

# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Omar Said

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Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Employment Barriers for TANF Recipients in Kentucky

by

Omar Said

MA, Sullivan University, 2012

BS, University of Kentucky, 2006

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

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## Abstract

Though Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) beneficiaries receive appropriate training and education within a 5-year time limit, many encounter challenges finding and maintaining employment. In this qualitative case study, constraints hindering the employability of TANF benefits recipients were explored to understand how some TANF program benefit recipients find and keep a job after completing 5-year term limits. The central research question examined the types of constraints that recipients of TANF benefits in the state of Kentucky experienced in finding and maintaining employment after completing a five-year term limit, and how some TANF recipients overcome such constraints. The conceptual framework for this study was a theory of constraints and punctuated equilibrium theory. The sample included seven TANF benefit recipients from Kentucky who found a job after completing the 5-year term limit and successfully held the position for a minimum of 5 years. The data sources included semistructured interviews and documents provided by the partner organization. Yin's five-step data analysis approach resulted in three themes: workplace norms and skillsets, barriers to employment, and case managers' competency. The study findings could result in positive social change through strategies that TANF recipients could use to find and maintain work. Employment opportunities could decrease poverty and improve the standard of living of TANF beneficiaries.

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## Dedications

I dedicate this study to my parents for their love, support, and encouragement during my doctoral journey. The doctoral research is for all the people that I know to tell them that nothing is impossible.

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## Section 1: Introduction to the Problem

### **Problem Statement**

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides support to eligible individuals with training, education, and job searching. The TANF program beneficiaries exceed over 8,000,000, with an average of 2 million caseloads per month (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019). The government shut down approximately 250,000 cases in 2019, resulting in beneficiaries lacking work readiness (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019). A few states have set up 5-year term limits on TANF financial help. Federal law sets a 60-month cumulative lifetime limit for receiving TANF benefits. Though the TANF beneficiaries receive appropriate training and education within a 5-year time limit, many encounter challenges getting employed (Kirst-Ashman, 2017). The TANF administrators fail to address substance abuse, mental issues, and domestic violence, which correlates to recipients' ability to find a job and remain employed (McClure, 2019). Therefore, additional research provided insights to TANF administrators in the state of Kentucky on how to address the constraints hindering the employment of TANF funding recipients.

### **Purpose Statement**

The federal government provides financial assistance to states to facilitate the TANF program. Individual state approaches in facilitating training and counseling necessitated by TANF programs enhance TANF beneficiaries' employability (Burnside & Schott, 2020). A few studies confirmed that the ability to acquire jobs relies on the effective administration of the TANF program (Danziger & Seefeldt, 2003). In 2019,

over 200,000 benefit recipients of the TANF program in Kentucky's state lacked work readiness by a 5-year program term limit (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2020), constraints to employment for TANF recipients are lack of education, training, mental health challenges, childcare, and work-limiting health conditions. Work readiness is necessary to gain employment and to leave welfare program (Anderson et al., 2001)

In this study, I aimed to explore additional constraints hindering the employability of TANF benefits recipients and understand how some TANF program benefit recipients find and keep a job after the completion of 5-year term limits. The study findings provided insights into the specific constraints the TANF recipients experience regarding employment. Understanding the constraints that hinder employability and some TANF recipients' strategy to overcome these constraints to find and keep the job could help shape the TANF policies regarding the employability of TANF beneficiaries.

### **Research Question**

What types of constraints do TANF benefit recipients in the state of Kentucky experience in finding and maintaining employment after completion of a 5year term limit, and how do some TANF recipients overcome such constraints?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What type of constraints did you experience in getting employment after the completion of a 5-year term limit?
2. How did you overcome these constraints?

3. How did the training provided by the TANF administrators help you to overcome these constraints?
4. What type of constraints did you experience in maintaining employment after the completion of a 5-year term limit?
5. How do you assess the effectiveness of the TANF program in assisting the TANF recipients in finding the job?
6. What additional information would you like to share to improve the employability of TANF benefit recipients?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was Goldratt's (1990) theory of constraints (TOC) and Jones and Baumgartner's (2012) punctuated equilibrium theory (PET). The TOC enables business leaders to identify constraints and efficiently solve the problem. According to Cooper and Loe (2000), the tenets of TOC help leaders to identify the constraints and apply solutions to the cause of the constraints. The leaders could decide what to change, change to what, and how to change the process (Cooper & Loe, 2000). Finding employment has been a challenge for TANF recipients. The TOC was a suitable lens for exploring participants' views regarding the constraints hindering their employability and seeking suggestions regarding the change needed to improve the employability of TANF recipients.

The Jones and Baumgartner's (2012) PET concept is that policymakers lack attention to issues and some groups overlook policy that benefits them, and for that reason, a policy does not change. The proposition in PET enables leaders to address the

weakness in policies relating to TANF recipients' employability. According to Robinson (2013), the government could use PET to analyze procedures and policy change. The PET was suitable for this study in conjunction with the TOC. After identifying constraints, the TANF administrators could revisit organizational procedures and policies regarding the employability of program recipients.

### **Nature of Administrative Study**

The three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods. In a qualitative approach, a researcher explores the phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Barnham, 2015). The qualitative study is subjective and suitable to find the answers to *how*, *what*, and *why* questions (Yin, 2017). The qualitative method was suitable in this study because a researcher understood the phenomenon by asking *how* and *what* questions.

Under the qualitative method, a researcher could use narrative design, ethnography design, case study design, and phenomenological design. The case study design is suitable for a study where a researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon bounded time and place from knowledgeable individuals (Dare et al., 2018). In a case study, a researcher seeks to explore the phenomenon in a specific setting by interviewing participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon (Yin, 2017). My study included identifying 10 TANF benefits recipients who are successful in finding and keeping their job after completing 5-year term limits. Data collection involved interview setting by asking semistructured interview questions. The use of Nvivo 12 software helped analyze data to develop themes.

### **Significance of the Study.**

The key stakeholders potentially impacted by the study findings include TANF beneficiaries, their families, and TANF administrators. The study results could enable TANF administrators to identify the right candidates who could benefit from the program. The candidates with drug addiction issues may enroll in a few recovery programs before beginning the TANF program (citation). People with mental problems will probably not work adequately; therefore, TANF administrators could ensure that such people get the necessary treatment before enlisting in the welfare program.

The study findings could help modify policies and procedures, resulting in improved training and counseling to TANF recipients leading to employment. The employment of TANF recipients could improve the financial health of their families. Moreover, the employment of TANF benefit recipients could result in tax revenue for local government.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Techniques**

A partner organization provided approval to conduct the study. The snowball sampling method was suitable to identify participants. Then, the purposeful sampling method resulted in qualifying participants., A researcher chooses participants based on criteria in a purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015). The selection criteria included participants who are (a) TANF program benefit recipients in KY, (b) found the job after completion of the 5-year term limit, and (c) successfully held the job for a minimum of 5 years.

The data collection process included collecting data from multiple sources for methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation will result in study validity (Yin, 2017). The face-to-face open-ended semistructured interview questions with follow-up questions enabled rich data extraction. The secondary documents included graphs, charts, sketches, figures, and any other company documents provided by the Cabinet of Health and Family Service in Kentucky that helped find the answers to the central research question. Interviews with participants consisted of a similar interview protocol. Interview protocol consists of interview guidelines and procedures that a participant and a researcher will follow during an interview (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Using Yin's (2017) five-step data analysis process using Nvivo 11 software, the data analysis process. The five-step data analysis process comprises (a) compiling data, (b) disassembling data, (c) reassembling data, (d) interpreting data, and (e) concluding. Nvivo software enables a researcher to analyze qualitative data (Zamawe, 2015). After data analysis, I correlated key themes using thematic analysis with articles published after my literature review to distinguish similarities and variations in identified themes. The thematic analysis allows a researcher to compare themes within the literature to enhance study validity (Teruel et al., 2016).

### **Summary**

Section 1 includes the background of the problem, problem and purpose statement, research question, interview questions, and the conceptual framework. Additional discussions in Section 1 include the study's nature, the significance of the



study, and data collection and data analysis techniques. Section 2 is about the extensive literature review and the role of the researcher.

## Section 2: Conceptual Approach and Background

Section 2 contains two parts. The first part includes a discussion on the conceptual fireworks, the theory of constraints, and punctuated equilibrium theory. The discussion consists of the rationale for using the theories, reviewing other studies constituting a conceptual framework like this study, and comparing their findings using several in-text citations within the paragraphs. The second part of Section 2 is about the study phenomenon. Here, the discussion includes existing scholarship on the topic and the strategies and standard practices relating to the study phenomenon. Finally, Section 2 has the description on the role of a researcher and summary of the key findings from the literature review.

The official poverty level income is just over \$24,000 for a family of four (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2016). In 2015, more than 40 million Americans lived in poverty, and many relied on welfare assistance for sustainability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Kwon and Hetling (2017) stated that an increasing number of researchers examined the demographics and barriers low-income families encounter to obtain employment. The barriers to work are (a) disability, (b) poor health, (c) caring for an infant or a family member with special needs, (d) limited education or work experience, (e) family violence, (f) substance abuse, and (g) mental health issues. Kwon and Hetling noted that the states' lawmakers should design policies and programs that prevent economic hardship through public assistance and employment.

The TANF is a welfare to work program, meaning the program benefit recipients need to transition to work (citation). TANF aims to provide aid to needy families and

assist them in entering the workforce (Haskins, 2016). However, TANF program recipients experience constraints to work, substance abuse, mental health disorders, and family violence (Moffit, 2008). The individual-level constraints could hinder their ability to find stable and formal employment (Blank, 2007). Dworsky and Courtney (2007) found that in 1999, 89% of TANF applicants in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, experienced at least one constraint. More than half of the recipients reported experiencing two or more constraints (Dworsky & Courtney, 2007).

The TANF program does not guarantee work to the program participants (Danziger et al., 2016). Some program participants cannot secure a job, and some who found work cannot hold to the job for an extended period. Some recipients prefer to exhaust the benefit time limit before seeking employment (Pavoni et al., 2016). Cebulla (2018) noted that the program failed because of the shortcoming of participants' educations, skills, training, and motivation. Rosa's (2016) study of TANF families in Puerto Rico found that most program participants either graduated from high school or did not complete high school. Sheely and Kneipp (2015) study's finding revealed poor health deterred participants from finding and holding on to the jobs. Wahler et al. (2015) found learning disabilities among TANF participants. Thomas et al.'s (2017) study involving 525 female TANF participants revealed that women experiencing domestic violence were less likely to find jobs. Pavetti and Schott (2016) recommended a review of the program structure to ensure meeting its purpose. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature.

TANF participants unable to find employment are likely to be at the poverty level. According to Germain (2018), a direct correlation exists between people at the poverty level and opioids dependency. The success of the TANF program through program participants' employability could reduce the crime rates (Mather, 2017). However, there are welfare restrictions to TANF benefits to felons (McCarty et al., 2015). Therefore, it is logical to conclude that policy restricting access to TANF benefits could increase poverty rates leading to higher crimes. According to Dworsky and Courtney (2007), evidence-based research on improving TANF policies remains limited.

The roles of race, political ideology, and decentralized state authority shape welfare policy choices. Using the data dating back to the 1960s social welfare programs, scholars sought to understand social welfare policies and found that Black Americans faced resistance in welfare income equality from some policymakers (Hardy, 2017; Hardy & Ziliak, 2016; Morduch & Schneider, 2017). States allocating more of their TANF block grant toward cash are less likely to be in the South and have slightly better pension health and lower TANF caseload where fewer Blacks reside (citation). Data indicated that the take-up rate for cash assistance or TANF among eligible families declined (Zedlewski, 2002). Therefore, welfare policy aimed at building emotional wellbeing, less bureaucratic dilemma, eligibility screening, and proper training of TANF recipients could facilitate a direct transition to employment and general wellbeing of program participants.

## Conceptual Models

The federal government allocated \$16 billion for the TANF program in 2017 (Brooks et al., 2018). The literature review revealed a gap in addressing constraints that prevent TANF participants from finding a job after program completion. TANF administrators conducted an assessment to identify employment barriers among TANF beneficiaries; however, the program recipients did not report specific obstacles because of the fear of discrimination and the possibility of facing the consequences (Allard et al., 2018; Stanczyk et al., 2018). Pavetti and Schott (2016) posited that the TANF shortcomings could result from the program's structure itself. The scholars noted some welfare weaknesses could result in higher crime rates (Liebertz & Bunch, 2018).

Many families receiving TANF benefits experience constraints to employment (citation). The constraints could be external or internal. The external constraints result from program policies and factors that hinder employability directly, whereas internal constraints are the policies themselves (citation). The TOC framework enables leaders to isolate constraints and then find solutions to address employment constraints (Cooper & Loe, 2000). The equilibrium model concept, in theory, is about defining issues in public discourse and setting agenda to reinforce or question the existing policies (Jones et al., 1999). The dual conceptual framework comprising TOC and PET is a suitable lens to examine both internal and external constraints affecting TANF recipients' employability.

A multitude of external constraints hinders employability. According to Cebulla (2018), external constraints relating to TANF shortcomings are low education, training, and motivation. Sun et al. (2016) noted mental and behavioral disabilities, domestic

violence, adverse childhood experiences as external constraints that affect employability. The other external constraints are physical hardship and poor health (Loprest & Nichols, 2011). Moffit (2008) found that the TANF recipients who faced external constraints were unable to find jobs and remained in the program, whereas TANF recipients found the job left the program. The TOC framework provides a greater benefit in addressing external constraints to retain and maintain TANF participants' employment.

