

TANF/JOBS Program Re-Engagement Review – September 2015

Background

TANF federal regulations require states have policies in place to address when families receiving TANF cash assistance refuse to engage in work or other alternatives. Oregon’s disqualification policy is codified in Oregon Revised Statute 412.009.

Pursuant to ORS 412.009 (6) the Department of Human Services (DHS) must report to the Family Services Review Commission every six months on the status of and outcomes for families for whom TANF cash assistance has been reduced or terminated.

Overview

Oregon’s disqualification policy requires the re-engagement process is completed prior to imposing a new disqualification and before full-family sanction. The goal of this effort is to identify potential barriers to client success in the program, to ensure necessary steps are taken to address those barriers, and to ensure disqualifications are applied correctly. The goal of the re-engagement process is also to re-connect the client in their case plan activities or to identify suitable activities if the current activities are inappropriate.

The “re-engagement” process is performed to ensure the following:

- Individual case plans were created in partnership with clients;
- Activities on the case plan were appropriate;
- Clients are aware of their rights and responsibilities;
- Screenings and possible evaluations for barriers have been offered/completed and documented; and
- A team review of the family’s situation before potential sanction – which includes a discussion of child safety issues – was conducted.

If the outcome of the re-engagement process results in a disqualification, clients are encouraged to re-engage in order to “lift” the disqualification. A two-week

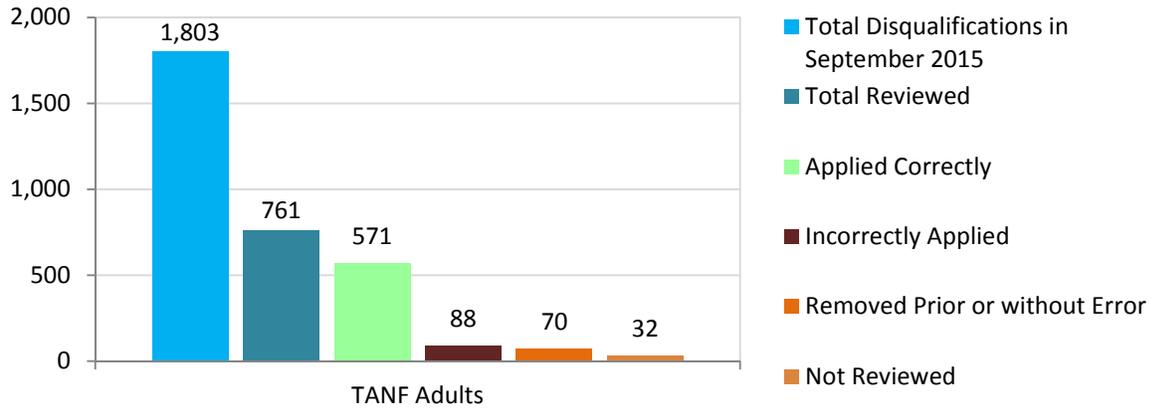
participation period is required to lift the disqualification and upon completion, the family may receive a full TANF grant. There are two levels of disqualification. In the first level, the non-participating adult's portion of the TANF grant is removed. This level can last up to three months unless the client re-connects or re-engages in their case plan activities. The second level of disqualification is full-family sanction, meaning the family does not receive a TANF grant. This level lasts one month, after which the family loses eligibility for TANF for two consecutive months if the client does not re-engage prior to the end of the full family sanction month. If the client begins the two-week participation period prior to the end of the full-family sanction month, TANF benefits are restored upon completion.

September 2015 Review

The September 2015 re-engagement review was conducted using the following cases:

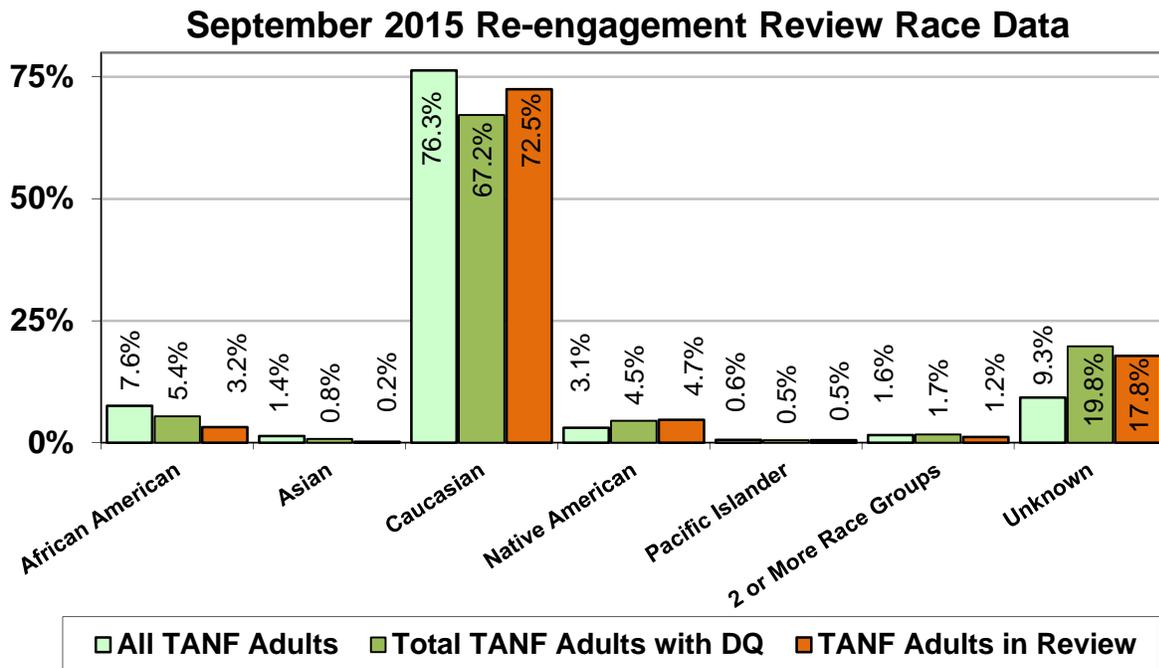
- DQ1 Cases – 25 percent of each District's DQ1 cases
- DQ4 Cases
 - 100 percent of a District's DQ4 cases if the District's accuracy from the previous review was less than 90 percent; or
 - 50 percent of a District's DQ4 cases if the District's accuracy from the previous review was 90 percent or better
- DQR Cases – 25 percent of each District's DQR cases and a brief review of the case post closure
- DQ Cases with known disabilities – Any case including an individual with a known disability (to be sorted from the beginning total of disqualifications)
- DQ Cases with DV in the past 6 months – Any case with DV in the past 6 months (to be sorted from the beginning total of disqualifications)

