

**ACF RAPID RESPONSE TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE PROJECT**

**SITE VISIT TO ConnectInc: OFFERING
EFFECTIVE POST EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES TO TANF CLIENTS IN RURAL
AREAS**

Site Visit Report

Submitted in accordance with
233-01-0067
Task Order 14
August 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW	1
II. BACKGROUND	2
III. WORKSHOP SESSIONS	4
1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS	4
2. PERSPECTIVES ON POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS.....	4
3. REVIEW OF STATES’ CURRENT PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDING POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS	7
4. FOCUSING ON OUTCOMES: POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO TANF CLIENTS	13
5. SITE VISIT TO CONNECTINC PROGRAM.....	14
6. REFLECTIONS ON THE CONNECTINC PROGRAM AND WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? NEXT STEPS FOR WORKING WITH EX-TANF CLIENTS ON POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.....	15
7. CLOSING REMARKS.....	17
IV. SEMINAR EVALUATIONS	19
1. EVALUATION FORM	19
1.1 Evaluation form Question: “Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 14”	19
1.2 Evaluation form Question: “Please rate the overall service of the facilitators and speakers on the following issues using a scale of 1 to 4”	20
2. WRITTEN COMMENTS.....	20
2.1 Session Organization/Flow of Day	20
2.2 Session: “Perspectives on Rural Post-employment Services”	20
2.3 Site Visit to ConnectInc Program	21
2.4 Overall Seminar	21
2.5 Benefits Anticipated as a Result of the Seminar.....	21
2.6 What Was Most Useful about this Seminar?	21
2.7 How Could the Seminar Have Better Met Your Needs?	22
2.8 Other Comments	22

APPENDIX A: CONFERENCE AGENDA

APPENDIX B: CONFERENCE SPEAKER AND PARTICIPANT LIST

This report summarizes the key findings of the Administration for Children and Families seminar on “Site Visit to ConnectInc: Offering Effective Post-employment Services to TANF Clients in Rural Areas,” held June 18-19, 2002 in Rocky Mount, NC.

I. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

I. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) sponsored the *Site Visit to ConnectInc: Offering Post-employment Services to TANF Clients in Rural Areas* on June 18th and 19th in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Participants included representatives from Alabama, Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. This one-and-one-half-day seminar focused on the development of strategies to help Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients in rural areas overcome barriers to employment. The purpose of the workshop was to showcase ConnectInc.'s program for helping former TANF clients remain self-sufficient through re-employment, retention, and advancement. ConnectInc creates job search plans, develops job readiness strategies, and emphasizes family maintenance. One of ConnectInc's most unique features is its Geographic Employment Tool. This GIS-based computer program gives clients, with a single mouse-click, up-to-date information about employers, job opportunities, child care providers, transportation resources, education and training opportunities, and financial services, as well as an instant connection to employment-related Web sites. The conference also offered participants the opportunity to exchange information on experiences for helping TANF clients in rural areas with employment. This summary highlights the main points from the conference workshop sessions.

II. BACKGROUND

II. BACKGROUND

The purpose of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is to increase the flexibility of States in operating a program that is designed to:

- Provide assistance to needy families so children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
- End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Under TANF, public assistance was transformed from an entitlement program to one that requires work. Under TANF, States are required to impose work requirements on welfare recipients. In their State plans, States must outline how they will require a parent or caretaker receiving TANF funds to participate in work once the State has determined that they are job-ready and they have received assistance for two years. Work activities can include unsubsidized employment, subsidized private sector employment, subsidized public sector employment, work experience, on the job training, job search and job readiness assistance, community service programs, vocational educational training, job skill training directly, education related to employment, high school and GED completion and child care services to an individual who is participating in the community services program. States are required to reduce or terminate TANF assistance for recipients who do not participate in work activities.¹ The Federal time limit for receipt of public assistance is five years or less, depending on State option.

