



TANF Caseload Decline

The Well-Being of Parents and Children Leaving WorkFirst in Washington State

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Report to the DSHS Economic Services Administration, Office of the Assistant Secretary and the Community Services Division

THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) program in Washington State has undergone significant changes over the past four years due to both program improvements and budget cuts. Changes made due to budget cuts are likely responsible for at least some of the decline in the TANF caseload, which fell from a peak of 65,140 cases in SFY 2011 to 42,569 cases in SFY 2014 (a 35 percent decline over four years). This study examines key measures of interest for parents and children who left TANF. It seeks to answer the following question: how are TANF leavers who were exposed to recent program changes faring relative to those who left the caseload in an earlier period?

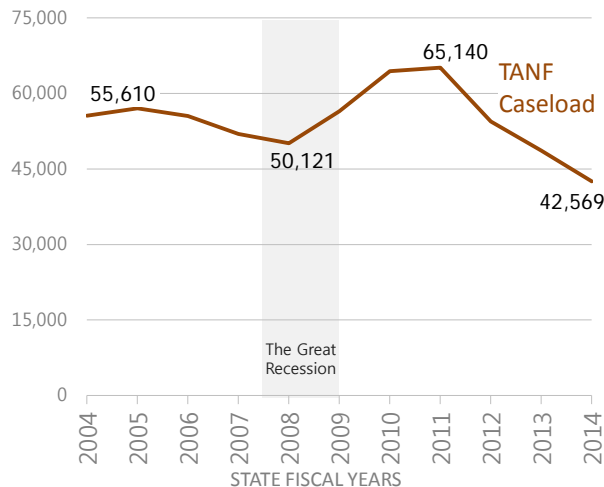
Q. How are TANF leavers who were exposed to recent program changes faring relative to those who left the caseload prior to these changes?

Key Findings

- 1. The TANF caseload has changed in both size and composition over the past four years.** The number of TANF cases increased considerably during the Great Recession and has been decreasing since February 2011, when changes to the time limit extension policy were first made. Child-only cases make up an increasing share of the caseload, as a greater proportion of WorkFirst families leave the program and do not return.
- 2. Despite high rates of baseline health risk relative to other WorkFirst leavers, those who left due to time limits were less likely to transition to disability-related medical coverage.** According to health service information over a two-year baseline period, 64 percent of time limited leavers had a mental illness, 25 percent had an alcohol/drug treatment need, and 23 percent had chronic illness risk scores on par with those of individuals receiving SSI. Yet only 7 percent had transitioned to SSI-related medical coverage by the third year follow-up, compared to 23 percent of "slow leavers" from an earlier period who had very similar risk profiles.
- 3. "Slow leavers" and those impacted by time limits faced greater barriers to work but remained connected to supports and services.** Parents who left WorkFirst quickly had a lower prevalence of baseline risk factors and better outcomes over the follow-up period. Slow and time limited leavers had higher rates of health risk and homelessness and lower rates of employment, but many maintained connections to supports such as medical, food, and housing assistance.

The TANF caseload rose with the Great Recession and declined with program changes and improving economic conditions

FIGURE 1.
Average Monthly TANF Caseload
By State Fiscal Year

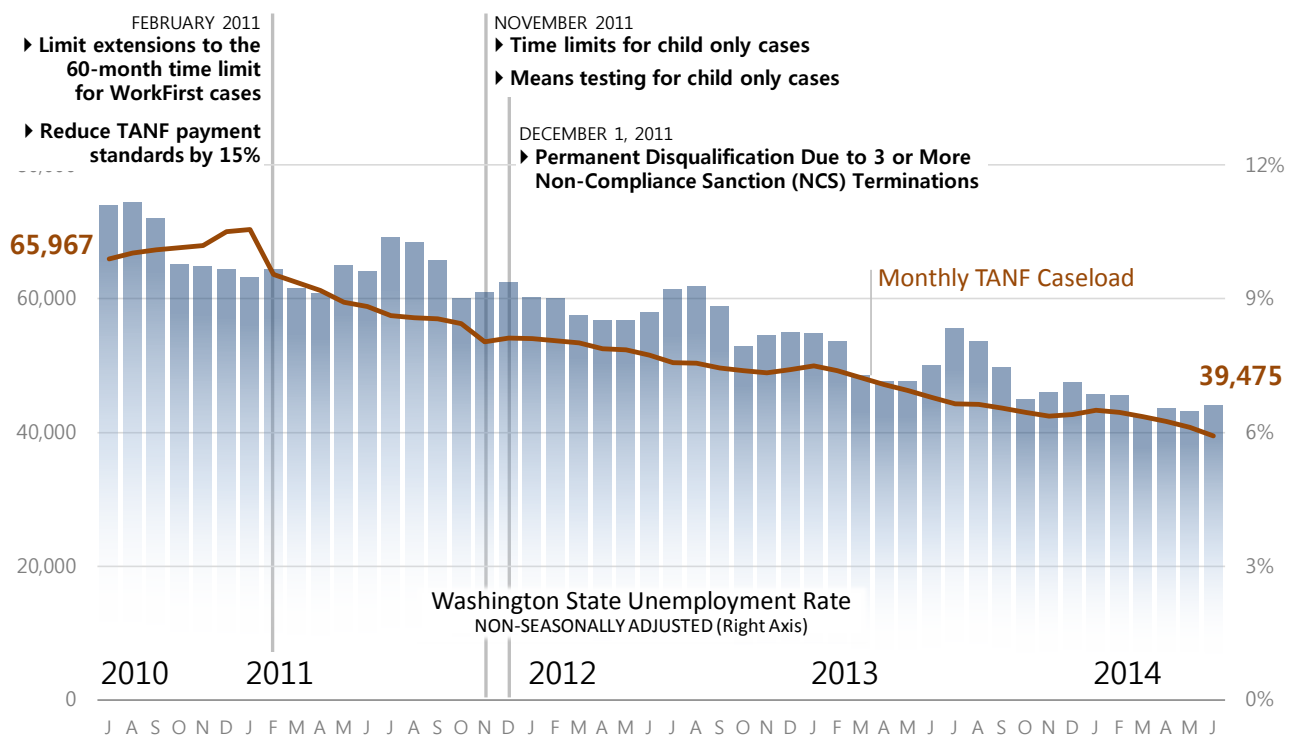


NOTE: The lower axis above shows State Fiscal Years, which end in June 30 of the year noted. The Great Recession officially started December 2007 and ended June 2009 (calendar months).

Over the past decade, the TANF caseload has fluctuated, typically in relation to changes in economic conditions and policies. Most likely due to the impact of the Great Recession, the average monthly TANF caseload grew from 50,121 cases in SFY 2008 to 65,140 cases in SFY 2011 (a 30 percent increase). However, the caseload then declined by 35 percent from SFY 2011 to SFY 2014, most likely reflecting both policy changes and improved economic conditions.

Figure 2 below shows declines in the caseload along with key program changes, notably: 1) time limits for WorkFirst families and a 15 percent TANF grant reduction starting in February 2011 and 2) time limits and means-testing for child-only cases starting in November 2011. We also see a 41 percent decline in the state's unemployment rate (from 11.1 to 6.6 percent) between July 2010 and June 2014.

