



CHEROKEE NATION CAREER SERVICES

JOBS, OPPORTUNITES, BENEFITS AND SERVICES (JOBS) TRIBAL TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TTANF) PLAN: FY2026 – FY2028

SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1. Mission Statement

The mission of Cherokee Nation Career Services is to develop and encourage individuals to achieve and maintain work habits and skills that promote employability and self-sufficiency through programs encompassing education, training, rehabilitation and supportive services.

1.2. Statutory Authority

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), Section 412, authorized Indian tribes to operate Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF) program. The Cherokee Nation (CN), in accordance with such authority, began implementing a TTANF program effective October 1, 2019. This document, in its entirety, constitutes the CN TTANF plan; a three (3) year plan effective October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2028. This plan is being submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, for review and approval.

1.3. Program Administration

The CN Executive Branch will have overall administrative authority for the CN Tribal TANF Program. This program will be administered through the Career Services Department. Program direction and management responsibilities will be delegated to the CN Tribal TANF Program.

1.4. Program Purpose in Providing Welfare-Related Services

In accordance with the purposes established by Public Law 104-193 (42 U.S.C 601 (a)), CN's key areas of focus are to:

1. End dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, to increase participant's employability and promote self-sufficiency.
2. Provide assistance (or other forms of support) to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
3. Educate to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

To end dependence and promote job readiness, participants' work activity options will include activities specific to enhancing self-sufficiency. Some services may be mandated to address significant employment barriers (e.g. educational deficiencies, mental health and/or substance abuse issues).

To help adults with the basic living expenses so children may be cared for in their own homes or homes of relatives, monthly financial assistance will be provided.

To educate on prevention and reduction of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, the CN Tribal TANF Program will work with youth in communities throughout the program service area. This may be accomplished through guidance, training, education, mentoring, youth services, and other character building activities.

To encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent households, the CN Tribal TANF Program will offer services that address challenges. Such services may include, but are not limited to: Counseling, workshops, parenting skills, Diversion and Transitional services, educational/work incentives, and work subsidies.

1.5. Program Goal and Outcome Measures

The goal of the CN Tribal TANF Program is to provide opportunities that will allow families to attain and maintain self-sufficiency.

To meet the goal, CN Tribal TANF will provide temporary support in meeting basic needs, promote and offer training that will lead to a career pathway and employment, and offer youth services.

The goal will be measured by the number of cash grants awarded, work participation rate, number of job placements, and an increase in youth and two-parent participation. In addition, the CN Tribal TANF Program will focus on the aforementioned key areas of focus.

1.6. Geographical Service Area and Service Population

Cherokee Nation is the largest federally recognized Native American tribe with approximately 466,181 registered tribal citizens. There are approximately 283,227 enrolled Cherokees residing in Oklahoma and currently 146,587 reside within the reservation of the Cherokee Nation; the final boundaries of which were fixed by treaty in 1866. The reservation covers all of six counties and parts of an additional eight counties in northeast Oklahoma with a total area of 6,950 square miles and 4,447,716 acres. These counties include: Adair, Cherokee, Craig, Delaware, Mayes, McIntosh, Muskogee, Nowata, Ottawa, Rogers, Sequoyah, Tulsa, Wagoner, and Washington.

The Cherokee Nation and its entities operate offices, clinics, hospitals, businesses, housing additions, and casinos on fee lands, restricted individual allotments, and trust lands throughout the reservation.

It is our intent to provide TANF services to the individuals and areas listed below:

1. All members of federally recognized tribes residing within Adair, Cherokee, Craig, Nowata, Sequoyah, and Washington Counties (these counties lie wholly within the Cherokee Nation Reservation service area);
2. All members of federally recognized tribes except Muskogee Nation Tribal Citizens residing within Mayes and Rogers Counties (per agreement with Muskogee Nation);
3. Only Cherokee Nation Tribal Citizens residing in Wagoner and McIntosh Counties (per agreement with Muskogee Nation);
4. All members of federally recognized tribes within the reservation service area only in Delaware and Ottawa Counties; and
5. All Cherokee Nation Tribal Citizens residing in Muskogee and Tulsa Counties, along with all members of federally recognized tribes except Muskogee Nation Tribal Citizens residing within the Cherokee Nation Tribal Reservation Areas of Muskogee and Tulsa

Counties (per agreement with Muscogee Nation). (Please see attached map for Tribal Reservation Area.)

