VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

# Sailing Through TANF Application Processing

## BPRO FALL Conference 2026

# WELCOME

**Presenters**

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# WARM UP QUESTIONS

Mountains or beach?

*Where is your favorite spot for a beach vacation?*

# OVERVIEW

This presentation will highlight information surrounding TANF application processing, tips for timeliness and excellent customer service, tracking and reports, and suggestions for managing a sea of applications.

# Guidance

# CHAPTER 400

TANF Basic Requirements Regarding Application



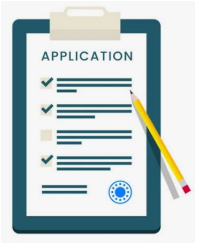
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) GUIDANCE MANUAL

Chapter 400 TANF Basic Requirements Regarding Application


| | |
|---|---|
| Basic Requirements Regarding Application | 401.1 |
| Request for Assistance | 401.1 A. |
| Where Applications are Made | 401.1 B. |
| Definition of Applicant | 401.1 C. |
| Who Completes the Application | 401.1 D. |
| Time Standard for Processing Application | 401.1 E. |
| Method of Application | 401.1 F. |
| Date of Application | 401.1 G. |
| Effective Date | 401.1 H. |
| Beginning Date of Assistance (BDOA) | 401.1 I. |
| Disposition of Application Under Special Conditions | 401.1 J. |
| Initial Determination/Redetermination of Eligibility | 401.2 |
| The Intake Interview | 401.2 A. |
| Substantiation of Eligibility Factors | 401.2 B. |
| Interviews | 401.2 C. |
| Practices Specifically Prohibited | 401.2 D. |
| Recommendation Regarding Eligibility | 401.2 E. |
| Decision of Eligibility | 401.2 F. |
| Renewal of Eligibility | |

# 401.1 BASIC REQUIREMENTS REGARDING APPLICATION




## A. Request for Assistance

- Federal regulations require that any individual that wishes to apply for assistance is able to do so without any obstacles.
- No individual, including minors, or an individual who is potentially eligible in another federal category such as SSI, can be denied the right to make application for public assistance.
- The EW should assist the individual in selecting the appropriate categories of assistance.

**INQUIRY**

- An informal request for information regarding eligibility requirements
- Does not require a case number or case record
- Clients should be given the actual criteria and income limits
- Workers should not answer hypothetical or specific questions

**APPLICATION**

- A formal request for assistance
- A case number, application number, and case record must be established or updated
- The application will be evaluated, an interview held, and eligibility factors substantiated so that a decision of eligibility can be made
- The client is given a formal notice of eligibility to explain the outcome of the application for benefits

# 401.1 BASIC REQUIREMENTS REGARDING APPLICATION

## B. Individuals can apply for TANF electronically or in writing:

- by fax
- by mail
- at their local agency
- by phone using the Enterprise Call Center (833) 5CALLVA
- online at https://commonhelp.virginia.gov

If the Application for Benefits is not signed, the signature must be obtained, or the application must be denied.

Applicants must be notified that an interview with an eligibility worker is required. This interview must be scheduled at the earliest date convenient to the applicant and may be conducted either in the local department, in the applicant's home, or by telephone.

# 401.1 BASIC REQUIREMENTS REGARDING APPLICATION

## C. Definition of an Applicant

*The parent or relative who is applying for TANF for a child who lives in their home, or the authorized representative who is applying on their behalf*

- Authorized representatives must be 18 years or older and have sufficient knowledge of the family and their circumstances so they can assist with the necessary information
- Authorized representatives are typically a spouse, guardian, friend, relative, or lawyer
- ARs can apply for and receive notices for TANF
- The AR's identity must be verified if they apply on behalf of the household
  - Any reasonable verification should be accepted
  - Readily available sources can be used: DMV, SPIDER, collateral contact, driver's license, school or work ID, etc.
- Written permission from the client must be provided to the local agency, kept in the case record, and entered into VACMS on the Authorized Representative screen
  - The statement must include:
    - Name, address, and phone number of the AR
    - Applicant's signature, date, address, and duties assigned to the AR

# D. Who Completes the Application

Individuals who are able, should complete the application themselves

The local agency should help any applicants who need assistance completing an application, for any reason.

