



FISCAL SNAPSHOT

FAMILY INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

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Summary

The Family Independence Program (FIP) provides direct cash assistance to low-income Michigan families for basic subsistence needs, such as housing, utilities, and clothing, without being categorically specific (i.e., it can be used for whatever needs the family has). Funds are direct-deposited onto a recipient’s electronic benefit card, commonly known as the Michigan Bridge Card, which recipients use like a debit card. Additional programmatic benefits, such as a children’s back-to-school clothing supplement and a young-child support supplement, have been included in recent years.

Background

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) administers the program and, in conjunction with federal and state statute, establishes program eligibility requirements. These requirements can be found within the Bridges Eligibility Manuals ([BEM](#)). DHHS caseworkers at the over 100 local offices statewide work directly with individuals to determine eligibility, conduct redeterminations, and assist recipients with program-related issues.

FIP was established in 1996 under the [Social Welfare Act](#) as a response to federal replacement of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ([TANF](#)) block grant. These changes included additional federal requirements on TANF use and policies that subsequently applied to FIP recipients, including work requirements and a cumulative 60-month lifetime limit.

Recent Activity

FIP [caseloads](#) have declined significantly in recent years, primarily due to policy changes and economic conditions, resulting in an 81% reduction in expenditures over the past decade. Policy changes implemented by [2011 PAs 131](#) and [132](#) and [2012 PA 607](#) that significantly limited the number of adults that could receive FIP for longer than 60 months led to the declining caseloads beginning in FY 2011-12. Caseloads increased slightly in FY 2019-20 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, other forms of assistance—such as food assistance and unemployment insurance—saw a much higher utilization increase over the same period.

[Article 6](#) of 2022 PA 166, the FY 2022-23 DHHS budget, includes additional support for FIP recipients that meet certain criteria. Specifically, section 669 provides \$7.2 million of FIP for an annual back-to-school children’s clothing allowance, and section 678 provides \$4.2 million TANF for an annual lump-sum young-child supplement of \$600 per child under the age of six.

