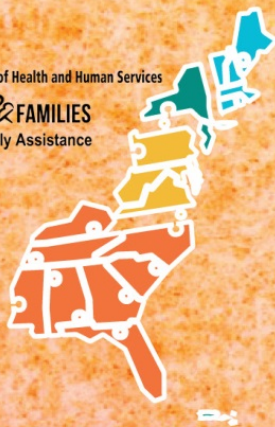




U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Family Assistance



OFA Regions I, II, III, & IV TANF Directors East Coast Meeting: Building Linkages Within and Across States to Achieve Family Independence

2014 Regions I, II, III, & IV TANF Directors East Coast Meeting
August 12-14, 2014

Summary Report



This technical assistance activity was funded by the
United States Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families,
Office of Family Assistance Regions I, II, III, & IV
and managed by ICF International

James Butler, Federal Project Officer
Renee Rainey, Project Manager
Caterina Bummara, Task Manager

This Technical Assistance (TA) activity was funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, and managed by ICF International for Contract No. HHSP2332009563WC, Task Order HHSP2337018T “TANF Training and Technical Assistance.”

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	4
Day One – August 12, 2014	4
Welcome and Opening Remarks.....	4
Meeting Overview: Discussion with ACF and OFA Leadership.....	5
State Dialogue and Topical Discussion	6
Redesigning Your TANF Program to Strengthen Services and Improve Employment Outcomes.....	10
Closing Remarks	11
Day Two – August 13, 2014	11
Improving Employment Outcomes: Subsidized Employment, Job Sector Training, Workforce Planning, and Career Pathways Strategies.....	11
Managing Through Performance Data: Using Program Data to Improve Program Performance	18
Creating an Employment Focused TANF Program: State Discussions and Work Groups	20
The Evolution of Your TANF Program.....	22
State Report Outs	22
Day Three – August 14, 2014	23
Toxic Stress and Homelessness	23
Taking Action – Implementing Change and Measuring Success: What Do You Have to Do to Get Where You Want to Go?	26
Closing Remarks	27



This technical assistance activity was funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance Regions I, II, III, & IV and managed by ICF International

James Butler, Federal Project Officer
 Renee Rainey, Project Manager
 Caterina Bumbara, Task Manager

Executive Summary

On August 12, 13, and 14, 2014, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Regions I, II, III, and IV convened in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for the *2014 TANF Directors East Coast Meeting: Building Linkages Within and Across States to Achieve Family Independence*. This meeting brought together Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program staff from 23 States and Territories to engage with colleagues and outside experts on innovative strategies to build connections within and across States. During the meeting, attendees shared their promising practices in collaborating with State, local, and community agencies to improve service to TANF participants. Attendees also heard from national experts and ACF and OFA Central Office leadership on identifying and addressing barriers to employment, improving employment outcomes, and evaluating existing TANF programs.

Day one: Leadership Remarks, Topical Dialogues, and Redesigning TANF

On the first day of the two and a half day meeting, attendees heard from ACF and OFA leadership, discussed pressing issues in their own jurisdictions, and heard from colleagues about their TANF redesign efforts. During remarks from Central Office leadership, Ms. Susan Golonka, Acting Director of OFA, shared updates on the Electronic Benefit Transfer transaction requirement from the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act, as well as discussed the quarterly financial reporting form revisions, which will go into effect in 2015. She also discussed a forthcoming technical assistance initiative sponsored by OFA. Acting Assistant Secretary for ACF, Mr. Mark Greenberg, also spoke, discussing FY 2013 use of TANF and maintenance of effort funds and supporting evidence-based programs and making research more practical.

During State topical dialogues, attendees discussed a range of pressing issues facing TANF programs today. These included:

- Offering retention services for TANF participants after case closure.
- Managing high staff turnover.
- Using TANF monies to support rapid re-housing initiatives.
- Strengthening employment outcomes in TANF and its impacts on the work participation rate.
- Serving non-custodial parents in job search, vocational training or subsidized employment.
- Using online work registration programs.
- Working with refugee populations who need English as a Second Language (ESL) supports.

The first day ended with an in-depth presentation and discussion about TANF redesign and improving employment outcomes. Representatives from Washington D.C.'s, Colorado's and Connecticut's TANF programs spoke. Each discussed the impetus for their TANF redesign efforts, what changes they made, and how. Questions to the presenters related to the costs associated with redesign, getting staff buy-in, and performance indicators.

Day two: Improving Employment Outcomes and Data and Performance Management

The foci of the second day were on improving employment outcomes for TANF participants and managing data. During the first session presenters spoke about specific strategies and programs that can help improve employment outcomes for TANF participants, such as subsidized employment, apprenticeship, and job sector training. Presenter Dr. Stan Koutstaal from OFA discussed the Health Profession Opportunity Grants program, which awarded grants to 32 organizations to educate and train TANF and other low-income individuals to access jobs in the healthcare industry. He also discussed the White House's and federal government's focus on offering job-driven training and the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). He then provided an in-depth overview of the key elements, identified by the White House, of job-driven training programs. These included:

- **Employer engagement:** working upfront with employer to determine local hiring needs.

- **Earn and learn:** offering work-based learning opportunities, such as on-the job training, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeships.
- **Smart choices:** making better use of data to drive accountability, informing program offerings, and recruiting job seekers.
- **Measurement matters:** measuring and tracking employment and earnings outcomes.
- **Stepping stones:** offering progressive training, where one experience can build off of and lead to another.
- **Opening doors:** breaking down barriers to employment for 'hard-to-serve' individuals.
- **Regional partnerships:** coordinating with other system stakeholders, like American Job Centers, local employment, and education institutions.

Following Dr. Koutstaal, presenters from Rhode Island and Kentucky spoke about their programs' approaches to offering holistic, job-driven programs to low-income and TANF participants. Ms. Kathleen Cloutier from Rhode Island's Dorcas International Institute, a human services organization and training provider, discussed the importance of comprehensively assessing participant needs and long-term career interests. Ms. Shauna King-Simms from the Kentucky Community and Technical College System discussed the impetus behind their Ready-to-Work program and its key components relating to education, the workforce participation rate, and strong case management. Dr. Elisabeth Babcock from the Crittenton Women's Union (CWU) ended the session, discussing her organization's efforts to help families move out of poverty by focusing on family stability, well-being, education and training, financial management, and employment/career management. She also discussed her organization's job programs that create expedited opportunities for participants to move out of poverty by connecting them to in-demand occupations and training.

The second session of day two focused on using program data to improve TANF program performance. Presenters discussed what performance measures are appropriate to assess in a TANF environment. Ms. Christina Tschlis from Region III discussed how to correct errors in data, walked attendees through a sample data reporting form, and discussed the process for receiving Central Office feedback. Following her were representatives from Denver, Colorado and West Virginia, each of whom discussed their data and performance measurement systems. Mr. Curt Pesicka from Denver shared performance management challenges, such as different goals between agencies, pay for performance issues, and managing multiple data sources and tracking systems. Mr. Rodney Wright and Mr. Keith Zalaznik discussed problems with West Virginia's TANF data system and presented their new data reporting dashboard, which allows users to access real-time data and organize caseloads, showing their work participation rates and general demographics.

The next session focused on creating employment focused TANF programs, which included State discussions and workgroups. Regional Administrator from the Employment and Training Administration from the Department of Labor (DOL), Mr. Leo Miller, first discussed WIOA and DOL's need to get substantial stakeholder feedback to implement the new law and draft regulations. Dr. Michelle Derr from Mathematica then facilitated a brainstorming session among attendees to help TANF programs become more employment focused. As part of this discussion, attendees discussed strategies for "work-ready" and "work-progressing" TANF participants within the context of case management, work requirements, performance management and outcomes. Following this facilitated dialogue, attendees participated in a small group exercise that focused on identifying the core components of a 'successful' TANF program.

