

## **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families**

*By, Donovan Antelope*

The TANF program is administered by Melody St. Clair and she also oversees the operations of the NADSS finance office. The purpose of the Northern Arapaho Tribal TANF Program is to provide temporary assistance to tribal members living on the Wind River Indian Reservation. TANF offers assistance to low income and unemployed families by offering training and education so that TANF clients can gain sustainable employment. The goal of Northern Arapaho Tribal TANF Program is to provide assistance to TANF Participants to become self-sufficient so that they don't continue to rely on the system to meet their basic needs. The assistance they offer to families includes vehicle repair, insurance, tuition costs for classes such as vocational training that would help them gain employment, the cost and fees for someone who is applying for a CDL, or they can help clients buy supplies needed for classes or work.

Eligibility for TANF is low income families and caretakers who have legal custody of children related to them. TANF is not designed for people to become dependent on, but rather a tool to help families become self-sufficient. When a TANF participant applies for benefits, they are strongly encouraged to become self-sufficient. This is achieved through the removal of barriers preventing the client from entering the workforce. The types of barriers are: obtaining their GED, getting drivers license reinstated (although TANF does not provide assistance for fines) and drug and alcohol evaluations. The removal of barriers is the first step in the road to success.

TANF also encourages "family formation," which encourages families to stay together. When a two parent family applies to the program, but they are not married, they encourage, not force, them to consider marriage. But this doesn't make parent families a higher priority over single parents; they will help all those who apply equally. They also help those who do qualify break down barriers that are keeping them from becoming self-sufficient. They help their clients by putting them into flexible plans to help them focus on obtaining self-sufficiency by creating career goals and help them obtain that goal. Their goals don't need to be specific, but something in general about what they want to do because over time goals can change depending on a person's situation.



The plans that TANF place their clients into are three parts, the first two are to set a career goal, overcome barriers standing in the way of becoming self-sufficient and to stay in compliance with the TANF program. To stay in compliance they need to achieve work participation hours. The work participation hours for two-parent families are a minimum of 30 hours a week and for single-parent families, it's a minimum of 25 hours a week.

When a TANF Participant becomes employed, they are entitled to receive transitional services for a period of twelve (12) months or until their income is above the 150% poverty guideline. Once these two criteria are attained, the TANF participant is considered to be self-sufficient and no longer requires assistance.