Cherokee Nation has worked extensively with Muscogee Nation to determine a fair and reasonable division of the American Indian 1994 caseload (and hence funding) in the counties in which we share reservation boundaries. For this purpose, it has been determined that 46.15% of Muscogee County is within the Cherokee Nation Tribal Reservation and 28.95% of Tulsa County is within the Cherokee Nation Tribal Reservation. (Please see attached document titled *TANF Service Area County Split*.) These percentages would be applied to all 1994 cases identifying as American Indian other than Cherokee Nation or Muscogee Nation.

The Cherokee Nation GeoData Department via their Online Virtual Map will assist in verifying residence of individuals in those counties with which we share reservation area with the Muscogee Nation to ensure compliance.

1.7. Assurance--Public Involvement

The CN Tribal TANF Program provided a public comment period from April 10, 2025 to May 24, 2025, to inform, educate and collect input from the public on the contents of this Tribal Family Assistance Plan. The public comment period was announced through the Cherokee Nation Communications Department and the Cherokee Nation website, as well as posted in Cherokee Nation facilities throughout the 14-county reservation area. In addition, copies of the plan were distributed to stakeholders and partner programs to orientate them about the contents in the plan. All comments were considered and, where appropriate, were incorporated in the plan.

SECTION 2: USE OF TANF FUNDS AS RELATED TO THE PURPOSES OF TANF

Only needy families may receive: (a) any form of federally-funded "assistance" (as defined in 45 CFR 286.10); and (b) any benefits or services pursuant to TANF purposes. "Needy" means financially deprived, according to income and resource (if applicable) criteria established in the TANF plan by CN to receive "assistance," benefit, or service.

CN may segregate Federal TANF funds to provide services (and related activities) that do not constitute "assistance" (as defined in 45 CFR 286.10) to individuals and family members who are not financially deprived but who need the kind of services that meet TANF purposes 3 or 4. Objective criteria will be established for participation in these programs.

SECTION 3: CASH GRANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1 Non-Financial Eligibility Requirements include:

1. **American Indian and/or Alaskan Native:** At least one person in the assistance unit who is an enrolled member of any federally recognized tribe; exception is given to child(ren) under one year of age.
2. **Residency:** The American Indian and Alaskan Native participant must reside within the service area as defined in section 1.6.

3. **Citizen/Alien Status:** All participants must be a U.S. citizen or have an approved alien status. Assistance units with Non-American Indian/Alaskan Natives must sign a statement attesting to citizenship or alien status.
4. **Social Security Card:** The participant must supply Social Security cards or a receipt of application for a Social Security card for all persons in the assistance unit.
5. **Birth Certificate:** The participant must supply copies of birth certificates for all persons in the assistance unit, or provide proof of application for same.
6. **Child Support:** Unless the participant meets an exemption or exclusion criteria, all participants must cooperate with either a State or Tribal Child Support Enforcement Division. Cooperation will be defined as completing an application with either Child Support Enforcement Division.

CN Tribal TANF will not condition eligibility for TANF on the assignment of child support to the tribe. CN Tribal TANF, to be in compliance with 45 CFR 286.155 and consistent with §286.45 (f), will not retain an assigned child support collection; no amounts will be utilized to further the tribe's TANF program.

7. **Dependent Child**
 - a. A dependent child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years of age; or
 - b. An individual who has not attained 19 years of age and is a full-time student in an accredited school (or in the equivalent level of vocation or technical training).
8. **Caretaker Relative**
 - a. A caretaker relative is defined as a person legally responsible for the care, control and supervision of the dependent child
 - b. A dependent child must live with a parent or caretaker relative
 - c. The caretaker relative is related to the dependent child in one of the following ways:
 - i. The biological parent
 - ii. Blood relative or half-blood relative (sharing one common natural or adoptive parent). Including:
 1. Siblings, aunts, uncles, first cousins, first cousins once removed, nephews or nieces;
 2. Persons of preceding generations denoted by the prefixes of grand, great, great-great or great-great-great;
 3. Stepfathers, stepmothers, stepbrothers or stepsisters;
 4. The spouse or ex-spouse of anyone listed in this section.
 - iii. Meets criteria of Special Population (Section 9, part c).
9. **Special Population (if applicable)**
 - a. Teen Parent
 - i. A teen parent is defined as a person legally responsible for the care, control, and supervision of a dependent child(ren).

- ii. A teen parent may be allowed to apply separately with his/her dependent child(ren) when the minor parent lives with an adult/relative in an adult supervised placement/home that is approved by CN TTANF staff.
- b. Emancipated Minor
 - i. An emancipated minor is defined as a young person who may be legally entitled to be treated as an adult through a court system or other federal agency without the means to achieve individual self-sufficiency.
- c. Foster Parent
 - i. Foster parent(s) with legal custody verified through state or tribal placement agencies.