Five years after the passage of the welfare reform law, States have achieved unprecedented declines in their welfare caseloads. All 50 States and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico met the overall work participation rates for all families in 1997, 1998, and 1999.² However, many TANF recipients in rural areas face unique barriers to employment. These barriers include the lack of child care, transportation options, and employment opportunities. In addition, characteristics of rural areas such as low population density, isolation and mobility disadvantages, lack of fiscal and human resources, resistance to innovation and

¹ *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996* H.R. 3734 <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c104:1:./temp/~c104zkD2k:e81140>.

change, and scarce educational opportunities, present additional challenges for welfare recipients in rural areas who are trying to move from welfare to work.

Families in rural areas often have less access to affordable, accessible, and reliable child care. In 1996, almost two-thirds of rural welfare families had at least one child under the age of 6;³ however, there is a lack of child-care centers for these children in rural areas. Long distances, small and scattered populations, and high transportation costs make it difficult for child care centers to exist in rural areas.⁴ The lack of available child care causes many rural parents to rely on the informal care provided by relatives.⁵

The lack of public transportation in rural areas is another barrier TANF clients in rural areas face to employment. Most rural welfare families do not own cars. Jobs in rural areas are also often located long distances from homes, which makes the lack of public transportation difficult for TANF clients trying to go to work.

In comparison to urban areas, local rural labor markets generally have fewer job options. Average earnings levels are often lower in rural areas in contrast to urban areas. Steady and consistent employment with high wages in rural areas is less likely because employment is usually for minimum wage and part-time jobs. In addition, employment in rural areas is often seasonal.

² *HHS Reports All States Meet Overall Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services August 22, 2000, <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2000/welfare822.htm>.

³ *Welfare Reform Legislation Poses Opportunities and Challenges for Rural America. Rural Conditions and Trends, Vol. 8, No. 1, Page 46.*

⁴ Beach, Betty. *Perspectives on Rural Child Care*. Eric Clearinghouse on Rural and Small Education Schools. January 1997. Accessed on-line at: <http://www.ael.org/eric/digests/edorc969.htm>.

⁵ *Welfare Reform Legislation Poses Opportunities and Challenges for Rural America. Rural Conditions and Trends, Vol. 8, No. 1, Page 46.*

III. WORKSHOP SESSIONS

III. WORKSHOP SESSIONS

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Grant Collins, Chief of Staff, ACF/Office of Family Assistance

Jackie Savage, President, ConnectInc

Grant Collins opened the meeting by talking about the ConnectInc program. Mr. Collins had seen a demonstration of the program earlier in the year in DC and was very impressed with the program. Mr. Collins was pleased that other States were able to have the opportunity to visit the ConnectInc program and see the program firsthand. The Administration has a commitment to a reduction in rural poverty.

Currently, 60 percent of the caseload on welfare is not working. As we look to reauthorization, there will be more intense work efforts with increased work requirements.

Jackie Savage welcomed participants to North Carolina. She thanked participants for coming to North Carolina to see the ConnectInc programs and for the opportunity to showcase the ConnectInc program. She introduced North Carolina State Representative Joe Tolson, ConnectInc staff, and State and county Department of Social Services staff.

2. PERSPECTIVES ON POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

Dr. Bruce Weber, Oregon State University

During this session Dr. Bruce Weber talked about rural workforce issues, providing participants with statistics and research. Specific topics he addressed included characteristics of the rural poor, welfare reform and rural populations, and obstacles to employment such as child care and transportation. Dr. Weber also provided participants with strategies for overcoming barriers to employment that TANF clients in rural areas face.

Dr. Weber first talked about the characteristics of rural labor markets and low-income workers. Rural areas often have poorer earning prospects in comparison to urban areas. Jobs in rural areas are usually low-wage jobs and workers are earning less than enough to keep a family out of poverty. TANF clients in rural areas who are transitioning from welfare to work have characteristics that limit earnings capacity. In addition, rural areas that have a relatively large pool of residents moving from welfare to work also tend to have high unemployment rates.