Day three: Understanding Barriers and Implementing Change

The final day of the meeting focused on understanding the impacts of toxic stress and homelessness on vulnerable families and implementing and measuring change. In the first session, presenters from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, OFA, Drexel University, and Crittenton Women's Union (CWU) talked about ways TANF programs can use their existing resources to better support homeless families and mitigate toxic stress caused by adverse

childhood experiences. Ms. Amy Sawyer from the Interagency Council on Homelessness talked about the federal government's strategy to have a coordinated approach to addressing homelessness, focusing on developing centralized entry systems, tailoring interventions, and providing rapid re-housing. Ms. Rebecca Shwalb from OFA explained ways TANF funds could be used to serve homeless families and shared OFA resources. Dr. Mariana Chilton from Drexel University then discussed what toxic stress is and how it can be impacted by early childhood experiences. She also discussed her ongoing research of adverse childhood experiences among low-income families. Ms. Elisabeth Babcock from CWU closed the session by discussing practical ways human service programs can use brain science to mitigate stress-related challenges facing poor families. She spoke about the importance of staff training and using 'brain science-informed tools' that help participants set goals, problem solve, and organize.

The final session of the meeting focused on helping attendees implement program changes designed to improve family self-sufficiency and stability. To help attendees identify potential opportunities for change, Dr. Michelle Derr from Mathematica suggested attendees consider:

- Whether what they are doing matches what they expect to happen.
- What their goals are and how they are achieving them.
- How they can be more intentional about what they are trying to achieve.

Attendees, after considering their goals, completed a worksheet that focused on interventions, opportunities for change, current and desired outcomes. Dr. Derr then led attendees through a structured dialogue about their goal setting and action plans steps and Louisa Jones from ICF International closed the session by asking attendees to reflect on what they learned during the meeting and what technical assistance they may want/need to implement program or policy changes.

Introduction

On August 12, 13, and 14, 2014, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Regions I, II, III, and IV convened the *2014 TANF Directors East Coast Meeting: Building Linkages Within and Across States to Achieve Family Independence* in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This meeting brought together Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program staff from 23 States and Territories to strategically engage with their peers and experts on innovative strategies to build linkages within and across States. During the meeting, State and Territory representatives shared promising practices for collaborating with State, local, and community agencies to successfully serve TANF participants. Attendees also heard from national experts and ACF and OFA Central Office leadership on a variety of topics related to identifying and addressing barriers to employment, improving employment outcomes, and evaluating existing TANF programs. Over the course of the two and one-half day conference a number of specific topics were examined, including:

- Redesigning Your TANF Program to Strengthen Services and Improve Employment Outcomes;
- Improving Employment Outcomes: Subsidized Employment, Job Sector Training, Workforce Planning, and Career Pathways;
- Managing Through Performance Data: Using Program Data to Improve Program Performance;
- Creating an Employment Focused TANF Program;
- The Evolution of Your TANF Program;
- Toxic Stress and Homelessness; and
- Taking Action – Implementing Change and Measuring Success: What Do You Have to Do to Get Where You Want to Go?

This report summarizes key highlights from the 2014 TANF Directors East Coast Meeting.

Day One – August 12, 2014

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Ms. Eileen Friedman, TANF Region III Program Manager, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, opened the meeting by noting that the quad-regional meeting represented about half of the TANF programs in the country gathered together to share ideas. Ms. Friedman remarked that “change is inevitable” and this was an opportunity to think outside the box, engage with one another, and think of new ways to improve TANF programs.

Ms. Friedman was followed by Ms. Essey Workie, Region III Administrator, Administration for Children and Families, and Ms. Lourdes Padilla, Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Ms. Workie commented briefly on the *State Commissioners and Secretaries ACF and OFA Leadership and Regional Office Staff Meeting* that took place earlier that morning and its focus on wide-ranging research, data, and Technical Assistance (TA) topics. Ms. Workie cited the overall meeting as a rare opportunity to step away from the numbers and “paper-pushing” and focus on ideas and passion. Ms. Padilla, who was attending on behalf of Secretary Mackereth of Pennsylvania, remarked on the theme of the meeting and how important it is to share best practices among States. Ms. Padilla explained that in her 32 years of working with clients, she has seen many examples of the system both working and not working and reminded States that they have the ability to adapt their programs to best serve families. Two of her goals included improving service delivery and increasing work participation rates (WPR). She closed by stressing the need to motivate clients to move them toward self-sufficiency.

Meeting Overview: Discussion with ACF and OFA Leadership

Ms. Susan Golonka, Acting Director of the Office of Family Assistance, began the session by encouraging attendees to think about how TANF can better serve low-income families as a comprehensive effort. TANF has a clear mission to help low-income families move toward self-sufficiency, and Ms. Golonka asked participants to think about program changes that would better serve those families. She hoped participants would leave the meeting “inspired.”

Ms. Golonka also provided updates on two topics. The first was the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) transaction requirement from the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 that requires States receiving TANF grants to maintain policies and practices that will prevent assistance provided under the program from being used in EBT transactions in any liquor store; casino, gambling casino, or gambling establishment; or at any retail establishment that provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclad state for entertainment.¹ ACF published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)² in the Federal Register on February 6, 2014 that provides instructions on how to submit comments that will help outline ACF’s thoughts and decision processes of the Final Rule. ACF has received responses on the NPRM from States, EBT vendors, organizations, and advocacy groups that will inform the design of the Final Rule. The second topic Ms. Golonka reminded attendees about was the quarterly financial reporting form revisions. In Fiscal Year 2015, States will be reporting via a new form with updated categories on their TANF expenditures (ACF-196R).³

Finally, Ms. Golonka announced an upcoming TA initiative, a policy academy that OFA is sponsoring, in which approximately eight States will be selected for a 15-month engagement focused on improving employment outcomes. This new initiative’s goal is to restore TANF’s ability to serve as a safety net and a vehicle to move towards employment. More details about the initiative were forthcoming at the time of the meeting.

Mr. Mark Greenberg, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families, then remarked that many things can only be accomplished by being together in person, so he was thrilled that the States and Territories in Regions I, II, III, & IV were able to come to Philadelphia to engage with one another. He gave a brief overview of the earlier *State Commissioners and Secretaries ACF and OFA Leadership and Regional Office Staff Meeting*, the purpose of which was to situate TANF within the broader sequence of what States are discussing with their human services agencies and workforce programs. Participants from the morning meeting all agreed that it is fundamentally important for TANF to serve families in need and to work as part of a broader overall strategy to raise work participation and sustain employment.

¹ The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-112publ96/pdf/PLAW-112publ96.pdf>.

² The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-02-06/html/2014-02488.htm>.

³ More information and instructions on this topic can be found on the OFA PeerTA website at: https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/uploadedFiles/revised_acf_196r_196_instructions_nh_15_md.pdf.

Mr. Greenberg next briefly mentioned the FY 2013 Use of TANF and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Funds, shown in **Figure One**. The pie chart of TANF financial data shows that the Total Funds Used (spent and transferred) in FY 2013 was \$31,649,201,568, and breaks the funds down by sections, the biggest of which was Basic Assistance at 28 percent, followed by Child Care Spent or Transferred at 16 percent, and then Other Non-Assistance at 15 percent.

Mr. Greenberg then addressed making changes to TANF programs. He noted that although an available pathway to change is through legislation and federal regulations, he has been sobered as to how long it takes to make legislative changes. But, ACF and OFA can help States and Territories by providing policy guidance through posting questions and subsequent answers online.⁴ Further, Mr. Greenberg particularly urged those involved in TANF redesign efforts that the best way to start is to begin with a clear vision of what States want to accomplish.

The last point Mr. Greenberg made was regarding research. ACF is an evidence-based administration and they take evidence seriously in the TANF program, as well as all other areas. One of the biggest challenges is that sometimes the evidence does not answer questions about what is happening now. OFA is attempting to make research more practical. An example of this is through a major experimental design they have undertaken on building career pathways to sustainable progress in the labor force in which they are working closely with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Further, some ongoing research efforts that will help human services become more evidence-based include the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program, and research efforts around subsidized employment, job search, early childhood adversity work, trauma-informed care, two-generational strategies, and working with non-custodial parents.