3.2 Financial Eligibility Requirements

1. **Income Limits:** Countable adjusted income must not exceed 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.
2. **Resource Limits:**
 - a. \$5,000.00 per assistance unit
 - b. Automobile exemption for one car per adult. Any additional automobiles will have a value assigned (Kelley Blue Book). Any assigned value exceeding the resource limit will count against the \$5,000.00 limit
 - c. Primary residence is excluded

3.3 CN TTANF Program Assistance Unit

The following persons are included in the assistance unit:

1. Applicants who meet all non-financial eligibility criteria,
2. Applicants who are parents or caretaker relatives meeting custody requirements, dependent children, and emancipated minors.
3. Child Only Cases
 - a. A child(ren) residing with non-needy caretaker relative:
 - i. The assistance is provided only to and for the benefit of child(ren) and not the caretakers;
 - ii. The non-needy caretaker's income is not counted in determining eligibility;
 - iii. The caretaker(s) are not required to participate in the work activities;
 - iv. Participation in activities related to improving the care and development needs of the child(ren) in their custody may be required if recommended by the CN TTANF Staff;
 - v. Support services may be provided for the benefit of the child(ren) when other sources are unavailable.
 - b. Emancipated minor
 - i. The emancipated minor is not required to participate in work activity requirements;
 - ii. Participate and maintain suitable academic standards approved by CN TTANF Staff;
 - iii. May be eligible for children and youth services as outlined in section 5.5.
4. All dependent children are included in the assistance unit, unless they do not meet TTANF eligibility requirements.

SECTION 4: PAYMENT OF TRIBAL TANF BENEFITS

4.1 Monthly Cash Assistance Grant

The monthly TTANF cash assistance grant will be issued once a month. Following the receipt of all earnings documents, the Career Specialist Staff will process the information for an issuance amount in accordance with the payment standards as outlined in policy. The Program Director and Finance Director will finalize all payments.

Beginning each fiscal year the monthly cash assistance grant amount may be increased by a set percentage based on availability of funds. The set standard will align with the yearly Social Security Administration Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) increase or as determined by Career Services Administration.

4.2 Underpayment of Benefits

CN Tribal TANF will authorize restoration payment(s) when an assistance unit receives monthly cash assistance less than it is entitled to as a result of any of the following:

1. An administrative error
2. Failure to take action on information reported by the participant
3. An incorrect effective date is issued for benefits issuance
4. Calculation error(s)
5. Denial, closure or reduction of benefits is applied in error
6. Appeal decision requires restoration of benefits
7. The repayment of an overpayment was in excess of amount due

4.3 Overpayment of Benefits

Recoupment will occur when an assistance unit receives monthly cash assistance more than it is entitled to. The following will occur once the discovery of the overpayment is noted:

1. Date and amount of the overpayment will be determined by the Case Management Staff.
2. First available payment will have the overpayment applied in full, unless recoupment amount is equal to or greater than monthly cash assistance payment. In this event, the recoupment will be applied to consecutive payments until recouped in full.
3. When an administrative error has caused the overpayment, the recoupment will be one third of the monthly cash assistance payment(s) until recouped in full.

SECTION 5: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

CN TTANF Staff will complete a needs assessment to determine participants' situation. Results of the assessment will determine approval of service(s) and amount of assistance. Specific limits will be defined in policy as to availability and amount of each service. All supportive services will be subject to the availability of funds.

5.1 Adult Employment and Vocational Programs (AEVP)

1. On-the-job Training (OJT) is a program that trains individuals in occupational trades in the public and private sector. Public agencies, nonprofit private agencies, private employers, government agencies, and tribal agencies are eligible to participate. Employers can negotiate an OJT contract with CN Tribal TANF for reimbursement of a

portion of an individual's hourly wage during the initial training period through which a participant is hired in full-time employment. Reimbursement will be provided for up to six months at up to 50% of the participant's gross wages.

2. Work Experience (WE) is a temporary or part-time assignment that encourages individuals to develop good work habits and basic work skills. CN Tribal TANF staff develops worksite agreements with various businesses to provide employment to individuals with little or no work experience and the program pays the participants an hourly wage.
3. Tribal Training Services (TTS) is a day-by-day training assignment at a Cherokee Nation entity. This program assists individuals with a temporary or part-time training assignment that encourages individuals to develop work habits, basic work skills, and understanding of the workforce. Tribal Training Services allows participants to learn the customs and routines of work, acquire work-task skills, establish an employment record, and generate employer references.
4. Vocational Training (VT) provides financial assistance for vocational training, applicable associate and bachelor degree programs; can include but is not limited to tuition, books, fees, GED/HSE prep and/or basic skills instruction; may include short-term classes and/or testing fees associated with training/certification.