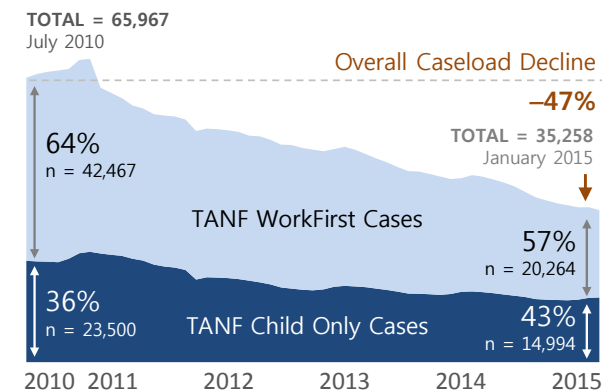
FIGURE 2.
Impact of Recent Budget-Related Program Changes on the TANF Caseload Decline



Child-only cases represent an increasing share of the caseload, as more WorkFirst families leave the program and do not return

FIGURE 3.
Change in the Composition of the TANF Caseload: WorkFirst and Child-Only Cases

As a Percent of the Overall TANF Caseload



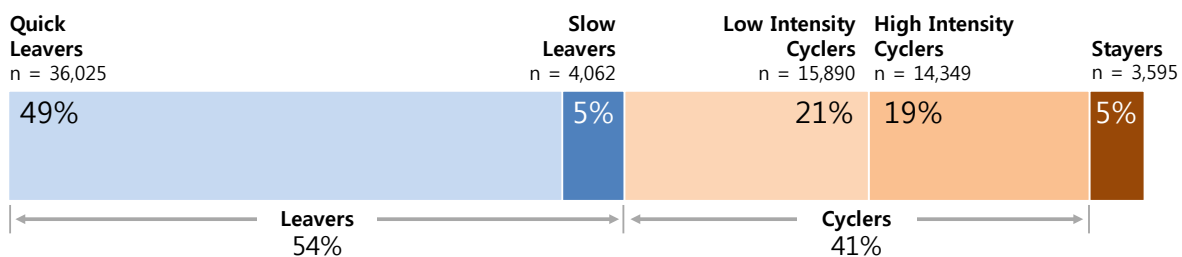
The composition of the TANF caseload has been changing in recent years, with child-only cases making up a greater share of the overall TANF caseload. In July 2010, child-only cases made up 36 percent of the total TANF caseload, while in January 2015, this case type made up 43 percent of the total caseload (a 19 percent increase).

This suggests that a decline in the WorkFirst caseload, in particular, is likely driving the declines observed for the TANF caseload overall. In light of this—and because child-only cases are not actively case managed and are often excluded from program performance measures—we focus the remainder of this report on WorkFirst parents and their children.

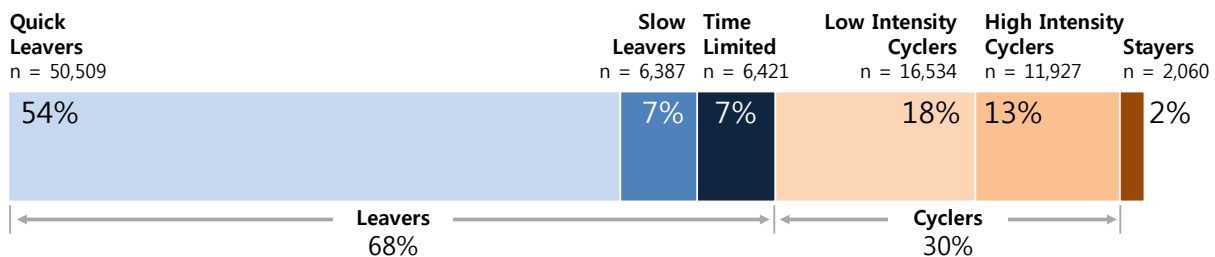
We compared a cohort of adult WorkFirst recipients from SFY 2007 to a cohort from SFY 2011, the latter of whom were exposed to budget-related program changes.¹ Clients within each cohort were grouped according to their pattern of TANF receipt over the 36 months subsequent to their last month on TANF in SFY 2007 or 2011. (*See Technical Notes; also, note that 20 clients categorized as “time limited” were actually permanently disqualified due to three non-compliance sanctions*). Clients in the SFY 2011 cohort were more likely to leave TANF. In particular, 68 percent of clients in the SFY 2011 cohort were categorized as “leavers” compared to 54 percent of the SFY 2007 cohort.

FIGURE 4.
TANF/WorkFirst Parents: Leavers, Cyclers, and Stayers

2007 GROUP (n = 73,921)



2011 GROUP (n = 93,838)

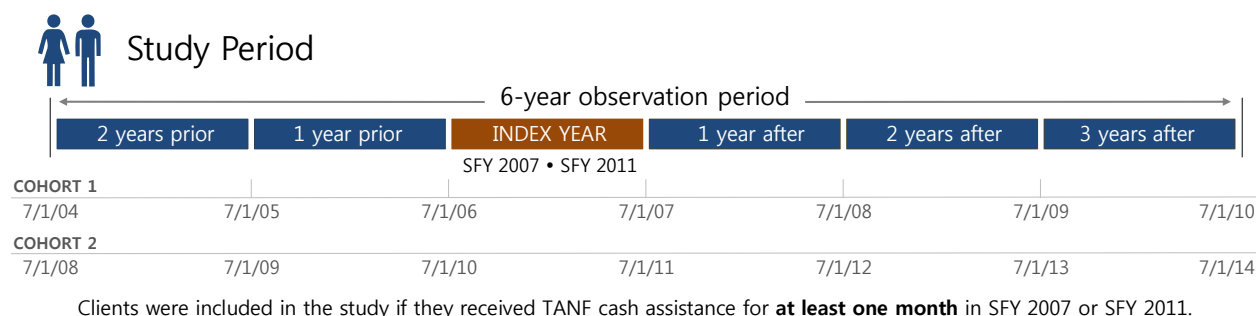


¹ One key change was that DSHS narrowed qualifications for TANF/WorkFirst time limit extensions in February 2011, which resulted in fewer families being eligible for continued TANF cash benefits after 60 months.

Two cohorts of TANF leavers are compared: SFY 2007 and 2011

As noted above, caseload trends over the past decade suggest that 1) the TANF caseload has been declining since peaking in SFY 2011, 2) child-only cases make up an increasing share (and WorkFirst cases a decreasing share) of the TANF caseload, and 3) the proportion of clients on the caseload who leave the program and do not return over a 36-month follow-up period has increased. This report focuses on families who left WorkFirst in or after SFY 2011 relative to an earlier cohort of leavers not exposed to recent budget-related program changes and improving economic conditions.

FIGURE 5.

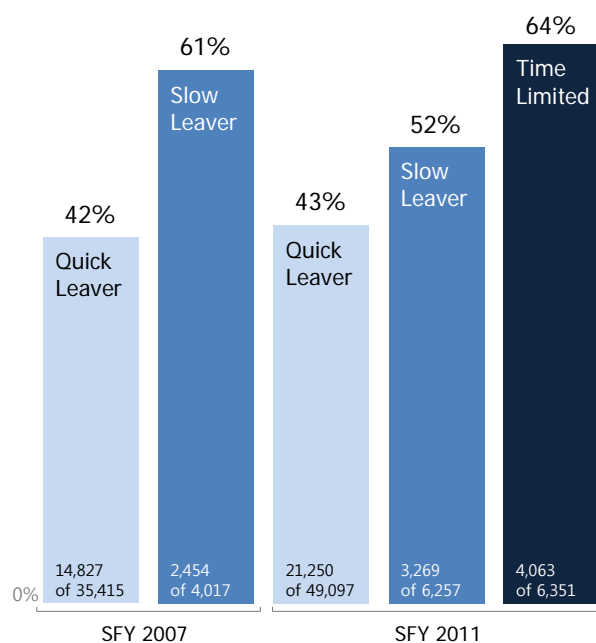


Time limited leavers were less likely to transition to SSI-related medical coverage despite relatively high rates of baseline risk²

FIGURE 6.

Mental Health Needs

Among those with medical coverage • Over 2-year period



Mental Health Needs

Indications of mental health need were identified through medical claim and encounter records, including the receipt of mental health services, psychotropic medications, and mental health related diagnoses in the index year or year prior.

Mental health needs were more prevalent among parents in the time limited group and the 2007 slow leaver group, relative to parents in the other groups. Nearly two-thirds of adults who exited TANF due to time limits had an indication of mental illness.