The TOC framework helps identify what requires change, change to what, and make the change. Goldratt (1984) noted the TOC framework enables leaders to identify constraints, exploiting constraints, subordinate decisions, and elevate constraints. According to Naor et al. (2013), though Goldratt used the TOC concept in addressing constraints manufacturing industry, the model applies to many disciplines. Various scholars researched to explore the impactions of TOC constructs in business practices. Wamuyu (2015) noted business leaders improved communications and technology capabilities using TOC constructs. British companies enhanced operational performances using the tenets of TOC (Panizzolo, 2016). Sukalova and Ceniga (2015) noted leaders improved the business process by embracing the TOC framework in their practices. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph.

The TANF process is a lengthy form from start to finish, thereby increasing the possibilities of constraints appearing at a different milestone. The TOC framework helps TANF administrators to understand the source and location of the constraints. Taylor et al. (2003) used the TOC framework to study public safety hiring practices of Texas's

police department. Tayler et al. found constraints in the employment process and recommended solutions, including addressing policy limitations in hiring practices.

Besides the TOC, the conceptual lens I used for this study was PET. The rationale for using the PET framework requires explaining policies relating to TANF and other welfare programs. Wacquant (2009) stated that harsh or punitive policy results in state-level decisions on welfare funds spending, which could negatively affect the poor. The main elements of TANF policy driving employment include time limits (Kaushal & Kaestner 2001). The states' policy of imposing time limits or benefits results in limited access to healthcare, increase infant mortality, reduction in educational opportunities (Spencer & Komro, 2017). Davis (2019) stated harsher sanctions and job search requirements result in adverse mental health among single mothers. States that spend more on welfare-to-work tend to have harsher sanctions and stricter job search requirements (citation).

TANF policies vary across counties, including work requirements and family caps. For example, Colorado and California allow policies to vary between counties (citation). Variations in state-level TANF policies could affect the percentage of TANF-eligible families who qualify for and receive TANF benefits and the services available to TANF recipients (Floyd et al., 2015). Dworsky and Courtney (2007) found that 89% of TANF applicants in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, in 1999 reported experiencing at least one policy barrier to work while over half reported experiencing two or more barriers. Hardy et al. (2019) stated that the states and local government officials exert total autonomy concerning how they execute social welfare and employment programs.

Many state officials significantly reduced the cash safety net function of their respective TANF programs in the 2000s (Bitler & Hoynes, 2016a). The state-level decisions regarding expenditures and welfare sanctioning policy resulted in operating mechanisms to either support or punished the poor (Wacquant, 2009). Therefore, the percentage of families at or below the federal poverty line who received TANF benefits dropped precipitously in 2013, mainly because of policy variations, which have shortened or otherwise changed the time limits, or created more stringent application requirements (Floyd et al. 2015).

The scholars found that Black people faced harsher sanctions within the welfare program. The states with higher shares of Black people on the welfare caseload tend to be harsher concerning sanctioning policy and administrative burdens (Johnston, 2018; Moynihan et al., 2014; Schram et al., 2009). Hardy et al. (2019) stated that the Kerner Commission emphasized policies to promote employment, fair housing access, and improved economic well-being of black and urban communities facing high unemployment and poverty levels. Researchers recommended instituting initial and ongoing assessments to address the policy barriers and devise intensive case management to address the obstacles (Dworsky & Courtney, 2007).

The congressional committees and government officials are responsible for information processing relating to policy punctuations for policy change (Baumgartner et al., 2014). Jones and Baumgartner's (2012) stated that the constructs of PET help policymakers understand the effectiveness of policies and help decide if attention to policy change is necessary and in what capacity. The PET concept supports the notion



that policy reform's political process requires small adjustment or large-scale change from the norm through equilibrium, relative frequency, and punctuation (Eldredge & Gould, 1972). Equilibrium results in neither in motion nor development because of opposing forces' balancing (Encarta Dictionary, 2009). The relative frequency is a rate of changes in policies that took place in a particular situation, and punctuation dictates the radical changes that took place in a short duration (Jones et al., 1999). The three tenets of the PET framework could help TANF administrators and policymakers decide to improve policy suitability and policy change relating to TANF.

The PET framework propositions support the notion of information processing and setting an agenda to drive policy change. Using the PET concept, Baumgartner et al. (2014) explained the political process regarding policy change characterizing stability and instrumentalization to depart from the past. The various scholars used the PET framework for policy punctuation and budgetary issues across federal and state spending. For example, Martin and Streams (2015) used the PET framework to explore federal spending. Robinson and Caver (2006) used the PET framework to explore the office of management and budget policies. Ryu (2009) examined the influence of policy factors on states' budget punctuation, whereas Liang and Fiorino (2013) studied federal research and development spending on technology spending. Breunig and Koski's (2006) study involving the PET framework found that states' budgets are punctuated and varied across states depending on the program's nature. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph. Explain the impact of the studies mentioned. Connect back to your study.

### **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

TANF is a federal-state government-funded program supporting families with dependent children who need financial assistance (citation). Page and Larner (1997) noted that TANF is a welfare program designed to assist economically-disadvantaged people, especially single mothers. States oversee TANF funds that provide housing, clothing, and utilities to qualifying families. The TANF program also offers job training, childcare, and temporary financial assistance. TANF is a form of social welfare with several outlined objectives; the most prominent one is reducing poverty (Office of Family Assistance, 2015). The other stated goals of the 1996 legislation regarding TANF are assisting the children of a needy family, including care at home or in the home of relatives, and ending the dependence on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage assistance. Additional goals include reducing the incidence of pregnancies and encouraging the continuance of two-parent families (citation). However, these goals are broad. The program allows state administrators to control the TANF grants as they see fit, which resulted in substantial variation between states in the types of policies adopted (citation). Auxiliary researchers have found that states could benefit from welfare reform (Cho et al., 2005).

### **Families with Young Children**

TANF program could support recipient children's wellbeing by providing and facilitating services to children of participants, such as early-childhood or other enrichment programs. A correlation exists between a child's wellbeing supports and parental stress (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014). Growing evidence shows the

negative consequences of extreme stress and poverty among children of TANF recipients (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). Researchers and advocates argued that TANF programs should focus on better support for the wellbeing of children of participants (Schmit et al., 2014).

Providing and facilitating services to children of program participants, enrichment programs, and services to adult participants could strengthen parenting capacity. Schmit et al. (2014) supported the two-generational approach by focusing on both the adult and child's wellbeing. Stanczyk et al. (2018) suggested creating a support division, extending services to children and other family members, and enhancing housing services.

Therefore, TANF administrators should take a two-generational approach by focusing on adult and child wellbeing (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Schmit et al., 2014).

Moreover, adult participants' services should include strengthening parenting capacity and addressing physical, emotional, and economic wellbeing. Stanczyk et al. (2018) suggested creating a support division to assist participants as they navigate complex systems, extend services to children and other family members, and enhance housing services. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature with your own analysis.

Because financial hardship, poor health, and exposure to violence and adversity constrains TANF beneficiaries to work and maintain jobs, Sun et al. (2016) stated that families with young children under age six participating in the TANF consider work mandatory. They need to participate in work-related activities for at least 20 hours per week to receive TANF benefits. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

implemented a randomized control trial pilot called *The Building Wealth and Health Network* (The Network RCT; citation). The Network RCT is an ongoing study in which program demonstrators seek to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs that address family hardships associated with exposure to adversity, violence, social isolation, and low financial ability. The program helps the families of TANF to get on the pathway to self-sufficiency. The program's goal is to test a workforce development model that includes attention to mental, emotional, and financial health that can become a new TANF education model and training programming model (citation).

TANF program replaced the Aid for Dependent Families with Children (AFDC) program in 1996 through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which was President Clinton's pledge to "End Welfare as We Know It" initiative. The 1996 law required that working-age adult assess their skills, employability, and "work-readiness" within 90 days of filing a claim. The TANF program contains new rules imposed by the federal government for states to increase conditionality and place time limits on the receipt of cash benefits. The TANF program, which is new from the entitlement-based AFDC program, required claimants to meet the eligibility requirements (Page & Larner, 1997). Falk (2012) noted that the central policy of the PRWORA reform requires states to engage recipients in work-related activities and place benefit sanctions on noncompliant recipients. The three federal requirements for TANF recipients' work-eligibility are employment assessments, find work within 2 years from the benefits start date, and sanctions recipients for failure to comply with work requirements (Falk, 2012). Add summary and synthesis to connect back to your study.

## **Challenges Faced by TANF Recipients**

Poverty and financial stress are contributors to poor health. Significant evidence shows that more affluent individuals have better health than lower socioeconomic status (Chetty et al., 2016). Sun et al. (2016) stated that many families receiving TANF benefits experience barriers to employment, which may prevent them from successfully transitioning off the program because of poor health. Approximately one-third of TANF recipients reported a work-limiting health condition. Almost 43 % of TANF recipients reported multiple types of mental and behavioral disabilities, including memory impairment, emotional and mental limitations, movement limitations, and sensory impairment (Sun et al., 2016). In addition to the poor health and disability, TANF participants also reported alarmingly high rates of exposure to domestic violence in their communities and their family relationships. For instance, among TANF eligible families, rates of intimate partner violence are as high as 74 % compared to up to 31 % in the general community posing a significant barrier to employment (Sun et al., 2016). At the same time, exposure to violence in adulthood results in severe hardship.

The violence exposure across the lifespan, reaching back to childhood, is significantly higher among low-income families. Sun et al. (2016) used Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) to describe violence among TANF recipients, consisting of physical and emotional abuse and neglect, sexual and household dysfunction, having a household member in prison, or witnessing domestic violence. Adverse childhood experiences limit working capability and cause high worker absenteeism and stress (Sun et al., 2016). Sun et al. noted TANF recipients with young children demonstrated a very

high level of adversity and economic hardship. Examining the relationship between trends in reassessments for benefit eligibility and mental health between 2010 and 2013, Barr et al. (2016) found that severe conditionality increased suicides, self-reported mental ill-health, and increased prescriptions of antidepressants among sanctioned benefit recipients.

### **Disconnected Individuals**

Economic disconnection is having no public cash assistance or employment income. Economically disconnected mothers comprise a large and growing portion of families in poverty (Blank & Kovak, 2008; Loprest & Nichols, 2011; Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006; Wood & Rangarajan, 2003). Using the national survey of American families, Loprest and Zedlewski (2006) found that in 2002, economically disconnected people included 20% of former welfare recipients and 12% of those who never received welfare. Mothers disconnected to either welfare or from formal employment have limited cash resources.

Although disconnected mothers often receive other types of noncash aid and utilize additional support from family and friends to survive, they lack formal cash income. Disconnected women may have access to infrequent cash sources, either through help from their family or friends or informal work (Edin & Lein, 1997; Zedlewski et al., 2003). Informal work may include "under the table" jobs such as babysitting or potentially illegal means such as sex work or drug trafficking (Pyles, 2007).

Disconnected mothers often live without other adults in the household, and some reside with their relatives or cohabitate with romantic partners. Research indicated that

some romantic partners in disconnected women's households do not share resources because of disability, lack of work, and welfare benefits (Blank, 2007). Researchers found that some cohabitating women have limited access to their partners' financial resources (Cross-Barnet et al., 2008; Nock, 1995). Therefore, most disconnected women reported physical hardships, including food insecurity (Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006).

Disconnected families are likely to qualify for welfare based on their financial situation, and receipt of welfare could improve their financial situation and lessen associated hardships. Kwon and Hetling (2017) noted that disconnection from employment and public cash assistance for a prolonged period might create challenges for families. Families with prolonged disconnection from welfare and jobs are less able to maintain minimal living standards. Approaches to assisting disconnected mothers need to include barriers and opportunities facing them at several levels. Although current research added much to our knowledge of individual-level risk factors, little research exists on disconnected families' environmental circumstances and how macro-level factors, especially local socioeconomic characteristics and state policies, influence economic disconnection. An understanding of such elements is essential in designing programs to assist disconnected families.

Disconnected single mothers are likely to face multiple barriers in comparison to married women with children. Kwon and Hetling (2017) stated that over 30% of low-income single mothers struggled to stay connected to welfare. Kwon and Hetling posited that the Safety net and tax policy in the United States reside on the assumption that only married couples fully share resources. Both formal and informal diversion policies and

practices could be hassles for welfare applicants. The women with the least amount of human capital are the least capable of negotiating the bureaucratic application process (Brodkin, 2006). Therefore, many choose not to apply despite eligibility because of hassles (Seefeldt & Levy, 2008). Some researchers also speculate that diversionary messages at welfare offices play a significant role in decreasing welfare rolls (Mead, 2000). State rules regarding time limits and sanctions and those related to extensions or exemptions from specific requirements may influence a recipient to leave the program without employment.

Disconnected women are reluctant to apply for welfare because of low benefit levels or upfront job search programs. Diversion grants allow caseworkers to grant a lump sum cash amount to help an applicant address an emergency need related to work, such as car repairs. The grant is typically more extensive than a monthly TANF benefit, and thus the recipient taking advantage of grants forgoes eligibility for welfare for the equivalent number of months. Upfront job searches enable applicants to find jobs immediately, thus avoiding their need for assistance. Fender et al. (2002) noted that the cash diversion programs and mandatory upfront job search could divert participants from seeking TANF (cite).