TANF clients in rural areas often face challenges to transitioning from welfare to work. Rural areas, on average, have higher poverty, greater unemployment, lower educational levels, and longer distances to travel between home, child care, and worksites in comparison to urban areas. Because of lower population densities, rural areas usually have higher costs for services and frequently lack a full range of services needed for welfare to work transitions.

There are three main reasons why workers earn low incomes from wage work. These reasons include personal barriers, limited job opportunities, and limited community support systems. Examples of each of these are listed below:

Personal Barriers

- Limited education and skills
- Physical and mental disabilities
- Lack of a car for transportation to workplace or child care arrangements

Limited Job Opportunities

- Wage rates in rural areas are often low, especially in comparison to urban areas
- Full-time work is not always available. Part-time work is often more common in rural areas
- Year-round employment is not always available. Seasonal work is often more available in rural areas

Limited Community Support Systems

- Lack of job training programs and facilities which could help employees in rural areas obtain jobs or advance in their jobs
- Lack of child care facilities
- Lack of public transportation.

Dr. Weber presented research on welfare reform and rural areas. He talked about a study that took place in June 2002 called *Rural Dimensions of Welfare Reform*, which was the first comprehensive analysis of spatial dimensions of the 1996 welfare reform legislation. The study includes research on welfare, work, and poverty outcomes from some of the nation's leading poverty researchers. The study also provides evidence of rural-urban differences in outcomes. From this study as well as other studies, many lessons have been learned about welfare reform and rural areas. One lesson is that in both rural and urban areas, welfare reform and a growing

economy have led to reduced welfare caseloads, increased employment earnings for poor single mothers, and reduced poverty. Another lesson is that the current work-oriented welfare policy has not increased earnings or decreased poverty in areas with fewer job opportunities or work supports.

In another study conducted at Iowa State University, researchers looked at welfare reform impacts in seven different rural towns. One of the conclusions from this study was that rural TANF recipients had poorer access to jobs. The average earnings per job were lower in these rural areas. Another conclusion was that rural TANF recipients had less access to support services such as quality, affordable, and flexible child care; job training and education; affordable health care; and emergency services.

Dr. Weber also presented information on new findings from a forthcoming study by Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and the Rural Policy Research Institute. The study found that remote rural and central city/county outcomes are worse for single mothers. Between 1992 and 1998, single mothers in central cities had lower earnings growth, more persistent poverty, and more persistent welfare receipt in comparison to suburban and adjacent rural areas. The study also showed that the percent of single mothers with earnings increased across the urban-rural continuum. However, single mothers median earnings did not increase in central cities and remote rural counties. Also, single mother poverty rates decreased the least in central cities and remote rural counties.

There are several explanations as to why central cities and rural areas had less favorable outcomes. In terms of job opportunities, central cities have poorer access to jobs when compared to the suburbs. Rural areas have lower job earnings per job than metro areas and they also have higher under-employment. Another explanation is the personal and community barriers that central cities and rural areas face. Central cities have fewer child care options in contrast to the suburbs. Rural areas have more limited child care, transportation, and job training options than metro areas.

Dr. Weber talked about two of the most common barriers to work among rural low-income populations: child care and transportation. He also offered strategies for overcoming each of these barriers. In rural areas, there are fewer regulated child care slots, skilled service providers, child care centers, and options for infant care and after-school care. People in rural areas often have to travel longer distances between home and child care and work. One study found that rural households traveled twice as far as urban households from home to child care. In order to overcome barriers to child care, Dr. Weber suggested strengthening kith and kin child

care. Most of the child care in rural areas is kith and kin care; however, this care is often unstable. Because of the lack of regulated child care and skilled service providers, there needs to be more care giver training and licensure support. Another strategy is parent education. Parents need to be taught how to know what to look for in child care. In order to improve center care, more community and faith-based organizations should offer child care. Investments in family child care group homes and child care centers should also be made.