The review included 761 of 1,803 actively disqualified adults as of September 1, 2015. The 1,803 disqualifications in September 2015 represent approximately 11.1 percent of the adults receiving TANF who are required to participate in case plan activities. This represents a 1.4 percent increase over the last review. Of the 773 disqualified adults, 70 had the disqualification removed prior to the review or without error (no negative impact to the family). Another 32 cases were not reviewed for various reasons including TANF had been closed. These 102 cases are not included in the details below. Of the 659 cases included in the detailed report, disqualifications were applied correctly in 86.6 percent of the cases.



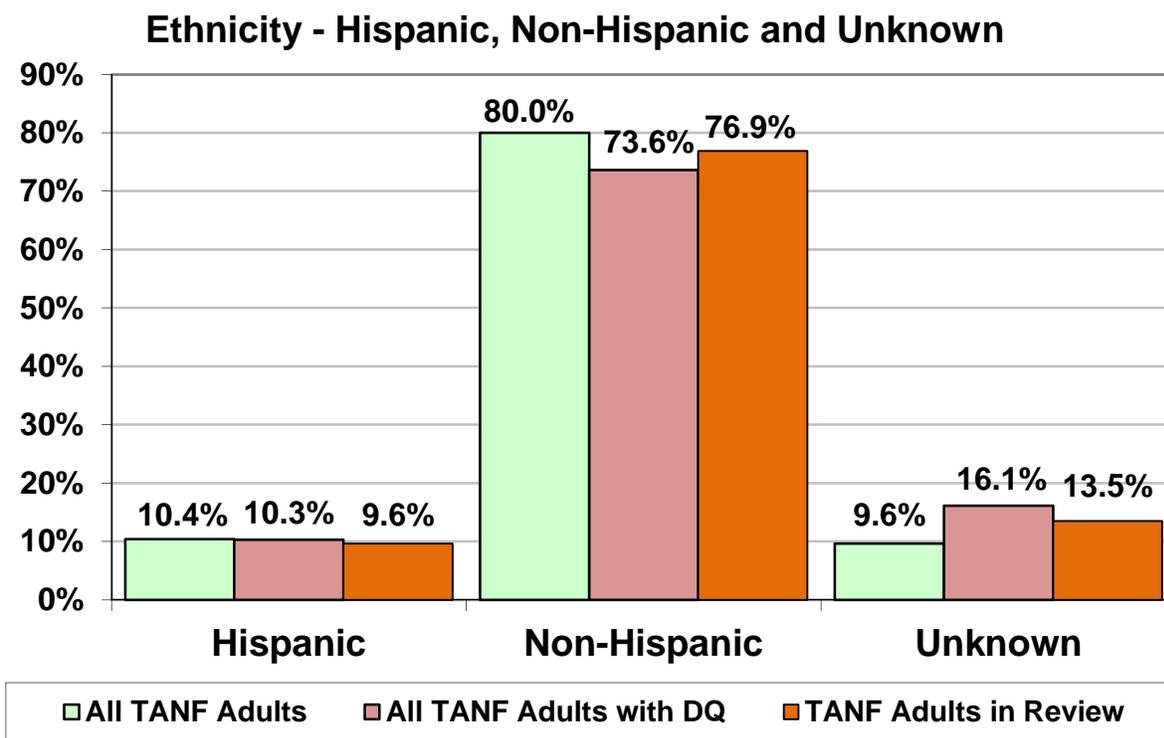
September 2015 Review – Race and Ethnicity

The chart below, displays the race and ethnicity¹ information for all TANF adults, the 1,803 total adults with a disqualification and the 659 adults who were included in the review.



¹ Based on Federal definition, Hispanic or Latino is identified as ethnicity rather than race. Providing race and ethnicity information is optional for DHS clients.

According to DHS data, 9.3 percent of TANF adults fall into the “Unknown” category for their race however a larger percentage of those with disqualifications were identified as “Unknown”. This was similar to the last review in March 2015. Disclosure of race and ethnicity information is voluntary.