5.2 Incentives for Adults

Education, training, and work participation incentives will be offered to encourage consistent engagement in activities contributing to job readiness, personal development, and family strengthening. One parent must complete a minimum of 20 hours per week and two parents must complete a minimum of 30 hours per week with each parent completing a minimum average of 15 hours per week. Incentives may also be offered for completion of two-parent relationship sessions.

5.3 Supportive Services

To promote family stability and increase participant's ability to attain and maintain self-sufficiency, supportive services will be offered (dependent upon availability of funds). Payments may be issued to the TTANF program participant (excluding Diversion participants) or directly to their service providers. Participant must be in compliance or demonstrate requested service will result in compliance with work participation requirements.

Supportive Services include but are not limited to:

1. Job Skills Training Payments
2. Professional License
3. Special Tools or Equipment
4. Driver's License
5. Automobile Insurance
6. Vehicle Service
7. Transportation
8. Professional Clothing

Specific limits will be defined in policy as to availability and amount of each service. All supportive services will be subject to the availability of funds.

5.4 Nonrecurring Short-term (NRST) Benefits

Benefits will be offered to participants (excluding Diversion participants) to address specific crisis situation or episode of need consistent with 45 CFR 286.10.

Nonrecurring short-term benefits include, but are not limited to:

1. Housing Expenses
2. Emergency Household Expenses
3. Emergency Shelter Expenses - Homeless
4. Utilities
5. Disaster Relief
6. Vehicle Loss Prevention

5.5 Children and Youth Services

Services designed to promote employment readiness, academic, social, cultural, and emotional growth. Children on Diversion cases are not eligible. Activities include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Youth Employment Activities
2. Cultural Preservation Activities
3. Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Activities
4. Education and Academic Outreach
5. Grade/Attendance Incentives
6. High School Completion Incentive
7. Career Pathway Plan (CPP) Incentive
8. Graduation Allowance
9. Extracurricular/Healthy Lifestyle Allowance
10. Clothing/Attire Allowance
11. Footwear Allowance
12. Grooming/Hygiene
13. School Supplies
14. ACT/SAT fees
15. Tutoring

Specific limits will be defined in policy as to availability and amount of each service. All supportive services will be subject to the availability of funds.

5.6 Suspension Services

When a family's countable income exceeds the payment standards, the case may remain open for a period of three consecutive months. During this period, the family may remain eligible for other services, but not for monthly cash assistance. After three consecutive months of suspension, a case will close or move to Transition, based on the source of income. The family must continue to comply with all cash assistance and eligibility guidelines or case may be sanctioned or close.

5.7 Transitional Services

When a family's countable earned income exceeds the payment standard, the case may move to transition for a period of six consecutive months following suspension. During this period, the family may remain eligible for other services, but not for monthly cash assistance. After six consecutive months of transition, the participant will be eligible for a program completion incentive and case will close. The family must continue to comply with all eligibility guidelines or case will close.

5.8 Diversion Assistance

Diversion assistance is provided to applicants who have accepted employment or are currently employed with a barrier to maintaining said employment. Applicants must meet all diversion eligibility criteria. The family's countable adjusted income must not exceed 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Payments will be issued directly to the service provider to enable participant to accept and maintain employment.

SECTION 6: TIME LIMIT

Basis for modified time limit: Under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program, adults are limited to 60 cumulative months of assistance. CN will count prior months of TANF assistance provided by any State or Tribe funded by the TANF block grant; exception will be granted for any months exempted or disregarded by statute, regulation, or under any experimental, pilot or demonstration project approved under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act.

Per 45 CFR 286.115 and 120, a month is not counted towards the time limit when:

1. The person is a dependent child living with a caretaker relative who is not in the TANF assistance unit.
2. The person was a dependent child, and is now a minor parent who receives TANF benefits as a caretaker for their own child.
3. When the unemployment rate, based on labor force records, is equal to 50% or more within the CN Reservation boundaries in any given month, that month will not be counted toward the 60 month time limit for assistance. However, the month(s) will only be excluded for the participating residents of the county or counties.
4. Any month of receipt of assistance to a family that does not include an adult head-of-household;
5. Any month of receipt of assistance by an adult during which the adult lived in Indian country or in an Alaskan Native Village in which at least 50 percent of the adults were not employed.
6. Hardship Exemption:
 - a. The person is a dependent child in a two-parent family and the principal wage earner dies;
 - b. The adult member of the family is required to care for a family member with a serious health problem or disabling condition requiring full-time care. Must be verified by a licensed physician or other competent medical authority;
 - c. Both parents are incapacitated or one parent has to care full-time for the other incapacitated parent;

d. Survivors of battery and extreme cruelty. CN Tribal TANF will coordinate and collaborate with various Victim Services Programs to ensure equitable treatment of members of the service population.