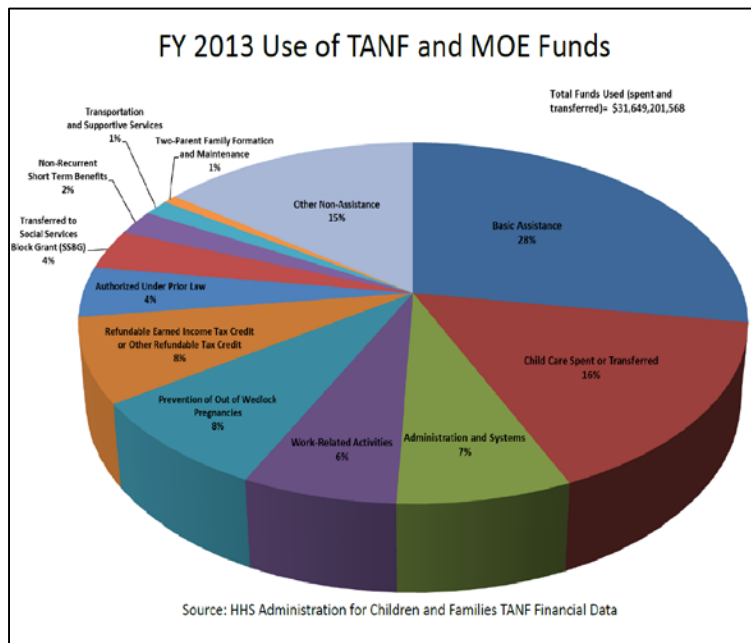
State Dialogue and Topical Discussion

Ms. LaMonica Shelton, TANF Region IV Program Manager, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, outlined this session in which States/Territories were given an opportunity to identify particular questions, challenges, and/or innovative solutions they wanted to discuss in more depth with their peers. A selection of the main questions and answers discussed throughout the session are included below. Comments were provided by various State representatives and are identified by State in the following responses.

Q: A participant from South Carolina asked, "[w]hat States have retention services for participants after case closure? What types of services? Are they for a limited time period?"

- New Jersey mentioned that they provide supportive services after closure in the form of child care and transportation, and their One-Stop provides ongoing employment services, but the services are limited. Child care services are provided for two years and transportation is provided for six months.

Figure One



⁴ TANF information including Q & A can be found on the ACF website at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource-library>.

- New York remarked on their provision of transitional child care for 12 months, though they meet emergencies as needed on a month-to-month basis.
- A Kentucky representative discussed that they provide a reimbursement payment for the nine months following participants attaining employment. The payment is only available to an individual once in his or her lifetime and is used to stabilize employment placement and prevent a return to assistance.
- Child care eligibility in Washington D.C. is based on income. They also bridge their TANF program to their Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) Program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)). They described their disregard structure as a “generous” one that keeps participants on TANF slightly longer than usual. Their clients can “earn quite a bit comparatively” before they exit TANF. They also have access to transitional FSET benefits.
- An attendee from Mississippi mentioned that they offer 12 months of transitional transportation in the form of a stipend and 18 months of transitional child care. The State transfers 20 percent of their TANF grant to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) based on funding eligibility and income eligibility. They serve parents up to 50 percent of State median income.
- In Connecticut, they have a restrictive TANF time limit of 21 months but they offer a one-year safety net program for eligible families which provides stipends for basic needs such as food, rent, utilities, or clothing.
- Further, a Florida attendee mentioned that their State offers transitional child care, transportation, and education for up to two years. The income threshold is 200 percent of Federal Poverty Level.
- Lastly, Pennsylvania offers transitional cash assistance and child care.

Q: “How do you adjust to high staff turnover? The policies and procedures are difficult and it takes months to train staff.”

- In Alabama they experience turnover and believe that States need a strong training program to reduce turnover. In recent years, Alabama has moved toward online training using a system that tracks employee training and provides supervisors reminders if the employee does not complete their required training.
- A West Virginia attendee remarked that, in combination with face-to-face training, they offer online training and recently revamped their training modules. West Virginia found that if one orients people well to a job, they are much more likely to stay in that job. Also, some of their counties have weekly mentoring programs and they have found this to be an encouraging forum for open discussion around challenges.
- Providing a different perspective, a Maine representative remarked that it is important to get to the root of what causes turnover. In Maine, it is often the level or amount of work that staff are required to accomplish that causes turnover. Therefore, the State has undertaken a Business Process Redesign (BPR) to reshape how they do their work and serve their TANF participants. Their hope is that it will promote a better work environment. The BPR has seen tremendous buy-in from their staff. Overall, the turnover issue is related to the satisfaction of employees with their jobs. Training is a part of the solution, but if staff are unhappy in a work environment, it will lead to retention issues.
- Florida has recently been experimenting with remote training, where regions with new hires can participate in training from other areas via webcam. This is helpful if a new employee misses a class because it allows them to make it up virtually. They have an integrated computer system, which is a key component to this new procedure.
- In West Virginia, they are improving worksites and supporting workers through voice satisfaction surveys to examine why employees leave, allowing them to then provide targeted solutions. They have found that employee turnover is not always a compensation issue. Further, the State has started to concentrate more on effective management, team building, and other successful workplace practices.
- Finally, Massachusetts does not have a high staff turnover rate. This is due, in part, to TANF staff being unionized in Massachusetts. Recently, they created a better career ladder for staff and a better career path for those doing direct care that will be implemented in January 2015.

Q: "Have you utilized TANF dollars to support Housing First or Rapid Re-Housing initiatives?"

- An attendee from Washington D.C. discussed their utilization of TANF dollars to support Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing initiatives. Some of those dollars are Contingency Fund dollars. They have been allocating resources to pay for case management.
- Florida provides TANF funding for a homeless prevention program for individuals who are facing lost housing due to family emergencies. The program provides assistance to help the individuals retain housing, including rent payments, mortgages, and utility expenses.
- New York does not use TANF dollars for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), but they do use funds for rent supplements to move homeless individuals out of shelters. The State's representative concluded that "anything we can do to get [homeless individuals] out of shelters or prevent them from getting evicted in the first place is money well spent."

Q: "What strategies are States using to strengthen employment outcomes in the TANF program and what, if any, has been the impact on WPR?"

- Washington D.C. uses the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) tool.⁵ They designed a method to do intelligent referrals, so each customer has a referral based on their individual needs and goals. The most significant impact that Washington D.C. has seen on work participation is retention and more consistent participation. Many customers had a lot of completed hours but there was no real impact on work participation. Now, however, they are seeing an increase in WPR across all programs.
- Rhode Island receives the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant in which they work in partnership with their State Department of Labor and Training, Department of Education, and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to develop a collective workforce development strategy. The Rhode Island attendee continued that collaboration among counties is relatively easy due to the small size of the State. They also implemented a program where all workforce development in Rhode Island will follow one specific path. The strategy that has been most effective is implementing work experience. The participants not only go through work readiness and earn a credential, but are provided with career pathways which lead to employment. Consequently, there has not been a big increase in WPR, but they are hoping to see increases as they move forward.
- In Maryland, they are working with a University research partner to identify industries with higher starting wages. They also interviewed small, medium, and large job developers. This has helped both with job placements and their WPR.
- A representative from the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) shared that the Ready-to-Work program in Kentucky has an extensive TANF work-study component, which is effectively subsidized employment in the community college context.

Q: "Is any State using TANF or workforce funds specifically to serve non-custodial parents (NCPs) for job search, vocational training, or subsidized employment?"

- Maryland serves NCPs of TANF children in their TANF work programs in many of their local departments, and they have programs that are targeted specifically for NCPs. For example, Washington County, Maryland has a program entitled Dads Connection that has helped around two-thirds of the fathers who participate in the program earn employment.
- Colorado's ReHire program, funded by the State, focuses on their metro area and serves NCPs, among other populations.
- Lastly, Florida has a program focused on employment opportunities for NCPs, although it is limited to a few counties in the State. NCPs can request assistance or be ordered by a judge to participate.

⁵ More information on the OWRA tool can be found at: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/tanftc/>.

Q: A representative from Florida asked, "Florida recently implemented an online work registration program for TANF applicants to expedite application approvals, [allowing them to do their] initial registration more easily. Are any other States doing this, too?"

- An attendee from Pennsylvania mentioned that State legislation was passed that requires an up-front applicant job search as a condition of eligibility. Participants can register via Pennsylvania's online system, JobGateway. During the application process, participants must complete up to three job searches per week, which can be either in person or online as long as they can verify the searches.
- Lastly, South Carolina has online applications, and their cases are processed regionally. However, if someone is not able to apply online, they can apply in-person.

Q: "How are States effectively working with refugee populations who need English as a Second Language (ESL) to be successful? What types of components do you have?"

