



DC COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Imposing TANF Sanctions and Additional Compliance Requirements will Force Victims of Domestic Violence to make Difficult Choices about Their Survival

The Mayor's revised FY2010 budget proposes implementing new mandatory requirements for individuals applying for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Applicants will now **have** to go through a work ability assessment **and** participate in an orientation. In addition, if individuals do not meet the work requirement, progressive sanctions, including full sanctions, will be imposed.

- Women seeking TANF are often fleeing domestic violence and already face so many barriers to leaving: financial instability, lack of affordable housing and shelter, limited family resources, etc. Imposing additional administrative requirements will present **even more barriers for women trying to escape abuse.**
- Victims of domestic violence face unique barriers to employment - for this very reason, the City Council adopted an exception to the law's requirements known as the Family Violence Option ("FVO"), which excuses domestic violence victims from work requirements. But there are serious problems with victims accessing this option:
 - A recent survey indicated that while an estimated 21% of D.C. TANF recipients reported as victims of domestic violence – which amounts to approximately 2,650 people.¹
 - Unfortunately, however, out of those approximately 2,650 people, in FY2008 **only one TANF recipient was granted the FVO.**
 - It is clear that victims do not know their rights and are not being screened properly for the FVO. **It is extremely poor public policy to sanction victims who are legitimately not participating in work activities because it will endanger their lives.**
- If sanctions are imposed, many women will be forced to return to their abuser because they can no longer support themselves and their children. In these tough economic times, even a small sanction imposed on an already meager benefit amount may force victims to go back to their abusers.

¹ Acs, Gregory and Loprest, Pamela, "A Study of the District of Columbia's TANF Caseload," The Urban Institute, October 2003, http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410863_DC_TANF.pdf