Another major barrier that rural welfare recipients face to employment is transportation. More than half (57%) of the rural poor do not own a car. Rural residents lack access to public transportation. Two-thirds of rural residents live where there is limited public transit. Rural residents often have to travel long distances between their homes, child care, and work. In order to overcome these barriers to transportation, Dr. Weber suggested private vehicle ownership programs. These programs allow for low-interest loans for the purchase of a car. The program also includes classes on buying, insuring, and maintaining a car. Assistance with insurance and licensing drivers and cars can also be provided through the program. Another strategy is the use of “other agency” vehicles. Often churches or community organizations have vans or cars that could be used to get welfare recipients to and from work. Employers could also provide transportation for their employees.

At the end of the session, Dr. Weber talked about strategies for improving employment outcomes in rural areas. In order to improve job retention and advancement in remote rural counties there needs to be more work supports such as job training, child care, and transportation. To increase the availability of jobs in rural areas the demand for limited skill workers needs to be increased.

3. REVIEW OF STATES’ CURRENT PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDING POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

Dr. Bruce Weber, Oregon State University
Nicole Waldman, Caliber Associates

Dr. Bruce Weber led an interactive session in which participants divided into groups by State and identified the assets and challenges their systems face in providing post employment services in rural areas.

Virginia

Participants identified the following assets:

- The State has a good community college system. The community college system provides training and education to welfare recipients in rural areas.
- There is a relentless commitment to improving the lives of rural residents. There is a real understanding of the problems rural TANF recipients face. Rural residents have many advocates.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- There is a lot of seasonal employment. It is difficult for TANF recipients in rural areas to find jobs that last throughout the year.
- The lack of transportation and child care are barriers to employment that rural welfare recipients face.

Maryland

Participants identified the following assets:

- Local flexibility and devolution are assets. Agencies at the local level have a lot of control over the design and implementation of programs to serve rural welfare recipients.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- Engagement is a barrier. Once clients have left welfare and found jobs, they do not want to continue to be involved in the system.
- Transportation is a barrier.
- Adequate and affordable child care is a barrier TANF clients face to employment.

Tennessee

Participants identified the following assets:

- There are a lot of support services for rural TANF recipients. These services include car repair, family services, and counseling services.
- The staff who work in the social service agencies are very dedicated to their clients and their work. As a result, there is not a lot of turnover.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- There is a lot of apathy in the rural community.
- There is a need for more training in order for welfare recipients to find jobs.

West Virginia

Participants identified the following assets:

- In West Virginia, there is a car lease program called West Virginia Wheels. The program helps welfare recipients and some former recipients to lease and eventually own cars. Participants sign a 24-month lease-to-own agreement based on their ability to pay. The vehicles will give people a reliable way to work so they can find and keep jobs.
- There are a number of support services such as transportation that are available to TANF recipients in rural areas for up to six months after they leave welfare.
- In social services agencies, there is not a lot of staff turnover.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- The lack of public transportation poses a barrier to TANF recipients trying to reach work.
- The lack of employment opportunities available to TANF recipients in rural areas.
- There is a need for case management training to provide better services to TANF clients in rural areas.

Arkansas

Participants identified the following assets:

- Autobuy, which is a statewide transportation program. Cars are purchased and distributed to low-income working families who are selected by Arkansas Welfare-to-Work coalitions.
- There is a low ratio of client to case manager. As a result, TANF clients are receiving more personal services.
- Funding is available for local coalitions that provide services to rural TANF clients
- There is strong legislative support. This support is especially helpful for new initiatives and programs to serve rural welfare clients.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- There is a lack of guidance for local coalitions that offer services to rural TANF clients.
- There is a need for more case management services for rural TANF clients.
- The lack of communication between Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor. Collaboration between the two offices could improve the services offered to rural TANF clients.

