

Lilo Miller statement
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TANF

People have a lot of stereotypes about TANF and people on welfare. I certainly didn't expect to be in this situation – but life happens. I moved to Georgia with my husband and 6 kids. Both of us had jobs. I was making \$15/hr with an accounting job, my husband was a truck driver. We got childcare assistance and Peachcare, and we were getting by. Then one day, my husband was gone.

There was no way I could support 6 kids with an accounting job, so I went back to school, to finish my BSN degree. As a nurse, I will earn enough to be self-sufficient. I'll still need help with childcare and Peachcare for awhile, but I'm going to do what it takes.

I'm one of the lucky few to even get childcare assistance. I applied in Dekalb Co when we first moved here and was told there was a 5 year waiting period. When I got a job in Alpharetta, I applied in Gwinnett Co – why not? I got childcare assistance right away.

When my husband left and I decided to go back to school I got no TANF, no Peachcare and no educational assistance. I found my own grants and loans to go to school. The only program I could get into is Brenau, so I drive back and forth to Gainesville for class. In order to keep my childcare assistance I have to work at least 25 hrs week. I'm a waitress at Waffle House, earning about \$6.25/hr. I have housing assistance through Nicholas House and Medicaid for the kids. But I earn too much to qualify for TANF.

Contrary to what people think, most people on TANF are not there for the money. What can you do with \$220/month if you have 1 or 2 kids? You can't even pay rent. The real problem is that TANF doesn't help people with the education they need to support themselves.

If you are working and not earning enough to feed your kids, the system makes it nearly impossible to get benefits. You have appointments every 6 months for recertification. Each appointment will take all day – no matter what time they say you are scheduled for. And there is a separate appointment for food stamps, childcare and Medicaid. That means losing 3 days of work every six months! Waffle House is willing to work with me now, but my accounting job did not. I had to take a sick day or vacation for each appointment and with 6 kids, I needed to save my sick days.

If they won't pay for the full 4-year BSN, why not cover the 2 years of nursing school? I have to keep my grades up for scholarships anyway – TANF could have the same requirement.

TANF would pay for me to get a CNA certificate – but I'd be making \$6-8/hr. What's the point? They only pay for 10 month programs, which lead to low-pay, deadend jobs. Sometimes, people need help in order to help themselves. TANF teaches people to settle for less.