### **TANF Policies**

TANF policies impact the recipients' financial securities, health, and wellbeing. The TANF program is subject to federal and state government policies that aim to protect low-wage workers, promote work, reduce poverty, and provide a safety net for low-income families or families experiencing job loss (Spencer & Komro, 2017). Riccucci



(2005) posited that in 1996, control over welfare monies to support families with dependent children shifted from an entitlement program controlled by the Federal government to states and states having the authority to implement and distribute benefits. The shift led to sizable variation across states over time in welfare eligibility rules, as states' demonstrators could use their expertise to administer the program with greater efficiency and effectiveness. Davis (2019) noted that the TANF program conditionality policies might increase the inequalities between advantaged and less advantaged groups, resulting in a negative impact on disadvantaged people's mental health. Spencer and Komro examined the effects of TANF benefits on program beneficiaries and found that restrictive TANF policies. In the US, conditionality policies affect women and minorities than other groups.

State officials use TANF grants to provide income support, job training, job search, and child care support to needy families. However, an increasing number of families have little or no access to welfare benefits (Shaefer et al., 2015). A growing number of economically disadvantaged families have limited cash assistance access (Shaefer et al., 2015). Hardy et al. (2019) researched to understand how state officials spend TANF grants and found that the states that allocated one-third of TANF grants in cash assistance have lower unemployment rates, smaller proportions of black in TANF caseload, and are politically liberal. The findings revealed a negative relationship between cash assistance expenditure and back residents' proportions in the TANF caseload (Hardy et al., 2019). The authors recommended additional research to explore racial disparities within states' welfare policy.

A significant correlation exists between parent's and children's' wellbeing. The TANF administrators need to take a more "two-generational" approach, promoting adult and child wellbeing (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Schmit et al., 2014). Adult and child-focused programs could facilitate (1) services to children of participants, such as early-childhood or other enrichment programs, and (2) services to adult participants to strengthen their parenting capacity. Despite the need, simultaneous attention to both parents and children remains rare in public welfare programs (Schmit et al., 2014). Very few scholars have examined two-generational approaches in TANF (Collins et al., 2003).

California's human service agencies provide a welfare-to-work program to help TANF program participants and their families in crisis. California's Family Stabilization (FS) program allows administrators to address two service gaps in the welfare-to-work program: Targeting the need for enhanced services to address barriers to work experienced by TANF recipients and more significant service attention to children of participants. Stanczyk et al. (2018) examined the implementation TANF program to help participants facing barriers to work in 11 northern California human service agencies. The research findings addressed the two TANF service gaps identified in the literature: (a) responding to the employment barriers among families served by the program and (2) reducing stress and economic deprivation among participants. Study results showed multiple ways of meeting these service needs, and the authors suggested that responsiveness to agency service and staffing strengths could help fill the gaps in the welfare programs. Stanczyk et al. (2018) identified three distinct family stabilization (FS) design and implementation approaches, with each closely related to organizational

factors. Smaller agencies used the FS program by upgrading support in core areas such as mental health, substance abuse, and family violence services (Stanczky et al., 2018).

Larger agencies used FS to add specialized social workers units and expand services in areas promoted by the FS legislation. The implementation guidelines for FS includes (a) dedicating more staff time to support participants as they navigate complex systems, (b) extending services to children and other family members, and (c) enhancing housing services. The FS program of California could provide insights to other state administrators to improve their welfare-to-work programs.

TANF program administrators should utilize comprehensive approaches to help families access treatment for depression and overcome severe financial difficulty related to low housing and nutrition. Because of the TANF recipients' high levels of violence exposure, the State and Federal government should consider adding trauma-informed approaches and social services programs and provide job search assistance (Sun et al., 2016). Another approach is to consider two-generation interventions that simultaneously address caregivers' mental health and economic stability, focusing on the health and development of children (Sun et al., 2016).

The welfare-to-work program prepares people for employment. Dean (2003) argued that welfare-to-work requirements might be ill-suited to significantly individuals with disabilities. Based on evidence from 50 in-depth interviews with benefit recipients with multiple needs (including drugs, alcohol, homelessness), Dean found that welfare-to-work policies (counter-productively) led to self-blame, which created further distance from finding a job. Dean suggested an alternative 'life-first' approach that prioritizes

work-life balance. Reeves and Loopstra (2016) made a similar argument based on an annual population survey analysis. Reeves and Loopstra found that single parents and disabled people (in the UK) received more benefit sanctions than other groups. Reeves and Loopstra argued that ineffectiveness in helping these groups to return-to-work created barriers to finding employment. A recent report also illustrated raised concerns about homeless people in the UK disproportionately sanctioned, which further exacerbated homelessness and hindered recovery (Beatty et al., 2015).

The State governments have significant control over TANF. The state government has autonomy over work requirements, work waivers for survivors of domestic violence, and eligibility criteria and time limits for TANF (Bloom et al., 2011; Huber et al., 2015). In 2014, only 23 out of 100 US families with children in poverty received cash benefits from TANF (cite). The ratio is 4 in 100 in Louisiana and 78 in 100 among Vermont families in poverty (cite).

In May 2012, Maine enacted a 60-month time limit to enrollees, contributing to a 53% reduction in caseloads between 2006 and 2014 (cite). To the same effect, Indiana reduced TANF caseload by 77% in the same amount of time by changing the work requirement policies, including requiring applicants to complete 20 days of job search before receiving benefits (Floyd et al., 2015).

These policies could be barriers to transitioning to employment. Spencer and Komro (2017) stated a need to address health inequalities in the USA. The prevention science could help TANF administrators to focus on developing programs to address health disparities because, however, policy-level changes could "ultimately be more

important in realizing societies where most people thrive" (cite, Page number). Studies showed that the TANF cases (the number of families receiving welfare assistance) are declining since the state takeover of welfare (Bell, 2001; Cancian et al., 2002; Fremsted et al., 2004). However, the caseload remains high. Pavetti et al. (2004) Stated that the caseload increased because the initial decline of benefits resulted in recipients reapplying for benefits again at a later date. Wu et al. (2014) argued that those who leave the TANF program because of sanctions are less likely to find employment. Lee et al. (2004) argued that leaving the TANF program to find work leads to less lucrative employment than leaving for other reasons. Wu (2008) found that harsher TANF sanctions are causes for leaving the program.

TANF program policies need to tackle the personal obstacles that pose barriers to work among TANF program recipients. The obstacles include substance abuse, mental health disorders, disability or poor health, caring for an infant, and family violence (Moffit, 2008). Participants who face such obstacles find it challenging to secure and maintain employment and remain in the workforce. Researchers recommended ongoing assessments of barriers that program recipients experience to transition to the workforce and remain employed (Dworsky & Courtney, 2007). The assessment could lead to treatment and program engagement (Bloom et al., 2011). However, research on approaches to mitigating barriers to work remains limited, and few evidence-based programs are available.

### **State Autonomy**

The 1996 reform enhanced state-level autonomy of welfare and created a new program— Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). TANF provides a block grant to states to provide income support, job training, and job search assistance to needy families (Ziliak, 2016). The 'Work Within Two Years' legislation required states to engage all work-eligible recipients in work-related activities within two years. The benefit of sanctions applies to any family member who does not participate in work-related activities without "good cause". States could decide what constituted "good cause" and the severity of sanctions increase in unemployment and more low wages for those who find work.

The federal government has relatively high levels of control via the expansion of welfare related programs. The federal government requires TANF recipients to show proof of work within 24 months of receiving assistance (Avery & Peffley, 2005). Many states require employment before the federal 24-month deadline (Soss et al., 2011). Though the federal government has lifetime eligibility cut off after 60 months, states may choose to shorten that horizon (Soss et al., 2011). States' program administrators could decide family caps denying benefits when women give birth to an additional child. Liebertz and Milita (2018) argued that increased restrictiveness could decrease caseload. Liebertz and Milita found that increases in restrictiveness contributed to reducing caseloads across the board between 1996 and 2012. Still, additional degrees of restrictiveness did not yield substantially higher reductions in the poverty level.

Performance management systems improve accountability and enhance understanding of specific performance indicators. Stanford et al. (2019) stated that State governments relied on performance management to address accountability concerns across all levels of government in the last twenty years, including public and private service providers. As of 2004, all states had legislative requirements to create performance information systems to improve public service (Moynihan, 2008). However, administrators often encounter implementation challenges. The challenges are conflicting goals, causal uncertainty, and task complexity create (Hall & Handley, 2011; Hall & Jennings, 2011; Moynihan, 2008; Pollitt et al., 2010).

Income could influence educational and socioeconomic outcomes. Amid evidence exists that an increasing number of families have little-to-no access to welfare cash benefits or employment (Akee et al., 2015; Dahl & Lochner, 2012; Rothstein & Wozny, 2013; Shaefer et al., 2015). The decision to divert spending away from cash assistance could result in severe implications for socioeconomic well-being. However, some benefits outside of cash assistance, such as childcare subsidies, presumably promote employment and economic self-sufficiency among needy families.

Better allocation of TANF spending allocations requires the TANF administrators to understand the state-level demographic, economic, and political factors. Some scholars suggested exploring the welfare policy by examining the political ideology and race (Fording et al., 2007; Schram et al., 2009; Soss et al., 2001). The other scholars focused on the changing provision of benefits and benefit generosity (Bitler & Hoynes, 2016a). Bitler and Hoynes categorized TANF spending as (a) cash assistance, (b) work supports,

or (c) childcare. Bitler and Hoynes examined the factors that predict an allocation of TANF funds. They found that the states that allocate 33% or more of their TANF grant toward cash assistance have supplemental minimum wages and have lower unemployment rates.

The states that provide more cash assistance are ideologically liberal, with a noticeably lower proportion of Blacks residing in the state and a lower proportion of Blacks on the TANF caseload. In considering state allocation of resources toward cash assistance versus other noncash activities, Bitler and Hoynes (2016a) observed that many essential TANF program functions fall outside of traditional cash assistance such as childcare, transportation, and job training to maintain liquidity welfare funds. Bitler and Hoynes found a negative link between state basic assistance expenditures and Blacks' proportion on the state's TANF caseload.

Bollinger et al. (2009) concluded that earnings rise among single mothers when transitioned to TANF. However, Bollinger et al. (2009) and Primus et al. (1999) noted that transfer income losses largely offset the growth. Researchers examining the full package of welfare benefits, including but not limited to TANF, found that generous benefits at the state level (e.g., adding up food assistance, cash assistance, and refundable credits) could reduce food insecurity (Schmidt et al., 2016). However, TANF alone had little-to-no impact on poverty reduction, mainly because of low cash assistance spending in many U.S. states (Bitler & Hoynes 2016a, 2016b; Hardy, 2017).

The scholars in the political science arena examined historical labor market discrimination, exclusion from government benefits, and sociohistorical accounts of



racial stereotyping surrounding welfare. However, fifty years after the Commission's report, assessments of state-level policy choices indicate social and economic progress. Black poverty elevated steadily in comparison to the overall population since the 1960s. Over the past 50 years, approximately one-third to one-fifth of Black Americans were poor in any given year (Fontenot et al., 2018). Historically, evidence showed that safety net expenditures (Hoynes et al., 2016) and school spending (Jackson et al., 2016) improved socioeconomic outcomes, which benefited many Black Americans.

Many safety-net programs, including cash welfare, are unfavorable to less educated and economically disadvantaged participants (Hardy et al., 2018). Policy reform such as transitioning from TANF to AFDC highlights a devolution of authority to states across other social safety net domains. Further research to understand how state-level TANF policy variation potentially impacts individual and family-level socioeconomic outcomes could lead to differential outcomes across groups, including race, education, and family structure.

### **Balancing Between State and National Policies**

Balancing policies between the State and the US federalist system regarding the social welfare programs is essential. Stanford et al. (2019) stated that in 2005, *Deficit Reduction Act* initiated TANF with a new performance management regime highlighting new federal rules, including mandates for states to report the program participants' activities (Allard, 2007; Government Accountability Office, 2010). This established performance standard, so-called "work participation," allows administrators to focus on documenting process indicators such as on-the-job training, work experience, or

employment (subsidized or unsubsidized). The program participants may engage in "non-core" activities proven to lead to long-term economic success, such as education, rehabilitation services, or high school completion. However, program participants' mental health and chemical dependency treatment do not get tracked.

State and local governments, nonprofit advocacy and service organizations, and private charity play unique roles in social welfare programs. Since 1974, the federal government requires organizations that serve the poor to document their effectiveness. For example, The United Way, a nationwide network responsible for funding essential safety-net programs, utilized this approach, in part, to improve public confidence after national scandals of financial mismanagement (Hendricks et al., 2008; Plantz et al., 1997). More than 20 years ago, the United Way created a new process to measure their nonprofit standards and implemented elaborate training programs in logic modeling, referred to as "performance regime" (Martin et al., 2015; Moynihan, 2008; Pollitt et al., 2010; Talbot, 2010). The use of the term "regime" provides logic for actors such as governments, private contractors, program managers, or governance bodies to help resolve ambiguity and specific legitimate actions above others (cite).