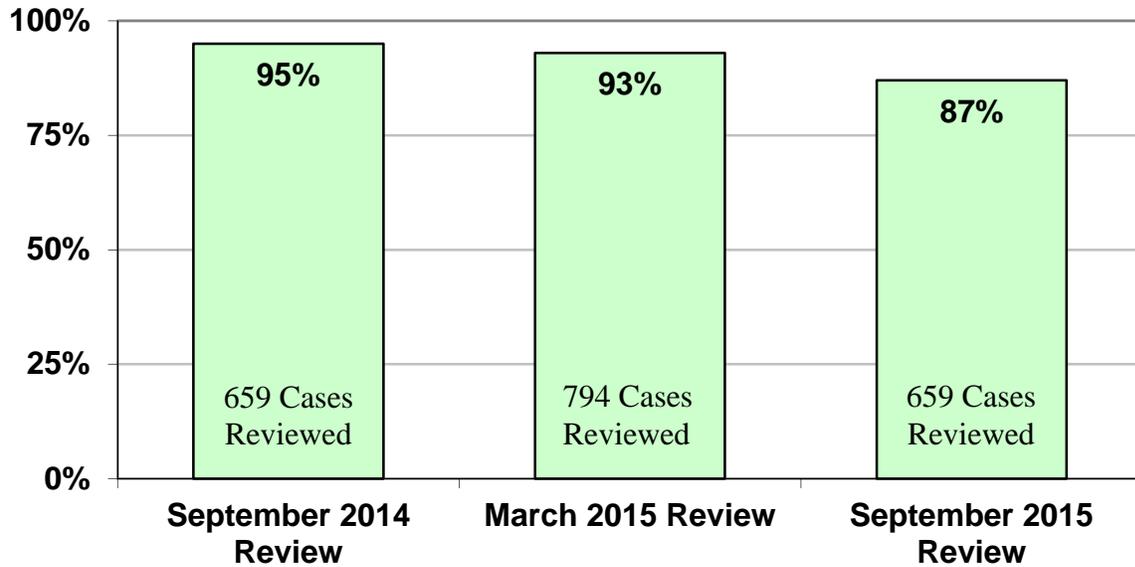


The ethnicity chart above shows a small difference in the percentage of non-Hispanic clients disqualified (73.6 percent) as compared to the percentage of non-Hispanic adults receiving TANF (80 percent). This difference can be attributed to the demographics of districts with a lower percentage of non-Hispanic population.

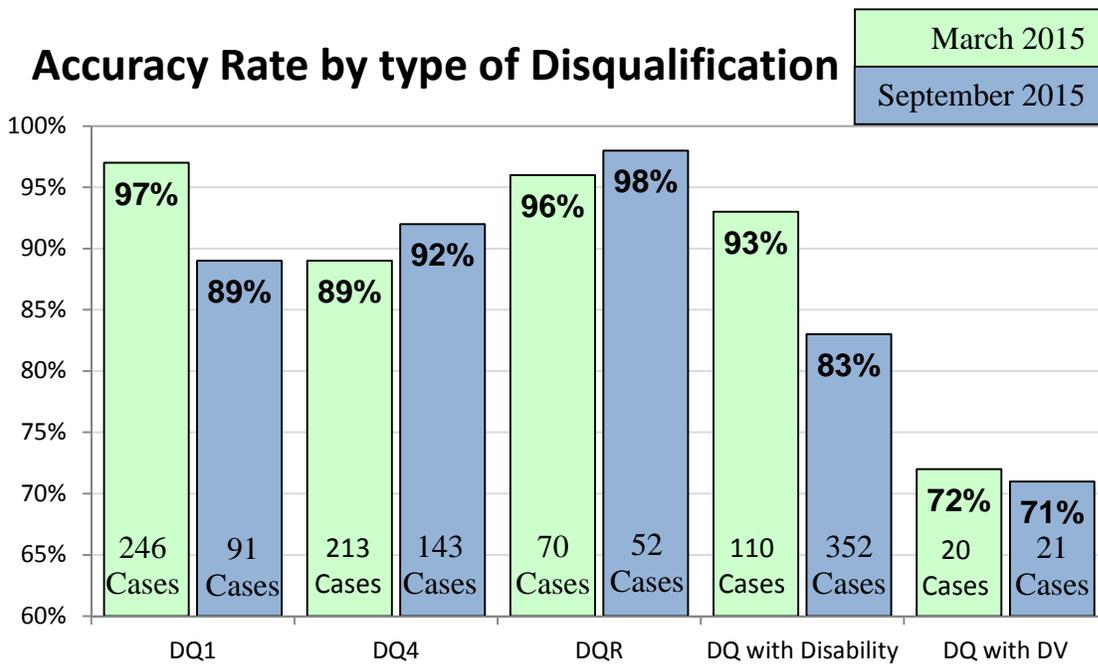
Results - Re-Engagement Process

The chart below displays the percentage of September 2015 TANF cases where a disqualification was appropriately applied as compared to the two previous re-engagement reviews. 87 percent (559 out of 659) of the cases reviewed had the disqualification applied correctly. This percentage represents a 6 percent decrease from the March 2015 review. One factor leading to this decrease was the focus on areas with traditionally lower accuracy rates.