Mississippi

- For rural communities, there are a lot of available health care facilities.
- There is rural community action contract with community colleges that provides education and training to rural welfare clients.
- The faith-based community is very strong in Mississippi.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- The lack of full-time employment opportunities for residents in rural areas.
- The lack of available child care for rural welfare recipients.
- Decreased opportunities for private partnerships in order to create jobs and opportunities for rural welfare recipients.

Georgia

Participants identified the following assets:

- Georgia's GoodWorks program, which is a service strategy that provides intensive services and job search assistance for rural TANF clients.
- Rural welfare recipients in Georgia receive help with retaining employment. These clients are assigned to personal advisors who monitor and evaluate their work.
- The Wheels to Work program which provides reliable transportation for welfare recipients to get to work.
- Comprehensive assessments of TANF clients are performed up front. These assessments include making long-term career goals that are tracked.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- The lack of funding for specialized services such as child care and other supports for TANF clients.
- Staff issues which include large caseloads and the lack of specialized services.

- Staff cannot share information with other departments and agencies who might be providing services to TANF clients. The technology is not efficient.

Alabama

Participants identified the following assets:

- WR Initiatives funds which provides funds to counties to develop their own program for TANF clients.
- The support services are available to TANF clients. Examples of these services include transportation, child care, and help with retaining jobs.
- Partnerships exist between domestic violence trained specialists, mental health and substance abuse offices, the kinship care program, Welfare-to-Work, and the Department of Labor in order to improve the services that offered to rural TANF clients.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- It is a challenge to send funds to the counties. Often, the counties need funds for programs immediately and the funding is often not available.
- There is a need to strengthen partnerships among those who are offering services to TANF clients. Businesses need to be involved in these partnerships in order to increase job opportunities for TANF clients.
- Once TANF clients have a job, it is difficult to get them to come back to the Department of Social Services for follow-up.

Kentucky

Participants identified the following assets:

- Case management offers TANF clients training for employment and comprehensive family services.
- The job retention bonus provides financial incentives to TANF clients who retain their jobs.
- Collaboration between the Department of Social Services and the Department of Employment Services to better serve TANF clients.
- The Department of Social Services provides TANF clients with an allowance for expenses related to employment such as uniforms.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- It is difficult for TANF clients to advance in their careers because of low wages and limited job opportunities.
- The quality of child care is a barrier for TANF clients who are working.
- Transportation is a challenge for TANF clients trying to reach their jobs.

District of Columbia

Although DC has no rural perspective, the representative reported on the assets and challenges of providing services to TANF clients.

Participants identified the following assets:

- DC has a sophisticated transportation system that makes it easy for TANF clients to get to work.
- DC has a wide range of job opportunities available to TANF clients who are looking for employment.
- Assistance is provided to the poor in DC through the rebuilding of the inner city program and the scholarship programs.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- In DC there are self-imposed boundaries that isolate the poor.
- Because of the multitude of jobs available, there is job competition for entry-level jobs.
- Literacy issues present challenges to TANF clients applying for jobs. There is a lack of sufficient education.

North Carolina

- The flexibility the State gives the counties to design their own programs for rural TANF clients.
- Collaboration efforts to serve rural welfare clients.
- Support services for TANF families such as family programs.
- The faith community's involvement with helping TANF clients in rural areas.

Participants identified the following challenges:

- More funding is needed for programs to serve rural TANF clients.

- The data system the State uses to track clients is outdated. As a result, many agencies are not getting credit for the services they are offering to clients.
- There is a need for more mental health services for TANF clients.
- The lack of affordable housing for the rural poor.
- Many TANF clients lack educational skills which is a barrier to applying for employment.
- Part-time work is often all that is available in rural areas.

4. FOCUSING ON OUTCOMES: PROVIDING POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO TANF CLIENTS

Jackie Savage, ConnectInc

Jackie Savage, President of ConnectInc, gave a presentation on the ConnectInc program in order to set the stage for the site visit the next day. She provided participants with information on the program, discussed how the components of the ConnectInc program can be used to better serve TANF clients in rural areas, and presented information on preliminary program outcomes.