- Rhode Island has a program entitled Project Opportunity. The program has ESL, work experience, and contextualized work components built into it. The State also just passed a law that changed the program to last longer than six months.
- A Delaware attendee mentioned that they would waive the WPR for the refugee and put them into the appropriate service.

Q: "What are some effective approaches to serving customers with significantly high barriers to employment? Specifically, those with criminal histories?"

- Washington D.C. works with the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) to refer TANF participants to address criminal histories through UDC's expungement program. Further, a civil rights law prohibits discrimination against people with criminal backgrounds, and a recent law was passed that prohibits even asking the question when hiring. The local Washington D.C. government is very tolerant of returning citizens.
- A meeting attendee from Delaware responded that they have a reentry program, but it is not targeted to TANF participants. They also have an expungement and pardon process. Many of Delaware's TANF participants do not know how to answer potential employers' questions about their criminal histories but State TANF agencies can help by preparing clients with how to respond.
- Lastly, the conversation shifted to Georgia. As part of the Governor's criminal justice reform package, the "Ban the Box" program was created. Any State government application can no longer ask about criminal history. Further, workforce development and other departments developed public/private partnerships to create funnels for people entering the workforce after being incarcerated.

Q: "What low tech tools or approaches have been most effective in helping [TANF participants] maintain employment? States have been exposed to a lot of helpful technology, but are there any non-technological innovations that have helped?"

- An attendee from Colorado discussed taking an approach that moves away from technology to make sure they are completing assessments and developing individualized plans. Many counties in Colorado have had success spending more face-time with customers.

Q: A representative from Colorado asked, "In regards to Social Security, how do we better connect those who are likely eligible for Social Security to Social Security benefits quicker? [Are] there any State[s] with specific programs? In Colorado, they try to look at employment-outcome. It has taken between 24-36 months to successfully attach someone to a higher income base through Social Security. Sometimes it is happening through a navigation program, other times it is not happening at all."

- A New York attendee mentioned that they have a Disability Assistance Program which assists clients through the eligibility process. Another project that targets the homeless population includes the Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/ Supplemental Security Disability Income (SSDI) Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) project (a partnership with the federal government, specifically the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)). The New York attendee has found that the many of their homeless have mental health issues and are difficult to serve.
- Similarly, Washington D.C. implements SOAR. Specifically, they have a team of social workers who assist TANF customers. If the participant is disabled longer than 12 months, the participants can submit an application for verification by Social Security. They have an eligibility determination function within Washington D.C. Social Security that is becoming more stringent on eligibility determinations because they are facing bankruptcy concerns. In the future, they predict it is going to be even more challenging to help customers attain SSI benefits.
- A Pennsylvania representative noted that in addition to building linkages within and across States, it is important to build linkages between other agencies. The State reaches out to their Social Security office to develop training for TANF staff and general assistance staff so they can better identify cases that would potentially be eligible for Social Security. In this training, they have built in how to expedite applications. This has worked very well in Philadelphia specifically.

Redesigning Your TANF Program to Strengthen Services and Improve Employment Outcomes⁶

Ms. Deborah Carroll, the Interim Director for the District of Columbia Department of Human Services, remarked that Washington D.C. has the highest TANF caseload per capita and about 60 percent of their TANF families were at or were approaching the 60-month expiration of benefits. Washington D.C. continues serving participants after they have exhausted their 60 months of eligibility for federal TANF with non-federal funds. Recent changes to improve their TANF program include restructuring contracts, adopting the OWRA tool as their assessment method, and educating the caseworkers serving TANF clients on how to increase participation.

Ms. Katie Griego, Acting Director of the Employments and Benefits Division of the Colorado Department of Human Services, discussed that over the past six years, Colorado has tried to reshape their program. They eliminated asset tests and monthly status reports because they found both of these to be of little use. Ms. Griego discussed that eliminating these has reduced paperwork and has allowed customers to focus on what is necessary to exit TANF successfully. Colorado has also been using an employment-focused, family-centered approach to their program. The first step in implementing this approach was to give counties an option to rework their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State and focus on employment as an outcome. The way they meet target work participation rates “should not be on the backs of our customers,” Ms. Griego said, “but on the State to figure it out.”

The final speaker, Mr. Peter Palermino, Program Manager of the Economic Security Unit within the Connecticut Department of Social Services, noted that Connecticut is just beginning to redesign their program and they are still in the initial stages. Two events influenced their decision to restructure their program: (1) a change in administration, which brought in a new Commissioner; and (2) a waiver opportunity that President Obama issued in 2013 that would allow States, if interested, to submit a “waiver to certain federal TANF policies” in order to improve or redirect services to TANF participants, while still needing to meet the TANF federal requirements. Connecticut was considering a waiver to the one-year cap on vocational education and a waiver to allow for additional hours in basic skills education. The first challenge was to see if they could repurpose existing State funds but they did not succeed. Then, the Commissioner suggested implementing a different strategy that included reexamining eligibility decisions and rules, exploring the employment and training delivery services model, and assessing if the State was

⁶ The PowerPoint(s) from this session are available on the OFA PeerTA Website at: [**insert link**](#).

successfully operating their TANF block grant. They have begun meeting with TANF participants, partners, and national experts to begin the various aspects of this strategy.

Q: "Has this [change] required additional financial resources, and if so, how did you get them?"

- Ms. Carroll responded that when they started their efforts, they had ten staff assigned to the pre-eligibility diversion program, had full support of the Mayor, received \$15 million, and then received \$46 million more. Washington D.C. made a huge financial commitment to get the TANF program where it needed to be. A significant investment went to building staff capacity; there are now 60 new case coordinators.
- Ms. Griego responded that it did not cost more for Colorado.
- Mr. Palermino answered that since TANF is a block grant, the State can repurpose some of those funds to better serve families, so they are not looking for new funding.

Q: "How do you bring the frontline workers on board and provide them the necessary resources and training? How do you get staff buy-in to do this?"

- Ms. Carroll admitted that Washington D.C. has more work to do in this area. Washington D.C. developed a training module and has invested ample time training caseworkers. They have also spent much time with their contractors through monthly stakeholder meetings communicating the philosophy and infusing their vision among all involved in hopes to instill a mindset change.
- Ms. Griego responded that it takes time and hard work. Colorado's program also has a monthly meeting with contractors and advocates.
- Lastly, Mr. Palermino answered that it is a challenge to bring eligibility workers and case managers together. He hopes to learn more about how to do this successfully as Connecticut progresses with their redesign efforts.

Q: "What are some of your performance indicators and WPR requirements?"

- Ms. Carroll said that their TANF program puts the WPR responsibility on their contractors and the government, not the TANF participant. A work eligible customer going to job placement has to meet full hours. Participants with barriers need to meet their plan requirements, but not necessarily the WPR.
- Ms. Griego told participants that in Colorado, they do not use WPR to measure success. In their program they sit down monthly with staff management to talk about the process and they measure employment as an outcome. They have the option of entering into an MOU with counties in lieu of the WPR.
- Lastly, Mr. Palermino explained that because they have two distinct agencies carrying out core functions, there are challenges. As the TANF agency, they have to monitor WPR, but family stability is their overall goal.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Frank Ceruto, TANF Region II Program Manager, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, recapped the key highlights of the day's sessions and thanked participants for their enthusiasm.

Day Two – August 13, 2014

Improving Employment Outcomes: Subsidized Employment, Job Sector Training, Workforce Planning, and Career Pathways Strategies⁷

Ms. Carol Monteiro, TANF Region I Program Manager, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, welcomed meeting attendees back for Day Two, conveyed her excitement for the session, and introduced the panel presenters. She discussed that the various strategies for improving employment outcomes emphasized

⁷ The PowerPoint(s) from this session are available on the OFA PeerTA Website at: ****insert link****.

throughout this session are important to ending dependence on public assistance. Further, each of the presenters represents organizations that are part of partnerships that need to be considered by TANF directors as they implement their programs.

Dr. Stan Koutstaal focused on the HPOG competitive grant program and how it exemplifies elements of job-driven training. Dr. Koutstaal first familiarized attendees with HPOG. HPOG, a five year program, is currently approaching the end of its fourth year. The program provides education and training to TANF participants and other low-income individuals so they have access to better jobs in healthcare. The programs are specifically targeted toward the healthcare sector because there has been a steady growth rate and much opportunity for employment in this sector. The 32 grantees include community colleges, local WIBs, State organizations, community-based organizations, and Tribal programs. Over the five year period, HPOG was projected to serve 30,000 students, Dr. Koutstaal discussed. At the time of the meeting, they had enrolled over 30,000 people and they had provided training for more than 50 healthcare occupations. In addition, HPOG provides supportive services such as child care and transportation to help reduce the barriers that prevent people from completing the program.

