



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 23.21

Subject **Families First Time Limits**

Approved by

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Authority

42 U.S.C § 608(a)(7);
45 C.F.R. §264.1
Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-3-104
Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-1-51

Application

Eligibility Staff

Policy Statement

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Families First Assistance Units (AU) shall not receive more than sixty (60) total months of TANF/Families First benefits.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Families First time limit requirements and exceptions.

Procedures

A. Time Limits

1. Families First assistance units (AUs) have eligibility time limits.
2. All AUs are limited to sixty (60) months of Families First assistance in a lifetime. Every month in which an AU receives cash assistance counts toward this limit.
3. The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) employees will be responsible for ensuring that no AU is terminated from the Families First program prematurely due to time limits. The sixty (60) month time count must be validated prior to beginning the case closure process.

B. Exceptions

Child Only cases are exempt from the sixty (60) month time limit.

- C. Countable Months**
1. The time limit begins with the first (1st) month an AU receives a cash assistance payment, even if the first (1st) month is a partial month.
 2. All months in which a grant is reduced to less than ten dollars (\$10) due to AU income or Families First recoupment are considered non-countable.
 3. Months in which a grant is reduced to less than ten dollars (\$10) due to bankruptcy will be considered countable.
 4. Months of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance received in another state or territory are countable months.
- D. Months of TANF Received in Another State or Territory**
1. Months of TANF assistance received in another state or territory after July 1, 2007 count towards the Families First time limit.
 2. Months of TANF assistance received in another state or territory before July 1, 2007 will not count for Families First cases that are active as of July 1, 2007 (as long as the case remains open).
- E. Good Cause Time Limit Extensions**
1. Up to twenty percent (20%) of the total Families First caseload may receive assistance beyond the sixty (60) month time limit.
 2. Good cause must be evaluated for a time limit extension when the AU is approaching the sixty (60) month time limit.
 3. Good cause may be granted for the following periods of time when the caretaker reaches the sixty (60) month limit and is exempt from the work requirements or has good cause because he/she is:
 - a. Sixty-five (65) years old or over (indefinitely).
 - b. Disabled (until the disability ends).
 - c. Temporarily incapacitated (until the incapacity ends).
 - d. Caring for an in-home disabled relative (until the disability ends).
 - e. Other hardship conditions discovered by the eligibility counselor.
 - f. Involved in a significant life crisis (two (2) month extension)

A significant life crisis may include, but not be limited to:

 - i. Eviction from home.
 - ii. Domestic violence.
 - iii. Family crises (such as an illness or death of a family member).
 - iv. Natural disaster.
 - v. Drug treatment.
 - vi. Complications of pregnancy/recent birth.
 - vii. A caretaker currently exempt from the work and/or educational activity for having a child under one (1).

An extension based on a temporary life crisis must be approved by a Families First supervisor and lasts for two (2) months beyond the sixtieth (60th) month. See [Families First Time Limits Procedures](#).
 4. Good cause is deemed to exist if the AU files a timely appeal or has a pending appeal with continuation of benefits. This extension reason is only valid until the appeal is resolved.

F. Process for Good Cause Time Limit Extensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate good cause when an AU reaches the fifty-ninth (59th) month in the sixty (60) month lifetime limit and is subject to termination at the end of the next month. 2. If good cause does not exist, close the case and open Transitional Child Care (TCC). If the AU has not cooperated with Child Support as outlined in policy 23.10 Families First Child Support Cooperation, the AU will not be eligible for TCC as outlined in policy 11.18 Transitional Child Care. 3. If the AU makes contact within the ten (10) day adverse action period, and it is determined that good cause does exist, the AU must be reopened with the appropriate good cause extension. 4. If good cause does exist and all other eligibility requirements are met, continue Families First benefits.
G. Two (2) Parent AUs	<p>The number of countable months for a two (2) parent household will be the same for both adults.</p> <p>The number of countable months in a combined two (2) parent household will be the higher number of months if the combination of AUs results in one (1) AU. TDHS staff must ensure that the time count for the parent with the lower time count is adjusted correctly.</p>
H. When an Adult May Have More Than Sixty (60) Months of Eligibility	<p>An adult who has received sixty (60) months of assistance in one AU may receive Families First again only as a Child Only caretaker. He/She cannot be included in the AU.</p>
I. When a Child May Have More Than Sixty (60) Months of Eligibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child in an AU that reached its time limits can later apply for his/her own AU as an adult. 2. A child living with a particular caretaker (mother, for example), and loses eligibility due to time limits, may be eligible in the future if he/she lives in the home of a different caretaker (grandmother, for instance) whose time limits have not expired.
J. Re-Entry Following Closure for a Sixty (60) Month Time Limit	<p>There are no provisions for re-entry following case closure for time limits.</p>
Forms	<p>None</p>
Collateral Documents	<p>Families First Time Limits Procedures</p> <p>23.10 Families First Child Support Cooperation</p> <p>11.18 Transitional Child Care</p>

Additional Resources [Time Limits Desk Guide](#)

Retention of Records Pending

Glossary

Term

Definition

Adverse Action Period The ten (10) calendar day period that begins the date the closure notice is mailed. If the tenth (10th) day falls on a weekend or holiday, the adverse action period is extended to the following business day.

Child Only Cases Cases with a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiary as caretaker or a non-parental caretaker who is *not* included in the Assistance Unit.

Countable Month Any month an Assistance Unit receives a Families First cash assistance payment.

Time Limit A range of months in which an Assistance Unit will work to achieve self-sufficiency while receiving Families First cash assistance.

Two-parent Households An Assistance Unit where there are two (2) eligible adults and at least one (1) common child.

Acronyms

Abbreviation

Expansion

AU Assistance Unit

TANF Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

TCC Transitional Child Care

TDHS Tennessee Department of Human Services