Hardship exemptions will not exceed 20% of the participant population.

The five largest Indian populated counties in our reservation are Adair, Cherokee, Delaware, Mayes, and Sequoyah; which are characterized by poverty and substandard living conditions resulting in crime, drug use, and high incarceration rates. The following table lists relevant demographics for each of the counties within the Cherokee Nation Reservation area:

AREA	% INDIAN POP. ¹	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE ²	POVERTY RATE ³	HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE ³
State of Oklahoma	9.5%	3.3%	15.8%	89.1%
Adair County	44.7%	4.6%	23.1%	82.8%
Cherokee County	36.7%	3.7%	18.7%	89.9%
Craig County	21.6%	3.8%	18.8%	86.2%
Delaware County	23.8%	4.1%	21.0%	87.4%
Mayes County	22.5%	3.5%	16.9%	89.3%
McIntosh County	19.2%	5.2%	19.2%	86.6%
Muskogee County	20.6%	4.9%	20.8%	87.0%
Nowata County	19.1%	3.3%	17.4%	90.4%
Ottawa County	21.4%	3.7%	21.6%	87.2%
Rogers County	13.4%	3.1%	9.6%	92.2%
Sequoyah County	23.3%	4.0%	22.3%	84.5%
Tulsa County	7.2%	3.3%	15.1%	89.8%
Wagoner County	10.2%	3.3%	10.4%	91.7%
Washington County	11.5%	3.8%	15.1%	91.5%

1 U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2023 Population Estimates Program American Indian and Alaska Native alone <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

2 OK Employment Security Commission (January 2025) <https://oklahoma.gov/oesc/labor-market/local-area-statistics.html>

3 U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)

4 U.S. Census Bureau, High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2019-2023 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

Even though the unemployment rates are low, the poverty rates are quite high. There are high rates of drug abuse, with a current opioid addiction epidemic occurring across Oklahoma, which also has an extremely high rate of incarceration. Oklahoma has ranked #1 in the nation for female incarceration for many years and one in ten adult males is a felon.

Compared to the rest of the state, the targeted area lags behind financially. There are two Workforce Investment Areas within the Cherokee Nation Reservation (there were three, but Eastern and Tulsa have recently combined into Green Country Workforce Region.

Unfortunately, the most recent data is from the three previous regions.): *Eastern Oklahoma Workforce Region* – American Indians account for 17.2% of the total population, with females making up 50.2%. Individuals with a high school diploma or less make up 55.5% of the population. Average earnings for the region are lower than the state average of \$49,200 and range from \$30,600 - \$38,600. *Northeastern Oklahoma Workforce Region* – American Indians account for 16.2% of the total population, with females making up 50.5%. Individuals with a

high school diploma or less make up 54.6% of the population. Average earnings for the region are also lower than the state average at \$38,550. *Tulsa Oklahoma Workforce Region* – American Indians account for 7.4% and African Americans account for 8.1% of the total population, with females making up 50.8%. Individuals with a high school diploma or less make up 42.4% of the population. Average earnings for the region surpass the state average and range from \$38,800 - \$56,800.

While it is true that many underserved individuals are working, unfortunately, quite often the jobs are part-time, low-skilled, minimum wage, or seasonal in nature. This situation must change if underserved persons are to become and remain self-sufficient. The time limits proposed for the Cherokee Nation TANF Plan are necessary to ensure individuals have the skills to acquire employment in jobs with self-sufficient wages that will lift families out of poverty.

SECTION 7: WORK PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

All adult and minor parent(s) TTANF participants will be required to complete work activities and maintain an Individualized Employability Plan (IEP), unless exempt (See Section 9).

Participation Rate: CN acknowledges barriers may affect TTANF client participation. These may include employment, educational, and/or social barriers that delay the attainment of self-sufficiency. As a result, the participation rates and minimum average participation hours per week presented in this Plan are appropriate.

All Families Minimum Participation Rate

Fiscal Year	Rate
2026	30%
2027	30%
2028	30%

All Families Minimum Average Participation Hours per Week

Fiscal Year	One Parent	Two Parent
2026	20	30
2027	20	30
2028	20	30

In a two-parent family assistance unit, the hours of each parent are shared to satisfy the hour requirement. Each parent will be required to complete a minimum average of fifteen (15) hours per week. An exception may be made for those families with children under the age of six years.