Dr. Koutstaal then explained the background of the key component of his presentation, the Job-Driven Training Checklist, which originated with the State of the Union Address in January 2014. After the State of the Union Address, President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum for workers and assigned Vice President Biden a 180-day action plan to make training programs more job-driven, integrated, and effective, with the intent to provide training knowing the occupation for which the person is being trained is an occupation that is in demand, so the person is much more likely to get a job upon completion of the training program. This involves a strong emphasis on labor-market demand and forming partnerships, Dr. Koutstaal stressed. Therefore, in order to more clearly define what it means to be job-driven, a seven item Job-Driven Training Checklist⁸ was developed. The Job-Driven Training Checklist came into existence with the help of representatives from multiple Departments, including DOL, HHS, and ED. The Checklist was given from Vice President Biden to President Obama on the same day the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law and many aspects of the new law work in concert with the Checklist. The Checklist includes the following items: Engaging Employers, Earn and Learn, Smart Choices, Measurement Matters, Stepping Stones, Opening Doors, and Regional Partnerships. Dr. Koutstaal then provided attendees with an overview of each of the seven elements, and used an HPOG example to illustrate each element in action.

Engaging Employers

Dr. Koutstaal discussed that this Checklist element describes the importance of working up-front with employers to determine local hiring needs and design training programs that are responsive to those needs. An HPOG example of this item, he conveyed, is the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB) which partnered with Aurora Healthcare to provide Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training. The training is provided in a hospital setting which allows for hands-on learning and more readily translates to job opportunities by area hospitals. Some placements are reserved for HPOG recipients, all of whom are TANF participants and low-income individuals. Aurora Healthcare employees also have access to tuition reimbursement and other in-house training to help advance their careers. This partnership grew in response to limited training placements available to TANF participants that would adequately equip them for post-training employment. Training was relocated through a philanthropic gift, and MAWIB was willing to pay fees for TANF participants and other low-income individuals to receive training. Aurora Healthcare was willing to reinvest those fees to cover the cost of relocation. Recently collected employment and retention data indicates the partnership is effective in meeting targeted objectives.

Earn and Learn

⁸ The Job-Driven Training Checklist can be found at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/skills_report.pdf.

The next Checklist item discusses offering work-based learning opportunities with employers as training paths to employment. This includes on-the-job training, internships, pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships. Dr. Koutstaal illustrated an HPOG example of this element, the Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC). The community college has made deliberate efforts to engage employers and identify what challenges employers are facing. EGCC discovered employers were having difficulty devoting time and resources needed to help new employees assimilate to a new work environment. Consequently, Project HOPE, a program on campuses including EGCC, designed an on-the-job training contract that reimbursed employers for instructors' time. The on-the-job training contract ensures new hires are well-trained and reduces employee turnover. EGCC has also created a database of participant résumés that is accessible to employers to eliminate the need for advertising open positions. They also provided extensive customer service training to their participants to help ease the adjustment into a new work setting. Now the community college has strong relationships with 40 employers.

Smart Choices

The Smart Choices Checklist element consists of making better use of data to drive accountability, informing what programs are offered and what is taught, and offering user-friendly information for job seekers to choose programs and pathways that work for them and are likely to result in jobs. Dr. Koutstaal noted that the HPOG example that best demonstrates this element is the Full Employment Council (FEC) in Kansas City, Missouri. The FEC provides services to the unemployed and underemployed. Their training strategy is called the "just in time" approach because it meets employers' immediate workforce needs. The process involves a panel that determines a menu of training options that covers a wide variety of healthcare occupations. Participants use this "just in time" approach by selecting training from the menu of options that has been determined to meet the needs of employers. Thus, they are more likely to find jobs at the end of training than participants in other programs.

Measurement Matters

This Checklist element captures the need to measure and track employment and earnings outcomes. MAWIB and FEC also excel in this area. Because MAWIB is tracking employment and retention, they have been able to strengthen their employer engagement. Meanwhile, the Full Employment Council knows their system is working because they are seeing a difference between participants who go through programs linked to the labor-market information versus programs not linked to the labor-market data. Lastly, Dr. Koutstaal relayed to attendees that HPOG in general does a lot of measurement and evaluation. For HPOG participants, 25,000 are enrolled in a healthcare occupational program. About 17,000 have completed at least one program, and 14,000 have become employed since intake. The data is collected on an individual level, but it can be aggregated to see how HPOG is doing as a whole. Grantees are familiar with the data because they submit semi-annual reports. The HPOG Team can see if the grantees need TA, and the grantees can get clues as to what kind of assistance they may need.

Stepping Stones

The fifth element of the Job-Driven Training Checklist, Stepping Stones, refers to the progressive nature of effective training, where each experience leads to another. These educational experiences cut across work-based training and education services so a career ladder is constructed for each participant and this ladder facilitates a career – not just a job. The College of Menominee Nation, an HPOG grantee in Wisconsin, exemplifies this strategy.

Opening Doors

Dr. Koutstaal briefly discussed the purpose of this job-driven training element, noting that it is about breaking down barriers to accessing job-driven training and hiring for any American who is willing to work. For example, the South Carolina Department of Social Services, an HPOG grantee, uses the OWRA tool. They piloted this, and it led to more real conversations between case managers and participants so barriers like domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues would be better addressed.

Regional Partnerships

The last Checklist element describes the importance of coordinating American Job Centers, local employers, education groups, and more to make the most of limited resources. A good example of this element can be found through HPOG grantee San Diego Workforce Partnership, who created a common customer group, including themselves, four community-based organizations, California Health and Human Services Agency, CalWorks (San Diego's TANF Program), contractors, and the city of San Diego subsidized housing authorities. These stakeholders map the service offerings of each and collaborate to identify and fill gaps.

Dr. Koutstaal closed by providing resources for meeting attendees, including the HPOG forecast on the ACF website. He then encouraged participants to apply for next year's HPOG grant competition. Finally, he requested input from State and Territory TANF programs about how their TANF programs are already aligned to the elements in the Job-Driven Training Checklist and what information or support they would find most helpful to align their TANF programs with the Checklist.

Following Dr. Koutstaal's presentation, Ms. Kathleen Cloutier offered her own viewpoint on improving employment outcomes through a discussion of the organization she works for, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island (DIIRI), a training provider and a human services organization whose mission is to work with vulnerable populations to integrate them into the community and help them achieve self-sufficiency. Ms. Cloutier provided background on DIIRI to set the context, noting that DIIRI is a large organization serving 15,000 individuals across many service areas. They also resettle 150 refugees each year, who are allowed access to benefits almost immediately because of their refugee status. As a side note, Ms. Cloutier explained that U.S. born TANF participants will generally become inspired when they hear a refugee story and it has created a wonderful learning community where students are learning from each other, an added benefit that they never expected. Around 80 percent of the people DIIRI serves live in Providence, and the population in the service area is very diverse. Approximately 13 percent of the Rhode Island population is foreign born, so there are many immigrants being served, as well.

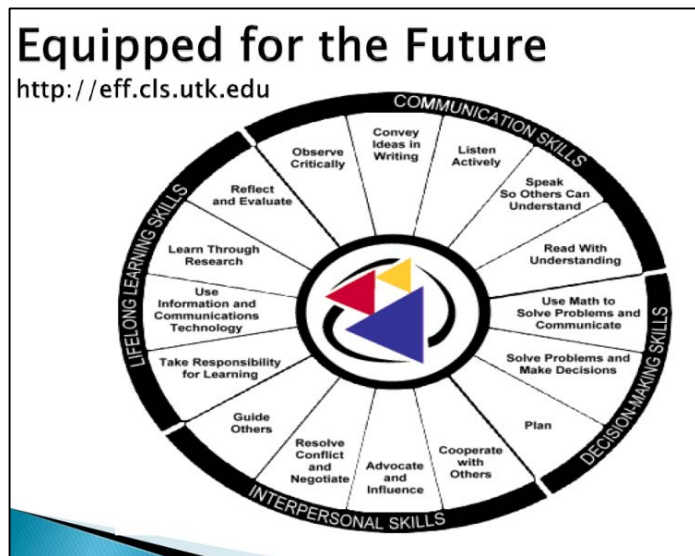
Initially, DIIRI developed programming based on what they thought these populations needed. But, after they sent out surveys and conducted focus groups to find out what clients really wanted, they found that simply providing training and education would not suffice. They realized they needed to incorporate a holistic approach to providing services. To implement this approach, DIIRI has begun to do a full assessment of people's needs and goals. The individuals they questioned had career plans and long-term goals and DIIRI wanted to build the continuum of services and help individuals develop the skills they needed to reach those goals. Therefore, instead of spending money dealing with crises, DIIRI is investing in people's outcomes.