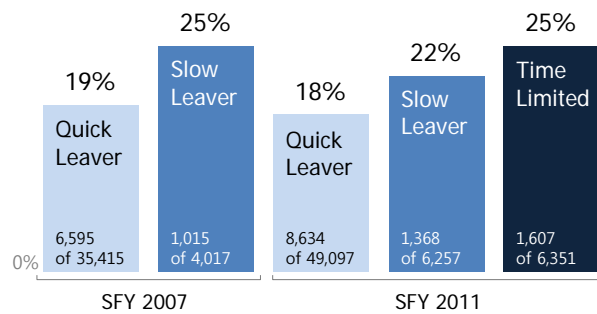
Quick leavers in both the 2007 and 2011 cohorts had lower rates of mental health issues relative to parents who were time limited or slow leavers. Nonetheless, these issues were still fairly common, with four out of ten quick leavers in each cohort having an indication of a mental health issue observed through administrative data.

² Baseline measures of mental illness, alcohol/drug treatment need, and chronic illness are restricted here to the 98 percent of leavers in the study population who had at least one month of medical coverage in the two-year baseline period.

FIGURE 7.

Alcohol/Drug Treatment Need

Among those with medical coverage • Over 2-year period



Substance Abuse

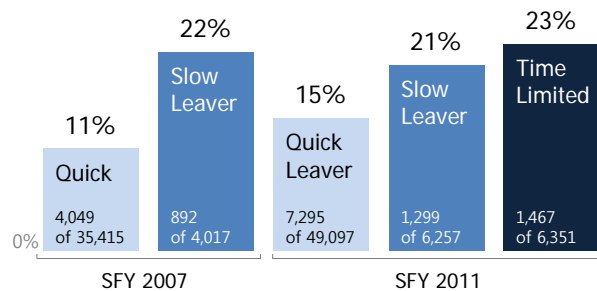
Rates of substance abuse were calculated by identifying individuals whose health service or criminal justice records indicated diagnoses, treatment, or arrests associated with substance-related problems during the index year or one year prior to the index year.

Overall, WorkFirst parents from both the SFY 2007 and 2011 cohorts had rates of alcohol/drug treatment need between 18 and 25 percent. Rates were highest—at 25 percent—for slow leavers in the 2007 cohort and for parents who exited due to time limits in the 2011 cohort.

FIGURE 8.

Probable Chronic Illness

Among those with medical coverage • Over 2-year period



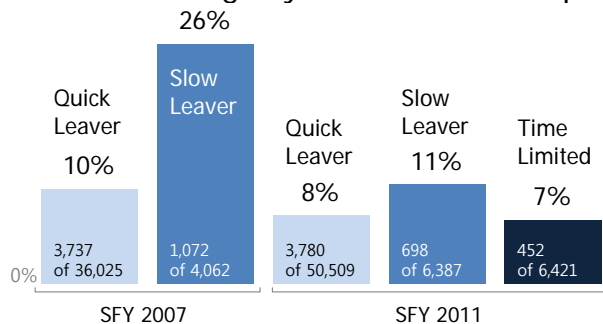
Health Status

To assess health status in the TANF leaver population, we used chronic illness risk scores based on health service diagnoses and pharmacy claim information. TANF parents with scores of 1 or higher were identified as having a probable chronic illness given that the score is calibrated to equal one for the average person in Washington State meeting Social Security Insurance (SSI) disability criteria.

Time limited parents from the 2011 cohort and slow leavers from both cohorts had the highest chronic illness rates, with over one-fifth of each group having risk scores equal to or greater than the average SSI recipient in Washington State.

FIGURE 9.

Transitions from TANF to SSI-Related Medical Coverage by 3rd Year Follow-Up



Supplemental Security Income (SSI)-Related Medical Coverage

We examined rates of transition to SSI-related medical coverage, using this as a proxy for receipt of federal disability cash assistance.

Despite comparable baseline rates of mental illness, substance abuse, and chronic illness, slow leavers from the 2007 cohort were much more likely to transition to SSI-related medical coverage by the third year of follow-up than time limited leavers from the 2011 cohort (26 percent compared to 7 percent, respectively).

Moreover, time limited parents had the highest prevalence of chronic illness of all five groups but the lowest rate of transition to SSI-related medical coverage.

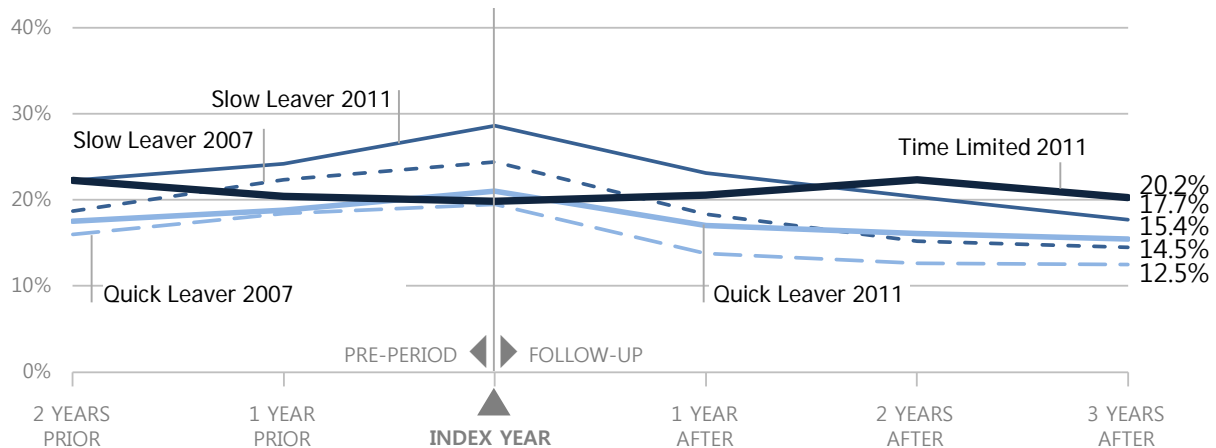
Time limited leavers were more likely to be homeless after three years but also had relatively high rates of public housing receipt

We examined homelessness as recorded by ESA caseworkers in the DSHS Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES).³ Rates of homelessness among parents leaving TANF declined in the three-year follow-up for all groups except the time limited group. Among the other groups, homeless rates increased leading into the index year and decreased thereafter. By contrast, rates stayed fairly stable among time limited leavers, with one-fifth experiencing homelessness in SFY 2014.

FIGURE 10.

Homelessness among TANF Parents

Among those served by DSHS Economic Service Administration in the year of observation

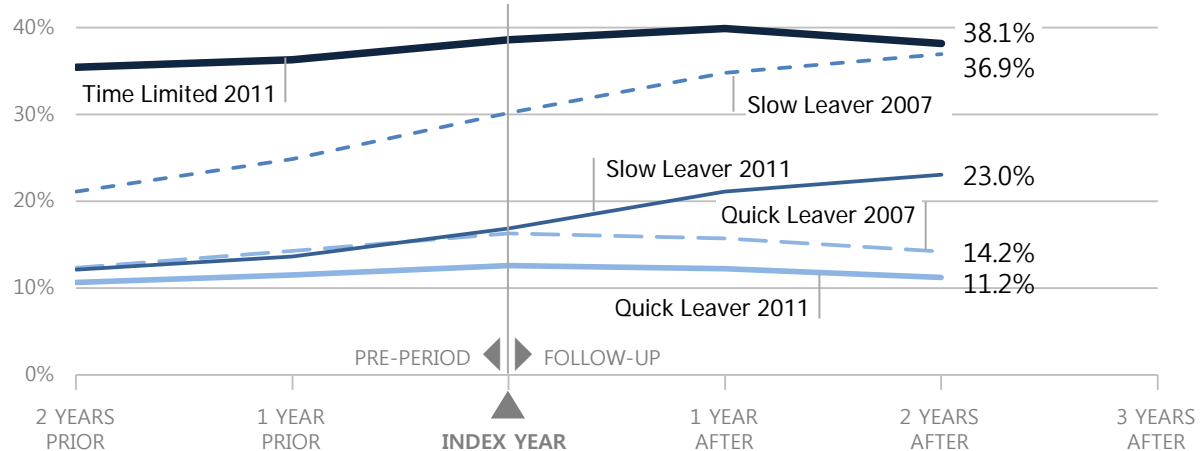


We also examined the proportion of TANF leavers receiving assistance through the Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), including low-income public housing as well as project- and tenant-based vouchers. Time limited parents had relatively high rates of PHA housing receipt over the 5-year period for which PHA data was available. Slow leavers in both periods increased their use of PHA housing over time, while quick leavers maintained relatively low reliance during the entire period.