SECTION 8: COUNTABLE WORK ACTIVITIES FOR PARTICIPATION RATE:

Work participation activities will be categorized as:

1. Organizational
 - a. Activities for the preparation of work readiness.
2. Family Strengthening
 - a. Activities that are family focused, including but not limited to: wellness, cultural and the enhancement of family/participant.

3. Employment, Education, and Training
 - a. Activities to increase employability by developing marketable skills, including but not limited to: Education, job search, work experience, and job skills training.
 - b. As provided in 45 CFR 286.105, limitations concerning vocational education, job search and job readiness are:
 - i. Tribes are not required to limit vocational education for any one individual to a period of 12 months.
 - ii. There are two limitations concerning job search and job readiness:
 - (1) Job search and job readiness assistance only count for 6 weeks in any fiscal year.
 - (2) If the Tribe's unemployment rate in the Tribal TANF service area is at least 50 percent greater than the United States' total unemployment rate for that fiscal year, then an individual's participation in job search or job readiness assistance can increase for up to 12 weeks in that fiscal year.

If job search or job readiness is an ancillary part of another activity, then there is no limitation on counting the time spent in job search/job readiness.
4. Barrier Removal
 - a. Activities addressing issues of health, wellness and self-sufficiency barriers.
5. Other activities that will assist families achieve self-sufficiency

CN TTANF may allow reasonable transportation time up to two hours per week to and from work/training sites and travel to child care providers; unless the client is employed, in which CN TTANF may allow up to two hours per day. Reasonable will be actual time between home and countable work activities, including travel time to child care, which shall count as time towards meeting CN TTANF client's work activities. Requesting flexibility on this criterion demonstrates CN TTANF's commitment to promoting self-sufficiency.

Due to the rural nature of the area, it is necessary to include transportation time towards meeting the client's work activities. Many of our families live in very rural, isolated areas that do not have work or training sites nearby. Child Care resources are not always readily available. This requires many of our families to drive long distances to fulfill their work activity requirements.

Note: An adult of a Child Only case may be required to participate in countable work activities if deemed necessary by the CN TTANF staff. Activities will be related to self-improvement and improving the care and development needs of the child(ren).

The planned work requirements were designed to assist individuals enter employment in available jobs with self-sufficient wages. Employment opportunities in Cherokee Nation require a skilled workforce. Projected growth in construction, hospitality, manufacturing, health care, warehousing, social assistance, and food service provides employment opportunities for individuals who have the skills needed to be successful on the job.

Because of the high poverty rates and low basic skills of individuals (see table, page 10), the planned work requirements are necessary to ensure TANF participants are able to acquire the skills needed to enter employment and be successful on the job.

SECTION 9: EXEMPTION FROM WORK PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Exemption Criteria: CN recognizes that some conditions and circumstances may limit or prevent persons from work participation. Documentation will be required. The following is a list of conditions and circumstances allowed for exemption but not limited to:

1. Pregnant females who are experiencing medical complications
2. Females during the eight weeks after giving birth
3. Persons age 65 or over
4. Person unable to participate in TTANF activities due to their individual and/or family disabling condition(s)
5. Adults in a Child only case
6. Emancipated minor
7. Domestic Violence Victims
 - a. Coordination and collaboration with various Victims Services, to determine the actual victimization, current threat and on-going safety issues
 - b. Circumstances to be considered in determining an exemption include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Physical recovery from an assault/victimization
 - ii. Pending criminal charges as a result of victimization requiring their participation and preparation for trial
 - iii. Relocation due to safety issues
 - iv. Participant temporarily in hiding/shelter due to safety issues
8. Single parent caring for a child under the age of six that has demonstrated an inability to obtain needed child care based on reasons below:
 - a. Appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from the person's home or work site is unavailable
 - i. Appropriate child care will be defined as: a safe, nurturing child centered learning environment where a child's needs are met as well as the parent/caretaker's needs regarding availability and affordability; care provided by a licensed contracted child care facility; an approved in-home child care facility; a dependable relative who is able and willing to assume responsibility for care and supervision of the child(ren) for a part of the day; a free lower cost facility such as a day care, pre- school, or Head Start program operated by a community actions agency; or informal arrangements made by the parent with a neighbor or friend for occasional care.
 - ii. Reasonable distance will be defined as: Within the parent/caretaker's town/city of residence or in route to or within the town/city of the parent/caretaker's place of employment/school/or other work activity; a distance determined and agreed upon by the parent and the worker and is dependent upon the individual needs of the parent and child(ren).
 - b. Informal child care by a relative or under other arrangements is unavailable or unsuitable
 - i. Unsuitability of informal care will be defined as: a child care setting in which the child's needs are not being met; an arrangement that does not afford the child(ren) adequate care and supervision (supervision of a child means the function of observing, overseeing and guiding a child); an arrangement that does not encourage a child's social development or stimulate the child(ren)'s mental

capabilities and afford the child(ren) a safe and stable environment that provides for learning opportunities.