Clients may face obstacles such as:

Language barriers
Learning Disabilities
Physical impairment
Literacy Level

- If help is needed, the interactive interview must include time to read each section of the application to the applicant, with sufficient explanation and rephrasing to make the meaning clear.
- During the interview, the EW will enter the information provided into the VACMS system.
- The following forms must be reviewed and completed with the applicant, and signed by the applicant, prior to case approval:

  - Do You Have a Disability? (032-03-0670) – **(exception*)**
  - Notice of Personal Responsibility for the TANF Program (032-03-0750)
  - Notice of Cooperation and Good Cause (032-03-0036)
  - Notice of Intentional Program Violations and Penalties (032-03-0646)

- If the applicant fails to return the signed and dated, Do You Have a Disability? form, the EW must not deny the application. If all other eligibility criteria are met, the application must be approved.
- The case record must contain the Do You Have a Disability? form and be documented to show that the applicant was provided with oral and written information and was provided with a copy of the written information.
- Rights and Responsibilities must be discussed with the client and noted in the case record (Form or documentation)

# E. Time Standard for Processing Application

Applications must be processed within 30 calendar days from when the application is filed

Applications must remain pending for the full 30 days unless:

The 30th day falls on a weekend or holiday.
In those cases, an eligibility decision must be made on or before the last working day before day 30

- If a client misses their scheduled interview, the application must remain pending until day 30, or until the last working day prior to day 30 if the final day falls on a weekend or holiday
- If an applicant misses their initial scheduled interview, but reschedules, they must be given the opportunity to complete the interview and provide necessary verifications

The applicant has a minimum of 10 days to provide the required verifications; the application must not be denied before the 10 days has passed

1. Exception to the 30-day processing standard may apply when:

   a. the applicant has limitations that hinder him from securing verifications.
      -The local agency must assist the applicant in securing verifications.
      -The BDOA will be the first of the month following the month of application.
   b. an emergency beyond the agency's control occurs
      -If an agency delay occurs, and the application was otherwise eligible,
      -The BDOA must be the date of application.
   c. the postmark date is at least two days prior to the verification due date.

At no time should an application remain pending > 60 days! VACMS will automatically deny applications not processed by the 60th day

Workers should document the reason for delay (agency or client caused) for all applications processed after day 30

# 401.2

# INITIAL DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

Intake Interview

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Substantiation of Eligibility Factors

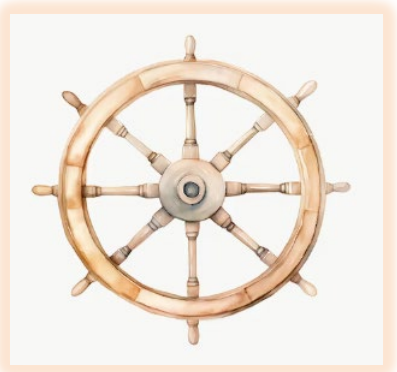
↓

Decision of Eligibility

↓

Notification to Client

# REMINDERS



- All  TANF applications should be regarded as a SNAP application unless otherwise indicated
- If an application does not list a child, the worker must contact the client to confirm prior to denying the application for *No Eligible Child*
- The EW and applicant should agree upon a plan for obtaining required verifications
- If a Refugee household is denied TANF for Non-Financial reasons, the EW must evaluate for Refugee Cash Assistance and document the case accordingly