FIGURE 11.

TANF Parents Assisted by Public Housing Authorities

(Federal PHA data from HUD is not available in the DSHS Integrated Client Database for SFY 2014)



³ Data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is only available to the DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division from July 2009 forward and therefore could not be used for this analysis, which begins in July 2004 for the SFY 2007 cohort.

Child welfare involvement increased the most and was most prevalent among children of slow leavers over the follow-up

We also examined involvement in the child welfare system among children from both cohorts whose parents left WorkFirst. Child Protective Services (CPS) investigations and out-of-home placements were more prevalent in the follow-up period among children whose parents were slow leavers. For both the 2007 and 2011 cohorts, rates of child welfare involvement among children of slow leavers are about twice as high as rates for children of quick leavers by the end of the follow-up period.

By the third year follow-up, children of time limited leavers had rates of out-of-home placement that were below those of slow leavers but above those of quick leavers, though they had the highest rates of both CPS investigations and out-of-home placement prior to leaving TANF.

FIGURE 12.

Child Protective Services Investigations involving TANF Children

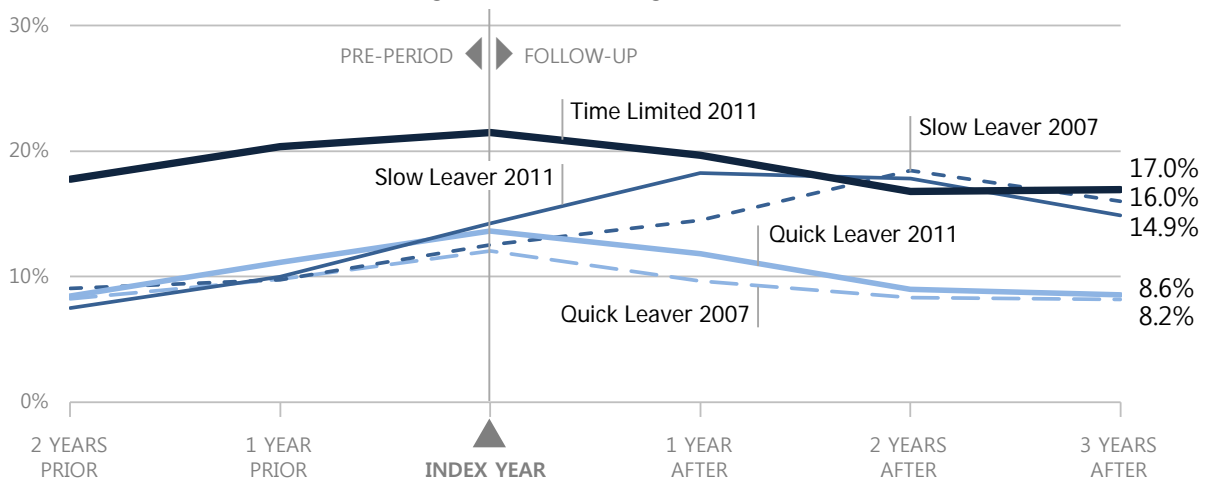
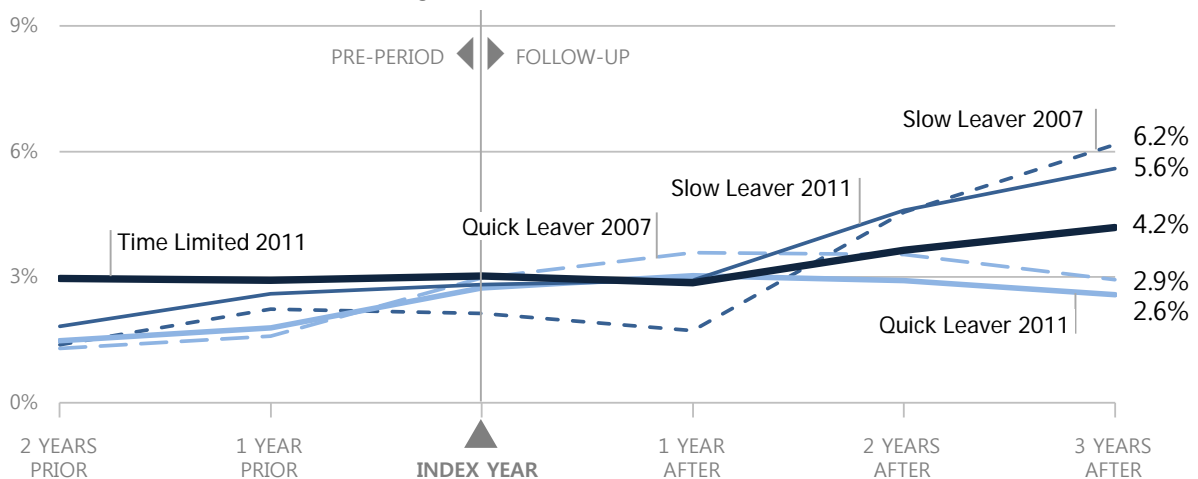


FIGURE 13.

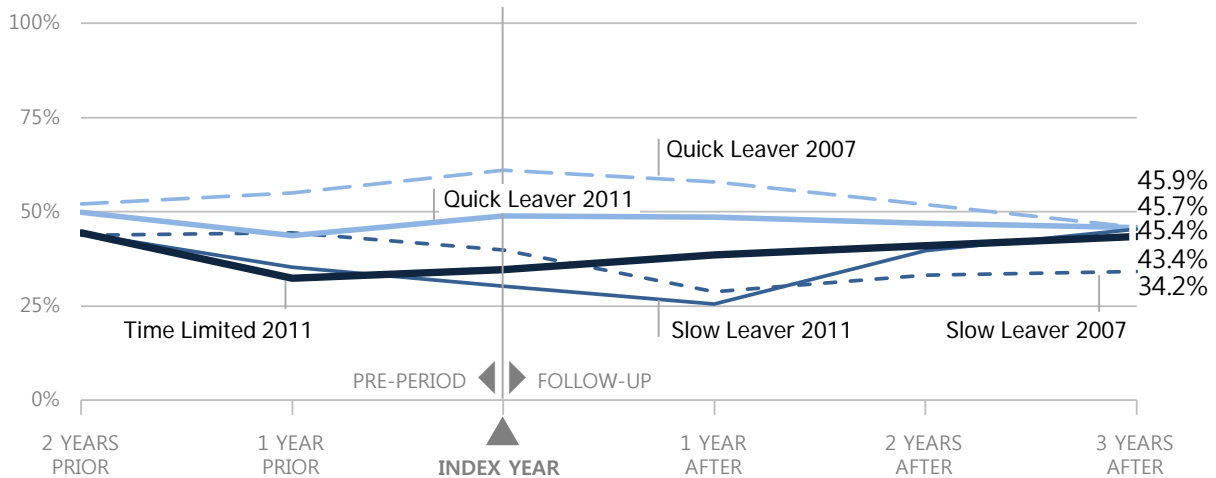
Out-of-Home Placements among TANF Children



Time limited and slow leaver parents had poorer employment outcomes but remained connected to public assistance

Parents who left TANF quickly exhibited the highest rates of employment in the follow-up period. That said, the difference between the employment rates for quick leavers and rates for the other groups narrowed considerably over the three-year follow-up period. This is due to both a decreased employment rate for quick leavers and an increased employment rate among slow and time limited leavers from the 2011 cohort.