When participants finding difficulties to secure and maintain employment and remain in the program may drain the resources. Researchers and advocates at the national level noted that TANF program administrators need to target and address the increasing rates of personal challenges among participants that pose barriers to work, including substance abuse, mental health disorders, and family violence (Bloom et al., 2011). Moffit (2008) Stated that since the implementation of the TANF program, recipients who

experience fewer challenges in finding the job left the programs while recipients who faced personal and family issues remained in the program and were unable to secure and maintain employment. Dworsky and Courtney (2007) indicated that work barriers are common among current and former TANF participants. Scholars recommend instituting initial and ongoing assessments for barriers to work, provide intensive case management, and enhance services to address the obstacles (Dworsky & Courtney, 2007).

State politicians are accountable for addressing economic inequality by providing public assistance and also ensure that the State does not become a welfare magnet by attracting poor people from neighboring states (Peterson, 1995). Redistributive programs are a public program to help poor and low-income families and ease poverty and economic inequality. Choi and Neshkova (2019) noted that state politicians face challenging decisions when determining their redistributive budgets. The *race to the bottom* concept is about states competing with the neighboring states and keeping redistributive policies stricter than their neighbors. Choi and Neshkova noted that prior researchers examined whether state redistributive systems compete in a *race to the bottom* fashion and found mixed results. Each state welfare administrators seek to set the levels of its social welfare lower than its neighbors to avoid becoming a welfare magnet (Peterson, 1995). Some scholars found strong evidence of negative interstate competition (Bailey & Rom, 2004; Peterson, 1995; Rom et al., 1998). Volden (2002) found that states increase benefits only when neighboring states increase their benefits. Although no one would disagree about the need for redistribution on moral and human dignity grounds, the extent of redistribution remains highly disputed and differs significantly across states.

### **Role of the DPA Researcher**

Currently, the researcher is working with the Department and Health and Human Services responsible for administering the TANF program in Kentucky. A researcher needs to research the area of interest to avoid boredom and better understand the phenomenon (Berger, 2015). Considering the challenges relating to the program's effectiveness, researching in the TANF field expanded the knowledge base on the phenomenon and could build the researcher's credibility within the organization with factual knowledge and solutions to the problem. Though such research could result in personal growth with an organization, the researcher's interest in the project rests on curiosity to learn and desire to help others. The research outcome has both implications for social change and a positive contribution to business practices.

My role as a qualitative researcher was to collect, analyze, and conclude the study findings. The credibility of the study findings relies on participants' knowledge and experience (Yin, 2017). Therefore, participants selection was conducted through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling enables a researcher to set criteria for participant selection (Benoot et al., 2016). Seeking participants with no personal or prior business relationship and not offering incentives to research participants for their contribution resulted in unbiased findings. However, participants will receive 2 to 3 pages of study findings upon completing the research. A researcher needs to build trust to gain cooperation from the participants during the interview process (Maddox, 2018). Being transparent on research guidelines through informed consent resulted in trust and a good working relationship with participants.

To improve study credibility, a researcher needs to avoid personal biases during data collection and analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The study involved a bracketing technique to avoid interjecting personal bias throughout the research. According to Sutton and Austin (2015), the bracketing method is about being mindful of preconceived notions on the study topic. Maintaining a reflective journal throughout the research process regarding the research activities acted as a reminder to minimize a researcher's bias. Moreover, following interview protocol reduced bias during data collection. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), interview protocol allows a researcher to follow the same procedures with all participants during data collection, thereby reducing biases.

### **Summary**

Economic security policies impact individuals and families. Economic security policies are essential for infants and children because early life disruption has long-term physical and mental health implications (Shonkoff et al. 2009). In their studies, Sun et al. (2016) focused on low-income families with children receiving TANF benefits and found that financial hardship, poor health, and exposure to violence-affected TANF participation outcomes. The recipients' poor health conditions and domestic violence can be an employment barrier. Sun et al. recommend focusing on recipients' mental, psychological wellbeing and counseling programs to support TANF recipients suffering from domestic violence and depression.

The welfare program to eliminate poverty varies across states, ranging from expanding Medicaid eligibility, cash benefit under the TANF program, and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) availability. Changing some aspects of policies could result in

individual- and community-level susceptibility, experiences, and responses to poor economic conditions (Komro et al., 2014). Regulators are debating in bringing fundamental reform to welfare benefits.

For example, Bitler et al. (2018) suggested universal child allowances; Paul et al. (2018) recommended raise in wages; Herd et al. (2018) advocated an increase in benefits to older people, and Holzer (2018) posited in improving education and training. Discussing all the programs to eliminate poverty found in the literature is beyond this literature review's scope. Contrarily, reducing poverty should not be overlooked and has to be the utmost priority to lawmakers. Berger et al. (2018) emphasized that lawmakers should enhance existing welfare programs by reviewing the effectiveness of existing policies and embracing new ideas.

Section 2 includes a comprehension literature review on the study phenomenon and a discussion of my researcher role. Section 3 expands upon the databases used to conduct the literature review, participants selection, eligibility criteria, and approaches to maintain ethical research. Moreover, section 3 includes a discussion on data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis techniques. Finally, section 3 wraps up with a discussion on approaches to ensure study reliability and validity.

### Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

Though the TANF beneficiaries receive appropriate training and education within a 5-year time limit, many encounters challenge getting employed (Kirst-Ashman, 2017). In my study, I explored additional constraints hindering TANF benefits recipients' employability and understanding how some TANF program benefit recipients find and keep a job after the 5-year term limits.

Section 3 starts with a brief introduction of contents in the previous section, including a discussion on the TANF related problems, the gap in the literature about the employability of TANF participants, and the key terms used in this administrative project. Furthermore, Section 3 contains the database used to search for peer-reviewed articles, the list of keywords used to search the database, and the search strategies for exhaustive and comprehensive literature review.

#### **Practice-Focused Question**

TANF program's objective is to assist eligible individuals in finding employment to get them out of poverty (citation). However, welfare-to-work programs such as TANF carry some risk, including program participants not seeking work, reducing their work hours, or dropping out of the workforce altogether while enrolled in the program (Duncan et al., 2020). To escape poverty, TANF participants need to earn sufficient wages. Lack of motivation for employment while seeking TANF benefits could stem from participants being comfortable with cash benefits (citation).

The TANF administrators attempted to identify the constraints to work (Stanczyk et al., 2018). According to Allard et al. (2018), most survey recipients did not report the

specific constraints because of fear of adverse consequences or did not realize the barrier itself. Some state program administrators conducted functional, psychological, vocational assessments, and disability screening to understand employability factors (Allard et al., 2018; Joyce et al., 2015). The assessment resulted in finding constraints such as the lack of education and training (Rosa, 2016), health factors (Sheely & Kneipp, 2015), and violent and traumatic past experiences (Thomas et al., 2017). Based on the assessments, states developed support programs, including job coaching, referrals, case management, and rehabilitation job-specific training (Farrell et al., 2016). Though the TANF beneficiaries receive appropriate support within a 5-year time limit, many encounter challenges getting employed (Kirst-Ashman, 2017). The TANF administrators' support program fails to address substance abuse, mental issues, and domestic violence, which correlate to recipients' ability to find a job and remain employed (McClure, 2019). Therefore, additional research could provide insights to TANF administrators in the state of Kentucky on how to address the constraints hindering TANF recipients' employment.

The objective of this study was to explore constraints hindering the employability of TANF recipients and understand how some TANF program recipients find and keep a job after the completion of 5-year term limits. The underlying central research question was “What types of constraints do TANF benefit recipients in Kentucky experience finding employment after completing a 5-year term limit?” Understanding the employment constraints and shaping the TANF policies could benefit TANF recipients.



### **Definition of Terms**

*Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)*: ACEs affect the health and employability of individuals as a result of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, substance abuse, mental illness, or incarceration of a family member in their household (Hege et al., 2020).

*Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)*: The PRWOR aims to improve the efficacy of the existing welfare program to aid married and unmarried women in reducing the number of births and motivating them to enter the labor force (Chamlin & Denney, 2019).

*The Building Wealth and Health Network (The Network RCT)*: The Network RCT is a 28-week educational program consisting of a full intervention group, a partial intervention group, and a control group in which participants receive financial education and financial help in lieu of work participation (Sun et al., 2016).

*Two-generation approach*: Two-generation approach is about providing welfare benefits to low-income parents and their children (Chase -Lansdale & Brooks-Gun, 2014).

### **Sources of Evidence**

The central research question for is study was “What types of constraints do TANF benefit recipients in the state of Kentucky experience in finding employment after completion of a 5-year term limit, and how do some TANF recipients overcome such constraints?” Six semistructured, open-ended interview questions were useful in finding the answer to the central research question.

A researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research (Hyers, 2018). The primary and secondary data collection instruments were the researcher and semistructured interview questions in this case study. The semistructured interview questions enable a researcher for an in-depth conversation to explore participants' experience with the phenomenon (Cridland et al., 2015). Therefore, Heath et al. (2018) considered interviews a gold standard in qualitative research data collection.

Following an interview protocol (Appendix B) during interviews resulted in consistency in the interviews. Interview protocol help researchers follow a set procedure during an interview, maintain consistency, and improve study reliability (Milagros, 2016). The interview protocol consisted of asking follow-up questions for each central interview question to extract rich data to understand the study phenomenon. The advantage of semistructured interviews consisting of follow-up questions is that a researcher can understand participants' knowledge of the study topic (Honan, 2014). According to Walsh (2014), open-ended interview questions are more suitable for an in-depth understanding of study phenomenon than other techniques such as observations, surveys, and forums.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested collecting data from multiple sources for methodological triangulation. Therefore, besides interviews, data from documents provided by the partner organization resulted in triangulation. The secondary documents included graphs, figures, charts, program policies, program procedures, archival documents, employment records, funding sources, availability of TANF program funds, demographic information, training manuals, job search records, and employment records.

The secondary data provided additional insights into the study phenomenon. After data analysis, member checking ensured the interpretation of participants' responses was accurate and helped to obtain additional information participants missed in initial interviews. According to Varpio et al. (2016), member checking helps a researcher to improve study validity.

### **Published Outcomes and Research**

I reviewed various journals and seminal books to explore the study phenomenon resulted in additional insights on employment barriers for TANF recipients. Google Scholar and databases accessed through the Walden library were the primary sources for accessing journal articles. The databases I used were Business Source Complete, Sage Premier, Academic Search Complete, ABA/INFORM Complete, and ProQuest Central. In some instances, government websites provided access to information on welfare to work programs. The strategy of the searching database includes the use of keywords and phrases and the use of filters. While searching databases, the preference included peer-reviewed articles published in or after 2016 to ensure that the information is current and relevant. The keyword used were *welfare programs*, *TANF program*, *TANF unemployment*, *welfare to work*, and *welfare policies*. Crossref and Ulrich's Periodicals were useful in verifying the peer-reviewed journal articles. The literature review resulted in 200 references, out of which 170 (85%) are peer-reviewed, and 190 (90 %) are published within the last 5 years.

## **Archival and Operational Data**

This qualitative multiple case study aims to explore employment barriers to TANF recipients. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2020), constraints to employment for TANF recipients are lack of education, training, mental health challenges, childcare, and work-limiting health conditions. A few studies confirmed that acquiring jobs relies on the effective administration of the TANF program (Danziger & Seefeldt, 2003). In this study, participants included TANF benefits recipients who successfully found and kept their job after completing the 5-year term limits. Eight semistructured interview questions and follow-up questions resulted in data saturation. The participants' archival data from government websites and documents served as secondary data for this study. The interview findings could modify TANF policies and administrative procedures, resulting in improved training and counseling to TANF recipients leading to employment.

## **Participants**

An exploratory qualitative study is when a researcher seeks to understand the study phenomenon through participants' perspectives by asking *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2017). Therefore, participants' experience and the sample size are essential for data saturation. However, academic scholars have no set sample size requirement for a qualitative case study (Campbell, 2015). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), sample size does not determine whether a researcher reaches data saturation. Aligning with Fusch and Ness's concept, Yin (2017) recommended not to exceed more than 10 participants in a qualitative case study. Moreover, some scholars recommended a small

sample size if the participants' responses could result in incredible findings (Brown et al., 2017).

In this study, snowball sampling was useful in identifying participants and purposeful sampling technique in qualifying six participants knowledgeable in the study phenomenon. Researchers set specific eligibility criteria in participant's selection in purposeful sampling technique (Kazadi et al., 2016). The eligibility criteria included participants who (a) are past TANF benefit recipients, (b) found jobs after completion of the TANF program, and (c) successfully remained employed for a minimum of 5 years. Past TANF benefit recipients familiar with the program policies and procedures, successfully found jobs, and remained employed could provide insights into the study phenomenon.

A researcher's access to participants can be a challenge (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The use of a personal network helped identify the eligible participants. I reviewed participants' credentials on LinkedIn, if available. The partner company and social media platforms helped obtain contact information for eligible research participants. Participants received the invitation through email or telephone for a preinterview to review the search guidelines. The preinterview discussion included the content in the consent form and answered their questions.

## **Procedures**

This study's objective has two-fold: (a) identify constraints that TANF benefit recipients in the state of Kentucky experience in finding employment after completion of a five-year term limit, (b) and how do some TANF recipients overcome such constraints.

