

Creating an Employment- Focused TANF Program: Lessons from the Field

**Presentation at the ACF Regional TANF Directors Meeting
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Presentation Goals

- **By the end of the session, participants will have:**
 - **Examined the strengths and challenges of the current TANF program environment.**
 - **Provided input into an individualized, employment-focused practice framework aimed at customizing service delivery pathways to more effectively and efficiently serve TANF recipients.**
 - **Considered opportunities for implementing new or improving existing services to increase engagement and employment outcomes.**

TANF Program Environment

Changing Demands

- **Decrease in federal funding to support TANF programs**
 - Declining value and reallocation of the TANF block grant
 - Discontinuation of federal supplemental grants
 - End of American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds
- **Cuts in state and local spending to support TANF**
- **Increase in the demand for public assistance programs**
- **High unemployment, fewer full-time jobs**

Responses by States and Localities

- **Explicit efforts to reduce program costs**
 - Reductions in state and local administrative and program staffing
 - Reduction in the amount of the cash grant
 - Decreased availability of work and personal supports
- **Limit TANF caseload growth**
- **Modified contracts with local employment service providers**
- **Rethinking TANF practices and performance measures**

Opportunities for Change

Customizing Employment Services

- **Getting and keeping a job is a process**
- **Different clients require different approaches to service delivery, “start where the client is at”**
- **“Success” may measured in a variety of ways**
 - **Educational attainment/credentialing**
 - **Job placement**
 - **Wages**
 - **Retention**
 - **Progress toward work**

Customizing Employment Services (cont.)

- Implementing a customized, employment-focused approach may influence:
 - Assessment
 - Work and program requirements
 - Case management and planning
 - Work-focused activities
 - Personal and work supports
 - Monitoring and tracking
 - Performance measures and program outcomes
- Collaborative partnerships can expand existing services

How do program components for work-ready TANF recipients compare to those progressing toward work?

Promising Practices

- **Integrate a strong program message about the benefits of family self-sufficiency and stability**
- **Make strategic investments in services and supports**
- **Customize case management and service delivery**
- **Emphasize and incentivize goal-directed behaviors in progressing toward work**
- **Build strong TANF/employment networks (e.g., government agencies, community partners, employers, specialized service providers)**
- **Broadly define employment-focused outcomes**

What employment-focused promising practices have been implemented in your state or localities?

For More Information

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