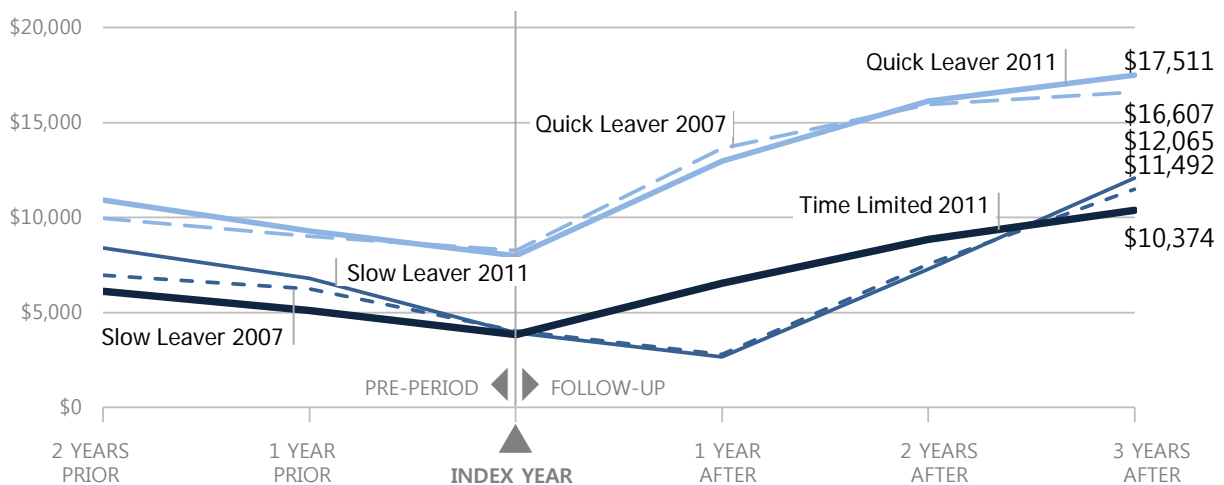
FIGURE 14.
Part-Time or Full-Time Employment among TANF Parents



Among those with any employment, average annual earnings for both cohorts of quick leavers increased steadily over the follow-up period. Time limited and slow leavers earned less across all six years but also experienced an upward earnings trend in the follow-up years. However, it is important to note that earnings are calculated only among those who are employed, so part of the increase may be due to low earners leaving the workforce in contrast to earners experiencing wage growth.

FIGURE 15.
Average Annual Earnings among TANF Parents

Among those with any employment in the year

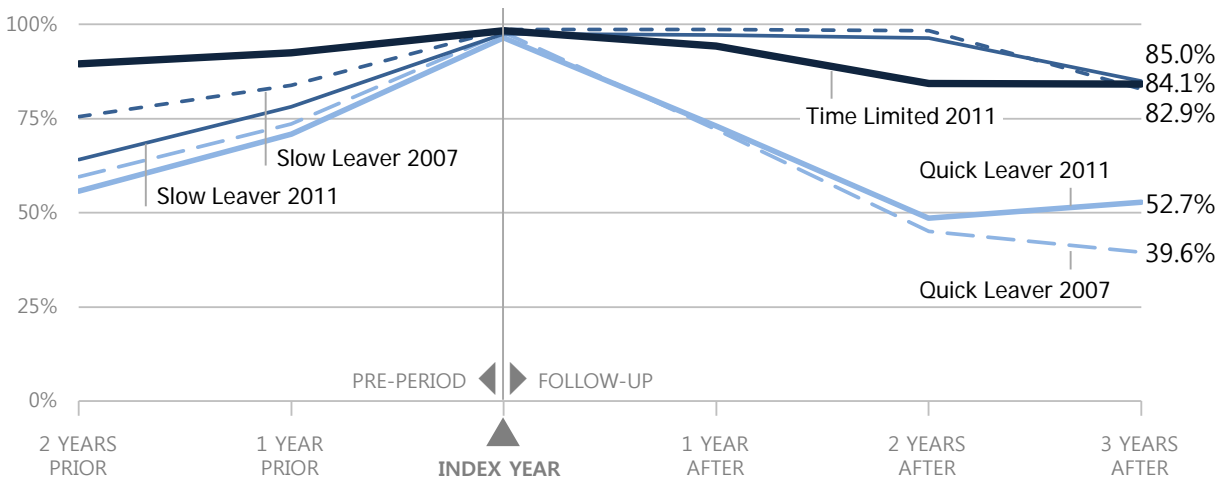


Medicaid or Related Medical Coverage

Rates of medical coverage through Medicaid or related programs decreased substantially for both cohorts of quick leavers over the follow-up period. Enrollment among 2011 quick leavers dropped by nearly 50 percent over the three-year follow-up period and enrollment among 2007 quick leavers dropped by about 60 percent over the same period. In contrast, time limited and slow leaver parents had medical coverage rates of over 80 percent by the end of the three-year follow-up period.

FIGURE 16.

Receipt of Medical Assistance among TANF Parents

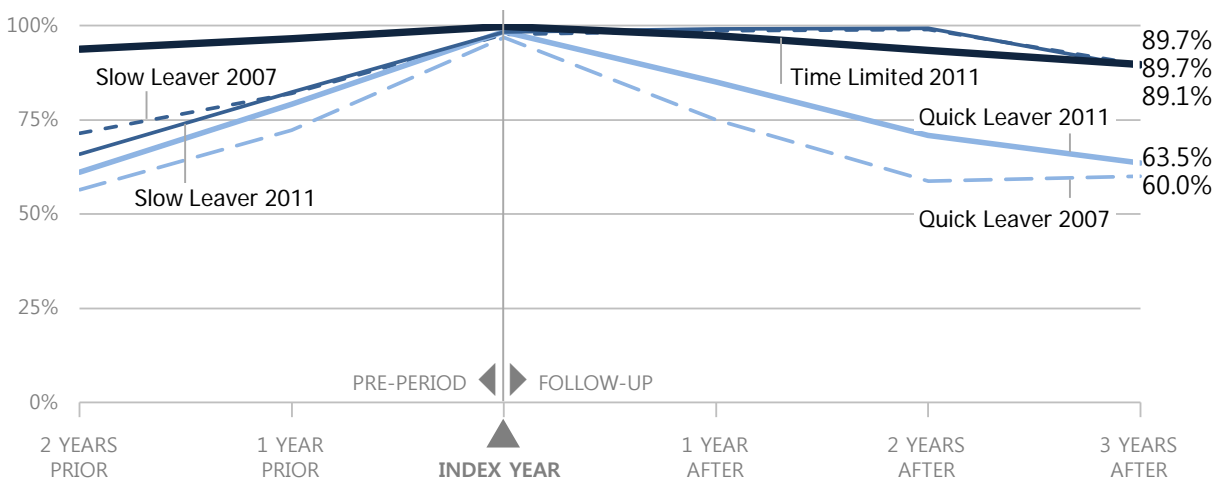


Receipt of Basic Food Assistance

Parents from both cohorts who left TANF remained connected to Basic Food assistance at high rates. The highest rates of Basic Food receipt in the follow-up period were among time limited leavers and among slow leavers from both cohorts, with nearly 90 percent of parents in these groups continuing to receive Basic Food in the third year follow-up. Quick leavers from both cohorts were more likely to leave Basic Food than slow and time limited leavers, perhaps due to household incomes exceeding the threshold used to determine eligibility for the program (200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level).

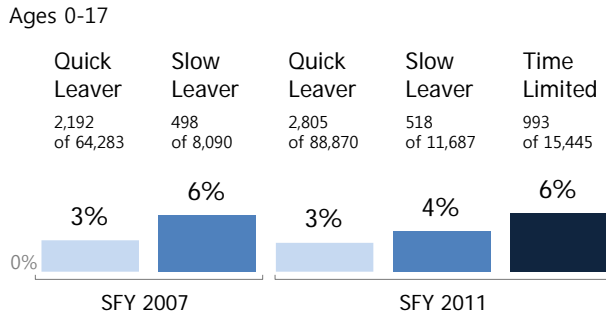
FIGURE 17.