Percent of cases with Correct Process



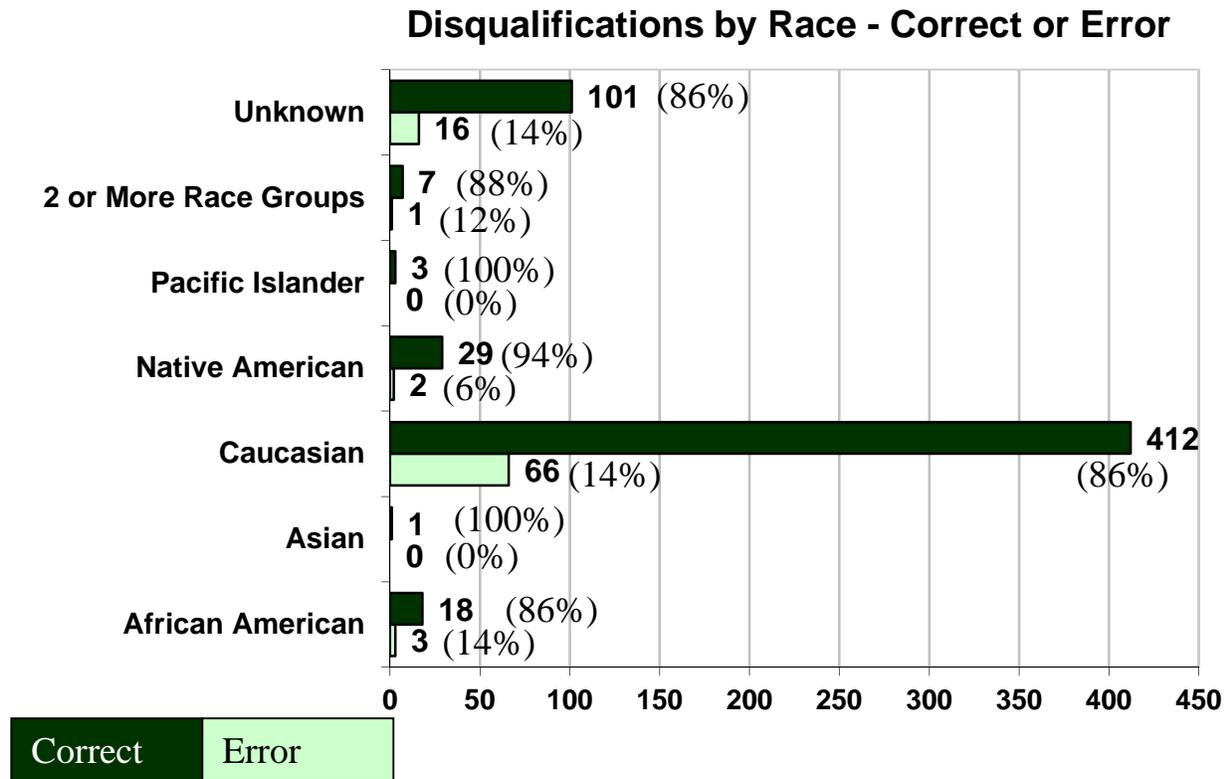
Accuracy Rate by type of Disqualification



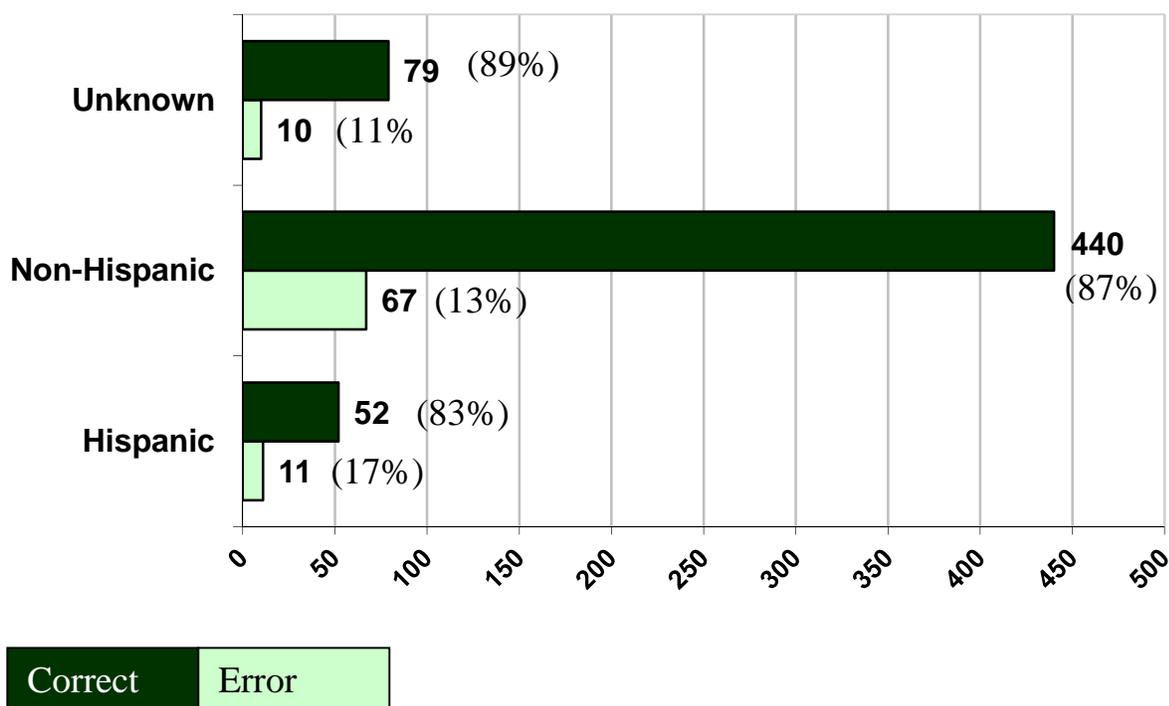
The chart above compares the most recent review to the current one and displays the accuracy rate among different types of JOBS disqualification.

The method of identifying cases with known disabilities was changed for this review. In the past cases with known disabilities were identified after all other cases were identified. Starting with this review, cases with known disabilities are being identified before other categories. This new method accounts for the significant increase in cases with known disabilities from the previous review.

The charts below display the number of disqualifications applied correctly or in error by race and ethnicity. The charts also include the percent of disqualifications applied correctly and in error by race and ethnicity. The percent in each category represents a percentage of the total disqualifications by the specific race or ethnicity correctly applied versus those applied in error.