# Organization Resources

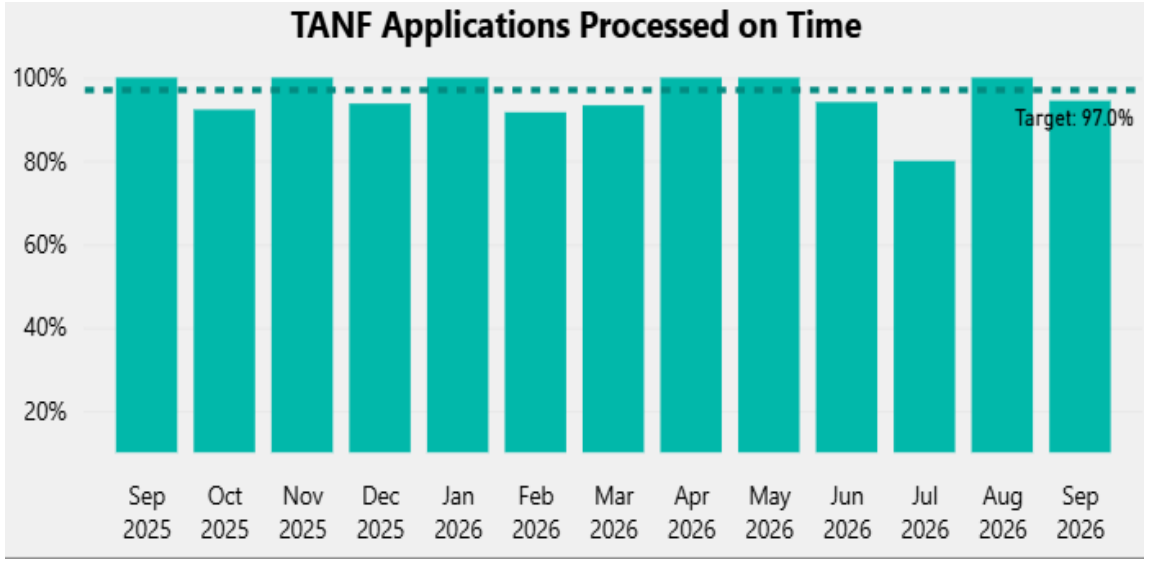
# Reports

| Report Period Begin: | |
|---|---|
| Report Period End: | Aug 2026 |
| Target: | 97% |
| Statewide Data: | 96.0% |

| VDSS REGIONAL OFFICE | PD | CLASS | FIPS | LOCAL DEPARTMENT | Timeliness of TANF Application Processing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 001 | | 100.0% |
| | | | 003 | | 97.9% |
| | | | 510 | | 85.1% |
| | | | 005 | | 100.0% |
| | | | 007 | | 80.0% |
| | | | 009 | | 100.0% |
| | | | 011 | | 20.0% |
| | | | 013 | | 96.0% |

## Are you making the best use of reports to manage your caseload?

- ✓ Pending Point In Time Report (PPIT) – VaCMS
- ✓ Performance Indicator Monthly Report (PIMR)-FUSION
- ✓ Benefits Dashboard – Fusion
- ✓ Applications by Program Summary – Data Warehouse

