**Approaches to Ending Full-Family Sanctions**

In the last few years, Illinois, Maryland, Maine, and the District of Columbia have decided to end full-family sanctions as a TANF work penalty. (New Jersey’s legislature also passed a bill repealing full family sanctions but Governor vetoed during the pandemic due to uncertainty of state fiscal situation.) These states join New York, California, and Vermont which had never adopted or imposed full-family sanctions.

The recent state legislative actions repealing full-family sanctions all follow a similar approach of identifying a portion of the TANF benefit for the children and protecting that portion from reduction or termination due to sanction. Under the new state approaches, only the portion of the benefit designated as for the adult in the family is subject to reduction or termination. Specifically:

In late 2017, Washington, D.C. enacted a [law](https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/sections/4-205.19f.html) (section (g) (1) that designates 80 percent of the TANF benefit for the children and 20 percent for adult members of the assistance unit. It bars any reduction of the children’s portion due to sanction and specifies a 30 percent reduction of the adult’s portion due to sanction. The bottom line result is specified in the law – a family’s benefits cannot be reduced more than [6 percent](https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/sections/4-205.18.html) due to sanction.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Illinois’ 2019 [legislation](https://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=101-0103) and implementing [rule](https://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/089001120C00790R.html) and [policy memo](https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=121046) took a similar approach, designating 75 percent of the TANF benefit for the children and 25 percent for adult members of the assistance unit. It bars any reduction of the children’s portion due to sanction and specifies a 30 percent reduction of the adult’s portion due to sanction. The bottom line result is specified in the law – a family’s benefits cannot be reduced more than 7.5 percent due to sanction.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Maryland’s [2020 legislation](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/Chapters_noln/CH_457_hb1313e.pdf) took a similar approach, designating 75 percent of the benefit for the children and 25 percent for the adult assistance unit members, and allowing a 30 percent reduction of the adult’s portion due to sanction.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Maine’s [2021 legislation](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?ld=78&PID=1456&snum=130) applies a sanction that reduces benefits to the family by terminating the portion of the grant for the noncomplying adult.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. The Washington, D.C. law change was enacted in 2017. The District had previously adopted but had not yet imposed full-family sanctions for non-compliance with required work activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The rule change was effective August 26, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Maryland’s law change has an effective date of July 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Maine law change does not set an effective date but requires a final report to the legislature of the effect of removing full-family sanctions be submitted by January 2023. The fiscal note indicates technological changes would take some time and assumes a January 2023 implementation. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)