

New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Public Assistance (PA) Cases with Earned Income Overview

General Description

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) is responsible for supervising programs that provide assistance and support to eligible families and individuals.

OTDA's functions include: Providing temporary cash assistance; providing assistance in paying for food; providing heating assistance; overseeing New York State's child support enforcement program; determining certain aspects of eligibility for Social Security Disability benefits; supervising homeless housing and services programs; and providing assistance to certain immigrant populations.

Definitions for this dataset:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the federally-funded cash assistance program for households consisting of children living with related adults, and certain foster care cases (the latter cases are not examined for earned income).

Safety Net Assistance Maintenance of Effort (SNA MOE) is a state-funded cash assistance program consisting of cases that would qualify for TANF except that they are barred from TANF assistance because they have exceeded the 60-month lifetime limit on that assistance or because they are a qualified alien but in the country for less than five years. Such cases are referred to as Maintenance of Effort cases because state expenditures on those cases count toward expenditures states are required to make in order to access TANF funding.

Safety Net Assistance Non-Maintenance of Effort (SNA Non-MOE) is a state-funded cash assistance program primarily for childless adults and two-parent families with children where both parents are non-disabled. These two-parent families are removed from the TANF and SNA MOE programs to avoid possible federal penalties associated with failure to meet the extremely high federal work participation standards for that group.

Earned income disregards are applied to earnings of public assistance recipients in order to encourage work. Instead of receiving a dollar-for-dollar reduction in their cash grant for each dollar earned, all cash assistance cases are allowed a deduction for work related expenses, and households with children are allowed to retain an additional percentage of their earnings after

the work expense deduction. This additional percentage is calculated annually, covers a June through May time period, and is designed so that the public assistance grant for a family of three in New York City phases out when earnings reach the poverty level. The June 2014 to May 2015 disregard rate is 49 percent. This rate is scheduled to become 50 percent in June 2015.

On a monthly basis, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) publishes *Temporary and Disability Assistance Statistics*, which contains data relating to the operation of OTDA programs. Included in the report are a number of data tables providing statistics on the State's ongoing cash public assistance programs, Family Assistance (FA) and Safety Net Assistance (SNA)¹, and other agency programs. The file provided here contains the data necessary to recreate the public assistance cases with earned income information in Table 30 of *Temporary and Disability Assistance Statistics* for each month beginning with April 2006 (the first month such data was published), and continuing to most recently available data. Updates are scheduled to occur 65 days after the end of the reference month. This will allow interested parties to construct trends in cases with earned income, gross earned income amounts and net income amounts available to households after deductions for each of the State's 58 Local Social Services Districts (SSDs), New York City and the remaining 57 counties.

The file is arrayed as follows:

- The column headings of the spreadsheet include the month and year the data is for, the SSD the data pertains to, a two-digit code for each SSD and the State, the full name of the SSD and an array of columns designating, for each of three case classifications, the number of cases with earned income, the average amount of gross income and net earned income for these cases.
- The rows of the spreadsheet are the table entries for the month and SSD, as designated by the column headings. There is one record for each month for each SSD.

The data dictionary attached to this data set provides a complete description of the data in the file.

Data Collection Methodology

The cases and earned income provided here and in *Temporary and Disability Assistance Statistics* are created by extracting end of month files from the New York City and Upstate

¹ While by statute the state cash assistance programs are named Family Assistance and Safety Net Assistance, these case designations no longer provide a useful rubric for classifications on a programmatic and funding source level. For the present data set, we use the designations of TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), the federally funded welfare program for families with dependent children, Safety Net MOE (Maintenance of Effort) which are similar to TANF cases except they have exceeded the 60-month limit on TANF assistance or are barred from TANF because they are qualified aliens that entered the country within the last five years, and Safety Net Non-MOE, primarily single adults or childless couples but also including non-disabled two-parent families.

Welfare Management Systems, the automated systems used to establish eligibility for the public assistance and other programs. These extracts contain information on the household type, earned income amounts and data necessary to calculate net earned income. Programs are run monthly to calculate the appropriate statistics.

Statistical and Analytic Issues/ Limitations of Data Use

Users of these data should make themselves aware of the meaning of the case categories contained in the report before reaching analytic conclusions about specific subsets of the caseload. For instance, it is not the case that all families with children are in the TANF or SNA-MOE program, nor that SNA non-MOE cases consist of single adults. Users should also make themselves aware of the income disregard rules used to calculate net earned income and, because the disregard percentages are recalculated annually, the calculation that applies to the time period they are interested in.

Users should also be aware that case count data for TANF, SNA MOE and SNA non-MOE from elsewhere in *Temporary and Disability Assistance* and Data.NY.Gov cannot be used as denominators for the data here to determine precise ratios of earned income cases to all cases. This is because the caseload data and earned income data come from different sources and cases in each dataset are selected in different ways. The earned income data here is taken on cases eligible for assistance at a point in time, while the case counts elsewhere count cases that receive a public assistance payment at any time during the target month, and which may include retroactive payments for earlier periods of eligibility.

The SNA non-MOE earned income cases include cases where the person is receiving income as part of a grant diversion program.