



The maximum amount per person is roughly \$6 a day or \$2 a meal. The amount does not vary with the age of the child or the living standard of the geographic area—an infant gets the same level of food support as a 15-year old boy. The program is designed to help meet the nutritional needs of low-income children and adults, and provides funding through an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, similar to a debit card that can be used at a commercial food outlet.

The reliance of young children on the program varies dramatically across counties—essentially reflecting the variance in poverty rates—from a low of 8 percent of young children in Livingston County to 44 percent in Lake County. Nonetheless, Livingston County experienced one of the largest surges—a fivefold increase—in its rate of young children participating in the Food Assistance Program between 2000 and 2007. Counties with participation well above the state median tended to cluster in the southeastern and south central urban centers hard hit by the decline of the auto industry, and in the more rural areas of northern Michigan.

**Families dependent on the state cash assistance program subsist on income well below the poverty level.**

Unlike the trends in the Food Assistance Program, the participation of young children in the state cash assistance program for families rose only slightly as the state unemployment rate doubled over the first seven years of the decade. While the original cash assistance program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), responded to unemployment trends by rising in times of high unemployment and falling as jobs became available, the current program has not. The rules governing the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, which contributes to the state funding for the program, rewards states for reducing caseloads even during times of rising unemployment.

Cash assistance caseloads have remained relatively flat despite the surge in the state’s unemployment. In

Children Ages 0–5 Receiving Cash Assistance in Michigan and its Counties, 2000 vs 2007													
2007 Rank	County	2000 Annual Average		2007 Annual Average		% Change in Rate	2007 Rank	County	2000 Annual Average		2007 Annual Average		% Change in Rate
		Number	%	Number	%				Number	%	Number	%	
	<b>Michigan</b>	<b>52,349</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>58,835</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>18</b>	42	Hillsdale	99	2.8	179	5.1	85
1	Leelanau	15	1.1	8	0.7	-38	42	Mecosta	163	5.6	139	5.1	-9
1	Livingston	65	0.5	89	0.7	52	44	Otsego	51	2.9	92	5.5	90
3	Clinton	50	0.9	84	1.7	86	45	Ingham	1,733	8.0	1,209	5.7	-29
3	Gr. Traverse	83	1.5	97	1.7	15	45	Manistee	77	4.8	86	5.7	19
3	Ottawa	178	0.8	360	1.7	109	47	Gladwin	67	3.9	93	5.8	50
6	Charlevoix	27	1.3	35	2.0	54	48	St. Joseph	257	4.8	325	5.9	24
7	Dickinson	38	2.1	36	2.2	5	49	Iosco	89	5.7	88	6.1	7
8	Houghton	73	3.2	52	2.3	-28	49	Roscommon	125	9.3	78	6.1	-34
9	Emmet	44	1.9	54	2.5	31	51	Newaygo	153	3.8	231	6.2	61
10	Marquette	157	4.0	97	2.6	-34	51	Van Buren	424	6.8	394	6.2	-9
10	Oakland	1,874	1.9	2,383	2.6	34	53	Jackson	815	6.4	779	6.3	-2
12	Kalkaska	24	1.9	37	2.9	54	54	Kent	2,680	5.0	3,526	6.4	28
13	Alcona	31	5.0	14	3.1	-39	55	Cass	191	5.0	207	6.5	31
14	Allegan	142	1.5	280	3.2	106	55	Missaukee	132	3.8	218	6.5	71
15	Macomb	1,283	2.1	2,011	3.3	60	55	Wexford	132	3.8	218	6.5	71
16	Eaton	260	3.3	252	3.4	6	58	Mason	86	4.6	125	6.7	47
17	Antrim	42	2.6	50	3.5	35	59	Baraga	26	4.5	40	6.9	52
17	Ionia	197	3.9	175	3.5	-11	60	St. Clair	443	3.3	860	7.0	111
17	Lapeer	144	2.0	225	3.5	75	61	Crawford	50	5.3	58	7.1	34
20	Alger	21	3.8	17	3.6	-5	62	Iron	50	7.5	43	7.2	-4
20	Benzie	20	1.8	41	3.6	103	63	Arenac	74	6.7	78	7.5	12
20	Sanilac	95	2.7	111	3.6	31	64	Branch	103	3.0	267	7.8	161
23	Mackinac	20	2.9	23	3.7	28	64	Gratiot	113	3.8	221	7.8	104
24	Menominee	56	3.2	55	3.8	20	66	Alpena	122	5.8	142	8.1	39
24	Presque Isle	22	2.7	28	3.8	42	66	Bay	568	7.0	608	8.1	15
24	Washtenaw	728	3.0	941	3.8	27	68	Kalamazoo	1,156	6.2	1,566	8.5	39
27	Midland	154	2.4	228	3.9	66	68	Luce	48	11.3	31	8.5	-24
28	Tuscola	152	3.6	165	4.1	16	68	Ontonagon	20	4.8	24	8.5	78
29	Lenawee	239	3.2	307	4.2	33	71	Berrien	1,287	10.1	1,180	9.3	-7
29	Osceola	99	5.7	75	4.2	-26	72	Ogemaw	81	5.9	126	9.6	63
31	Cheboygan	58	3.1	74	4.4	43	72	Oscoda	34	5.7	50	9.6	70
31	Huron	68	2.8	87	4.4	59	74	Clare	173	7.8	199	10.1	29
31	Monroe	367	3.1	467	4.4	42	74	Oceana	126	6.1	243	10.1	67
34	Schoolcraft	27	4.5	22	4.5	0	76	Lake	105	14.5	70	11.0	-24
35	Barry	105	2.3	193	4.6	100	77	Calhoun	776	7.0	1,406	12.8	82
35	Shiawassee	161	2.7	243	4.6	67	78	Saginaw	2,635	15.3	2,038	13.1	-15
37	Montcalm	154	3.2	241	4.8	50	79	Genesee	5,170	13.5	5,051	14.0	3
38	Chippewa	134	5.5	110	4.9	-10	80	Wayne	22,602	12.3	24,168	14.5	18
38	Delta	118	4.7	118	4.9	3	81	Gogebic	87	9.1	123	15.9	75
38	Montmorency	42	7.9	26	4.9	-38	82	Muskegon	1,642	11.5	2,350	17.0	48
41	Isabella	144	3.7	210	5.0	34	*	Keweenaw	5	—	3	—	—