ConnectInc is a nonprofit organization that was started out of the need to expand the services delivered by the Work Central Career Advancement Center. Work Central is a call center that uses technology to help former welfare clients attain financial self-sufficiency. The program started three years ago and currently serves eight counties in North Carolina. The program has the technological capacity to serve States outside of North Carolina. Work Central is open 6 days a week for 70 hours per week in order to meet clients schedules. The program is unique because it combines a GIS based computer system with customer service. Work Central is a collaborative effort whose partners include Rocky Mount/Edgecombe Community Development Corporation, Sprint, Nortel, community colleges, Department of Commerce, Division of Social Services, Employment Security Commission, Department of Health and Human services and the Division of Information Resources Management.

ConnectInc currently serves 8,400 families. These families have left welfare and the counties refer them to ConnectInc. The Counties first send clients who have left welfare a letter telling them about ConnectInc. After the letter is sent out, a ConnectInc representative will call these clients. Participation in the program is voluntary. Of the referrals from the county, 76 percent of clients choose to participate in the ConnectInc program. In terms of demographics of ConnectInc clients, 76 percent of these families are African American and 20 percent are White. 97 percent of ConnectInc clients are female. 73 percent of clients have a 12th grade or higher

education while 27 percent have less than a 12th grade education. The average age of clients is 30 years old. ConnectInc has four goals, which include re-employment, job retention, career advancement, and asset accumulation. For reemployment, ConnectInc creates job search plans, develops job readiness strategies, and emphasizes family maintenance. This goal recognizes that a large number of first jobs do not last. In order to help clients retain jobs, ConnectInc reviews support systems, promotes problem solving, and supports longevity on the job. This goal is measured in 6 and 12 month benchmarks. For career advancement, ConnectInc introduces customers to career paths, explores training opportunities, and pursues educational plans. Asset accumulation is achieved by connecting customers to checking and savings account resources, informing customers about financial counseling, and educating them on home ownership opportunities.

ConnectInc has had success with helping former TANF clients find and retain employment. Since June 2000, 1,329 clients have entered employment. These customers annualized wages equal more than \$41 million.

5. SITE VISIT TO ConnectInc PROGRAM

On the second day of the workshop, participants had the opportunity to take a site visit to the ConnectInc program. During the site visit, participants heard about how counties in North Carolina refer ex-TANF clients to the ConnectInc program. The Department of Social Services at the county level sends ex-TANF clients a letter telling them about the ConnectInc program. The database system notifies ConnectInc when clients have been contacted. A ConnectInc representative will then contact the client via phone. All of ConnectInc's services are free and voluntary. Participants were also able to meet with program staff and see a demonstration of the Goldmine software, which is ConnectInc's case management tool. The system tracks clients' progress based on ConnectInc's goals of re-employment, job retention, career advancement, and asset accumulation. The system also helps clients with child care and transportation options. It shows how many miles away from the clients home the job is, as well as a list of child care facilities. Participants spent time with career representatives to see how they interact with clients. Career representatives can talk to businesses simultaneously while customers are on the phone. Daycare and transportation options are also discussed during the calls.

6. REFLECTIONS ON THE CONNECTINC PROGRAM AND WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? NEXT STEPS FOR WORKING WITH EX-TANF CLIENTS ON POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Karen Lynn-Dyson, Caliber Associates

Nicole Waldman, Caliber Associates

During this session, participants shared their reactions to the ConnectInc site visit, with emphasis on what aspects might work in their States. Participants divided into groups by State and talked about practical next steps they plan to take when they return to their offices. Obstacles to future steps were also discussed.

Alabama

- The participant wants to share the information that was presented at the conference with the State director of TANF.
- The participant would like to inform commissioners and legislators about ConnectInc's program in order to see about implementing the program in Alabama.
- An obstacle to implementing a program such as ConnectInc is data sharing. It is difficult to obtain data from other agencies.

