

State of Alaska
Department of Health & Social Services

Frank H. Murkowski
Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001
NEWS RELEASE



Joel Gilbertson
Commissioner
907-465-3030
FAX: 907-465-3068
www.hss.state.ak.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 16, 2004

For information contact: Sherry Hill: (907) 321-2838 Cell
Margaret Webb: (907) 465-8116, (907) 957-0747 Cell

Alaska TANF program helps Alaskans move from welfare to work

Bonus award funds to be designated for new employment and family-centered services.

(Anchorage) — The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in the Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Assistance, continues to excel at helping needy Alaskans find jobs. At an event today at the Gambell Job Center to help launch the state's Jobs for Alaska's Future campaign, Health and Social Services Commissioner Joel Gilbertson discussed the TANF program's success over the past three years.

"The Temporary Assistance caseload dropped by nine percent from FY03 to FY04, resulting in \$4 million in savings," said Gilbertson. "In recognition of its performance, the TANF program is receiving its third Federal TANF High Performance Bonus Award."

This year's bonus award of more than \$3.18 million recognizes improved performance in moving welfare recipients from public assistance to the workforce. It is in addition to performance bonuses received for the two previous years amounting to \$6.36 million, for a total of \$9.54 million over three years.

"We're getting Alaskans back to work," said Gilbertson. "And once they get back to work, we're giving them the services they need to help them stay there."

In 2004, adults receiving temporary assistance were getting the help needed to help themselves:

- 67 percent of adults were working toward self-sufficiency and 31 percent were employed.
- 25 percent were employed within 60 days of filing an application for assistance.
- 36 percent saw wage increases during the fiscal year.
- 45 percent of the families leaving assistance during 2004 had earned income.
- 84 percent of the families whose cases closed with earnings stayed off of assistance for at least six months.
- 82 percent of Job Start participants successfully completed their Job Start, wage subsidy, contracts.

Alaska will receive the maximum bonus allowed for ranking highly in the nation in 2003 for the “job entry” category — the percent of people placed in jobs. Alaska also received bonus funds for offering services to families so they can have affordable, quality childcare.

“Our welfare-to-work emphasis continues to reap rewards — which ultimately helps families,” said Division of Public Assistance Director Katherine Farnham. “Our staff and partners’ hard work with Alaska’s families have been an important part of our success with job entry, job retention and child care services.” Farnham said that the bonus funding would be used for additional family-centered services and continued integration of services that will assist Alaskans as they move toward greater self-sufficiency, such as:

- Providing grant funds for innovative strategies to support and promote healthy, two-parent families.
- Providing additional tutors for rural Adult Basic Education programs in Northern Alaska.
- Building childcare capacity in rural Alaska.
- Providing supports for victims of domestic violence.

“To be nationally recognized three years in a row is an amazing achievement, and I applaud everyone in the Division of Public Assistance for their efforts to help Alaskans move from welfare to work,” said DHSS Commissioner Joel Gilbertson. “Three consecutive performance bonuses shows consistent, excellent work on behalf of Alaska’s families.”

The welfare reform legislation of 1996 authorized funding for annual performance achievement bonuses within the TANF program, called the High Performance Bonus. States can choose to compete in any or all of the performance bonus categories, but must supply data to HHS in order to be considered for the award.

A total of \$200 million in bonuses has been awarded to 37 states and the District of Columbia this year for moving more welfare recipients from welfare to work, job retention, increased earnings and meeting other goals of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.