

# YOUTH RIGHTS: WELFARE BENEFITS FOR TEEN PARENTS

## **Do teenage parents have to live with their own parents to receive TANF?**

To receive TANF benefits, a teenage parent must either live at home with his or her parents, a legal guardian, or other adult relative who is at least 18 years old, or in an adult-supervised supportive living arrangement. In these situations, it is the parent, legal guardian, relative or other adult who is the payee on behalf of the minor parent and his or her child.

## **A minor parent can claim an exemption from the requirement to live with an adult if she can provide documentation of one of the following:**



- Neither a parent, legal guardian or other adult relative is able to retain or assume parental control over the minor parent due to physical, emotional, mental, financial or other limitations
- The minor has no living parent or guardian or their whereabouts are unknown;
- The parent or guardian of the minor will not let her live in the home due to space, housing code or lease limitations
- The physical or emotional health or safety of the minor or her child would be jeopardized if they resided with the parent or guardian, as shown by records from health facilities, school, social service agencies, the police or the courts
- The minor parent's child was conceived as result of rape or incest committed by someone living in the household
- The minor parent and child no longer reside in the home of the parent or legal guardian because of physical or sexual abuse of the minor parent, her child or any other child in the household or the threat of such abuse
- The parent or guardian lives in another area of the state in which it is not practical for the minor parent to live because of factors such as attendance at school, a vocational program, employment, therapy or substance abuse treatment
- The parent, legal guardian or adult relative has spent the minor parent's assistance in an improper manner

## **Does a minor parent have to stay in school in order to receive welfare benefits?**

The minor must attend an educational program directed towards attaining a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a GED program, to receive benefits.

## **Are there other requirements for minors who are eligible to receive welfare benefits?**

To receive financial assistance through TANF, the teenage mother must cooperate with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare to identify the father for support purposes. The applicant has a right to claim "good cause" not identify the father. The applicant should be informed of this right by the cash assistance worker. The cash assistance worker should also explain the requirements for making this claim.

- **Under what circumstances can you file for good cause not to identify the father?** Circumstances in which identifying the father would not be in the best interest of the child include: if identifying the father would result in serious physical or emotional harm to either the child, the minor mother, or the caretaker of the minor mother and child; if the child was conceived through incest or rape; or if adoption proceedings are pending.
- **How can I prove my claim for good cause not to identify the father?** A good cause claim must be supported by documentation, including medical, law enforcement, social service, and psychological records. A sworn statement of an individual (other than the applicant) with knowledge of the circumstances can also be used to support a good cause claim. This evidence must be provided within 20 days of filing a good cause claim unless an extension is granted. If requested, the cash assistance worker may be able to help you in getting the needed documents to prove good cause. The Department must make decide whether "good cause" does exist within 45 days from the day the good cause claim was started.