Disqualifications by Ethnicity - Correct or Error



Cases with Disqualifications applied in Error

The cases with disqualifications applied in error had the disqualification removed. In some situations multiple disqualifications were removed. There were a total of 88 cases with 149 reasons for removing the disqualification. A case may have had multiple reasons for having the disqualification removed. The table below displays the reasons, which resulted in the removals during the March 2015 and September 2015 reviews.

Reason for Removal ²	March 2015		September 2015	
	55 cases	Percent	88 cases	Percent
Accommodations (No record of a needed accommodation being offered)	10	18%	35	40%

² The percentages represent the percent of cases with a disqualification removed in which this particular reason for the removal was discovered. A single case may have had multiple reasons for removal and any single reason would have resulted in the disqualification being removed.

Reason for Removal ²	March 2015		September 2015	
	55 cases	Percent	88 cases	Percent
Assessment/Evaluation (No record of required assessment/evaluation being offered)	0	0%	10	11%
Child Safety review (no record of child safety review with Child Welfare)	21	38%	13	15%
Client re-engaged (client re-engaged and was cooperating with plan)	0	0%	2	2%
Continuing DQ: Local Team Staffing (No record of review team staffing on continuing non-cooperation)	15	27%	12	14%
Disabilities (No record of disability issues being considered)	15	27%	43	49%
Domestic Violence (No record of domestic violence being considered)	7	13%	5	8%
DQ4³ Requirements (No record of DQ4 requirement being met)	14	25%	9	10%
Employment (client became employed)	0	0%	2	2%
Exempt (the client is exempt from JOBS participation and disqualification according to OAR 461-130-0315(2)(a)(A-L))	4	7%	0	0%
New DQ Instance: Local Team Staffing (No record of review team staffing)	8	15%	10	11%
Required notices (No record of required notices being sent)	0	0%	1	1%

³ DQ4 constitutes full-family sanction. The additional requirements before full-family sanction are that the department attempt a home visit and discuss with the client alternative resources should the TANF grant end.

Reason for Removal ²	March 2015		September 2015	
	55 cases	Percent	88 cases	Percent
Rights and Responsibilities form (DHS 7819 not located)	0	0%	0	0%
Rules (OARs governing the Re-engagement process were not followed)	3	5%	2	2%
Screening (No record of required screenings being offered or re-offered)	0	0%	2	2%
State Family Pre-SSI (SFP) Program (the client is actively working with the SFP disability analyst to determine eligibility for the SFP program.)	1	2%	3	3%
TANF Closed (TANF closed prior to disqualification being applied)	0	0%	0	0%

Reasons for Removing a Disqualification

- **Accommodations:** DHS must provide reasonable accommodations in order for an individual to participate in program requirements. In order to apply a disqualification staff must determine whether or not accommodations are needed. If there are needed accommodations, staff must determine if they were provided and if provided whether they were appropriate.

The percentage of occurrences in this category changed from 18 percent (10 of 55 cases) in March 2015 to 40 percent (35 of 88 cases) in the September 2015 review. This represents a 22 percent increase in the number of occurrences.

The increase in occurrences may be a result of the increase in the number of cases with known disabilities included in the reviews. In the March 2015 review there were approximately 110 cases with known disabilities. This number increased to 352 during the September review. The increase in cases with known disabilities was discussed on page 6. The increase in occurrences was expected. Because of the new method for identifying these

cases, it is difficult to compare the September review to the March 2015 review.

- **Assessments:** When a screening, or other indicator, identifies a need for additional assessment or evaluation, DHS must offer the assessment or evaluation to the client.

There were 10 occurrences (10 of 88 or 11 percent) where a disqualification was removed because DHS did not offer an assessment or evaluation when follow up was needed. Of the 10 occurrences, 9 were cases with known disabilities. The increase in this number may be in direct relationship to the increase in the number of cases reviewed with known disabilities. Of the 10 occurrences, 6 were connected to one District. The district is in discussion with central office staff to help correct the problem.

- **Child Safety:** Child safety reviews are required prior to each level of disqualification. The review consists of a discussion of potential risks if the TANF grant is reduced or ended. This contact may include contact with Child Welfare. If there is an open Child Welfare case, contact with the Child Welfare worker is required.

In March 2015 the percentage of occurrence was at 38 percent (21 of 55 cases). The September 2015 review saw a decrease in the percentage of occurrences to just 11 percent or 10 of 88 cases.

The importance of child safety reviews continues to be reinforced through training and guidance. It would appear these efforts have helped to reduce the percentage of occurrences during the September review.

- **Client Re-engaged in Program:** When a disqualification is applied, a client has an opportunity to remove the disqualification by cooperating with program requirements. In order to end a disqualification a client must cooperate for two-consecutive weeks in the activity or activities of a new or revised case plan.

There were 2 occurrences where a client had re-engaged in program activities however the disqualification had not been lifted. In 2016, the re-engagement process is begin overhauled. The changes will help prevent situations, which lead to this type of error.

- **Continuing DQ: Local Staffing on continuing non-cooperation:** After a disqualification has been determined appropriate and applied, if there are no changes and the client continues not to cooperate, the disqualification will automatically advance to the next level. Prior to the disqualification progressing to a full family sanction (DQ4), there must be a local staffing to determine if the disqualification is still appropriate.

The percentage of occurrences in this category continues to decrease from previous reviews. In March 2015 there were 15 of 55 occurrences representing 27 percent. The percentage of occurrences decreased to 14 percent (12 of 88 cases) during the September 2015 review.