- c. Appropriate and affordable formal child care is unavailable
 - i. Affordable child care arrangements will be defined as: The rates consistent with those established by the State and/or Tribal Child Care Programs for subsidized child care; not exceeding the maximum child care cost as indicated on OKDHS Appendix C-4, Child Care Eligibility/Co-payment chart (<http://www.okdhs.org/OKDHS%20Form%20Library/c-4.pdf>).

SECTION 10: GOOD CAUSE FOR NON PARTICIPATION

Participants who fail to participate in assigned activities or fail to accept/maintain employment are subject to penalties unless there is good cause. It is the participant's responsibility to provide verification of good cause. Examples include:

1. A sudden and temporary situation beyond the family's control;
2. The participant must appear in court or serve on a jury;
3. Transportation breaks down or becomes unavailable, and the participant lacks a reasonable alternative;
4. Extreme weather conditions that prevent safe travel; and/or
5. Child care arrangements are unavailable.

Good Cause Criteria for Failure to Accept/Maintain Employment include:

1. The work site violates health and safety standards;
2. The wage does not meet minimum wage or piece work standard;
3. The job is vacant due to a strike, lock out or other labor dispute;
4. Joining a union is required and the participant has religious objection;
5. The job conflicts with the participant's current union membership;
6. The job referral or employer is discriminatory; and/or
7. Required hours of work are in excess of what is customary for the job.

SECTION 11: SANCTIONS

CN TTANF Program sanction provisions are designed to encourage progress towards self- sufficiency. Unless a participant is allowed an exemption or good cause, a sanction will be imposed for non-compliance. Participants will receive timely written notice of the reason for the sanction and the appeals process instruction. Sanctions are as follows:

1. First Sanction - \$50 benefit reduction will be imposed.
2. Second Sanction - \$100 benefit reduction will be imposed.
3. Third Sanction - Warrants case closure for a period of six months. After the six month period, participant may re-apply.

An active participant who has received less than 3 sanctions within a 12 month period will, at their 13th month, be deemed at the beginning of the sanction level.

Termination Due to Fraud: Fraud is an action taken by a participant that intentionally misrepresents, conceals, or withholds a material fact for the purpose of establishing or maintaining a family's eligibility for TTANF benefits, or for increasing or preventing a reduction

in benefits. Fraud may occur with or without a dollar loss. In cases where there has been a termination for fraud, the participant may be declared ineligible for a period determined by CN TTANF staff.

SECTION 12: GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE AND APPEAL PROCESS

The procedure for filing a grievance or appealing a decision pertaining to CN TTANF program is as follows:

CN TTANF may review/follow procedures outside of steps below and will review on a case by case basis.

1. The complainant must submit the grievance in writing to the Program Director within five (5) working days of notice.
2. The Program Director will present the appeal to the Case Review Team. The Case Review Team will review the complaint and render a decision within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of the grievance.
3. The Case Review Team's decision will be communicated in writing to the complainant.
4. If the Case Review Team's decision is not satisfactory to the complainant, the complainant must submit a letter for review stating his/her dissatisfaction to the Career Services Executive Director within five (5) working days of the receipt of the Case Review Team's decision.
5. The Executive Director will review and then render a final decision with fifteen (15) working days of receipt of the letter.

SECTION 13: EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN SERVICE AREA

Cherokee Nation has conducted a number of employment and training programs since December of 1974 and has successfully administered Department of Labor employment and vocational training programs since that time. Many linkages have been established with area employers, training sites, other tribal governments, federal agencies, city and county governments, communities, and the general public. These include: Area training institutions, the State of Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, local businesses, economic development boards, chambers of commerce, and others for the benefit of our participants. Many staff members serve on various City, County, State, and National councils, boards, committees, and workgroups to assist in developing and providing an array of services to our communities. These linkages contribute to the success of employment and training programs and the improved quality of the Native American workforce to sustain economic growth, enhance productivity and competitiveness, and reduce dependency.