Note: Cash assistance is provided through the Family Independence Program (FIP).

Source: Department of Human Services

2000, roughly one in every 20 young children ages 0–5 in Michigan (6%) lived in a family that depended on the FIP program for bare subsistence; their participation rate rose to almost 8 percent by 2007. In the state, roughly 143,000 children of all ages participated in the program by 2007.

One reason FIP participation is depressed is due to the fact that the eligibility ceiling has not been tied to inflation. These ceilings for participation remained flat between 1991 and 2006 at monthly income under \$774, and then rose to a cutoff of \$810 in 2006. This income represents just over half (60%) of the 2007 poverty level

income of \$1,391 a month for a family of three—the average family size for a cash assistance case. As the poverty level is adjusted for inflation each year, more and more poor families will be unable to meet their basic needs yet will not qualify for cash assistance. Compounding the family’s economic fragility, many of these parents work part-time jobs which do not qualify them for unemployment benefits when they are laid off.

Families must have exhausted virtually all financial resources in order to access the state cash assistance program. To qualify for such assistance the family may not have countable assets exceeding \$3,000, including savings and retirement plans. The maximum grant for a family of three with no other income is currently \$492 per month. This amount was increased by one dollar per person per month in October 2008, representing the first cross-the-board increase in 19 years. Over that period, the cost of living rose by 61 percent.