- **Disabilities:** Understanding the barriers a client faces is essential to providing appropriate services. DHS must consider if an aspect of a client's disability had an impact on the ability of the client to participate in the program.

The percentage of occurrences in this category, which had increased in by 3 percent in the March 2015 saw another increase. The September 2015 review found 49 percent (43 of 88 cases) had a known disability and no evidence the issue was considered prior to a disqualification.

The types of disabilities identified in connection with the errors ranged from cognitive to intellectual and learning disabilities to mental health. The majority of disabilities were connected to borderline intellectual functioning.

Borderline intellectual functioning is a condition characterized by cognitive abilities that are lower than the average, but not at the level of full intellectual disability. Patients with this intellectual disability typically have an intelligence quotient (IQ) score between 71 and 85. They do not usually need assistance with tasks of daily living. Their impairments tend to be focused on learning and applying information, especially in areas like abstract and critical thinking. Some people with this condition have high levels of independence and can acquire an assortment of skills, while others may experience more difficulty, especially if they live in deprived environments.

The need for more in depth disability training remains. DHS staff who provide services to TANF families would greatly benefit from training focusing on working with individuals who have cognitive and intellectual disabilities as well as mental health disorders. DHS is pursuing training options for both intellectual and mental health disorders.

- **Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence (DV) often impacts an individual's ability to participate. DHS must consider the possibility that known or suspected DV is negatively impacting the ability of an individual to participate. This consideration must be documented in the re-engagement process.

The September 2015 review saw a decrease of 5 percent in occurrences from the March 2015 review. In September 2015, 5 of 88 cases were in error due to no evidence DV was considered prior to disqualification.

The percentage of occurrences improved over the past review however more work needs to be done. The accuracy in this category was slightly better than last review.

In February 2016, new DV training will begin to be delivered to DHS staff. Along with changes to the re-engagement process it is hopeful that the accuracy in this category will increase.

- **DQ4 Requirements:** Prior to applying a DQ4, which is a full family sanction meaning there will be no cash grant, DHS must attempt a home visit and a discussion of alternate resource for the family.

The percentage of occurrences in this category during the September 2015 review was 10 percent (9 of 88 cases) compared to 25 percent (14 of 55 cases) in the March 2015 review.

- **Employment:** One of the goals of the TANF program is to help clients become employed. When a client becomes employed the disqualification would end so the family can benefit from Transitional Benefit Alternative through the SNAP program.

Of the 88 cases, 2 had the disqualification removed because the client had been employed at the time the disqualification was applied. This represents 2 percent of the occurrences.

- **Exempt from JOBS:** OAR 461-130-0310(2)(a)(A-L) describes who is exempt from JOBS participation and disqualification. These include, but are not limited to; individuals providing care for a family member with a disability, parents up to six months after the birth of their dependent child, and an individual receiving SSI.

The percentage of occurrences in this category during the September 2015 review was 0 percent (0 of 88 cases). The percent of occurrences in the March 2015 was 7 percent (4 of 55 cases).

- **New DQ Instance: Local Team Staffing prior to disqualification:** Prior to a disqualification being applied, which would result in a reduction to the grant, a local staffing must take place to determine if any barriers were preventing the individual from meeting the program requirements. The local staffing team must include at a minimum three DHS staff and may also include JOBS partners, and professionals such as mental health specialist, nurse, Family Support & Connections, etc.

The percentage of occurrences in this category decreased for the second straight review. There were 11 percent (10 of 88 cases) of occurrences in the September 2015 review compared to 15 percent March 2015.

- **Required Notices:** DHS must send all required notice prior to applying a disqualification. They include such notices as the re-engagement appointment, grant reduction, and full family sanction notice.

There was 1 case out of 88 cases during the September 2015 review where the disqualification was removed due to lack of required notice being sent. This represents 1 percent of occurrences.

- **Rights and Responsibilities:** The DHS 7819 is the client's rights and responsibilities form that is required to be provided regularly (within the past 12 months prior to a disqualification). This form explains to the individual about their rights and responsibilities relating to the TANF/JOBS program.

The percent of occurrences remained at 0 percent.

- **Rules:** There are specific OARs governing the re-engagement process. The further explanations of the rules are provided in the Family Services Manual. Staff must follow these rules when conducting re-engagement, specifically when the outcome leads to a disqualification.

The September 2015 review saw another decrease in occurrences from 5 percent (3 of 55 cases) to 2 percent (2 of 88 cases) of the cases.

- **Screening:** Before imposing a disqualification, DHS must ensure all screenings for barriers have been offered. These include alcohol and drug, learning needs, mental health, physical health, domestic violence and family stability (as per policy).

The March 2015 review saw no occurrences where a disqualification was removed. The September 2015 review had 2 of 88 cases (2 percent of occurrences) where the disqualification was removed.

- **State Family Pre SSI:** The State Family Pre SSI program is a separate state funded program dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities become eligible for SSI. The entire family is moved into the SFP program once eligibility is determined. Adults in the program are no longer required to meet Federal Participation.

Individuals who are working with the SFP disability analysts (DA) should be given the opportunity to work with the DA to determine eligibility for the program. This should take priority over participation in JOBS activities.

During the September 2015 review there was an increase in occurrences to 3 percent (3 of 88 cases). In the March 2015 review there was 1 of 55 cases, representing 2 percent of occurrences.

- **TANF Closed:** In some circumstances a disqualification would not be applied if a TANF case is closing. These include but are not limited to a case closing for employment, during a disqualification rolling from DQ1 to a DQ2 or DQ2 to a DQ3, when TANF should have been closed the previous month but was not closed, etc.