Georgia

- In Georgia, there is already a system in place that connects clients to employment opportunities. However, there is a need for more advanced and efficient services for job retention.
- An obstacle to a more technical system is funding.

West Virginia

- The participant from West Virginia wanted to share information about the ConnectInc program with others in his State.
- The participant liked the idea of the GIS-based system. This system makes information easily available for caseworkers and would reduce paperwork.
- An obstacle to implementing a program like ConnectInc is funding.

Tennessee

- The participant wanted to share the information about ConnectInc with the director of policy.

- The participant wanted to work to implement a pilot of the ConnectInc program in Tennessee.
- An obstacle to implementing a pilot project would be funding.

Maryland

- The participant would like to go back to her State and do more research on programs similar to ConnectInc.
- The participant also would like to share the information she learned about the ConnectInc program with her supervisor and director.
- If implementation of the ConnectInc program is an option in Maryland, the concept of the ConnectInc program could also be sold to nonprofits and private businesses.
- The participant would like to set up a conference call between staff of her office and staff from the ConnectInc program.
- Obstacles to implementing a program like ConnectInc are funding and getting the local call center to help.

Kentucky

- The participant will share information from the workshop with the policy director.
- In order to convince others in the State to implement a program like ConnectInc, the representative would emphasize the programs benefit to the economy and economic development and the program's success with helping clients find jobs and retain employment.

Arkansas

- The participant wanted to share information about the ConnectInc program with the head of her department.
- The participant would submit a recommendation for a pilot of the ConnectInc program for Arkansas.
- A possible barrier to implementing a program like the ConnectInc program is the release of data from other agencies. Data from different agencies is incompatible.

District of Columbia

- The participant would also share the information on the ConnectInc program with others in her office. She would advocate for implementation of the program in DC.

Mississippi

- The participant would take the information gathered from the ConnectInc program back to her director.
- A barrier to implementation of the ConnectInc program is that the State is lacking the infrastructure for the technology that is required for the program.

Virginia

- The participant would share the information with her director.
- The participant wanted to arrange a visit for people from her office to see the ConnectInc program.

North Carolina

- Assistance is needed to improve some client services such as providing medical assistance.

7. CLOSING REMARKS

Grant Collins, ACF/Office of Family Assistance

Grant Collins talked about the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Network. Welfare Peer TA provides opportunities for States to learn about innovative programs such as the ConnectInc program. Mr. Collins talked about how States must show their processes for tracking and meeting goals in their State plans. The purpose of site visits to innovative programs like ConnectInc is to introduce States to existing technologies to address performance issues.

Mr. Collins also talked about some issues States need to consider for TANF reauthorization. Under the administration's plan, States will be required to report on the following in their State plans:

- How they are using TANF funding in their State plans
- Set measurable goals for each of the TANF purposes in their State plans
- Address critical issues of TANF such as substance abuse and child care.

Employment achievement awards will be given to States based on their performance in the following areas: job entry, wage progression, and job retention. States who are applying for these awards will need to set goals and will compete against the previous year's performance.

States will also submit self-sufficiency plans in which they outline specific processes for case closures due to earnings. In addition, for 2007, States will be required to meet a 70 percent work participation rate. TANF recipients must have 24 hours of direct work per week. There are six ways to meet the direct work requirement: unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, on the job training, supervised community service, supervised work experience, and public/private employment.

IV. SEMINAR EVALUATIONS

IV. SEMINAR EVALUATIONS

1. EVALUATION FORM

This section summarizes evaluation forms and written comments about the seminar.

At the conclusion of the seminar, attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form.