Most families receiving cash assistance do not have other income and must subsist on \$492 for all their basic needs including rent, utilities, transportation, telephone, school supplies, cleaning and paper products, clothing, shoes and boots, and other necessities. They also must use some cash resources to supplement their food assistance benefit, which is designed to cover only two-thirds of the amount required to eat at the very basic nutrition level. Although most families receiving cash assistance would also receive food assistance, the total benefits would still leave them with total resources at 65 percent of the federal poverty level.<sup>56</sup>

Eligibility has also tightened in other ways. The 2006 federal reauthorization of TANF set strict penalties for states not meeting the required “work participation” rates by program enrollees, and in turn, the Michigan legislature established a sanction system to remove families from the

program when parents do not comply with work expectations. In September 2007, roughly 1,800 young children lived in families whose cash assistance was terminated for the entire family for at least 90 days.

Many observers note that these stringent work requirements contribute to non-participation in cash assistance programs in Michigan by the neediest families where cash-strapped parents with unreliable transportation and child care assistance are required to shuffle back and forth between job “training and placement” centers and the high unemployment areas in which they try to locate work. Many of them find it impossible to “jump through all of the hoops” and as a result are sanctioned or give up trying to participate.

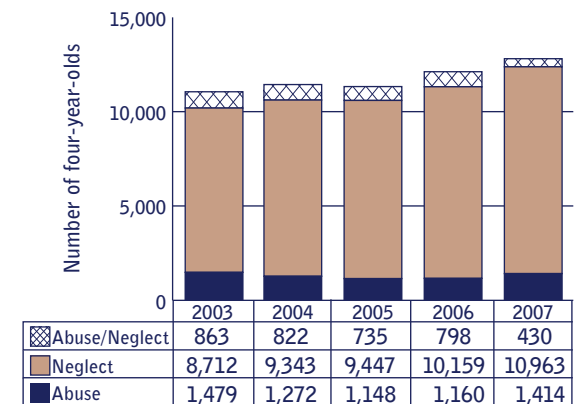
**Confirmed victims of child maltreatment increased.**

Overall the rate of child abuse and neglect in Michigan increased between fiscal years 2000 and 2007—rising by 14 percent. In 2000, 10 children of every 1,000 suffered from abuse or neglect, but by 2007 that rate had climbed to 12 of every 1,000. In 2007 roughly 29,400 children in the state were confirmed as victims, and almost half (44%) of these children were under the age of 6.

Child victims are much more likely to suffer from neglect (unmet basic needs) than abuse. The number of young children ages 0–5 confirmed as neglected rose by 25 percent in the five years from 2003 to 2007. Roughly 86 percent of Michigan’s 12,800 young child victims of abuse or neglect suffered from some type of neglect in 2007 compared to 79 percent in 2000.

Michigan law defines five types of neglect: physical neglect, inadequate supervision, failure to protect, abandonment, and medical neglect. *Physical neglect*, which accounts for the majority of all maltreatment cases, results from the parent or caregiver not meeting the child’s basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. The failure to provide these necessities compromises the child’s physical health and well-being, as well as psychological and cognitive growth and development, and is particularly

The number of neglected young children rose rapidly between 2003 and 2007.



Source: Michigan Department of Human Services

damaging to young children. Neglect is usually tied to poverty and a lack of family and community supports.

While incidents of physical and mental abuse get major media attention, the tragedy of the large and rising incidence of neglected children is largely hidden. Yet, neglect victims suffer as profoundly as abuse victims from short- and long-term effects including reduced coping skills, lack of impulse control, psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and a variety of severe relationship difficulties.

The most effective approach to addressing child abuse and neglect is shoring up family supports, particularly for low-income families who face the largest hurdles in meeting the basic needs of their families, and providing access to education and training opportunities for parents to expand their employment opportunities. Unfortunately many of these programs such as the cash assistance and the child care subsidy programs, which are intended to address the waning economic security among Michigan’s threatened families, have likewise eroded.

<sup>56</sup> The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is considered 100 percent of poverty. Extreme poverty is 50 percent of the FPL or half of poverty level income.