During the March 2015 review there were 0 occurrences. The September 2015 review did not change.

TANF Closure due to Disqualification

There are two levels of disqualification. The first level is three months long. The second level is one month. If the individual does not begin cooperation by the end of second level month, TANF will close and the family would not be eligible for TANF for two-consecutive months.

During the September 2015 review, approximately 52 of 659 (8 percent) cases reviewed had been closed due to disqualification. Of the 52 cases, 51 were closed correctly. This represents 98 percent accuracy of cases in this category and a 2 percent increase in percentage from the previous review (96 percent).

Review of March 2015 TANF Cases Closed due to Disqualification

A new feature of the September 2015 review is to take a look back to the previous review, at cases which closed due to a disqualification.

This part of the review looked at 79 cases from March 2015, which were closed due to reaching the final level of disqualification. These cases would have been ineligible for TANF program benefits for two consecutive months after TANF closure.

As of September 2015, 66 of the 79 (84 percent) clients were receiving some form of Self-Sufficiency program benefits for themselves and their families. These benefits included TANF, SNAP or ERDC benefits. The table below displays the number of families receiving benefits by Self-Sufficiency program.

Receipt of Benefits by Program

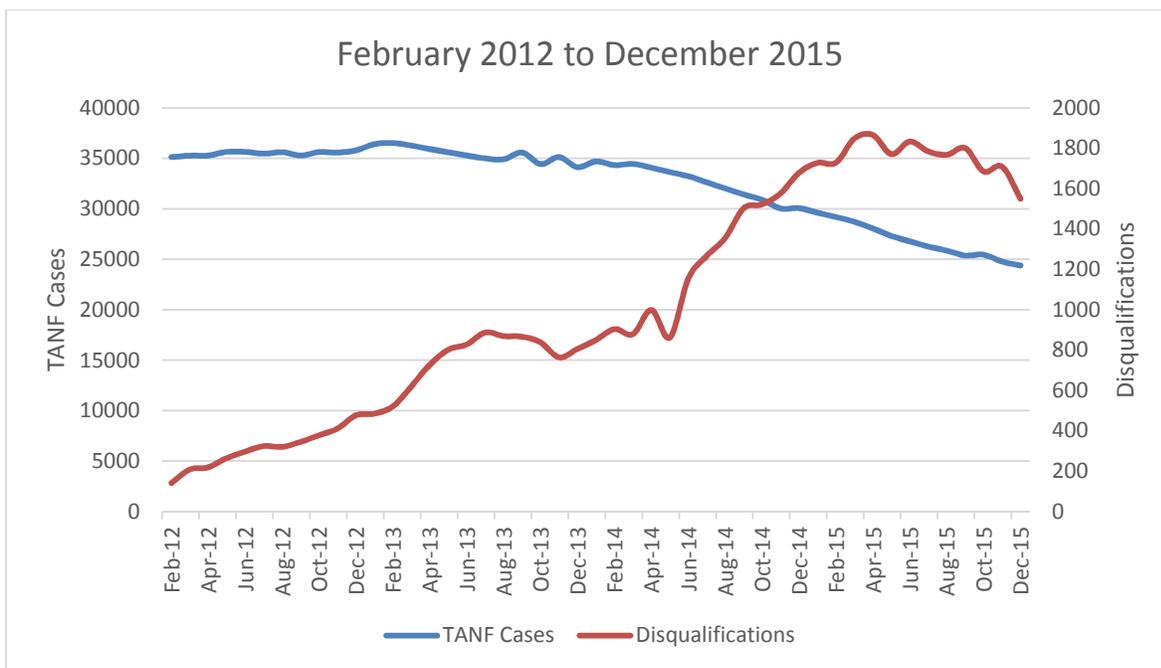
DHS Program	Cases	Percent of Total
TANF	23	29%
SNAP	61	77%
ERDC	4	5%

Many families were receiving multiple benefits. The table below displays the type of benefits received and number of families receiving those benefits.

DHS Program or Programs	Cases	Percent of Total
TANF Only	1	1.3%
TANF & SNAP	20	25.3%
Employed on TANF & SNAP	2	2.5%
SNAP Only	31	39.2%
Employed on SNAP & ERDC	3	3.8%
Employed on SNAP	5	6.3%
Employed on ERDC	1	1.3%
Employed no programs	3	3.8%
No Services	13	16.5%

