



The Poverty Institute

at the Rhode Island College School of Social Work

Summary of State Welfare Time Limits

The Administration for Children and Families 7th Annual Report to Congress on TANF which documents TANF policies as of December 2006 shows that Rhode Island is well within the mainstream of the nation when it comes to welfare time limits. Like Rhode Island, the majority of states have a 60 month lifetime limit on benefits. Only 8 states have less than a 60 month limit. Five states have no time limit on benefits. States may also have periodic time limits within the lifetime limit, or may have limits for some populations while others (e.g., families with a disabled parent) are not subject to time limits.

Governor Carcieri has hinted at upcoming proposals to reduce time limits. Any such proposal should be discussed only as part of a larger review of the FIP program that looks at how FIP is serving families with major barriers to employment, how the program helps parents gain the skills for good jobs and how the "work readiness" part of FIP is linked with other state efforts to improve literacy and skills for all adults. In addition, shorter time limits would undoubtedly cause severe financial hardship for FIP families where the parent is not able to increase her family's economic well-being because the parent is severely disabled.

The following is a summary of the data from the ACF Annual Report.

37 states and DC have a 60 month lifetime limit

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, DC, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

5 states have no time limit

Massachusetts (exempt families), Michigan, New York, Oregon, Vermont

8 states have less than a 60 month lifetime limit

48 months: Florida, Georgia

36 months: Delaware, Utah

24 months: Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana

21 months: Connecticut (recipients may receive 6-month extensions)

New England States

Connecticut: 21 month time limit. Six month extensions are allowed.

Maine: 60 months

Massachusetts: No time limit for exempt families; other families have 24 month time limit with extensions allowed in 60 months.

New Hampshire: 60 months

Rhode Island: 60 months

Vermont: No time limit