13.1 Population: The Oklahoma Indian population ranks second only to California in total Indian population (Census 2020). A total of 332,586 Oklahomans identified by race as American Indians and Alaskan/Natives (AI/AN) and 633,496 individuals identified as American Indian when given the opportunity to report more than one race. As a percent of total state population, American Indians in Oklahoma represented 16.0 percent - ranking as the second highest percentage of all 50 states.

13.2 Employment Trends: The following are the State of Oklahoma Industries with the greatest projected employment growth for the period –2016 - 2026 according to the Oklahoma Employment Commission: Construction; Leisure and Hospitality; Warehousing and Storage; Health Care and Social Assistance; Accommodation and Food Service.

13.3 Tribal Economic Development: CN offers a diversity of economic development. These range from Tribal government, Gaming and Business Enterprises. Two of the operating divisions are Professional Services and Life Safety Services. Professional Services specializes in three advanced areas: Enterprise Information Technology Services, Project/Program Management, and Scientific and Research Support. Life Safety Services Division specializes in providing surveillance, access control and alert systems to universities, public schools, law enforcement, tribal governments and casinos.

The CN TTANF Program will partner with private and public sector employers to establish work experience and/or subsidized employment opportunities for participants. These opportunities will allow the participant to enhance their ability to compete for sustainable employment.

SECTION 14: CONFIDENTIALITY

The CN TTANF Program will take all necessary steps to protect the privacy of TTANF participants by restricting the use and disclosure of information regarding TTANF participants. The CN TTANF Program will not release or disclose any participant information, except as specifically required in administrative rule or as ordered by a court.

Confidential information includes all verbal, written, printed or electronic display of data that can identify any specific participant's name, Social Security Number or address. Confidential data cannot be released in any format, including mailing labels, PC downloads on disk or spreadsheet, or other computer printouts, unless specifically authorized by the Executive Director of Career Services.

All verbal information related to a participant's eligibility is documented in the participant's file along with other written documents. The files will be stored in a secure location. The file and its contents are accessible to all authorized TTANF staff.

Staff members must sign an acknowledgement statement on confidentiality as well as an Information Systems Policy, Procedure, and Use Agreement.

SECTION 15: INFORMATION ACQUISITION AND EXCHANGE

15.1 Information exchange with other States and Tribes: The CN TTANF Program, the States, and other tribes are authorized to exchange specific data necessary for the administration of the Program. This will ensure duplicate benefits are not extended and cumulative months are counted.

15.2 Information Pertaining to Support Enforcement: The CN Child Support Services Program has established administrative rules to safeguard all confidential information of participants. The CN TTANF Program will coordinate with the Child Support Services Program on all Child Support Enforcement issues.

SECTION 16: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY ASSURANCE

The Cherokee Nation recognizes and acknowledges the responsibility associated with the exercise of sovereignty. The tribe has an annual audit performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and the standards applicable to financial audits contain in The Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and the additional analysis as required by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations. The tribe has the expertise, systems and procedures in place to effectively and appropriately administer the proposed TTANF program. The CN assures that, for each year in which the tribe receives or expends TTANF funds, it will continue to apply the fiscal accountability provisions of section 5(f)(1) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act [25 U.S.C 450c(f)(1)], relating to the submission of a single-agency audit report required by Chapter 75 of Title 31, United States Code.

SECTION 17: DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

The Cherokee Nation will comply with all the statutory and regulatory data collection and reporting requirements pertaining to Tribal TANF.

SECTION 18: RETROCESSION

If the Cherokee Nation elects to retrocede this program back to the State, it will adhere to all the statutory and regulatory requirements pertaining to retrocession of a Tribal TANF Program.

Attachments:

CERTIFICATION REGARDING DRUG FREE WORKPLACE REQUIREMENTS

CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS

Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters- Primary Covered Transactions

Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-- Lower Tier Covered Transactions

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

CERTIFICATION REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL TOBACCO SMOKE SF424B –

ASSURANCES NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

TRIBAL RESOLUTION TRIBAL

RESERVATION MAP

TANF SERVICE AREA COUNTY SPLIT



ᏍᏍᏍ ᏳᏍᏍ
CHEROKEE NATION®
P.O. Box 948 • Tahlequah, OK 74465-0948
918-453-5000 • www.cherokee.org

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief
ᏍᏍ ᏳᏍᏍ ᏍᏍᏍ
ᏳᏍᏍᏍ

Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief
ᏍᏍᏍᏍᏍᏍ
ᏍᏍᏍ ᏳᏍᏍ ᏳᏍᏍᏍ

Comments regarding the Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TTANF) will need to be sent to career-services-grants@cherokee.org with "TTANF Comments" as the subject line.

Comments will be accepted by May 24th