Receipt of Basic Food among TANF Parents



Children of time limited leavers more likely to transition to SSI-related medical and less likely to be on TANF after three years

FIGURE 18.
SSI-Related Medical Coverage among Children by 3 Years Follow-Up



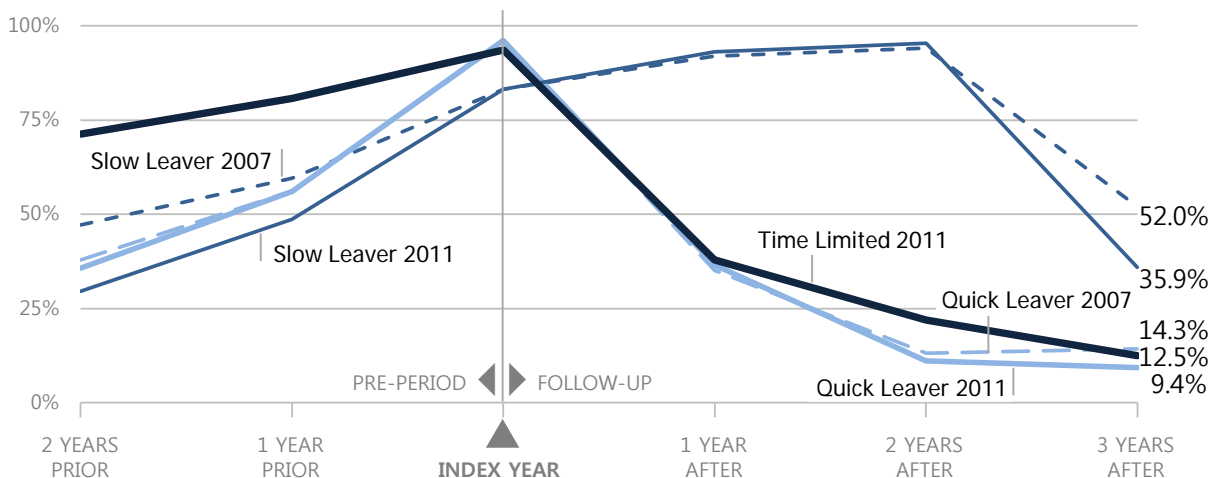
Transition to SSI-Related Coverage

Whereas parents on time limited cases had the lowest rates of transition to SSI-related medical coverage of any group, children on time limited cases were slightly more likely to have transitioned to disability-related coverage by the third year follow-up. Children of slow leavers in 2007 had rates of SSI-related medical coverage that were similar to those of time limited cases. By contrast, children of quick leavers from both cohorts were about half as likely as children on time limited cases to transition to SSI-related coverage. Additional analyses indicate this difference is not likely to be due to differences in underlying medical risk among children of leavers.

TANF Receipt

Children of slow leavers from both cohorts maintained the highest levels of TANF receipt during the three-year follow-up period, though there was a steep drop from the second to third year follow-up. Children on time limited cases had much lower rates of TANF receipt in the follow-up period, which were on par with rates for children of quick leavers. On most other measures, outcomes for time limited parents and their children have tended to align with those of slow leavers. However, in the case of TANF receipt, time limited children have patterns that follow those of quick leavers. This is likely because children whose parents transitioned to SSI-related medical coverage would be eligible for child-only TANF, whereas children whose parents were time limited would not be eligible for TANF unless they became part of a new "assistance unit" (household).

FIGURE 19.
TANF Receipt among Children



Discussion

The TANF program in Washington State has undergone a number of changes in recent years. In general, WorkFirst parents and children who left the program in the wake of these changes have experienced comparable outcomes to those who left in an earlier time period. One exception to this is that parents terminated from TANF due to changes in the time limit extension criteria that took effect in February 2011 had relatively high rates of baseline health risk factors (substance abuse, mental illness, and chronic illness) compared to other groups but were less likely to transition to SSI-related medical coverage. In addition, while other groups of leavers experienced a decline in the rate of homelessness over a three-year follow-up period, the homeless rate hovered around 20 percent for time limited leavers over the entire six-year study period.

Given that termination due to 60-month time limits is now a reality many TANF clients in Washington State face, their caseworkers must work harder than ever to quickly identify and address potential barriers to self-sufficiency. Accordingly, ESA has engaged in several efforts over the past few years with that aim in mind, including the following:

- Developed and implemented a new Comprehensive Evaluation tool that was rolled out statewide to each of the Community Services Offices (CSOs) for use by frontline staff in July 2014. The new tool is designed to quickly identify and address urgent and emergent needs upfront, to assess the needs of the whole family (including children), and to identify the best path forward for each client based on their individual set of strengths and challenges.
- A cross-agency workgroup overhauled the WorkFirst performance measures to better assess, on an ongoing basis, how the program is doing at improving the well-being of both parents and their children in a number of areas, including behavioral health, housing, education, and employment.
- Frontline staff in ESA began receiving training on Motivational Interviewing in August 2012, providing them with a new framework for interacting with clients that uses a more collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication. Motivational Interviewing is used to strengthen a person's own motivation, engagement, and commitment to change.
- Beginning in June 2013, pilot tested a Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) program in two CSOs in collaboration with the DSHS Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery. The pilot leveraged training ESA staff had received on Motivational Interviewing.
- In collaboration with the Department of Commerce and the Employment Security Department, began implementation of the Ending Family Homelessness (EFH) program in April 2013 in five counties. The EFH program provides rapid re-housing and employment support to TANF clients experiencing homelessness.
- Implemented the WorkFirst Housing Pathway in the five EFH pilot counties in November 2013 and expanded use to three additional counties in February 2014. The Housing Pathway is an electronic referral mechanism that allows TANF caseworkers to directly refer a client to a specific housing provider rather than simply providing clients with a list of providers they should call.
- Piloted a web-based application—TANF PRISM—in three CSOs from September 2014 to March 2015 to explore the potential benefit of providing information to frontline WorkFirst staff based on a statistical model predicting exit from TANF to stable employment.

Continued efforts such as these will ensure that TANF clients have their most urgent needs met, potential barriers-to-work identified, and that they are set on a path to success as quickly as possible upon entering the program.

APPENDIX | Supporting Tables

TABLE 1.

Baseline Health and Behavioral Health Risk, 2 years prior

	MENTAL ILLNESS			ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUG (AOD) TREATMENT NEED			CHRONIC ILLNESS		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	14,827	35,415	41.9	6,595	35,415	18.6	4,049	35,415	11.4
Slow Leaver 2007	2,454	4,017	61.1	1,015	4,017	25.3	892	4,017	22.2
Quick Leaver 2011	21,250	49,097	43.3	8,634	49,097	17.6	7,295	49,097	14.9
Slow Leaver 2011	3,269	6,257	52.2	1,368	6,257	21.9	1,299	6,257	20.8
Time Limit 2011	4,063	6,351	64.0	1,607	6,351	25.3	1,467	6,351	23.1

TABLE 2.

SSI-Related Medical Coverage

Adults	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	633	36,025	1.8	726	36,025	2.0	1,857	36,025	5.2
Slow Leaver 2007	66	4,062	1.6	79	4,062	1.9	62	4,062	1.5
Quick Leaver 2011	835	50,509	1.7	1,018	50,509	2.0	2,300	50,509	4.6
Slow Leaver 2011	102	6,387	1.6	105	6,387	1.6	78	6,387	1.2
Time Limit 2011	67	6,421	1.0	77	6,421	1.2	135	6,421	2.1

Adults	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	3,285	36,025	9.1	3,605	36,025	10.0	3,737	36,025	10.4
Slow Leaver 2007	32	4,062	0.8	537	4,062	13.2	1,072	4,062	26.4
Quick Leaver 2011	3,660	50,509	7.2	4,033	50,509	8.0	3,780	50,509	7.5
Slow Leaver 2011	27	6,387	0.4	526	6,387	8.2	698	6,387	10.9
Time Limit 2011	278	6,421	4.3	415	6,421	6.5	452	6,421	7.0

Children	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	1,173	64,283	1.8	1,462	64,283	2.3	1,914	64,283	3.0
Slow Leaver 2007	197	8,090	2.4	257	8,090	3.2	325	8,090	4.0
Quick Leaver 2011	1,641	88,870	1.8	2,060	88,870	2.3	2,567	88,870	2.9
Slow Leaver 2011	187	11,687	1.6	251	11,687	2.1	343	11,687	2.9
Time Limit 2011	557	15,445	3.6	653	15,445	4.2	799	15,445	5.2

Children	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	2,060	64,283	3.2	2,120	64,283	3.3	2,192	64,283	3.4
Slow Leaver 2007	402	8,090	5.0	465	8,090	5.7	498	8,090	6.2
Quick Leaver 2011	2,801	88,870	3.2	2,818	88,870	3.2	2,805	88,870	3.2
Slow Leaver 2011	418	11,687	3.6	500	11,687	4.3	518	11,687	4.4
Time Limit 2011	900	15,445	5.8	977	15,445	6.3	993	15,445	6.4

TABLE 3.