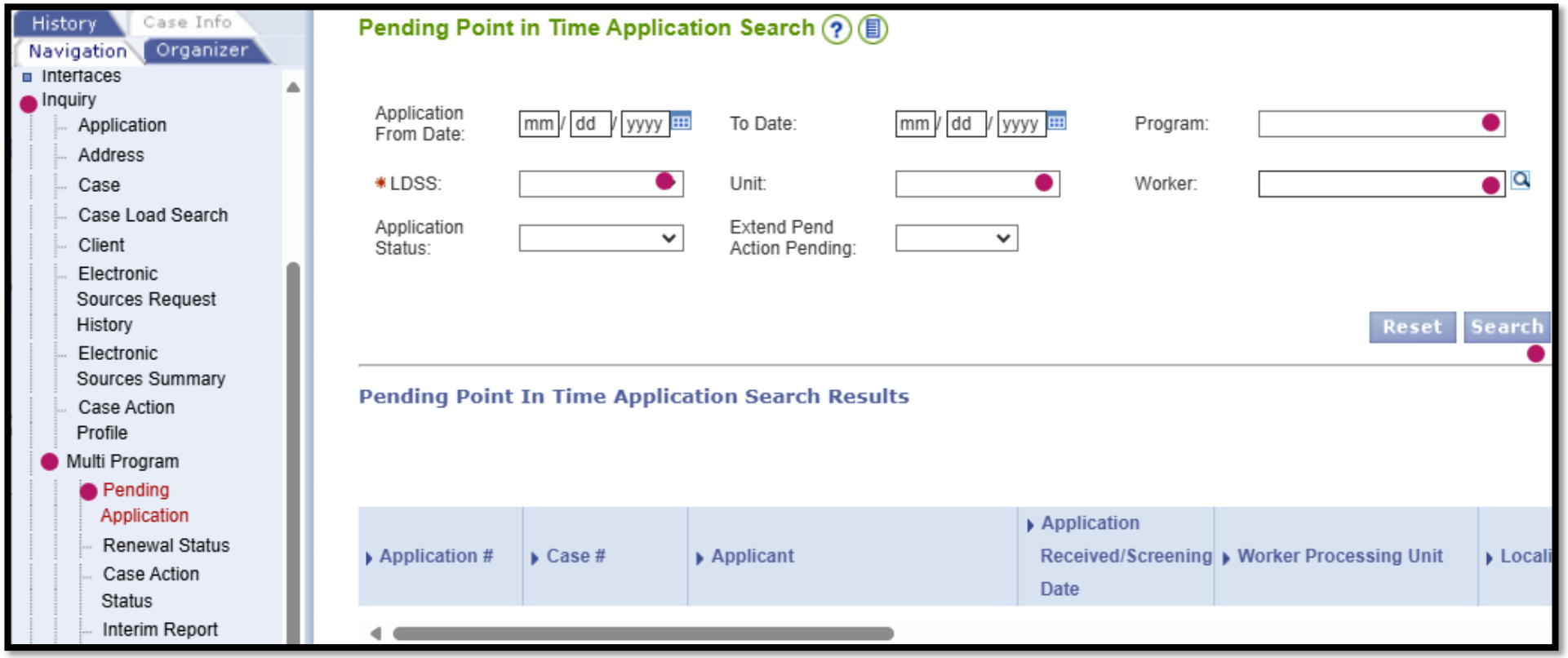


# Time Blocking Method

Take control of your time! Outlook is your friend!
Focus on one task at a time to minimize distractions and maximize productivity.
Improve time awareness while increasing prioritization.

# Tracking Applications

# Tracking Applications




**LDSS: Your Locality**
**Worker: VaCMS User Name**
**Program: You can leave blank to pull complete list, or choose a program**

****You can also find pending application here (Main VaCMS Page – Right Bottom Corner)**

# How Are You Tracking Applications?

| Case Name | Application Date | Application Number | VACMS Number | Interview Date | TANF | VCL Sent Date | 30th Day TANF | Status | Notes (Pending verifications, Disposition Status, Etc) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minnie Mouse | 8/1/25 | T12345678 | 13456789 | 8/11/25 | x | | 8/31/25 | | |

- Review your pending applications daily, to comply with timeliness processing standards.
- Review cases assigned to you to transfer cases belonging to other workers, units or localities.
- Use or create a Tracking System to keep up with status of applications, scheduled interviews and pending verifications. This tracking system or tool can be used for Renewals.
- A Tracking System allows a worker to review all the information, regarding pending applications, at glance, which is useful when clients call asking for application status, and when VaCMS is down.

# Best Practices

# Caseload Tracking & Best Practices

- ✓ Register and assign new applications asap
- ✓ Review your pending applications asap
- ✓ Reach out to the client asap, to set up an interview.
- ✓ Mail out the appointment letter and document the case narrative to include details of appointment date and time.
- ✓ Put the Case into action timely to reflect actions taken on the case. Even if a client misses their interview appointment, the case should be put into action to generate a Missed Interview Notice and update narrative.
- ✓ Review VACMS to check the case history, clocks, sanctions, and to see if permanent verifications are present.

# Caseload Tracking & Best Practices

- ✓ Generate a Verification Checklist the day the interview is completed. We want to give clients as much time as possible to turn in paperwork needed to determine eligibility.
- ✓ Be specific when listing needed verifications. If required TANF Forms are needed, name them so the client clearly understands which forms are required.
- ✓ Generate a Manual Verification Checklist when needed.
- ✓ Have forms ready to review or mail
- ✓ Review submitted verifications immediately in case follow up is needed
- ✓ Submit cases for supervisor review as quickly as possible, be sure to indicate when cases are close to the deadline
- ✓ Keep clients informed. Make sure program related flyers are posted in the lobby, as well as Income Limit Charts.
- ✓ Update narrative after action is taken to have a clear representation of status of the case.
- ✓ Block your time and focus on targeted tasks.

# GET THE WORD OUT

- ✓ Help your clients understand how TANF/VIEW can support their journey towards Self-Sufficiency.
- ✓ Help your clients understand eligibility requirements for the program.
- ✓ Inform your clients about what Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) Program has to offer.
- ✓ Inform relatives and/or fictive kin caregivers about Relative Maintenance Support Payment.
- ✓ Informed clients are empowered clients!

TANF_Flyer_(English).pdf

2025 TANF Income Limits Combined_2025FPL.pdf

RMP Flyer.pdf

Kinship Care Flyer.pdf

VIEW Flyer 2025 (English).pdf

RISE_Flyer_2024_(English).pdf

Full Employment Program (FEP)_Flyer (English).pdf

# Questions

# Thank you!