires publication of the referenced program rules for public comment in the Alabama Administrative Monthly for a period of 35 to 90 days. This rule affords all interested parties reasonable opportunity to submit data, or arguments, orally or in writing. The publication of the plan on the website and the proposed program rules process provide for input from other state agencies, public and private organizations, the general public and other pertinent entities during development and implementation.

V. CERTIFICATIONS

The State will operate a program to provide temporary assistance to needy families so that the children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; to end dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage; to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

This program is known as the Family Assistance Program
Executive Officer of the State (Name) Robert Bentley, Governor
In administering and operating a program which provides temporary assistance to needy families with minor children under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, the State will:

A. Specify which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program under part A in all political subdivisions of the State: Alabama Department of Human Resources is the agency responsible for administering the programs.

   Alabama Department of Human Resources is the agency responsible for supervising the program.

B. Assure that local governments and private sector organizations:

   1. Have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; and

   2. Have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services.

C. Operate a Child Support Enforcement program under the State plan approved under part D;

D. Operate a Foster Care and Adoption Assistance program in accordance with part E, and certify that the State will take all necessary actions to ensure that children receiving assistance are eligible for medical assistance;

E. Provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a Tribal Family Assistance plan approved under Section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

F. Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage.

G. Screen for and identify domestic violence by establishing and enforcing standards and procedures to:
   1. Screen and identify individuals receiving assistance with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals;
   2. Refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and
   3. Waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, child support cooperation requirements and work requirements, in cases where compliance

with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.

H. Make available to the public a summary of the State plan.

CERTIFIED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE STATE:

9/14/11
Date

Robert Bentley Governor
Signature and Title

VI. FUNDING

A. Payments to Agency Administering the TANF Block Grant

> Payments under the TANF Block Grant will be made to the Alabama Department of Human Resources as the organization managing Family Assistance/JOBS programs as of August 22, 1996.

B. State Payments for TANF Program

> Section 405 requires that grants be paid to States in quarterly installments, based on State estimates. The State's estimate for each quarter of the fiscal year by percentage is:

For FY 2011 and Future Years

1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter
27%	26%	25%	22%

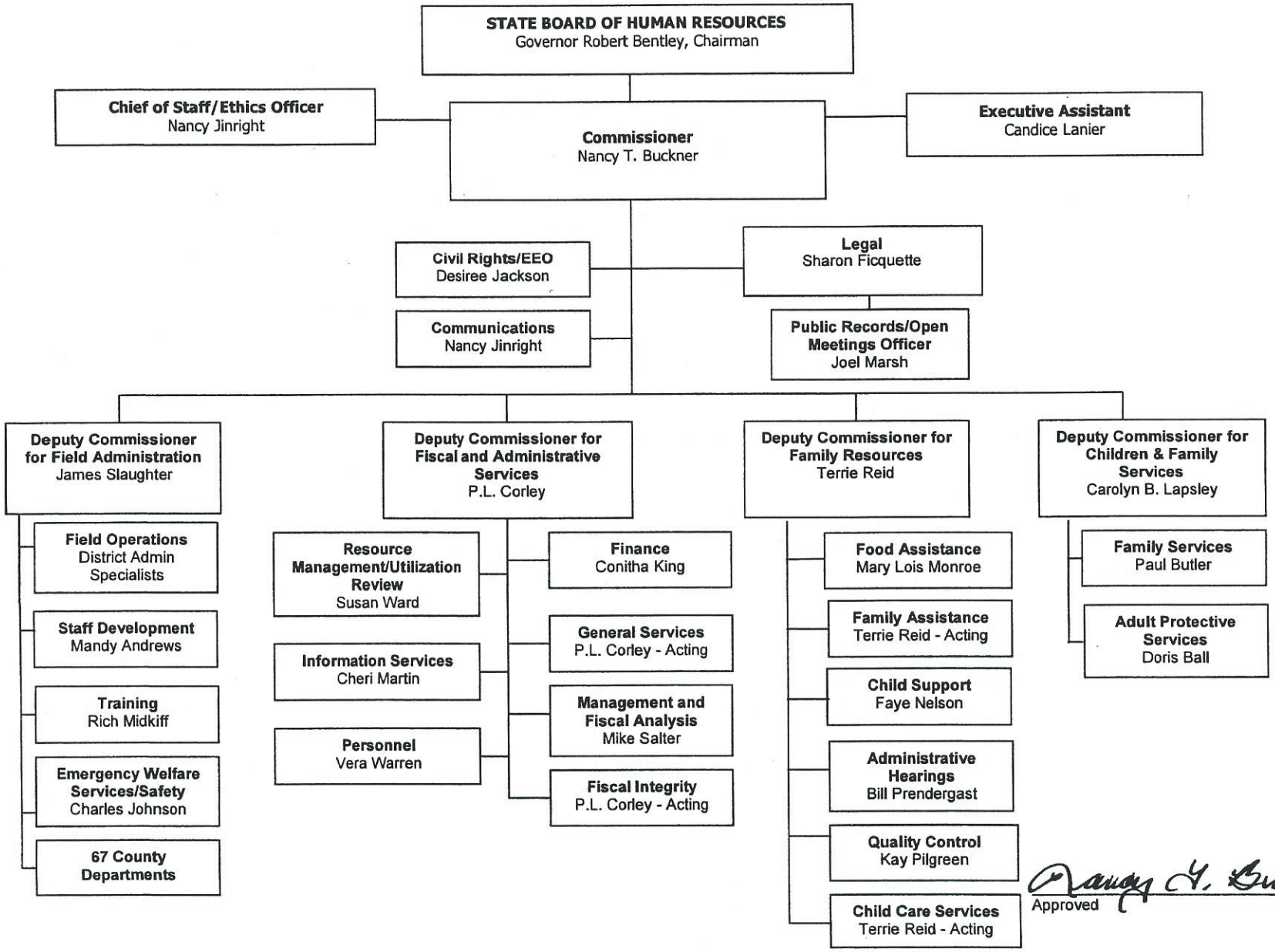
VII. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A