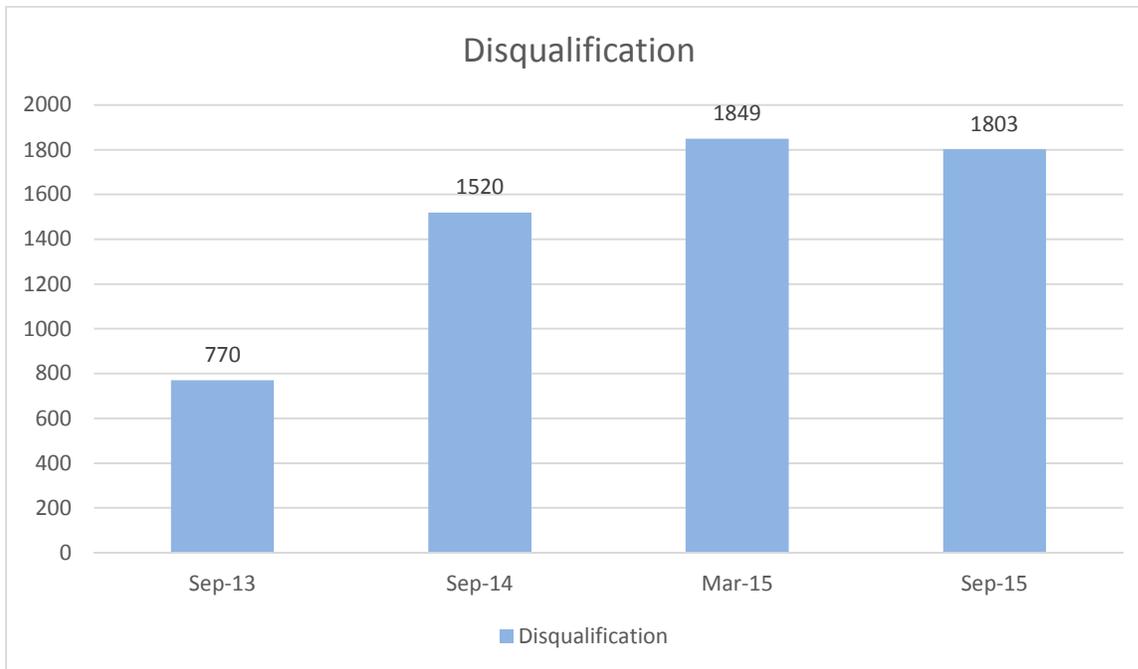
Caseload and Disqualifications

The number of cases with an active disqualification dropped slightly from the March 2015 review. There were approximately 46 fewer active disqualifications in September than there were in March 2015. The decline was expected.

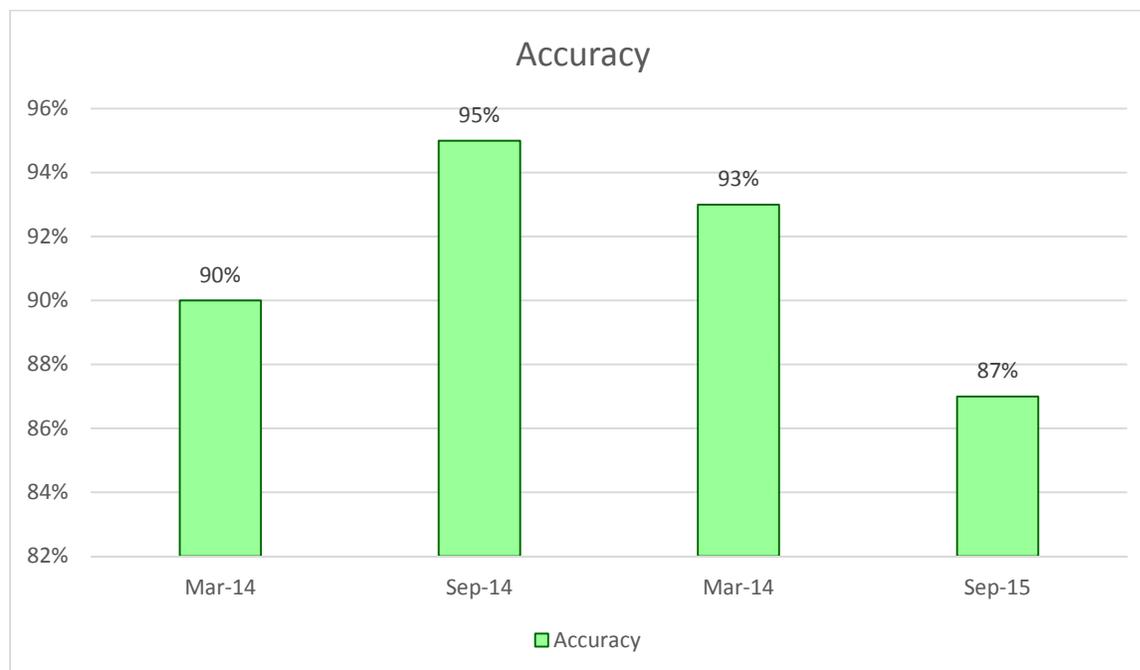


The number of TANF cases have been declining each month since the early part of 2013 (see chart above). In 2013, the TANF program was able to begin converting non-case management positions into TANF case managers. This conversion increased the number of case manager positions authorized from 236 to nearly 400. The decrease in cases along with the increase in staff doing case management enable more clients to be engaged in program activities. The increase in engagement had inevitably led to an increase in re-engagements and disqualifications. The chart above displays this trend.

Conclusion



The number of disqualified individuals increased from 770 in September 2013 to 1,520 as of September 2014 to 1,849 in March 2015. From March 2015 to September 2015 there was a small decrease.



The September 2015 review saw drop in the accuracy from 93 percent to 87 percent, which is the lowest it has been since October 2011. There are several identifiable reasons for the decrease in accuracy, which include:

- Change in how clients with known disabilities were compiled;
- Increasing the number of cases in the review from districts with historically lower accuracy rates; and
- Reducing the number of disqualified clients included in the review.

As discussed on page 6 above, the method of identifying cases with known disabilities was changed for this review. Starting with this review, cases with known disabilities are being identified before other categories. This new method increased the number from 110 cases to 352.

The number of cases included in the September review decreased by 125 from the previous review in March 2015. When fewer cases are included in a review it would take a smaller number of errors to have a greater impact in the accuracy rate.

A question and answer document will be created and distributed to TANF staff. The document will focus on a number of topics discovered during the current review. Some of these include:

- Considering the impact of disabilities especially those impacting an individual's ability to communicate, understand, and reason.
- Considering the need for accommodation in order to provide an individual equal access to program services.
- Considering the impact of domestic violence and need to look back through the individual's history to determine if DV is a current concern.