The study findings could modify policies and procedures, resulting in improved training and counseling to TANF recipients leading to employment. The data collection instruments for this research were the researcher and the semistructured interview questions. A researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Dikko, 2016), and semistructured, open-ended interview questions are the secondary data collection instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Several authors suggested collecting data from multiple sources for methodological triangulation (Leedy & Ormond, 2015; Yin, 2017). As a primary data collection instrument, the interview technique and secondary data from the company documents and archival records resulted in rich, in-depth information to answer the central research question.

As a primary data collection instrument, a researcher must minimize personal bias to ensure study reliability (Noble & Smith, 2015). A bracketing technique enables a researcher to be mindful of personal bias during data collection (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Being aware of preconceived bias regarding study topic and phenomenon and not interjecting personal bias during data collection and data interpretation resulted in study credibility. As a primary data collection instrument in a qualitative study, the researcher is responsible for choosing the research method, design, qualified participants, and sample size to ensure study validity (Yin, 2017). The study contains discussions on the rationale for the selected research method and design, purposeful sampling techniques, and justification for the sample size. The quality of semistructured interview questions enabled the researcher to collect rich data. The eight open-ended interview questions resulted in rich data. The expert review of the interview questions during the doctoral

study's prospectus phase ensured the effectiveness of semistructured, open-ended questions. The experts were the doctoral committee members.

The interviews were the primary data collection techniques, and therefore, reliability of the interview was essential. Following the interview protocol ensured study consistency, making the study reliable. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), interview protocol consists of a series of steps research follows during the interview to ensure consistency in interview procedures. The interview protocol consisted of opening scripts, going over the consent form, asking semistructured interview questions, following up with probing questions, requesting member checking, and closing scripts. The interview protocol was same for all participants.

Member checking resulted in the validity of interviews. According to Marshall & Rossman (2016), member checking ensure that the data interpretation accurately portrays participants' interview responses and also allows them to add additional information to make the study credible. Data from peer-review journals and government websites assisted the researcher in ensuring the reliability of archival data. The other form of secondary data came from the company document provided by the participants. The study limitation was the quality of secondary data participants provide. However, to address such limitations, the participants only provided secondary data relating to the study phenomenon after completing the actual interview. After completing the interview questions, the participants were familiar with the study phenomenon and knew the type of documents to provide based on questioning during the interview process.

The data collection process started after the institutional review board (IRB) approval. The interview timeline depended on the time taken to select qualified participants. Interviews took place within a week after identifying participants. The data analysis process begun after participants provided the secondary data. After data analysis, member checking resulted in the last set of data. The time to develop study findings took four weeks after completing member checking.

### **Protections**

Participants received invitation emails for a pre-interview, and the body of the email included the consent form. The objective of attaching the consent form and sample interview questions was to help participants understand the nature of the study and build trust. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), anonymity and privacy build trust leading to a good working relationship. Pre-interview included going over the consent form and answering participants' questions to build trust, which could result in their full cooperation during the actual interview. Leedy and Ormmond (2015) supported pre-interview to build trust and working relationships.

Maintaining the ethical protection of participants was an utmost priority for the researcher. The consent forms included maintaining privacy, data retention policy, voluntary participation, and participants' withdrawal rights. The confidentiality provision in the consent form assures participants' ethical protection (Beskow et al., 2014). Using pseudonyms to identify participants and their companies in the study help-maintained confidentiality. According to Onwuegbuzie and Weinbaum (2017), pseudonyms build



trust in participants knowing that their identity will remain confidential. The National Institute of Health certification helped familiarize me with ethical research practices.

Moreover, the study included following the Belmont report guidelines to conduct ethical protection of participants. The Belmont report guidelines require a researcher to maintain beneficence, justice, respect to participants (National Institute of Health, 2014). The consent form included provisions that there were no monetary incentives for participation, and participants could withdraw from the study anytime for any reason. As per IRB guidelines, the plan to store study data is for five years after completing the study. A password-protected hard drive and file cabinet will safeguard the data. After five years of study completion, the deletion of electronic data and shredding of the paper data would ensure additional data privacy. During the prospectus approval phase, the partner organization provided a signed letter of cooperation. Data collection took place after Walden's IRB approval. The IRB will review the content in the consent form, administrative guidelines, research procedures, and the researcher's qualifications (Walden, 2021).

### **Analysis and Synthesis**

The doctoral study involved an extensive literature review. The references collected during the literature review were in Microsoft Excel under *the literature review matrix* naming convention. All feedback from the committee members was in Microsoft Word under the *change matrix* naming convention. Recorded interview data were under designated folders for transcribing. Files had pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Dragon voice recognition was useful to covert

interview audio files to Microsoft Word, and NVivo 11 software appeared practical in data analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software suitable to analyze interview responses, notes, and secondary data. NVivo enables researchers to develop codes, recognize patterns and develop themes (Zamawe, 2015). The reflected journal consisted of the researcher's experiences, opinions, and thoughts during data collection, data interpretation, and for future use, if audits are necessary.

Bracketing techniques helped minimize personal bias during the data collection process. Bracketing techniques enable a researcher to be mindful of preconceived notions about the research topic and study phenomenon, minimizing interjecting personal viewpoints during data collection and interpretation (Chan, Fung & Chen, 2013). Minimizing personal bias could improve study conformability, enhancing study validity (Garside, 2014). The study assumption was that participants are knowledgeable in the study topic and will provide unbiased and factual information. Semistructured, open-ended questions, followed by probing questions, allowed the researcher to extract rich and credible data. According to Brown et al. (2013), semistructured, open-ended questions could result in factual and honest responses from the participants. The interview protocol, consisting of a set of procedures, led to consistency in the interviews. The interview protocol help maintains consistency and obtains reliable data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Carefully articulated and designed interview questions and follow-up questions were not personal or humiliating. Carefully worded follow-up questions redirected participants from sharing information that necessitates reporting. Denzin (2014)

recommended collecting data from multiple sources for methodological triangulation. Besides interviews, the secondary documents provided by the partner research organization aided in triangulation. The study limitation was that some documents did not help research as a researcher had no control over data usefulness. There was no use of any outliers and the same hold for off-topic interview responses in this case. The probing questions helped me get back on track to extract credible data during interviews. Conducting member checking after data analysis ensured that the interpretation of participants' interview questions was accurate and added the new and missing information. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), member checking adds validity to study findings.

The data analysis involved using Yin's (2015) five-step process: data compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpretation, and conclusion. Nvivo software integrates well in Yin's data analysis steps. The NVivo software helped assign character-based codes to data, eliminate redundant codes, assemble codes, and identify data patterns and themes. Afterward, doing thematic analysis validated the findings with current findings in the literature.

### **Summary**

Section 3 starts by restating the study background, organizational problem, and the study purpose. The section includes the sources of evidence, listed databases used, and key terms to search the database. Moreover, section 3 consists of a justification for data relevant to the practice problem and a procedure to access the data—moreover, section 3 includes participants' descriptions, the claim for sample size, and data collection

techniques. Additional discussions include participants' ethical protection, the consent process, and maintaining study confidentiality. I concluded section 3 by describing data analysis techniques. Section 4 will present study findings and contribution to business practices and implications for social change. Section 4 discussion includes study strengths, limitations, and recommendations for future researchers.

#### Section 4: Evaluation and Recommendations

Adequate work is the foundation for an inclusive path of securing welfare recipients' financial sustainability, and by providing such work, TANF policymakers can deliver social justice. Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP) operates under federal TANF guidelines. KTAP intake strategies to do assessments and then provide work activities, training, career planning, and supports clients' basic, vocational, and work-related skills to find jobs, help them earn a good wage, and become economically self-sufficient. However, KTAP benefit recipients are having difficulties finding and keeping jobs.

The State of Kentucky's work participation has declined steadily over the last few decades and plummeted during the Covid pandemic hitting workforce participation to an all-time low of 56% in June of 2020, reflecting the adult population are neither working nor seeking work (citation) For example, the document revealed that unsubsidized employment decreased by 29.2% between December 2019 to May 2020 (citation). In Kentucky, the workforce participation for women fell to 51.4% by 2020 (citation). Kentucky falls under the bottom 10 states in workforce participation rate at 56.3% (citation). The Minnesota Department of Human Service (2008) research revealed that clients' jobs after TANF are like jobs they lost. In a study conducted by Miller et al. (2011), only one out of four TANF recipients received a significant wage increase after 3 years of employment. So, the questions arise on the effectiveness of TANF program policies in preparing recipients to improve their wages over time besides finding a job.

In the literature, scholars noted barriers to employment for TANF recipients include (a) no high school education, (b) lack of work experience, (c) childcare needs and transportation, (d) history of domestic violence, (e) physical and mental health problem, and (f) criminal record (Bloom et al., 2011). According to Bloom et al. (2011), TANF recipients have at least one barrier, and 40% have multiple barriers to employment. Under the umbrella of TOC and PET as the conceptual framework, I interviewed six existing TANF recipients to explore constraints hindering employability and to understand how they found and kept a job after completing 5-year term limits.

Participants' experiences are essential for data saturation and credible findings. The eligibility criteria include participants (a) are past TANF benefit recipients, (b) found jobs after completion of the TANF program, and (c) successfully remained employed for a minimum of 5 years. Past TANF benefit recipients familiar with the program policies and procedures, and successfully found jobs, and remained employed could provide insights on the study phenomenon.

### **Findings and Implications**

The central research question was “What types of constraints do TANF benefit recipients in the state of Kentucky experience in finding and retaining employment after completing a five-year term limit, and how do some TANF recipients overcome such constraints?” The data sources included semistructured interviews and the secondary documents provided by the partner organization. The data analysis using Yin’ (2017) five-step approach and NVivo 11 software resulted in three themes: (a) workplace norms and skillsets, (b) barriers to employment, and (c) case managers’ competency. Theme 1

includes discussion on work culture, job skills, work relationships, and transitional benefits. In Theme 2, participants stated barriers to employment are childcare, transportation, budgeting, and health issues. In Theme 3, participants discussed governmental and non-government organizations (NGOs) alliance, transparency, and caseworkers' professionalism and work competency. Below are the themes and corresponding frequencies from data analysis.

Table 1

*Frequency of Themes*

Themes	<i>N</i>	Incidence
Workplace norms and skillsets	63	39%
Barriers to employment	57	35%
Case manager's competency	42	26%

**Theme 1: Workplace Norms and Skillsets**

The participants stated that some TANF recipients lack awareness of work culture, and some fail to exhibit work etiquette because of little work experience. Participants suggested TANF administrators need to work with employers to design workshops for a few months of employment to help employees deal with work situations. Tardiness and employees' inability to meet job demand could result in job loss. P2 said many TANF recipients take blue collar work and may not receive paid vacation, sick leave, or employer-paid health insurance. According to P2, lack of access to fringe

benefits at work could cause a lost interest in the job. Parker (1993) supported the notion that the absence of job security could result in employees putting less effort into their jobs.

P4 stated that their job after the TANF program did not commiserate to the skillsets. P4 noted being overqualified for the job demoralized their work ethic. However, P2 and P4 stated that after working for their initial job for about 6 months, they switched to jobs that provided benefits. P2 stated keeping a reflective journal and setting goals while transitioning into the new job. P2 said that a reflective journal helped stay focused on goals, maintain work discipline, and remain motivated.

P3 stated a need to adjust to workplace diplomacy and build relationships with coworkers and supervisors. After the morning work hurdle about work-related activities, P3 stated having a pep talk with the supervisor. P3 said ongoing communication daily with the supervisor resulted in an improved working relationship, which benefited P3 with work flexibility. P5 noted favoritism at work, and some coworkers undermined P5 to look incompetent. P5 stated that the job was temporary and found little opportunity existed to become permanent or advance at the company. However, by building a relationship with the supervisor and coworkers, P5's job became permanent. P4 stated that if a contract job started through a hiring agency to negotiate before the contract ends on an opportunity for a full-time job. P5 said many employers do not offer a permanent position for people coming through a temp agency because the employer had to pay high fees for doing so.



According to McKinsey Global Institute (2020), two-thirds of employers invest in automation and artificial intelligence technologies. However, Southern Regional Education Board data reflects that those employers adopting automated technologies could suppress the need for low skills workers and increase the demand for high-skill workers. Therefore, to remain competitive in the job market, P5 suggested that while seeking TANF benefits, participants need to seek some short-term training in specialized fields, such as electrician skills or HVAC repair. However, P5 recommended making sure that the short-term training meets the Kentucky Work Program requirement. KTAP provides an education bonus for completing educational programs. Contacting the case manager, designated staff in the region, or Family Self-Sufficiency Branch could determine if the short-term training classes are appropriate. P5 said that some individuals could not find jobs and could not meet federal participation requirements despite their best efforts. Individuals unable to find employment could do community service to increase their employability. The document revealed that the Work Experience Program (WEP) supports volunteering as a work activity to maintain KTAP benefits. The secondary documentation revealed that automation breakthroughs would likely impact food service, production, transportation, and office jobs. Therefore, preparing a person with new skills sets and professional licenses could help them find jobs with good pay.

P4 said that participants could benefit from direct application in finding a job. When asked to expand upon the direct application approach, P4 said, “While shopping at a retail store, I directly approached the store manager. The store manager suggested applying online, and I landed the job.” Add summary/synthesis to fully conclude the

paragraph. Avoid ending paragraphs in a direct quote as this reflects a lack of analysis of the quote information.