Because they are such a large educational institution, one of the internal conflicts DIIRI recognized is a friction between work and education, and the realization that most people cannot do both. To combat this, DIIRI acknowledged that access to education has to be flexible enough to consider child care, transportation, and other barriers. DIIRI has tried to be flexible in terms of class offerings, they opened a computer learning center, and they offer Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESL. DIIRI continues to support their clients for up to five years in some cases, depending on how quickly they become self-sufficient.

Building off of Dr. Koutstaal's presentation, Ms. Cloutier explained that DIIRI also has healthcare career tracks that are entry level. They created training to get clients into housekeeping, food services, or other similar occupations in healthcare settings, and they work with these clients simultaneously to train them for healthcare positions. Once they have been promoted, this opens up entry level positions for others in the program.

Ms. Cloutier clarified that integration is also crucial for progress. Technology instruction and financial literacy instruction are incorporated into DIIRI's services. They have proposed a financial match program and have also

Figure Two



integrated Equipped for the Future Skills (EFFs), a combination of communication, decision-making, interpersonal, and lifelong-learning skills, as shown in Figure Two. DIIRI support services include intake assessment, immigration legal services, case management, translation, citizenship services, housing services, child care, transportation, work services, and internship placement assistance.

Ms. Cloutier briefly displayed some outcomes of DIIRI, noting that Rhode Island currently has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. In one year, 98 out of 264 DIIRI students, or 37 percent, became employed. Out of these, 76 percent stayed employed for more than 90 days and 71 percent are no longer receiving cash assistance. She concluded her presentation by summarizing strategies for

improved outcomes. First, for low-literacy individuals, continued education is the key for lifelong self-sufficiency. Secondly, a minimum of one year should be allowed for ESL and General Educational Development (GED). Next, providing transportation and child care allows people to focus on their education without having to worry about those stressful barriers. Finally, Ms. Cloutier suggested integrating refugees and U.S. born citizens. She has found that this creates learning communities that are helpful for motivating and inspiring one another.

Next, Ms. Shauna King-Simms conveyed that her organization, KCTCS, has made recent progress in the number of students earning their GEDs, but Kentucky still ranks at the bottom in adults with college degrees. This statistic is exemplified within the TANF population, she reported. Ms. King-Simms explained that Kentucky "made the wise decision" to embrace education as an economic development strategy. In fact, approximately 67 percent of Pell Grant students over age 25 are low-income single parents with an average of two children. Ms. King-Simms communicated to attendees that in 1998, State legislation directed the State TANF agency to find ways to open the door to education; particularly post-secondary education for the TANF population. It restored supportive services and encouraged TANF programs to make supportive services available for a college pathway. This, in sum, is the Kentucky Ready-to-Work Program, born within the KCTCS. Some four-year colleges have similar contracts, but this is by far the largest in post-secondary education, she explained.

Relating to the previous presentations, Ms. King-Simms explained that Ready-to-Work pre-dated the Job-Driven Training Checklist and sector-driven career pathway models. Even though adjustments to their career pathway models are not purely sector-driven, Ms. King-Simms believes they are still on track. They are not short-term training sector-driven, but education-driven. Their pathways are Pell-supported and they are not spending TANF dollars on education components.

There are several critical components of the Ready-to-Work program according to Ms. King-Simms. Education-focused, WPR-driven case management is important. KCTCS aims to keep clients moving forward and engaged in the context of education. TANF funded work-study is another critical component for success. Work-study includes any activity that meets TANF WPRs, including work-based learning, internships, and transitional jobs. Placement has to be directly related to individuals' specific education pathway. The end goal is always family-sustaining wages. The

benefits of work-study include income supplementation, skill building, résumé building, improved college retention rates, improved graduation rates, improved six-year employment rates, and improved TANF WPRs.

Ms. King-Simms then highlighted the importance of intensive case management and being hands-on with counseling, advising, and mentoring. KCTCS develops partnerships and synchronizes efforts with local TANF offices to package activities for students, while making sure they meet WPRs for TANF agencies. On campus, KCTCS requires close partnerships with financial aid offices, bookstores, and more. They work with faculty, administration, and local TANF offices to make sure the participants are accessing all available resources and supports. Off campus, KCTCS works with employers to develop work services and community service placements. KCTCS was also able to take advantage of the OFA Promising Pathways Initiative⁹ to enhance their career coaching and counseling. The campus-based Ready-to-Work staff wanted a more robust model to ensure that all participants were receiving sufficient career coaching. The employment-focused case management approach consists of case managers identifying good jobs in their clients' communities and helping them understand the educational pathways through which they can become qualified for those positions. The case managers help their clients determine whether or not the pathway is realistic on a case-by-case basis. Then, they use the work-based learning component to help move clients along the pathway. Some career coaching tools include background checks, tiered placements, work-study agreements, time sheets, supportive services referrals and advocacy, and unsubsidized employment.

Ms. King-Simms continued by describing a recently implemented KCTCS Asset Building Initiative which supports students' financial success through financial literacy and education. They partnered with the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association and are offering a four-to-one match with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for Ready-to-Work students statewide. This has been in place for around six months, and so far they have 72 students enrolled in the program. These students have saved \$10,000 of their own income, which leverages a \$40,000 match. The Kentucky Domestic Violence Association has leveraged additional funding to support financial education and provide additional opportunities to GED and ABE students.

To complete her presentation, Ms. King-Simms highlighted a few notable outcomes. For example, of Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP) students, 86 percent participated in a TANF funded work-study program. Out of 181 Ready-to-Work graduates, 66 percent earned Associate's degrees. College participation of the KTAP population was 8.7 percent versus Kentucky adults in general at 3.6 percent.

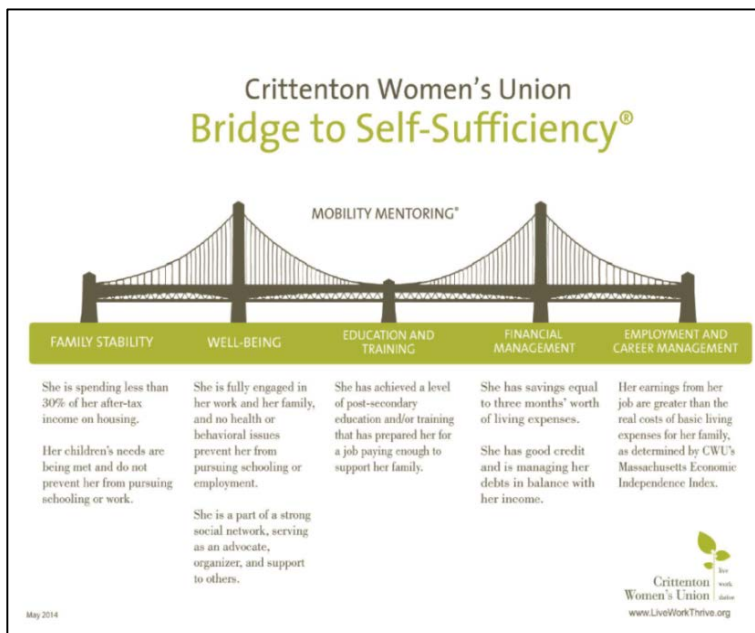
Dr. Elisabeth Babcock summed up the panel presentation with a portrayal of her work at the Crittenton Women's Union (CWU) in Boston, Massachusetts. CWU is an economic mobility action tank and the largest provider of transitional housing for homeless families in the greater Boston area. The organization provides job readiness training, parenting programs, and adult education. Almost 1,300 individuals are served each year. Ninety-two percent have a high school education or less. CWU's clients are largely TANF participants with average earnings of \$730 per month per family and the population is racially diverse.