Homelessness

Adults	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	4,017	25,187	15.9	5,461	29,657	18.4	7,011	36,006	19.5
Slow Leaver 2007	613	3,283	18.7	800	3,582	22.3	991	4,058	24.4
Quick Leaver 2011	6,348	36,173	17.5	8,069	42,994	18.8	10,596	50,508	21.0
Slow Leaver 2011	1,080	4,848	22.3	1,350	5,584	24.2	1,826	6,387	28.6
Time Limit 2011	1,391	6,239	22.3	1,292	6,339	20.4	1,272	6,421	19.8

Adults	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	4,522	32,785	13.8	3,728	29,575	12.6	3,601	28,784	12.5
Slow Leaver 2007	744	4,062	18.3	617	4,062	15.2	570	3,944	14.5
Quick Leaver 2011	8,033	47,256	17.0	6,947	43,146	16.1	6,254	40,544	15.4
Slow Leaver 2011	1,475	6,387	23.1	1,300	6,387	20.4	1,088	6,157	17.7
Time Limit 2011	1,315	6,390	20.6	1,407	6,307	22.3	1,258	6,214	20.2

Children	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	3,595	38,279	9.4	5,605	48,596	11.5	8,579	63,492	13.5
Slow Leaver 2007	456	4,786	9.5	782	5,682	13.8	1,023	7,023	14.6
Quick Leaver 2011	5,295	54,837	9.7	7,579	70,477	10.8	11,692	87,981	13.3
Slow Leaver 2011	688	5,375	12.8	976	7,382	13.2	1,631	10,079	16.2
Time Limit 2011	1,648	13,168	12.5	1,573	14,230	11.1	1,747	15,144	11.5

Children	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	4,595	58,300	7.9	3,328	52,102	6.4	3,336	50,385	6.6
Slow Leaver 2007	757	7,799	9.7	543	8,034	6.8	500	7,777	6.4
Quick Leaver 2011	7,927	83,175	9.5	6,092	75,376	8.1	5,365	70,450	7.6
Slow Leaver 2011	1,513	11,285	13.4	1,250	11,635	10.7	946	11,114	8.5
Time Limit 2011	1,654	15,256	10.8	1,621	15,005	10.8	1,538	14,686	10.5

TABLE 4.
Public Housing

Adults	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	4,452	36,025	12.4	5,131	36,025	14.2	5,857	36,025	16.3
Slow Leaver 2007	857	4,062	21.1	1,010	4,062	24.9	1,226	4,062	30.2
Quick Leaver 2011	5,367	50,509	10.6	5,823	50,509	11.5	6,371	50,509	12.6
Slow Leaver 2011	775	6,387	12.1	869	6,387	13.6	1,078	6,387	16.9
Time Limit 2011	2,275	6,421	35.4	2,328	6,421	36.3	2,478	6,421	38.6

Adults	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	5,648	36,025	15.7	5,125	36,025	14.2
Slow Leaver 2007	1,412	4,062	34.8	1,499	4,062	36.9
Quick Leaver 2011	6,185	50,509	12.2	5,679	50,509	11.2
Slow Leaver 2011	1,346	6,387	21.1	1,472	6,387	23.0
Time Limit 2011	2,559	6,421	39.9	2,449	6,421	38.1

TABLE 5.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigations

Children	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	5,294	64,283	8.2	6,314	64,283	9.8	7,737	64,283	12.0
Slow Leaver 2007	734	8,090	9.1	788	8,090	9.7	1,016	8,090	12.6
Quick Leaver 2011	7,519	88,870	8.5	9,892	88,870	11.1	12,134	88,870	13.7
Slow Leaver 2011	879	11,687	7.5	1,168	11,687	10.0	1,665	11,687	14.2
Time Limit 2011	2,743	15,445	17.8	3,145	15,445	20.4	3,322	15,445	21.5

Children	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	6,205	64,283	9.7	5,360	64,283	8.3	5,262	64,283	8.2
Slow Leaver 2007	1,173	8,090	14.5	1,491	8,090	18.4	1,297	8,090	16.0
Quick Leaver 2011	10,516	88,870	11.8	7,999	88,870	9.0	7,610	88,870	8.6
Slow Leaver 2011	2,132	11,687	18.2	2,081	11,687	17.8	1,737	11,687	14.9
Time Limit 2011	3,037	15,445	19.7	2,591	15,445	16.8	2,619	15,445	17.0

TABLE 6.

Out-of-Home Placement

Children	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	834	64,283	1.3	1,019	64,283	1.6	1,919	64,283	3.0
Slow Leaver 2007	112	8,090	1.4	181	8,090	2.2	173	8,090	2.1
Quick Leaver 2011	1,313	88,870	1.5	1,597	88,870	1.8	2,433	88,870	2.7
Slow Leaver 2011	213	11,687	1.8	304	11,687	2.6	330	11,687	2.8
Time Limit 2011	458	15,445	3.0	452	15,445	2.9	467	15,445	3.0

Children	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	2,309	64,283	3.6	2,281	64,283	3.5	1,887	64,283	2.9
Slow Leaver 2007	139	8,090	1.7	368	8,090	4.5	499	8,090	6.2
Quick Leaver 2011	2,697	88,870	3.0	2,597	88,870	2.9	2,296	88,870	2.6
Slow Leaver 2011	342	11,687	2.9	538	11,687	4.6	654	11,687	5.6
Time Limit 2011	442	15,445	2.9	562	15,445	3.6	646	15,445	4.2

TABLE 7.

Medical Assistance

Adults	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	21,462	36,025	59.6	26,488	36,025	73.5	35,226	36,025	97.8
Slow Leaver 2007	3,071	4,062	75.6	3,408	4,062	83.9	4,006	4,062	98.6
Quick Leaver 2011	28,111	50,509	55.7	35,783	50,509	70.8	48,727	50,509	96.5
Slow Leaver 2011	4,093	6,387	64.1	4,995	6,387	78.2	6,230	6,387	97.5
Time Limit 2011	5,751	6,421	89.6	5,938	6,421	92.5	6,318	6,421	98.4

Adults	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	25,955	36,025	72.0	16,227	36,025	45.0	14,254	36,025	39.6
Slow Leaver 2007	4,006	4,062	98.6	3,992	4,062	98.3	3,368	4,062	82.9
Quick Leaver 2011	36,872	50,509	73.0	24,548	50,509	48.6	26,629	50,509	52.7
Slow Leaver 2011	6,205	6,387	97.2	6,156	6,387	96.4	5,426	6,387	85.0
Time Limit 2011	6,052	6,421	94.3	5,410	6,421	84.3	5,400	6,421	84.1

TABLE 8.