The state faces penalties for failure to meet a 50% work participation rate (WPR) and 90% WPR for two-parent families (citation). P4 said that often TANF case managers push people to take any jobs as state KTAP administrators are responsible for showing job numbers to run the program. While pushing for work, there are possibilities of mismatch between skills and employment. Therefore, P4 suggested discussing one's strengths, skillsets, and experience with case managers while seeking a good employment match.

The state has discretion on the volume of cash assistance. For example, between December 2020 and May 2021, families receiving cash assistance dropped by 11%, and only 45% of program participants participated in work activities (citation). When participants do not follow program requirements, for instance, failure to engage in work activities such as training or vocational education while enrolled in KTAP could lose cash assistance. TANF also provides family alternative diversion (FAD) benefits, enabling families to make one-time cash payments to keep or accept employment. Also, payments are available to KTAP individuals for transportation and travel-related expenses necessary to participate in KWP. Furthermore, the Relocation Assistance Program (RAP) assists KTAP recipients with cash assistance if there is a need to relocate for employment. Individuals working after the KTAP case discontinuation are eligible for work incentive (WIN) reimbursement for up to 9 consecutive months (Document 10).

P5 stated rather than pushing to work, employment outcomes would be better with improved cash assistance and job skills training. A growing number of economically-disadvantaged families have limited cash assistance access (Shaefer et al., 2015). According to the data in the secondary document, only one-fourth of grant funds go towards cash assistance. The families with the low amount of no cash assistance are the least capable of negotiating the bureaucratic application process involved in transitional benefits (Brodkin, 2006). Therefore, many choose not to apply despite eligibility because of struggles with the process (Seefeldt & Levy, 2008).

All participants suggested using online job search tools besides government JOBS. P1, P2, and P3 stated using Indeed, Craigslist, Fiver, and Google for Jobs. According to P1, Indeed and Google for Jobs enable job seekers to use filters to narrow down the job type and locations. P3 stated Craigslist and Fiver are suitable for are good platforms for freelance jobs. The participants discussed other online job-seeking platforms, including ZipRecruiter, SimplyHired, Nexxt, and CareerBuilder. P5 suggested attending job fairs as it provides an opportunity to meet the employer and forward resumes.

Participants stated that most rural areas in Kentucky have limited access to the internet, hindering job search and taking remote jobs. However, in a suburban area where internet access is available, P3 stated that many TANF recipients use mobile devices to seek jobs because of ease of use. P3 said, "Applying for jobs through the mobile phone takes longer time, difficult to attach documents, and to respond to questions." P3 added

that applying through mobile could result in an incomplete application, resulting in denial.

Participants suggested with EITC, food stamps, disability benefits from Supplement Security Income Program could provide some financial cushions to people leaving TANF benefits for work. There is enhanced Child Tax Credit from the American Rescue Plan Act for people living in poverty zones. P6 recommended exploring the claim for Disaster Unemployment Assistance. P1 also suggested seeking the Work Opportunity Tax credit. P5 said Paths 2 Promise program helps many food stamp recipients with job training support and transportation to jobs. Path 2 Promise coaches also provide support in dealing with work culture and etiquette.

PRWORA (1996) requires states to engage TANF recipients in vocational education. PRWORA's Ready-to-Work approach provides TANF beneficiaries in vocational education. TAP vocational training programs help individuals with baccalaureate and advanced degrees to prepare for employment. Participation in vocational training needs to meet core federal participation requirements and is limited to a maximum of 1 year. According to P2, while selecting vocational education at participating campuses, participants need to partner with TANF case managers to choose training and education commensurate to their experience and skillsets. P2 said, "Taking a proactive approach, by the learning job market, job demand, and understanding job seekers skillsets could enable individuals to find a job that is meaningful, and valuable." Add summary and synthesis.

The above includes a discussion on work culture, job skills, work relationships, and transitional benefits. Path 2 Promise coaches provide support in dealing with work culture and etiquette (citation). Employment outcomes would be better with improved cash assistance and job skills training. Resources are available to job seekers, such as transitional benefits from NGOs and other agencies. The case managers could find help, ease the job search process, and access transitional benefits. Therefore, building working relationships with them could be beneficial.

## **Theme 2: Barriers to Employment**

Prichard Committee (year) pointed out that access to childcare facilities is difficult in Kentucky, especially in rural areas, where half of the state population resides. The participants noted that one of the challenges they experienced included finding a reliable and affordable childcare facility that accommodates their work schedule. Every year, 11 million parents are affected by a lack of access to childcare. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2021) revealed that 24% do not get in the workforce due to the need to care for a child and other family members. Moreover, during the pandemic, thousands of childcare facilities closed, leading parents to leave their jobs (citation). All participants stated that childcare issues could result in excessive absence from work, reduced hours, or even getting fired from the job. Participants suggested that all parents seeking jobs need to manage their childcare situation. P2 said, "Though it is easier to say than done, parents must seek help from family, friends, employers, and case managers." P3 noted that solutions to childcare need to be long term and one must have contingency plans in case of a crisis. P4 stated participating in Fatherhood Summit, which helped identify

resources for child support and overcome barriers. Fatherhood Summit is a collaboration between government agencies and community partners, and the state of Kentucky is the leader in Fatherhood Summit.

Literature review revealed that many women who leave welfare for employment quickly return to welfare (Glendon et al., 1994; Gritz & MaCurdy, 1991). The success of welfare to work relies on the coordinated activities between networks of organizations, including governmental agencies, profit, and nonprofit organizations (Jennings & Krane, 1998). Therefore, P5 suggested a strong alliance between the TANF agency and NGOs to help individuals become self-sufficient. P2 noted seeking help from a resource such as the Kentucky Highlands Promise Zone. The other available programs include Child Care Assistance (CCAP), Kentucky Kinship Resource Center (KKRC), community action center, family resource service centers, and other local support groups.

P1, P3, and P6 stated that they could not afford to pay market rates and therefore relied on their family members to take care of their children while they were at work. P1 said, "I felt comfortable leaving my newborn with my mother as I trusted her." P4 has a child with special needs and did not receive needed support resulting in her depression soon after starting the job. Therefore, she reached out to the case manager for help. Knowledge and awareness of professional responsibilities from case managers entail understanding the socioeconomic background of welfare recipients (Lawler, 2000). In the P4 case, the case manager was compassionate and appeared to be competent to identify the resources to get help. P4 stated that the case manager helped find subsidized daycare to take care of a child with special needs.

P2 suggested that people working in food service, hotel, and retail businesses seek flexible work schedules. P2 said that the employer accommodated the schedule with the spouse's shift so that at least one parent is at home to take care of the child. All participants were aware of state-supported subsidized childcare facilities. However, according to P5, there is a shortage of facilities. P1 noted bureaucratic snags such as cumbersome paperwork while seeking subsidized childcare facilities. Some welfare recipients are reluctant to go through the hassles of paperwork and bureaucratic red tape to obtain benefits (Ellwood & Adams, 1990).

Both P5 and P1 suggested seeking help from family, friends, or case managers to help with the paperwork. P4 stated that sometimes the cost of daycare, transportation to work, health problems are more than the financial gain from working. Therefore, welfare recipients do not put effort into finding jobs. P2 said that one of the deterring factors in taking a job is low wages. P2 added that even the low earnings could reduce the other government benefits such as food stamps and subsidized housing. So, according to P2, "When people do a cost-benefit analysis, they find that they are better off not working." P1 also supported the notion that working costs are high relative to rewards.

All participants stated that finding reliable and affordable transportation is a challenge to most TANF job seekers. The secondary document revealed that most rural Kentucky communities have limited access to transportation, making it difficult for TANF recipients for job training, interview, and work. P1 said traveling costs to work and daycare could add up. P1 noted that sometimes there was a need to take a taxi to work, and in one instance, the car broke down, and the repair cost was equivalent to a few

weeks' paychecks. P1 said financial support from the family helped overcome these expenses, but according to P1, most people do not have the support they need. P4 stated taking a night shift work, and those hours there was no public transportation, so he relied on family members for transportation.

P4 added, "When you rely on someone else for transportation, then you are subject to tardiness, even missing out on the work." P4 suggested not to take a job in which transportation can be a problem. P4 added that if there is no alternative, have a contingency plan as a backup for transportation, and then continue to seek another job in which public transportation is viable. The Work Incentive Program (WIN) provides reimbursement payment to individuals transitioning from the TANF program to cover transportation or other special needs. Individuals could receive \$130 per month for up to nine months (Document 1 and 4). The document revealed that WIN disbursement is limited to once in a lifetime and unavailable to those obtaining employment after discontinuing the KTAP case (Document 4).

Considering the cost compared to income, all participants recommended budgeting to meet ends. P1 is good in accounting and successfully manages the cash flow. P4 stated seeking help from a family member in managing the household budget. According to P1 and P4, budgeting issues could result in financial stress affecting jobs. P1 said, "It is essential to maintain healthy employment. People often have gaps in employment, and a short employment period in their resume reflects the instability and could deter new employers from hiring such persons." P2 recommended to live below the means and distinguish between the needs and wants.



Participants stated that healthcare coverage concerns people leaving welfare for work. Kentucky has a low ranking for overall physical and mental health (America's health ranking). Almost 43 % of TANF recipients reported multiple types of cognitive and behavioral disabilities, including memory impairment, emotional and mental limitations, movement limitations, and sensory impairment (Sun et al., 2016). Poor health could result in low work participation and high dependency on welfare programs. P2 said that participants often face a dilemma deciding on welfare to qualify for Medicaid or forgo Medicaid and keep the job. P2 said, "Seeking publicly funded health insurance while transiting from TANF benefits to the work."

Furthermore, participants stated that opioid abuse in Kentucky is the highest. Because of high opioid abuse, Kentucky ranks first in the region for incarceration. Participants said that incarcerated people have difficulty in finding jobs. P1 suggested discussing low-level felony or misdemeanor records with the case manager and employer, prior employer running the background checks, and finding out about it. TANF program recipients do not report felony or misdemeanor records because of the fear of discrimination and the possibility of facing the consequences (Allard et al., 2018; Stanczyk et al., 2018). According to P1, the case manager needs to make a case on behalf of the incarcerated people to reduce hiring discrimination. By doing so, they are doing justice to individuals who served their time for their crime. P1 added that the advocacy from the case managers and society at large could improve employability. According to Smith and Broege (2019), criminal background costs the nation between \$78 billion and \$ 80 billion in annual GDP.

The above includes a discussion on barriers to employment, which are childcare, transportation, budgeting, and health issues. Child care access appeared to be the major problem; therefore, improving childcare providers' access could benefit. Moreover, there is a need to minimize bureaucratic bottlenecks in accessing subsidized childcare or traditional benefits and make the system flexible. Finding reliable and affordable transportation is a challenge to most TANF job seekers. Payments are available to KTAP individuals for transportation and travel-related expenses, which are necessary to participate in KWP. Budgeting issues could result in financial stress affecting jobs. The other barriers to work are disability, poor health, caring for an infant or a family member with special needs, substance abuse, and mental health issues.

### **Theme 3: Case Managers' Competency**

The document revealed that the Kentucky KTAP program, which operates under federal TANF guidelines, enables families to qualify for Medicaid and food stamps get work incentive reimbursement for up to nine months. Individuals could get child care assistance as long as they meet the Child Care Assistance Program guidelines. P5 stated that there are resources available to job seekers, such as transitional benefits from NGOs and other agencies. When individuals exit welfare for employment, they could take advantage of transitional benefits (Kisker & Ross, 1997). For example, though there is a 60-month lifetime limit for TANF benefits, some caseloads may get exempt because of hardship. Individuals who lost their job for no fault on their own within a month of reaching term limits could receive an extension (Document 10). Also, an individual who has insufficient work opportunities as determined by Cabinet could get an extension

(Document 10). Therefore, the case manager must communicate such policy rules to the clients.

P6 said that KTAP individuals in the workforce after 5 years term limit could quit the job because of a crisis and ultimately return to welfare. Therefore, such individuals could benefit from Safety Net Services by reaching out to Protection and Permanency (P&P) services (Document 10). TAP benefit recipients who lost cash assistance by exhausting 5 years, were discharged from the program due to noncompliance to Work Program, and at or below 200% poverty level are eligible for temporary benefits up to \$365 for four months during a year (Document 5).

Participants stated that each TANF recipient has varying needs and obstacles. According to participants, case managers play an essential role in identifying TANF beneficiaries' needs and supporting them emotionally to overcome employment barriers. Case managers involve in the following activities to improve an individual's employability: General health assessment, mental health assessment, learning needs assessment and addressing challenges to Kentucky Work Participation Program (KWP) participation (document 11). P4 said success in job search depends on personal and social support from case managers. TANF recipients need to be transparent with their hurdles, requirements, and needs with their respective case managers to ensure they have the required information to help with the job search. P1 said, "In a few cases, some TANF recipients do not discuss their criminal records, some do not discuss physical and mental abuse with case managers. P1 said such reservation could hinder the job search approach and suggested transparency with case managers. P1 addressed the health issue with the

case manager and noted that the case manager advised a job search approach to identify jobs tailored to accommodate the health issue. All participants recommended building a good working relationship with case managers.

P2 mentioned abusive behavior from the domestic partner because of the growing independence from work and planned on quitting the job. P2 added, "In a situation like that, one needs help, and knowing who to lean on could be helpful." Family violence and abuse could be detrimental to job search and retention (Moffit, 2008). P2 said that many individuals rely on family members to address domestic violence. P1 and P2 stated that case managers could find help, ease the job search process, and access transitional benefits in some instances.