1.1 Evaluation form Question: “Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 4”

Exhibit IV-I summarizes the respondents’ rating of the session organization and flow, the “Perspectives on Rural Post Employment Services” session, the site visit to ConnectInc, question and answer opportunities, and the overall seminar. The following scale was used:

1 = poor 2 = satisfactory 3 = good 4 = excellent

EXHIBIT IV-1*								
Question	1		2		3		4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
A. Session Organization/Flow of Day	0	0%	0	0%	5	36%	9	64%
B. Session: “Perspectives on Rural Post-Employment Services”	0	0%	4	29%	4	29%	6	42%
C. Site Visit to ConnectInc Program	0	0%	0	0%	1	7%	13	93%
D. Question and Answer Opportunities	0	0%	0	0%	2	14%	12	86%
E. Overall Seminar	0	0%	0	0%	3	21%	11	79%

*Total number of respondents was 14

1.2 Evaluation form Question: “Please rate the overall service of the facilitators and speakers on the following issues using a scale of 1 to 4 (1=poor, 2=satisfactory, 3=good, 4=excellent)”

Exhibit IV-II summarizes the respondents’ rating of the facilitators and speakers knowledge about the content of the seminar, background and experience related to the content of the seminar, and overall rating of the facilitators of the speakers. The following scale was used:

1 = poor 2 = satisfactory 3 = good 4 = excellent

EXHIBIT IV-II*								
Question	1		2		3		4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
A. Knowledge about the content of the seminar	0	0%	0	0%	2	15%	11	85%
B. Background and experience related to the content of the seminar	0	0%	0	0%	1	8%	12	92%
C. Overall rating of the facilitators and speakers	0	0%	0	0%	3	13	10	77%

*Total number of respondents was 13

2. WRITTEN COMMENTS

Participants were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments. A summary of their responses is as follows:

2.1 Session Organization/Flow of Day

- The flow/pace was logical and comfortable. The comments from the politicals were impressive; smart protocols.

2.2 Session: “Perspectives on Rural Post-employment Services”

- This session was not of much value.
- Presentation of data was clear and good as a stage setter for roll out of the initiative; the limitations acknowledged were appreciated.

- More recent data would have been better to see. It would have been more beneficial to actually receive a copy of the challenges and assets reported by the various States or to be told where we could find this data after the consequence.
- The data was too hard to understand. It was dated. PowerPoint with color would have been helpful.

2.3 Site Visit to ConnectInc Program

- To actually see the site where the work is done clarified some questions left after descriptions presented.
- Excellent!

2.4 Overall Seminar

- I liked the small group concept at ConnectInc. We were able to get our questions answered better in that setting.
- The seminar was needed. Excellent information was shared. Great questions asked and answered.
- Needed to print information on flip charts in dark ink and large enough to see.

2.5 Benefits Anticipated as a Result of the Seminar

- I would love a pilot program for our State, but at least I can take back the concept of technology use and the phone call system.
- Focus on post employment services as we transition to a new focus due to reauthorization.
- The emphasis on post-employment tracking and programs.
- Perspective on a more comprehensive approach to post-employment.
- Clarified vision for developing a State program.
- Replication of the ConnectInc program to be recommended.
- Could use the information presented to put together a local caseworker guide.

2.6 What Was Most Useful about this Seminar?

- The list of assets and challenges for States providing post employment services to rural TANF clients.
- Hearing from other States.

- Seeing the software that ConnectInc uses with clients.
- The site visit.
- The information technology utilized: Goldmine.
- The knowledge of presenters.
- Actually seeing the ConnectInc program in progress.
- The question and answer sessions.
- The hands on experience.

2.7 How Could the Seminar Have Better Met Your Needs?

- More written materials on work flow and budgeting.

2.8 Other Comments

- There are no funds available in our State for a pilot of this program.
- The thoroughness of this seminar was appreciated.
- Hope we can partner with ConnectInc in a pilot project.
- High energy levels. Enjoyed this seminar very much. I couldn't have asked for nicer people. Thanks for the hospitality.

**APPENDIX A:
CONFERENCE AGENDA**

**APPENDIX B:
CONFERENCE SPEAKER AND PARTICIPANT**