

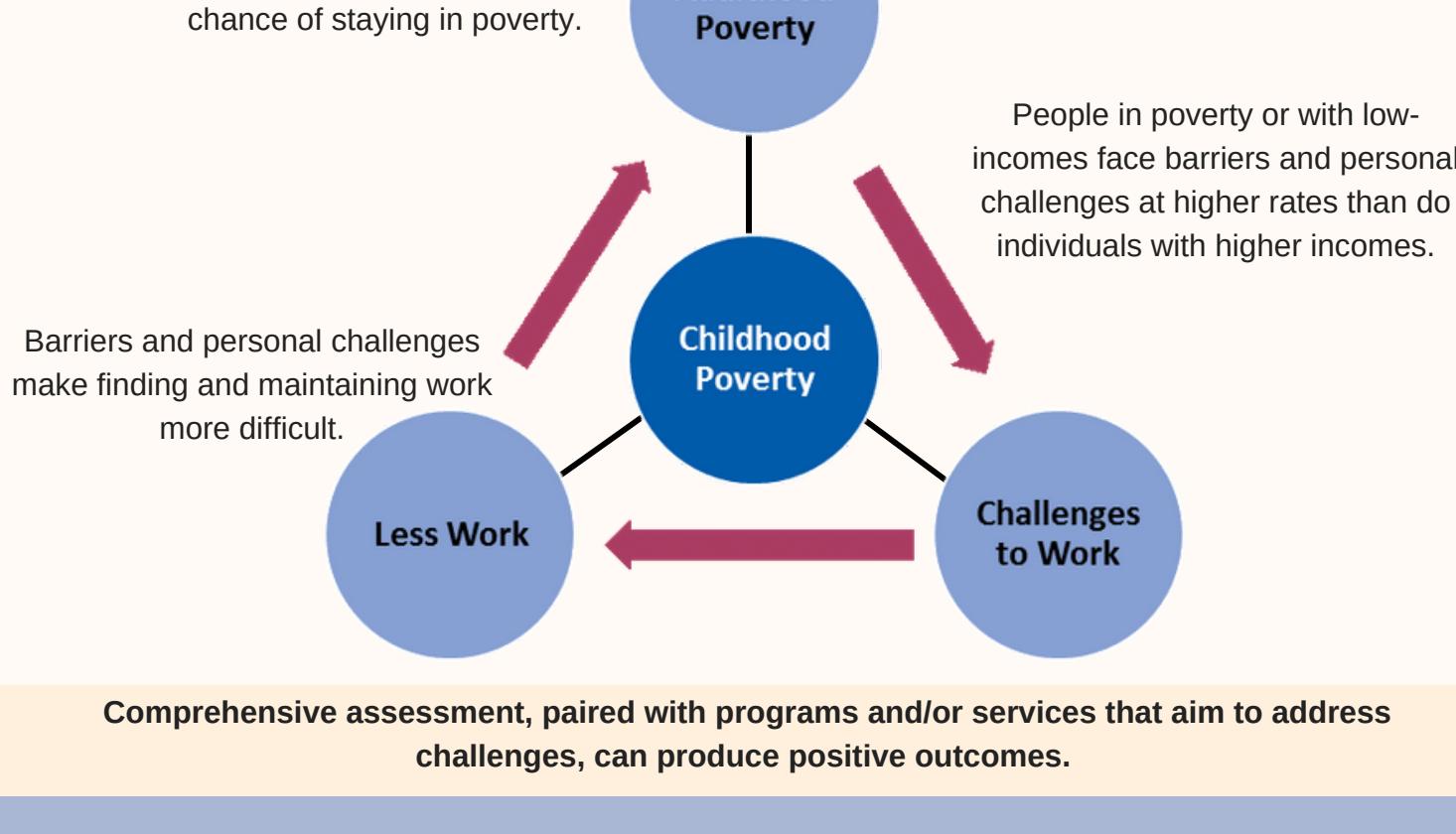
USING THE ONLINE WORK READINESS ASSESSMENT (OWRA)

To Address Significant Barriers to Employment

THE CUMULATIVE CHRONIC STRESS AND TRAUMA ASSOCIATED

with living in poverty can increase an individual's risk of barriers such as low educational attainment, unemployment, family instability, substance abuse, mental illness, and criminal activity. These risks can pose significant barriers to long-term employment and sustainable self-sufficiency.

Poverty, Challenges to Work, and Low Levels of Work are Interconnected



Comprehensive assessment, paired with programs and/or services that aim to address challenges, can produce positive outcomes.

OWRA Addresses Barriers to Employment

By integrating the OWRA tool within a comprehensive service delivery approach, agencies and organizations can more successfully identify and address significant barriers to employment. The web-based comprehensive assessment tool is designed to

as a core component of a comprehensive, employment-focused, service delivery approach. OWRA captures an array of information to generate a customized plan, which summarizes participants' strengths, skills, and potential barriers to employment in

order to connect the individual or family to appropriate resources.

In Washington, DC

The DC Department of Human Services (DHS) uses OWRA as part of a targeted redesign of the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families** (TANF) program. The redesign focuses on identifying barriers that customers and their family members face and offers supports through targeted mobility coaching and customized referrals. The Department's approach is family-centered and focuses on identifying participants' needs in order to set goals and develop a plan.

In Milwaukee, WI

Employ Milwaukee, the state's largest local workforce development board, uses OWRA with participants reentering the workforce from the justice system. The organization has found that OWRA helps them accurately identify significant barriers (such as mental illness, substance use disorders, and domestic violence) and connects participants to appropriate support services, training, and employment opportunities. The tool's usefulness allows for more appropriate resource allocation and informs target areas of future funding needs.

"Once a customer completes [OWRA], they are given, at a very high level, next steps of goal planning based on the recommendations from the tool. That helps guide them as we connect them to the next stage of their continuum."

Tamitha Davis
Washington DC DHS

Did you know ?

- OWRA assessments lead to tracked outcomes through an array of reporting features.
- OWRA generates recommended resources and services to address barriers for individuals and families.
- Programs can customize OWRA to meet the unique needs of the program and participants served.

For more information on this topic, view our webinar, *Using the OWRA Tool to Address Significant Barriers to Employment* at: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/owra/owra-video-resource-library>, visit our website (<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/owra/>) or contact the OWRA help desk at 1-866-989-6972 or owra@icf.com.

References

Bloom, D., Loprest, P., & Zedlewski, S. (2011). TANF recipients with barriers to employment. *Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation*.

Office of Family Assistance. (2018). Webinar: *Using the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) tool to address significant barriers to employment*. Presentations from: P. Loprest, Urban Institute, E. Nelson, Office of State Governments, Justice Center, C. Jewell, Employ Milwaukee Incorporated, and T. Davis, Washington DC Department of Human Services.

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