However, participants' assessments of the case managers varied during the interviews. Society faces a lack of professional responsibilities from welfare program facilitators (McDowell, 2000). Participants rate the case manager's professional competency, accessibility, accountability, and interpersonal relationships. Based on the conversation with participants, the findings revealed that these attributes are interrelated and contribute to the success of TANF recipients finding and keeping jobs. Furthermore, according to the study findings, case managers lack professional competency in work-related knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge to drive results.

Welfare agencies' administrative practice directly correlates with applicants' job search and retention (Anderson, 2001). Accessibility is about caseworkers' availability to help the TANF recipients address work issues. Accountability, according to P3, refers to ethical competency to do the job right from the beginning, and finally, interpersonal

relationship is to act to on TANF applicants' best interest by building rapport. In P2 and P3 cases, the case managers lacked accessibility and accountability. P2 and P3 said case managers treated them as just numbers and looked down on them. Welfare recipients' unstable situation could make them whims of the training programs (Lent, 2001), resulting in minimum work participation in fear of humiliation.

According to P5, "If the TANF recipients lose respect for their caseworkers, then they are reluctant to work them in finding jobs." Dixx (2001) noted that case managers need to consider participants' personal and emotional challenges. P1 said, "Job seekers' lack of respect towards case managers deter them from being transparent with their work records, emotional health, and psychological well beings." P2 said that the case manager's lacking people skills resulted in a confrontation.

P2 said TANF policy design relating to finding employment has some flaws. When asked to expand upon, P2 said, "I have a college degree and training program included a mandatory class in grammar, and I find that time-wasting." P2 added caseworker treated the participant as a retard and called the training program unorganized. P2 and P3 suggested not to overlook outside employment agencies in finding a job.

Above includes discussion on governmental and NGOs alliance, transparency, and caseworkers' professionalism and work competency. A strong partnership between the TANF agency and NGOs could help individuals become self-sufficient. A reservation could hinder the job search approach, and participants suggested transparency with case managers. Furthermore, the finding revealed that case managers' professionalism and

competency are essential to identifying suitable benefits for program benefit recipients. According to the study findings, case managers lack professional competency in work-related knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge to drive results.

### **Connecting the Study Findings to the Conceptual Framework**

The dual conceptual framework comprising TOC and PET supports the study themes. According to Cooper and Loe (2000), the tenets of TOC help leaders to identify the constraints and apply solutions to the cause of the constraints. The study constraints are employment barriers. The leaders could decide what to change, change to what, and how to change the process (Cooper & Loe, 2000). The Jones and Baumgartner's (2012) PET concept is that policymakers lack attention to issues, and some groups overlook policy that benefits them. For this very first reason, TANF continues to have flaws in policy, resulting in low job employment rates and retention rates through the TANF block grant since it became law in 1996.

### **Study Limitations**

The researcher assumed some limitations during data collection. The assumed limitations included lacking rich data in the secondary document obtained from the partner organization, participants' bias in their responses, and transferability of study findings. Partner organizations shared documents that they have authority to share, and these documents were public, and some included internal documents they shared with the legislature. Though the document relates to the study phenomenon, some were of no use to study purpose. The researcher used the secondary documents against participants' responses to validate the finding. Moreover, the internal document provided insights on

study topics that are difficult to obtain from a literature search in the database. The researcher was careful with follow-up questions to ensure participants did not provide answers to please the researcher or exhibited a preconceived bias towards TANF programs from their past experiences. There are multiple barriers to employment, and numerous variables affect these barriers, and each obstacle could be specific to individuals' cases. Therefore, discussing all barriers and identifying solutions in detail from the participants' perspective is beyond the scope of this research.

### **Social and Organizational Implications**

The research findings could benefit TANF policymakers. Also, the findings have potential implications for positive social change. The study findings could result in strategies that TANF recipients used to overcome barriers and maintain employment, which could be helpful to other TANF recipients in their employment search. Moreover, study findings could result in State's TANF administrators adjusting to policies to improve the employability of TANF beneficiaries. Employment opportunities could decrease poverty and improve the standard of living.

### **Recommendations**

The study findings revealed strategies TANF recipients could use to improve job accessibilities and retention. Participants recommended using outside sources besides government JOBS sources to find employment. External sources include online job searching platforms, networking, social media, company websites, and directly approaching hiring managers. Kentucky Career Centers could assist in building a resume, finding a job, and exploring career paths.

The study findings revealed that child care is a big problem. Help from families and friends in taking care of a child is a temporary solution. The recommendation for job seekers is to partner with caseworkers in identifying subsidized daycare centers. Moreover, seeking help from referrals agencies might help TANF recipients to find an appropriate child care facility.

Transportation appeared to be another barrier in job search and retention. Most towns in Kentucky are highly segregated and car-dependent. According to P1, in a rural community like Wolfe County in Kentucky, 20% of families don't have automobiles. P1 said relying on relatives for transportation until the first paycheck arrived two weeks later. After that, P1 relied on a public bus service with strict service hours, and then the participant had to walk an hour to get to the job site from the bus stop. According to the participant, a one-way commute took about 2 hours to work. P1 stated that access to child care and transportation is a formidable barrier to maintaining a job. Even people who have cars found rising gas prices, insurance took significant portion cut from the paycheck. According to P3, "It is a significant problem for people who work for minimum wage." Though most employers do not want to hear about the transportation problem, the recommendation for job seekers is to be transparent during job interviews and discuss with the employer about the transportation problem. Doing so could save future problems of being tardy or even quitting job wasting resources. On a positive note, an employer could offer solutions with work flexibility, cover the commuting cost, or provide carpooling.



TANF recipients who are employed could face an emergency crisis at home that could affect their employability. Another recommendation is to coordinate with caseworkers who could assist in seeking temporary assistance through the government and NGOs. Managing money is essential when people receive cash assistance. Participants stated budget challenges affect their transition into the workforce. The recommendation includes seeking assistance from the local community, deferring utilities credit card bills, and keeping track of expenses. The additional recommendation includes ensuring skillset matches with job demand, understanding general workplace norms, and involving in vocational training for job readiness. Physical and emotional health is equally important in job search, and assigned TANF caseworkers are valuable support, and therefore, building working relationships with them could be beneficial.

The study findings have positive implications from policy points of view. Additional recommendations include making transitional benefits available and accessible and proper training of caseworkers to ensure they act professionally and competently. Child care access appeared to be the major problem; therefore, improving childcare providers' access could be beneficial. To do so, the State TANF providers need to involve all stakeholders, including but not limited to NGOs and referral agencies. Moreover, improvement in all stakeholders' communication could be helpful. TANF beneficiaries' needs are diverse, and the TANF program needs to address these needs quickly and efficiently.

Moreover, there is a need to minimize bureaucratic bottlenecks in accessing subsidized childcare or traditional benefits and make the system flexible. Caseworkers

need to overcome communication barriers and remain flexible while helping TANAF job seekers. Participants suggested professionalism, a caring attitude, and the ability to deal with crises from caseworkers. Participants found it challenging to adjust to workplace culture after being unemployed for a long time. Caseworkers could help TANAF recipients to adjust to workplace culture, job etiquette, and work habits to retain the job.

### **Strength and Limitations of the Project**

The study strength includes understanding phenomena from TANF participants who were successful in landing and retaining jobs, making the study one of the kinds in the literature. Learning firsthand from TANF benefits recipients who are successful in employment offer a constructive approach to designing, planning, and implementing work readiness programs. The state of Kentucky TANF benefits providers' attention to program recipients' responses could shed light on practices and policies to undo stereotypes, bottlenecks, and offer appropriate professional development of caseworkers.

The study limitation included the accessibility of some internal documents due to privacy policy. There are multiple barriers to employment. However, participants' responses included discussing solutions in addressing the barriers they encountered, excluding other obstacles, which could be helpful to other TANF recipients. The future researcher could conduct a study with phenomenological design with a large sample size for study generalization. Furthermore, the study delamination included selecting participants from limited counties in Kentucky.

A future researcher could include participants from many counties in Kentucky, making the study broader.

## Section 5: Dissemination Plan

In this study, the Public Assistance Program Specialist (PAPS) from Cabinet for Health & Family Service has been a focal point of contact. PAPS reached out to the division of family support leadership team and sent some information to assist me with the study. I plan to disseminate a two-to-three-page summary of study findings to PAPS with a request to share with the leadership team at the Policy Development Branch/Program Support Section. The study findings could benefit wider audiences outside of Cabinet for Health & Family Service. I also plan to publish study findings in peer-reviewed journals and statewide publications. Moreover, I plan to present study findings to local community groups through conferences and community forums.

### **Summary**

A few studies confirmed that the ability to acquire jobs relies on the effective administration of the TANF program (Danziger & Seefeldt, 2003). In 2019, over 200,000 benefit recipients of the TANF program in Kentucky's state lacked work readiness by a 5-year program term limit (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019). Work readiness is necessary to gain employment and leave the welfare program (Anderson et al., 2001). In this study, I explored additional constraints hindering the employability of TANF benefit recipients and understood how some TANF program benefit recipients found and kept a job after completing 5-year term limits.

Methodological triangulation and the data analysis using Yin's (2017) five-step approach identified multiple strategies to find and retain employment. Findings revealed that the solutions to childcare need to be long term and one must have contingency plans

in case of a crisis. The Fatherhood Summit could help identify resources for child support and overcome barriers. Furthermore, job seekers could seek assistance from the CCAP, (KKRC, community action center, family resource your service centers, and other local support groups to manage childcare.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that case managers' professionalism and competency are essential to identifying suitable benefits for program benefit recipients. Low-income individuals could financially benefit from programs like FAD, WIN, RAP, Safety Net Services, and Work Opportunity Tax Credit while seeking or retaining jobs. Therefore, case managers need to find programs tailored to address individuals' needs. Discussing one's strengths, skillsets, and experience with case managers are essential while seeking jobs for a good match. Case managers need to overcome communication barriers and remain flexible while helping TANF job seekers. Participants suggested professionalism, caring attitude, and ability to deal with crises from case managers.

Considering the cost compared to income, all participants recommended budgeting to meet ends. Moreover, building relationship with the supervisor and coworkers is essential for job stability. To remain competitive in the job market while seeking TANF benefits, individuals need to seek short-term training in a specialized field. However, individuals need to ensure that short-term training meets the Kentucky Work Program requirement.

The study findings have positive implications from policy points of view. Additional recommendations include making transitional benefits available and accessible and proper training of case managers to ensure they act professionally and

competently. Improving access to childcare providers could be beneficial. Moreover, improving communication with all stakeholders could be helpful. TANF beneficiaries' needs are diverse, and the TANF program needs to address these needs quickly and efficiently. Moreover, TANF administrators must minimize bureaucratic bottlenecks in accessing subsidized childcare and be flexible.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participants,

My name is Omar Said, a student at Walden University. I am conducting a study regarding employment barriers for TANF recipients. I am seeking six study participants who successfully found employment after TANF five-year term limits and remained employed beyond 5 years. Upon review of your LinkedIn profile, you meet study eligibility criteria. If you are interested in participating, please review the attached consent form and reply to this email with the words "I consent."

After receiving your consent to participate, I will invite for a brief phone call to answer any questions you may have and to schedule an actual interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

My contact information phone is \_\_\_\_\_ and e-mail \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Omar Said  
DPA Candidate Walden University

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

### **Interview Methodology**

I will meet the participants in their office or public place in a casual setting. I will introduce myself, thank the participants for their time, show genuine care and interest in the participants. I will act accordingly to make participants feel comfortable and stay focused. I will hand out the copy of the signed consent form for their record and ask if they have any questions or concerns before I proceed.

### **Opening Scripts**

As you are aware, I am conducting a study regarding employment barriers for TANF recipients, and I very much appreciate your participation. The interview contains a predetermined set of 8 questions and follow-up questions. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you think and how you feel. There are no right and wrong answers. I estimate that this process should take approximately 45-60 minutes. If it is okay with you, I will be tape-recording our conversation. The purpose of doing this is that I can get all the details. At the same time, I will take notes to help me better understand your words. I assure you that all the information will remain confidential.

### **Interviewing Steps**

1. I will turn on the recorder after the opening scripts.
2. I will ask semistructured interview questions and follow-up questions.
3. If there is a distraction (knock on the door, someone walks into the room, etc.), I will pause and reiterate the question and the participant's last response and continue with the interview.

### **Closing Scripts**

I want to take this opportunity to thank you again and share how much I appreciate and value your input. After data analysis, I will reach out to you for member checking to ensure I accurately captured your feedback and to provide an opportunity for you to make any corrections or modifications. I request you allocate 15-20 minutes for member checking in your office or public place. Again, I thank you for your time today.