Dr. Babcock echoed the meeting's theme of making connections between organizations, so families do not have to build these connections themselves. At CWU, they engage their families via a framework called the Bridge to Self-Sufficiency (**Figure Three**). Progress is measured in five areas including family stability, well-being, education and training, financial management, and employment and career management.

⁹ More information on the OFA Promising Pathways Initiative can be found on the OFA PeerTA website at: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/uploadedFiles/Innovation%20Institute%20Executive%20Summary2.pdf>.

Dr. Babcock then explained two CWU programs that are meant to expedite pathways out of poverty, called Smart Start and Hot Jobs. These jobs have very similar criteria: they are high demand in a certain area, require two years or less post-secondary training, have solid benefits, and pay a starting salary of mid-\$30,000 (Smart Start) to mid-\$40,000 (Hot Jobs) per year.¹⁰ Additionally, Smart Start jobs provide transferable skills that connect to Hot Jobs. Examples of Smart Start jobs include medical lab technicians, physical therapy assistants, police dispatchers, animal control workers, and secretaries. Hot Jobs include property managers, respiratory therapists, radiology technicians, correctional offices, and building inspectors. Helping families to get

Figure Three



these well-paying jobs requires good program designing, as Dr. Babcock made clear. It is important to have strong, holistic models that allow for assessment and goal-setting frameworks. Also, client-directed coaching is an important strategy. This means that clients must want to achieve their goals, see them clearly, and understand the series of achievable steps to meet their goals. Finally, progress and outcomes must be measured regularly.

Dr. Babcock shared some of CWU's recent outcomes and successes. In one year, for homeless families in transitional housing, school and workforce participation rates increased from 45 percent to 80 percent. In addition, fully-subsidized housing families' post-secondary graduation rates were at 52 percent, which is four times higher than comparable families not in the program. The average wages of these families increased from \$14.82 to \$20.18/hour in less than three years. Dr. Babcock concluded by encouraging participants to visit the Resources and Tools tab on www.liveworkthrive.org.

After the four presentations, the speakers answered questions from the audience.

Q: Ms. LaMonica Shelton, TANF Region IV Program Manager, asked Dr. Babcock, "For Smart Start and Hot Jobs, there could possibly be a lot of competition. Are you seeing that your clients are competing with recent graduates with more education and more skills? Secondly, do you develop relationships with any of those employers and if so, what does that look like?"

- Dr. Babcock explained that there is competition for the Smart Start and Hot jobs, but the jobs have high vacancies and high demand. A study surveyed employers about their employee search needs across the U.S. Fifty-two percent of employers said they had a mismatch between jobs available and jobs for which employees had the necessary skills. Employers need high-vacancy jobs filled, but they cannot get qualified personnel to fill them. Of course, Dr. Babcock continued, competition is going to be there, but she reiterated how crucial it is to develop blended work-education experiences. The average age of CWU's parental clients is 33 years old. By the time they reach this age, they have experienced many challenges for a long time and

¹⁰ Boston pays higher, on average, because Boston is one of the most expensive areas in the country to live. Family sustainability of the earnings must be taken into consideration.

they are eager to better their lives and find ways to help their children. It is more complicated, but the data speaks for itself in terms of what the women can do when they get the right resources.

Q: A Mississippi TANF Representative asked Ms. King-Simms, "Out of the people who received Associate degrees, what was the budget? This is a pretty good investment and seems beneficial to the economy as a whole."

- Ms. King-Simms explained they had a \$10.7 million annual contract. Over \$7.7 million supports work-study and goes directly to TANF participants. The contract provides case management and all the additional supports for two to three million dollars annually.

Q: A Washington D.C. TANF representative asked Ms. King-Simms, "How are we to leverage Pell Grant funding for job training?"

- Ms. King-Simms answered that all TANF participants are Pell Grant eligible by virtue of their income situation. KCTCS is enrolling them into a catalog of programs. It is all for credit and builds into academic diplomas, certificates, and degrees, so therefore it is Pell supported. They are asking colleges to think about their academic offerings in the context of wages and about how to move their instructional resources into program areas in which their graduates are getting good jobs. They are addressing that as well, just not within the specific context of Ready-to-Work.

Q: A Maryland TANF Representative asked Ms. Cloutier, "How do you integrate refugees and U.S.-born work activities?"

- Ms. Cloutier responded that the program goes from ESL through GED. The groups may be working together, but it is generally in the Adult Basic Education and pre-GED where the integration of refugees and U.S. born workers happens. They all take their lunch break together, share activities, and go to the same meetings. Students are making connections through culture and food, as well.

Q: A Connecticut TANF Representative asked both Ms. Cloutier and Dr. Babcock, "What is your relationship with local WIBs? Is it a competition or collaboration?"

- Ms. Cloutier explained that she has not made connections to WIBs since she is so new to DIIRI. She does not want to duplicate what the WIBs do, but she wants to make sure her students can access the WIBs. She considers DIIRI as the pre-pathway that helps individuals access WIBs and workforce resources.
- On the other hand, Dr. Babcock said that she works with local WIBs very closely. They do mobility mentoring with families alongside employment and training. They are integration agents into those training opportunities, and CWU works closely with WIBs on the ground. Additionally, they work directly together for legislative initiatives.

Finally, Ms. Golonka closed out the session by thanking the panel and reiterating the importance of creating an integrated system of workforce and education so individuals know where to go to get help with their next steps on their career pathways. TANF programs need to work with other systems to create a long-term service plan with every individual who comes through.

Managing Through Performance Data: Using Program Data to Improve Program Performance¹¹

Recognizing that using data to measure and improve program performance is critical, this session focused on measures of success in establishing family self-sufficiency including what performance measures besides work participation may be appropriate. Speakers provided meeting participants with strategies for tracking benchmarks

¹¹ The PowerPoint(s) from this session are available on the OFA PeerTA Website at: ****insert link****.

and outcomes, such as around tracking contractors, employment outcomes, and much more, through various systems, to ultimately improve TANF program performance.

Following opening remarks by Mr. Frank Ceruto, TANF Region II Program Manager, Ms. Christina Tschlis, Region III Program Specialist, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families presented a brief overview of State TANF data, explaining to attendees how to correct errors in data and why accurate data is so important. Ms. Tschlis explained that different offices have different roles in the data collection and analysis process, with the State Data office collecting and transmitting data, the Regional Office handling communication between the States and Central Office, and Central Office analyzing the data. Ms. Tschlis also walked attendees through an example of the TANF data reporting form providing instructions on how to complete the different sections. For example, Section One data is used to calculate WPR and can be split into two levels, family level data and personal level data. She also gave some examples on how to fill out the different sections.

Ms. Tschlis also provided attendees with an overview of the process for Central Office feedback, explaining that the first line of feedback provides States with feedback on data submission within 24-48 hours. This is the first opportunity for States to correct and resubmit data, but States do not need to follow up if the report was free from transmission errors. Ms. Tschlis provided examples of questionable cases and frequency reports, noting that the purpose of all the feedback is to assist States in correction and resubmission efforts. In closing, Ms. Tschlis

Figure Four

Welfare Reform Board Goals	FFY 2011	FFY 2012	FFY 2013	FFY 2014 YTD
Participation - 18.9%	39.6%	26.2%	19.1%	13.9%
Countable Activities - 45%	45.5%	34.8%	32.7%	34.2%
Job Placement - 10%	18.4%	22.3%	18.6%	20.7%
Six Month Retention Rate - 50%	58.4%	63.4%	66.8%	**
Twelve Month Wage Increase - 50%	46.4%	61.6%	62.6% *	**
Average Monthly Cases	2,399	2,672	3,194	3,014

The WRB goal is for Denver to meet or exceed the Colorado average participation rate.
 Colorado's average work participation rate for FFY 2011 was 30.8%
 Colorado's average work participation rate for FFY 2012 was 26.8%
 Colorado's average work participation rate for FFY 2013 was 23.6%
 Colorado's average work participation rate for FFY 2014 YTD is 19.0%
 Average work participation rate for Denver cases assigned to OED is 24.5% for FFY 2013, 18.2% for FFY 2014 YTD

* Current data only available for the first six months of the year

** Data being updated through wages reported through Unemployment Insurance

*** Does not include child-only cases

reminded attendees of the importance of accurate data reporting and summarized the most important uses for TANF data including WPR, time limits, TANF program success, caseload publication, and the annual report to Congress.

