

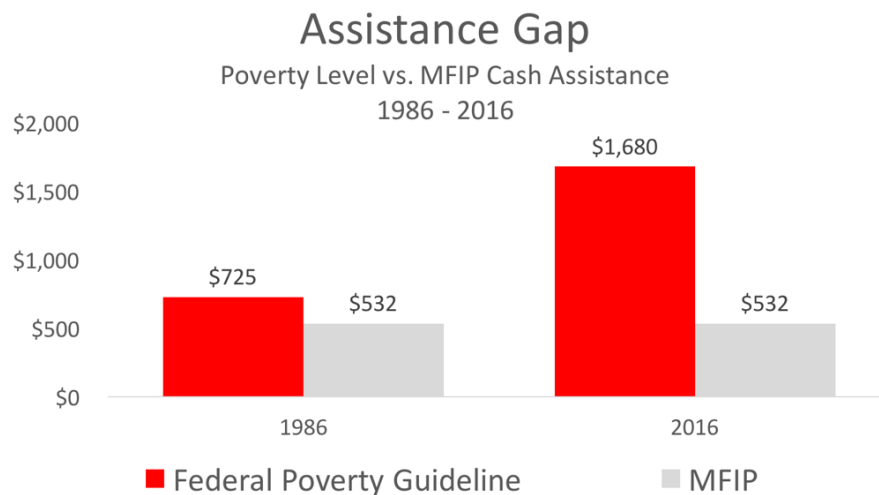
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Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid Report: Clock is Ticking for Lawmakers to Increase Cash Assistance in Minnesota's Welfare-to-Work Program

St. Paul—A new report released today by Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid shows the painful impact of inflation on the state's welfare-to-work program. Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) cash assistance has not increased since 1986. The maximum for a family of three is \$532 per month. This is lower than Wisconsin and South Dakota.

Last session, steps were initiated at the Capitol to address this problem—after a report by the legislatively created State TANF Task Force showcased how inflation has eroded MFIP cash assistance to dangerous levels.



Monthly Poverty Level & Maximum MFIP Cash Assistance for a Family of 3

Facing an eleven-week legislative session, the clock is ticking for state lawmakers to pass recommendations made by the Task Force.

“It has been 30 years since Minnesota has increased cash assistance for the lowest income families in our state. The consequence is devastating for families trying to get stable,” said Jessica Webster, a staff attorney with Legal Services Advocacy Project. **“Cash assistance covers basic expenses like car insurance, gas, work uniforms, and school activities while parents search for full-time employment.”**

Legislative action will slow the erosion of Minnesota’s federally funded welfare-to-work program; further delay will force families already below the poverty line into even worse economic conditions.

A bipartisan proposal (SF734, HF869) to increase MFIP cash assistance by \$100 per month was introduced by Senator Jeff Hayden and Representative Mary Franson. The bill will be considered in 2016.

“Most people enrolled in Minnesota’s welfare-to-work program are children—many are under 6 years old. These kids face challenges in their early development and at school because of their economic conditions at home,” stated chief author Senator Jeff Hayden, **“Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle agree this is a move in the right direction for the lowest income families on our state.”**

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid is among the coalition of 70 organizations advocating for an increase in MFIP cash assistance.

The program provides work support and cash assistance for families with children. Parents must be working, job searching, or enrolled in school or job training. In 2015, a \$110 per month housing allowance went into effect for families without subsidized housing. Last year, an MFIP policy passed to end a penalty for child support payments.

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