Basic Food Assistance

Adults	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	20,322	36,025	56.4	26,018	36,025	72.2	34,913	36,025	96.9
Slow Leaver 2007	2,901	4,062	71.4	3,333	4,062	82.1	3,971	4,062	97.8
Quick Leaver 2011	30,889	50,509	61.2	39,983	50,509	79.2	49,736	50,509	98.5
Slow Leaver 2011	4,205	6,387	65.8	5,260	6,387	82.4	6,276	6,387	98.3
Time Limit 2011	6,020	6,421	93.8	6,202	6,421	96.6	6,409	6,421	99.8

Adults	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	27,056	36,025	75.1	21,138	36,025	58.7	21,623	36,025	60.0
Slow Leaver 2007	4,007	4,062	98.6	4,018	4,062	98.9	3,643	4,062	89.7
Quick Leaver 2011	42,922	50,509	85.0	35,795	50,509	70.9	32,084	50,509	63.5
Slow Leaver 2011	6,332	6,387	99.1	6,343	6,387	99.3	5,691	6,387	89.1
Time Limit 2011	6,249	6,421	97.3	5,998	6,421	93.4	5,761	6,421	89.7

TABLE 9.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Receipt

Children	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	24,321	64,283	37.8	36,062	64,283	56.1	61,545	64,283	95.7
Slow Leaver 2007	3,817	8,090	47.2	4,813	8,090	59.5	6,724	8,090	83.1
Quick Leaver 2011	31,707	88,870	35.7	49,810	88,870	56.0	85,391	88,870	96.1
Slow Leaver 2011	3,449	11,687	29.5	5,680	11,687	48.6	9,724	11,687	83.2
Time Limit 2011	10,999	15,445	71.2	12,465	15,445	80.7	14,451	15,445	93.6

Children	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	22,605	64,283	35.2	8,469	64,283	13.2	9,187	64,283	14.3
Slow Leaver 2007	7,441	8,090	92.0	7,616	8,090	94.1	4,209	8,090	52.0
Quick Leaver 2011	32,376	88,870	36.4	9,906	88,870	11.1	8,311	88,870	9.4
Slow Leaver 2011	10,882	11,687	93.1	11,154	11,687	95.4	4,191	11,687	35.9
Time Limit 2011	5,850	15,445	37.9	3,394	15,445	22.0	1,928	15,445	12.5

TABLE 10.

Employment

	2 YEARS PRIOR			1 YEAR PRIOR			INDEX YEAR		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	18,738	36,025	52.0	19,810	36,025	55.0	22,006	36,025	61.1
Slow Leaver 2007	1,775	4,062	43.7	1,807	4,062	44.5	1,621	4,062	39.9
Quick Leaver 2011	25,148	50,509	49.8	22,082	50,509	43.7	24,704	50,509	48.9
Slow Leaver 2011	2,822	6,387	44.2	2,252	6,387	35.3	1,928	6,387	30.2
Time Limit 2011	2,851	6,421	44.4	2,077	6,421	32.3	2,221	6,421	34.6

	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP			3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		
	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT	NUMBER	TOTAL	PERCENT
Quick Leaver 2007	20,864	36,025	57.9	18,703	36,025	51.9	16,518	36,025	45.9
Slow Leaver 2007	1,170	4,062	28.8	1,344	4,062	33.1	1,388	4,062	34.2
Quick Leaver 2011	24,492	50,509	48.5	23,669	50,509	46.9	23,094	50,509	45.7
Slow Leaver 2011	1,627	6,387	25.5	2,535	6,387	39.7	2,900	6,387	45.4
Time Limit 2011	2,477	6,421	38.6	2,635	6,421	41.0	2,784	6,421	43.4

TABLE 11.

Earnings

If Employed	2 YEARS PRIOR		1 YEAR PRIOR		INDEX YEAR	
	MEAN	NUMBER	MEAN	NUMBER	MEAN	NUMBER
Quick Leaver 2007	\$ 9,967	18,738	\$ 9,020	19,810	\$ 8,271	22,006
Slow Leaver 2007	\$ 6,968	1,775	\$ 6,239	1,807	\$ 4,024	1,621
Quick Leaver 2011	\$ 10,919	25,148	\$ 9,294	22,082	\$ 7,986	24,704
Slow Leaver 2011	\$ 8,378	2,822	\$ 6,793	2,252	\$ 3,941	1,928
Time Limit 2011	\$ 6,113	2,851	\$ 5,091	2,077	\$ 3,840	2,221

If Employed	1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		2 YEAR FOLLOW-UP		3 YEAR FOLLOW-UP	
	MEAN	NUMBER	MEAN	NUMBER	MEAN	NUMBER
Quick Leaver 2007	\$ 13,624	20,864	\$ 15,959	18,703	\$ 16,607	16,518
Slow Leaver 2007	\$ 2,787	1,170	\$ 7,532	1,344	\$ 11,492	1,388
Quick Leaver 2011	\$ 12,972	24,492	\$ 16,132	23,669	\$ 17,511	23,094
Slow Leaver 2011	\$ 2,651	1,627	\$ 7,276	2,535	\$ 12,065	2,900
Time Limit 2011	\$ 6,546	2,477	\$ 8,842	2,635	\$ 10,374	2,784

STUDY DESIGN AND OVERVIEW

This study examines key risk factors and outcomes for TANF/WorkFirst families who left the program. It seeks to answer the following question: how are leavers who were exposed to the recent program changes faring relative to those who left the caseload in an earlier period?

The first cohort of TANF leavers includes adult TANF recipients during SFY 2007 and the second includes adult TANF recipients in SFY 2011. We examine two cohorts in order to compare the experiences of those who left TANF during a historical time period to those who exited TANF more recently, with SFY 2007 and SFY 2011 selected to allow for sufficient follow-up time to examine longer-term client outcomes. Child outcomes are reported for children associated with the adult cases from each cohort.

STUDY POPULATION

This report focuses on individuals who left WorkFirst in SFY 2007 or 2011 and did not return to TANF over a 36-month follow-up period following their last month in the program in the index year (SFY 2007 or 2011). However, here we describe the wider caseload to provide context for the analysis of leavers. Each adult on the TANF caseload was assigned to one of the following designations indicating their TANF status over a 36-month follow-up period following their last month on TANF in either SFY 2007 or 2011:

- 1) **Quick leavers** left the TANF caseload within one year of their last month of TANF in SFY 2007 (or SFY 2011) and did not return over the 36-month follow-up period.
- 2) **Slow leavers** took more than one year to leave following their last month on TANF in SFY 2007 (or SFY 2011) and did not return over the 36-month follow-up period.
- 3) **Time limited leavers** left TANF at any time after their last month on TANF in SFY 2011 and were determined to have been exited due to time limits ($n = 6,401$) or permanent disqualification due to three non-compliance sanction terminations ($n = 20$). Note that time limits did not apply to the SFY 2007 cohort because the change in the time limit was not yet in place.
- 4) **Low intensity cyclers** left and returned at least once, with no more than 12 months on TANF over the 36-month follow-up.
- 5) **High intensity cyclers** left and returned at least once, with more than 12 months on TANF over the 36-month follow-up.
- 6) **Stayers** continued on the caseload with no break longer than one month over the 36-month follow-up period.

Throughout the report, adult risk factors and outcomes are reported for TANF/WorkFirst adults who are slow leavers, quick leavers, or who left TANF due to time limits. Child outcomes are reported for children associated with the TANF/WorkFirst adults from each of these groups of TANF leavers.

DATA SOURCES AND MEASURES

RDA leveraged data from the DSHS Integrated Client Database (ICDB) in order to report on key risk factors and outcome measures for individuals leaving the TANF caseload in a historical and recent period.

- **Baseline risk:** Mental illness, alcohol/drug treatment need, and chronic illness score all come from administrative data in the ICDB. These measures are calculated over a 24 month period and are restricted to those with at least one month of medical eligibility during that period.
- **Medical coverage:** Medical coverage (including SSI-related coverage) is obtained from eligibility codes available in the ICDB.
- **Homelessness:** Homeless indicators come from ESA caseworker notes in the Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES), which are linked to the ICDB. Therefore, homelessness rates are restricted to individuals with at least one month of ESA service in a given state fiscal year.

- **Public housing authority assistance:** The ICDB includes housing data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This data was used to identify individuals who received housing through Public Housing Authorities for at least one month in a given state fiscal year. Housing authority assistance includes low income public housing, project based housing vouchers, and tenant based housing vouchers.
- **Child welfare:** Child protective services investigations and out-of-home placement indicators were drawn from RDA's Client Services Database and identify individuals who received at least one month of the service in the given state fiscal year.
- **Employment and earnings:** Employment outcomes were obtained from state Employment Security Department wage data. Individuals are flagged as employed if they had at least one quarter of non-zero earnings during the state fiscal year. Yearly earnings are calculated by summing quarterly earnings within each state fiscal year.
- **Public assistance:** Basic Food and TANF receipt were identified through data from the DSHS Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES) summarized in RDA's Client Services Database.



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