## Appendix C: NIH Certificate



## Appendix D

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**BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM STATUS REPORT**  
**December 1, 2019 – May 31, 2020**

**Department: Community Based Services (DCBS)    Block Grant: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families**

<b>This report is submitted in compliance with KRS 45.357. This report on achievements may be compared to the Block Grant application currently on file with LRC.</b>	
<b>Block Grant Manager:</b> <u>Marta Miranda-Straub</u>	8/6/2020
<b>Marta Miranda-Straub</b> Commissioner	<b>Date</b>

1. FINANCES	Federal Funds	General Funds	Trust/Local Match	Total
<b>Annual Budget</b>	\$180,689,420.00	\$55,980,000.00	\$0.00	\$252,602,520.00
<b>Actual Expenditures</b>	\$101,452,413.46	\$55,977,358.72	\$0.00	\$157,429,772.18
<b>Encumbrances</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Available Balance</b>	\$79,237,006.54	\$2,641.28	\$0.00	\$95,172,747.82

**2. RESULTS BUDGETED/ACHIEVED**

OBJECTIVES	ACHIEVEMENTS
1. Provide cash assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of families.	1. From December 2019 through May 2020, a monthly average of 13,616 families (4,744 adults and 26,214 children) received cash assistance through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP).
2. Provide supportive services, within budget limitations, to enable K-TAP recipients to participate in job preparation and work with the goal of family self-sufficiency.	<p>2. In December 2019, 13,716 families received K-TAP. The number of families receiving assistance increased to 13,944 in May 2020. In December 2019, there were 30,970 individuals including 4,710 adults and 26,260 children receiving K-TAP. In May 2020, the number of individuals receiving K-TAP increased to 32,204 individuals, comprised of 5,165 adults and 27,039 children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were 826 adult K-TAP recipients working in May 2020 (unsubsidized employment), compared to 1,168 in December 2019; a 29.2% decrease in unsubsidized employment. The monthly average of adults working during this time period was 1,006.</li> <li>• There were 1,625 recipients in adult education, high school, college, and skills training in May 2020 with a monthly average of 1,660.</li> <li>• During December 2019, 3,358 K-TAP recipients, or 79% of the recipients who are required to participate, were participating in some Kentucky Works activity. These activities are not all counted toward the federal participation rate. In May 2020, 3,564 K-TAP recipients were required to participate in some Kentucky Works activity, but only 42% were participating. This drastic decrease in KWP participation was due to K-TAP recipients being unable to participate in the Kentucky Works Program due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Other supportive services were provided for a monthly average of 34 K-TAP recipients from December 2019 through May 2020.</li> <li>• From December 2019 to May 2020, relocation assistance was provided to 5 families.</li> </ul>

## Appendix E

**BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM STATUS REPORT**

June 1, 2019 – November 30, 2019

Department: Community Based ServicesBlock Grant: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

This report is submitted in compliance with KRS 45.357. This report on achievements may be compared to the Block Grant application currently on file with LRC.

Block Grant Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Eric C. Friedlander, Acting Secretary

Date

1. FINANCES	Federal Funds	General Funds	Trust/Local Match	Total
Annual Budget	\$180,689,420.00	\$71,913,100.00	\$0.00	\$252,602,520.00
Actual Expenditures	\$70,795,788.11	\$13,555,992.35	\$0.00	\$84,351,780.46
Encumbrances	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Available Balance	\$71,207,231.15	\$18,316,399.50	\$0.00	\$89,523,630.65

\*Available balance is annual budget minus actual expenditures contained in this report and the previous status report submitted.

**2. RESULTS BUDGETED/ACHIEVED**

OBJECTIVES	ACHIEVEMENTS
1. Provide cash assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of families.	1. From June 2019 through November 2019, a monthly average of 14,167 families (4,943 adults and 26,895 children) received cash assistance through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP).
2. Provide supportive services, within budget limitations, to enable K-TAP recipients to participate in job preparation and work with the goal of family self-sufficiency.	2. In June 2019, 14,358 families received K-TAP. The number of families receiving assistance decreased to 13,830 in November 2019. In June 2019, there were 31,962 individuals including 4,933 adults and 27,029 children. In November 2019, the number of individuals, adults, and children receiving K-TAP decreased to 31,220 individuals, 4,821 adults and 26,399 children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were 1,258 adults working in November 2019 (unsubsidized employment), compared to 1,243 in June 2019. The monthly average of adults working during this time period was 1,274.</li> <li>• There were 1,709 recipients in adult education, high school, college, and skills training for November 2019 and a monthly average of 1,618.</li> <li>• During November 2019, 3,484 K-TAP recipients, 80% of the recipients who are required to participate, were participating in some Kentucky Works activity. These activities are not all counted toward the federal participation rate.</li> <li>• Other supportive services were provided for a monthly average of 47 K-TAP recipients from June 2019 through November 2019.</li> <li>• From June 2019 to November 2019, Relocation Assistance was provided to 6 families.</li> </ul>



## Appendix F

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**BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM STATUS REPORT**  
December 1, 2020 – May 31, 2021

**Department:** Community Based Services      **Block Grant:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

<b>This report is submitted in compliance with KRS 45.357. This report on achievements may be compared to the Block Grant application currently on file with LRC.</b>	
<b>Block Grant Manager:</b> <u>Marta Miranda-Straub</u>	8/1/2021
<b>Marta Miranda-Straub</b> Commissioner	<b>Date</b>

1. FINANCES	Federal Funds	General Funds	Trust/Local Match	Total
<b>Annual Budget</b>	\$ 180,689,420.00	\$ 53,503,700.00	0.00	\$ 234,193,120.00
<b>Actual Expenditures</b>	\$ 19,420,068.38	\$ 44,321,029.06	0.00	\$ 63,741,097.44
<b>Encumbrances</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Available Balance</b>	\$ 109,202,077.77	\$ 358,842.59	0.00	\$ 109,560,920.36

**NOTE: Section 1 "Finances" contains data for 1/2021-6/2021. Due to data collection timeframes, the TANF data for all other sections contains data for the six month time period of 12/2020-5/2021.**

**2. RESULTS BUDGETED/ACHIEVED**

OBJECTIVES	ACHIEVEMENTS
1. Provide cash assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From December 2020 through May 2021, a monthly average of 11,486 families (4,064 adults and 22,542 children) received cash assistance through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP).</li> <li>The number of families receiving KTAP has decreased significantly in the last year, from December 2019 through May 2020, a monthly average of 13,616 families (4,744 adults and 26,214 children) received KTAP case assistance.</li> </ul>
2. Provide supportive services, within budget limitations, to enable KTAP recipients to participate in job preparation and work with the goal of family self-sufficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In December 2020, 12,607 families received KTAP. The number of families receiving assistance decreased to 10,662 in May 2021. In December 2020, there were 28,190 individuals including 4,350 adults and 23,840 children. In May 2021, the number of individuals, adults and children, receiving KTAP decreased to 24,857 individuals (3,709 adults and 21,148 children).</li> <li>There were 646 adults working in May 2021 (unsubsidized employment), compared to 728 in December 2020, an approximate 11% decrease in unsubsidized employment. The monthly average of adults working during this time period was 672. From December 2020 to May 2021, an average of 97 KTAP cases per month discontinued due to employment.</li> </ul>

## Appendix G

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**BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM STATUS REPORT**

June 1, 2020 – November 30, 2020

Department: Community Based Services Block Grant: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

<b>This report is submitted in compliance with KRS 45.357. This report on achievements may be compared to the Block Grant application currently on file with LRC.</b>	
Block Grant Manager: <u>Marta Miranda-Straub</u>	2/1/2021
<b>Marta Miranda-Straub</b> Commissioner	<b>Date</b>

1. FINANCES	Federal Funds	General Funds	Trust/Local Match	Total
<b>Annual Budget</b>	\$180,689,420.00	\$53,503,700.00	\$0.00	\$234,193,120.00
<b>Actual Expenditures</b>	\$52,067,273.85	\$8,823,828.35	\$0.00	\$60,891,102.20
<b>Encumbrances</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Available Balance</b>	\$128,622,146.15	\$44,679,871.35	\$0.00	\$173,302,017.80

*NOTE: Section 1 "Finances" contains data for 7/2020-12/2020. Due to data collection time frames, the TANF data for all other sections contains data for the six month time period of 6/1/2020-11/30/2020.*

**2. RESULTS BUDGETED/ACHIEVED**

OBJECTIVES	ACHIEVEMENTS
1. Provide cash assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From June 2020 through November 2020, a monthly average of 12,688 families (4,412 adults and 24,818 children) received cash assistance through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP).</li> <li>The number of families receiving KTAP has decreased significantly in the last year: from June 2019 through November 2019, a monthly average of 14,167 families (4,943 adults and 26,896 children) received KTAP case assistance.</li> </ul>
2. Provide supportive services, within budget limitations, to enable KTAP recipients to participate in job preparation and work with the goal of family self-sufficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In June 2020, 13,757 families received KTAP. The number of families receiving assistance decreased to 12,094 in November 2020. In June 2020, there were 31,792 individuals including 5,040 adults and 26,752 children receiving KTAP. In November 2020, the number of individuals receiving KTAP decreased to 28,050, 4,226 adults and 23,824 children.</li> <li>There were 761 adults working and receiving KTAP assistance in November 2020 (unsubsidized employment), compared to 917 in June 2020: an approx. 17% decrease in unsubsidized employment. The monthly average of adults working during this time period was 786.</li> <li>There were 917 KTAP recipients in adult education, high school, or college for November 2020, with a monthly average of 971 for this time period.</li> </ul>

## Appendix H

**BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM STATUS REPORT**  
December 1, 2018 – May 31, 2019

Department: Community Based Services Block Grant: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

This report is submitted in compliance with KRS 45.357. This report on achievements may be compared to the Block Grant application currently on file with LRC.

Block Grant Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Eric T. Clark, Commissioner

7/26/2019  
Date

1. FINANCES	Federal Funds	General Funds	Trust/Local Match	Total
Annual Budget	\$180,689,420.00	\$71,913,100.00	\$0.00	\$252,602,520.00
Actual Expenditures	\$38,686,400.74	\$40,040,708.15	\$0.00	\$78,726,257.80
Encumbrances	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Available Balance	\$142,003,019.26	\$31,872,391.85	\$0.00	\$173,876,262.20

**2. RESULTS BUDGETED/ACHIEVED**

OBJECTIVES	ACHIEVEMENTS
1. Provide cash assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of families.	1. From December 2018 through May 2019, a monthly average of 14,858 families (5,122 adults and 27,792 children) received cash assistance through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP).
2. Provide supportive services, within budget limitations, to enable K-TAP recipients to participate in job preparation and work with the goal of family self-sufficiency.	2. In December 2018, 15,289 families received K-TAP. The number of families receiving assistance decreased to 14,563 in May 2019. In December 2018, there were 33,878 individuals including 5,381 adults and 28,497 children. In May 2019, the number of individuals, adults, and children receiving K-TAP decreased to 32,402 individuals, 5,019 adults and 27,383 children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were 1,240 adults working in May 2019 (unsubsidized employment), compared to 1,385 in December 2018. The monthly average of adults working during this time period was 1,273.</li> <li>• There were 1,752 recipients in adult education, high school, college, and skills training for May 2019 and a monthly average of 1,671.</li> <li>• During May 2019, 3,452 K-TAP recipients, 85% of the recipients who are required to participate, were participating in some Kentucky Works activity. These activities are not all counted toward the federal participation rate.</li> <li>• Other supportive services were provided for a monthly average of 61 K-TAP recipients from December 2018 through May 2019.</li> <li>• From December 2018 to May 2019, Relocation Assistance was provided to two families during this time period.</li> </ul>

## Appendix I

TOTAL KINSHIP CARE			RECIPIENTS AND PAYMENTS						MAY 2020
COUNTY	NUMBER OF FAMILIES	NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS	AMOUNT OF MONEY PAYMENTS	REGULAR PAYMENTS	SUPPLEMENTAL PAYMENTS	RETROACTIVE PAYMENTS	STARTUP PAYMENTS	SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE PAYMENTS	
TOTAL	1,992	3,580	\$926,815	\$922,315	\$300	\$0	\$0	\$4,200	
AV. PAY/PER CASE			\$465.27						
AV. PAY/PER RECIPIENT			\$258.89						
ADAIR	1	1	\$300	\$300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
ALLEN	7	13	\$3,600	\$3,600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
ANDERSON	17	27	\$7,200	\$7,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BALLARD	1	1	\$300	\$300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BARREN	12	21	\$4,770	\$4,770	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BATH	11	20	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BELL	26	39	\$11,400	\$11,400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BOONE	28	48	\$11,070	\$11,070	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BOURBON	16	22	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BOYD	29	55	\$15,300	\$15,300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BOYLE	16	24	\$6,900	\$6,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BRACKEN	5	10	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BREATHITT	7	12	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BRECKINRIDGE	7	17	\$4,200	\$4,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BULLITT	41	78	\$21,300	\$21,300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
BUTLER	3	3	\$900	\$900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CALDWELL	6	10	\$2,100	\$2,100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CALLOWAY	8	12	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CAMPBELL	30	50	\$12,975	\$12,975	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CARLISLE	2	2	\$600	\$600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CARROLL	2	6	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CARTER	23	42	\$10,800	\$10,800	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CASEY	2	4	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CHRISTIAN	9	18	\$5,100	\$5,100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CLARK	17	29	\$7,200	\$7,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CLAY	8	15	\$3,300	\$2,700	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$600	
CLINTON	5	7	\$2,100	\$2,100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CRITTENDEN	7	12	\$2,925	\$2,925	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
CUMBERLAND	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
DAMASCUS	27	47	\$12,300	\$12,300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
EDMONSON	2	5	\$900	\$900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
ELLIOTT	13	26	\$6,600	\$6,300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$300	