Alabama Department of Human Resources Organizational Chart

www.dhr.alabama.gov
On homepage click About Us; Organization

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES



Nancy T. Buckner
Approved 7/1/11

Attachment A

Attachment B

WORK PARTICIPATION DEFERRAL CRITERIA and SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES DELAY CRITERIA

A. Deferral Criteria

Individuals may be temporarily deferred from the participation requirements of the JOBS Program if the individual:

1. Is a person in the home whose presence is required on a substantially continuous basis due to the illness or incapacity, determined on the basis of medical evidence, of a related individual and no other appropriate individual is available to provide the needed care.

2. Has an illness or injury which is serious enough to temporarily prevent employment or training with the goal of employment. This includes pregnancy when it is determined by medical evidence that working or participation in training would be detrimental to the woman or the unborn child.

3. Is incapacitated with a physical or mental impairment determined by the Department of Rehabilitative Services which prevents the individual from engaging in employment or other work activity.

4. Has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty as defined in department program manuals to the extent participation in program work requirements is precluded.

5. Is participating in drug, alcohol or mental health counseling to the extent participation in program work requirements is precluded.

6. Is a single custodial parent caring for a child under the age of six (6) and appropriate childcare is not available or is inaccessible to the client.

7. Is a single custodial parent (age 18 or older) of a child age 12 months or younger.

8. Is age 60 or older.

9. Has no regular transportation of any kind available.

10. Has a personal barrier of such significance to preclude participation in a work activity or employment and is participating in other JOBS activities to overcome the barrier.

11. Is a parent in a two-parent family who has to provide childcare for a child while the other parent works or participates in a JOBS activity because appropriate childcare is not otherwise available, accessible and/or affordable.

B. Special Circumstances Delay Criteria

Participation for clients who are required to participate and do not meet deferral criteria may be delayed if no appropriate component/employment is available.

Attachment C

GOOD CAUSE FOR NONCOMPLIANCE WITH JOBS ACTIVITIES

Good cause for failure or refusal to participate in JOBS activities or to accept employment includes the following:

1. Illness of individual or illness of a household member or family member which requires the presence of the individual.
2. Childcare problems
3. Transportation problems
4. Personal or family crisis
5. Domestic Violence issues
6. Rare/Unusual Circumstances
7. Non-receipt of correspondence
8. Administrative error

Attachment D

GOOD CAUSE FOR NONCOOPERATION IN CHILD SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

An applicant/recipient for assistance under the FAP must cooperate with the agency in child support enforcement activities unless it is determined that cooperation in such activities is not in the child's best interest. Circumstances under which cooperation may not be in the child's best interest include:

1. Physical or emotional harm of a serious nature is reasonably expected to occur to the child or to the parent or relative with whom the child is living.

