



May 19, 2023

A Statement from Futures Without Violence on the Negative Impact of Work Requirements on Survivors of Domestic Violence

Futures Without Violence strongly opposes work requirements currently being discussed as part of the debt ceiling/budget negotiations because they would be particularly harmful to victims of domestic violence and children experiencing abuse and neglect. Any legislation mandating work requirements to receive critical basic needs like Medicaid, SNAP or TANF is particularly cruel to abused women, who may not be able to work safely, and mothers who may lose custody of their children because they can't afford to work and meet their children's basic needs at the same time. We ask Congress to remove this option from consideration in negotiations.

Many survivors of domestic violence are subjected to economic abuse, which impacts their ability to obtain or maintain employment. Most survivors of domestic violence want to work and are particularly desperate for a job that pays enough to support themselves and their children, however abusive partners will often intentionally sabotage their efforts to be financially independent. For example, 64 percent of survivors of domestic violence indicated in a recent study that their ability to work was impacted by the violence they experienced.ⁱ Frequent tactics used by abusers include forbidding their partner from having a job, harassing them at their workplace leading to the survivor's termination,ⁱⁱ or sabotaging their efforts in other ways such as beating them in the face so they are embarrassed to be seen, taking the car, refusing to provide child care or threatening the safety of the children so the survivor may feel afraid to leave them. People experiencing domestic violence want to work but sometimes they can't through no fault of their own, and they and their children should not be punished or put into life-threatening situations because of misguided policy.

Survivors of domestic violence also are particularly dependent on SNAP and TANF. In one study, 88.4 percent of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault stated SNAP is a very critical resource for them while 84.6 percent said TANF is a very critical resource for them.ⁱⁱⁱ

Work requirements would also severely impact any family reliant on TANF. According to the Center on Poverty and Social Policy, if 100 percent of the families impacted by work requirements lose their monthly TANF cash benefits, the economic and social cost could total \$29.6 billion every year.^{iv} Examples of the economic and social cost are decreasing children's future educational attainment, employment, and lifetime earnings.

Additionally, work requirements negatively impact families on the margins by increasing rates of child abuse and neglect and forcing more children into the child welfare system. According to research from Donna Ginther and colleagues, states that imposed total benefit loss as the most severe sanction for not meeting TANF work requirements saw a 23.3 percent increase in substantiated neglect reports, 13.4 percent increase in foster care entries due to neglect, and 12.7 percent increase in total foster care entries.^v More work requirements mean more neglect, and conversely, when families have the economic resources they need rates of abuse and neglect decrease.

Mandating work requirements would prevent survivors of domestic violence from accessing critical services and benefits and create negative ramifications for children at risk for abuse and neglect. In the strongest possible terms, we ask you not to impose work requirements on programs serving our nation's most vulnerable families.

For additional information, please contact Kiersten Stewart, Vice President for Public Policy and Advocacy, kstewart@futureswithoutviolence.org.

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***Futures Without Violence** is a national, non-profit organization that works to prevent domestic violence, sexual assault and violence against children and help all people impacted by violence and trauma to heal and thrive.*

ⁱ “National Benchmark Telephone Survey on Domestic Violence in the Workplace” Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence. <http://www.ncdsv.org/images/caepvsurvey.workplace.pdf>

ⁱⁱ “Dreams Deferred: A Survey on the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Survivors’ Education, Careers, and Economic Security” Institute for Women’s Policy Research. https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/C475_IWPR-Report-Dreams-Deferred.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ “The Difference between Surviving and Not Surviving: Public Benefits Programs and Domestic and Sexual Violence Victims’ Economic Security” National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/files/2018-01/TheDifferenceBetweenSurvivingandNotSurviving_Jan2018.pdf

^{iv} “The Cost of Cutting Cash Assistance to Children and Families: Changing TANF Work Requirements Could Cost Society up to \$30 Billion Per Year” Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/610831a16c95260dbd68934a/t/6463f347dd01dd3493d1d350/1684271943906/Costs-of-cutting-TANF-CPSP-2023+%281%29.pdf>

^v Ginther, Donna, et.al (2022) Associations Between State TANF Policies, Child Protective Services Involvement, And Foster Care Placement, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00743>, update to DK Ginther (2017) [Do State TANF Policies Affect Child Abuse and Neglect?](https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.00743)