

## IN THE FIRST NINETEEN MONTHS OF THE RECESSION THE NATIONAL TANF CASELOAD INCREASED ONLY 6.6%

HHS this week updated the TANF caseload data reported on its web site to include the second quarter of calendar year 2009. The new data shows that the number of persons (both adults and children) receiving TANF increased only 6.6% over the first nineteen months of the recession, rising from 4,014,111 in December 2007 to 4,278,030 in June 2009.<sup>1</sup> This 6.6% TANF increase was far less than the increase in the real need for assistance implied by the increase over this same nineteen month period of 27.4% in the number of Food Stamp recipients (from 27.56 million to 35.13 million) and of 80% in the unemployment rate (from 5.0% to 9.5%).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, with California excluded, the national TANF caseload increased only 3.4% over this period.

Even before the recession began, TANF was reaching only a minority of eligible families and an even smaller minority of poor families.<sup>3</sup> It is likely that participation rates have declined even further during the recession. The new caseload figures underscore the urgent need for federal action to make TANF more accessible and responsive. Last month Legal Momentum joined with the Center for Community Change, Jobs with Justice, and the Institute for Policy Studies in issuing a report, *Battered by the Storm: How the Safety Net is Failing Americans and How to Fix It*<sup>4</sup>, offering a comprehensive relief plan of job creation, state and local fiscal relief, and safety net improvement. With respect to TANF, the report calls upon Congress to act immediately to allocate an additional \$16.5 billion a year in federal funds, with no requirement for additional state spending, to be used for the limited purposes of cash assistance, creating subsidized jobs, sustaining current TANF-funded child care, or emergency payments.

(January 7, 2010.) Contact Timothy Casey, [tcasey@legalmomentum.org](mailto:tcasey@legalmomentum.org), for further information.)

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<sup>1</sup> The June 2009 figures are from the table titled "COMBINED TANF AND SSP-MOE - Oct. 08-June. 09 Preliminary Data Total Number of Recipients," available at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/2009/recipient\\_tanssp.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/2009/recipient_tanssp.htm); the December 2007 figures are from the table titled "COMBINED TANF AND SSP-MOE - Fiscal and Calendar Year 2008 Total Number of Recipients", available at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/2008/2008\\_recipient\\_tanssp.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/2008/2008_recipient_tanssp.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Food Stamp receipt figures are from USDA table titled "SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM", available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/34SNAPmonthly.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> See Legal Momentum, *The Bitter Fruit Of Welfare Reform: A Sharp Drop In The Percentage Of Eligible Women And Children Receiving Welfare*, (2009), available at <http://www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/lm-tanf-bitter-fruit.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Battered by the Storm* is available at [http://www.ips-dc.org/reports/Battered\\_by\\_the\\_Storm.pdf](http://www.ips-dc.org/reports/Battered_by_the_Storm.pdf)