2. The child was conceived as a result of incest or forcible rape.

3. Legal proceedings for adoption of the child are pending before a court of competent jurisdiction.

4. The applicant/recipient is currently being assisted by a public or licensed private social agency to resolve the issue of whether to keep the child or relinquish for adoption and the discussions have not gone on for more than three months.

1. Cash Assistance

A. Monthly Maximum Payment Standards

STANDARDS FOR FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Assistance Unit Size	Payment Standard
1	$165
2	$190
3	$215
4	$245
5	$275
6	$305
7	$335
8	$365
9	$395
10	$425
11	$455
12	$485
13	$515
14	$545
15	$575
16	$605

B. Resource Standards

Not applicable effective October 1, 2009.

2. TANF Emergency Assistance (Formerly EA)

Annual family income is lower than two times the state's estimated median income level (as published by HHS) for a family of three.

3. TANF Direct Child Welfare Assistance

Child's or family's gross income is equal to or less than 200% of the HHS poverty guidelines by family size.

4. Special Projects

Eligible Families: Child's, individual's (including pregnant women), or family's gross income can be up to 300% of the HHS poverty guidelines by family size. Additionally, the family's receipt of other means tested benefits/services is sufficient to convey categorical financial eligibility as well as receipt of benefits/services from an entity (organization, state agency, etc.) or program whose client population is largely low income.

CRITERIA FOR EXCEPTION TO TIME LIMITS

In order to receive past 60 months the grantee or spouse of the grantee must have a circumstance/situation which creates a barrier to self sufficiency known as a hardship and s/he must be cooperating with Child Support and complying with JOBS as appropriate. To be eligible both criteria in A & B must be met and continue to be met in each month after 60.

A. Hardships

The grantee or spouse of the grantee must meet one of the following circumstances and must not be employed. If a hardship is established but the individual becomes employed or employable (as determined by the JOBS worker) eligibility is lost.

A hardship may exist when the grantee or spouse of the grantee:

1. Is a person whose presence is required on a substantially continuous basis due to the illness or incapacity of the spouse, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law or of an individual to whom the relationship of the caregiver is within certain degrees of relationship and no other person is available to provide the needed care.

2. Has an illness or injury which has lasted or is expected to last at least 30 days and which is serious enough to temporarily prevent employment (or training with the hope of employment) when determined on the basis of medical evidence from the attending physician/clinic. This includes pregnancy when it has been determined by medical evidence that working or participation in training would be detrimental to the woman or the unborn child.

3. Is incapacitated with a physical or mental impairment determined by a physician or a licensed or certified psychologist which prevents or substantially reduces the individual's ability to work.

4. Is fleeing current domestic violence or abuse because s/he recently has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty as verified by certain documentary evidence specified in program manuals.

5. Is participating in drug, alcohol or mental health counseling as verified through the sources of the counseling to the extent participation in program work requirements is precluded.

6. Is age 60 or older.

7. Has a personal barrier of such significance as to preclude training and/or employment **and** is engaged in an activity to overcome the barrier.

CRITERIA FOR EXCEPTION TO TIME LIMITS – (Continued)

8. Lives in a Food Assistance ABAWD waiver county **and** has not been disqualified due to noncompliance with JOBS since December, 1996.

B. Program Compliance Criteria

The grantee and/or the spouse of the grantee must cooperate with Child Support and comply with JOBS in each month past 60. Failure to meet this criteria results in (1) permanent loss of program eligibility for the grantee and spouse of the grantee regardless of family circumstances and (2) recovery of all benefits received past month 60.

Attachment G.

Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
412 N. Hull Street * Montgomery, AL 36104
334-265-8004 (ph) * 334-265-8033 (fax) * www.acptp.org

Mission Statement

Provide statewide leadership on the issue of teen pregnancy prevention through collaboration, education, training and advocacy; thereby reducing teen pregnancy and improving the well-being of Alabama's children, families and communities.

Priorities

Empower parents and teens to talk about pregnancy.

Promote positive youth development as a prevention model.

Create high public awareness about youth related issues and use premier website and other social media as primary means of communication.

Support evidence-based approaches (also referred to as science-based approaches) to teen pregnancy prevention in Alabama communities (including schools, community-based organizations, clinics, etc.).

Engage policy makers who are informed, supportive, and active in teen pregnancy issues.