Building on Ms. Tschlis' presentation on State TANF data reporting, Mr. Curt Pesicka, Manager of Operations for Workforce Development at the Office of Economic Development in Denver County, introduced attendees to Denver's TANF program model. Eligibility is handled by one agency, while work support programs are handled by another agency. Denver's Welfare Report Board has established six goals for TANF in Denver County, shown in **Figure Four**. Mr. Pesicka also explained that Colorado has

performance plans for case managers, in which the data is reviewed monthly, quarterly, and annually. Performance ratings and raises were driven, in part, by this information. Mr. Pesicka said that like many other States in attendance, Colorado's caseloads have been increasing as its budget has been decreasing, which has led in part to Colorado's focus on employment outcomes instead of WPR. In reality, he said, a State can run a TANF program that meets the WPR year after year but have never put one person into work.

In closing his remarks, Mr. Pesicka listed some performance management challenges. First, oftentimes there are different goals among different agencies. For example, the Department of Human Services Eligibility is likely to have different performance goals than the Office of Economic Development, Workforce Development. Secondly, changes

in goals and measures require changes in mindsets and mechanisms. Additionally, the implementation of pay for performance has caused some issues. With the increase in referrals, the quality of referrals has decreased. Lastly, changes in mindsets take time and sometimes staff commitment is not as “solid” as what may be ideal. Overall, it is sometimes difficult to develop consistent, appropriate, and accurate methodologies for measurement and evaluation, in part due to multiple data sources and tracking systems.

Following Mr. Pesicka’s presentation, Mr. Rodney Wright, Family Support Program Manager at the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, and Mr. Keith Zalaznik, Senior Manager and Deloitte Consultant for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, spoke about West Virginia’s TANF data system. Mr. Wright and Mr. Zalaznik explained that in 2006, West Virginia was having problems with WPR, so they started looking for better ways to report on TANF data. Rather than starting top down from management, they went to the workforce and asked them what data they needed. The resulting data reporting tool, RAFT (Reporting and Formatting Tool), produces user-friendly reports that can be presented in a way people would understand. Mr. Wright and Mr. Zalaznik both noted that the RAFT system allows for access to data in real time so that people can get the information when they need it, while not creating an undue burden on their technology team.

This led into Mr. Wright and Mr. Zalaznik presenting the RAFT dashboard. The homepage presents workers with information on the tasks they have to do that day, as well as general statistics. The worker spreadsheet is broken into multiple tabs to give the workers an idea of where they are in terms of their WPR and the general demographics of their case loads – data that previously had to be recorded by hand. This allows caseworkers to sit down with their supervisors and talk about progress. Thanks to their new data systems, West Virginia’s WPR went from 20 percent to 44 percent in 2013, and it is even higher today. For the future, West Virginia is looking to improve their data reporting at more of an “executive dashboard” level, which will allow workers to break data down to a county level.

Creating an Employment Focused TANF Program: State Discussions and Work Groups¹²

Mr. Leo Miller, Acting Regional Administrator for the Employment and Training Administration within DOL spoke about the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that was signed into law on July 22, 2014. WIOA is the fifth rendition of the Wagner-Peyser Act that was created in the 1930s to provide core, intensive, and training services, case management, stipends, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and more. DOL invests over \$8 billion into their programs each year, but the programs all operate out of separate offices. Currently, they are trying to integrate them all into the One-Stop system (or American Job Center network).

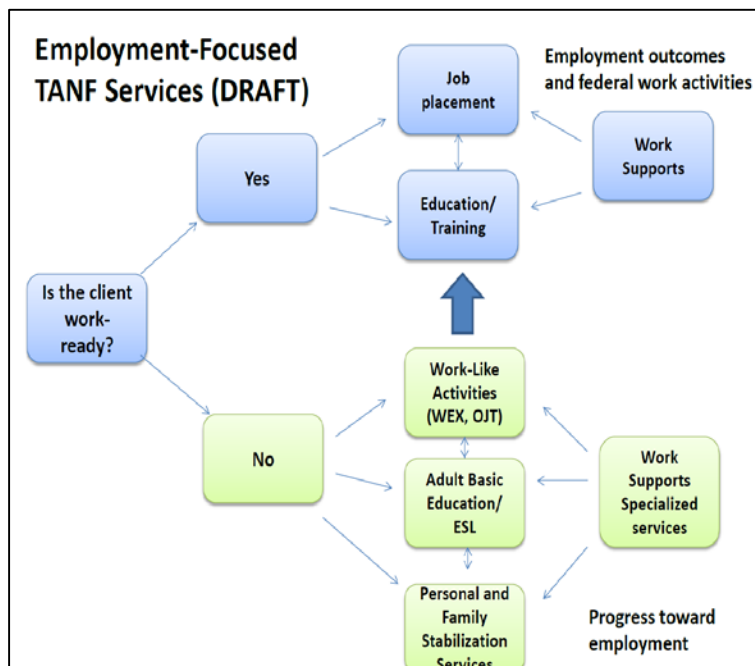
In terms of implementing WIOA, Mr. Miller remarked that DOL needs to get substantial stakeholder involvement, so they set up a series of Webinars to gather input. Mr. Miller explained that the Obama Administration is focused on being completely and utterly job-driven, a message consistent with previous speaker presentations. All of the workforce training organizations will be more job-driven in the future. DOL is writing regulations and holding stakeholder meetings on WIOA, and once the regulations are written, they will be holding TA forums throughout the regions. Then, they will conduct another review as States start implementing the regulations and changes. Mr. Miller concluded by assuring participants that his organization has “cast the net very widely”. At the time of the meeting, they had met with about 4,000 people regarding the law and its changes. Mr. Miller and meeting attendees then participated in a brief discussion on questions and comments related to WIOA that Mr. Miller planned to record and take into consideration with his staff at DOL as WIOA regulation development progresses.

¹² The PowerPoint(s) from this session are available on the OFA PeerTA Website at: ****insert link****.

The next speaker, Dr. Michelle Derr, Senior Researcher at Mathematica Policy Research, encouraged States to think about their strengths and challenges. TANF has faced changing demands in recent years, including declining value and reallocation of the TANF block grant, increase in demand for public assistance programs, high unemployment, fewer full-time jobs, and an increase in demands for SNAP benefits. In order to handle these challenges, States have made explicit efforts to reduce program costs by reducing staffing, reducing the amount of the cash grant, and limiting availability of personal work supports. States have also limited TANF caseload growth and modified contracts with local employment service providers. Dr. Derr said that this gives States the perfect opportunity to change, grow, and be more thoughtful about how resources are allocated. Given some of these changes, she asked States to consider thinking about their TANF programs differently. She then requested that States share some ways they have

been affected by the changes. States commented that they have seen a lot of vacancies, reduced supportive services, and reduced benefits.

Figure Five



Dr. Derr then helped States brainstorm opportunities for change. She said that although employment-focused TANF services are necessary, not everyone is ready for employment. States need to determine if their clients are truly work-ready by defining that term clearly (Figure Five). Dr. Derr then listed the following program components: case management, work requirements, performance management, and program outcomes. She presented States with an activity where they addressed the aforementioned components for "work-ready" and "work-progressing" TANF participants and the differences for each.

The exact question was, "How do program components for work-ready TANF participants compare to those progressing toward work?" The answers are as follows.

Case Management

States discussed coaching and mentoring for people that have fewer barriers to employment. For work-progressing participants, coaching would be more intensive. These individuals may not have identified an education or career goal yet. It is important for case managers to help their clients focus on where they want to be in the future.

Work Requirements

For the work-ready group, States spoke about subsidized employment, internships, credentials, and on-the-job training. For those who are less ready-to-work, community service, life skills management, and alleviating substance abuse can all be helpful. Lastly, motivational seminars are important for both groups.

Performance Management and Program Outcomes

It was noted that New York and Utah do well in the areas of performance management. There is data that shows how effective performance management and motivation are in improving program outcomes, Dr. Derr mentioned.

Finally, Dr. Derr and several States shared some notable promising practices. These included integrating a strong program message about the benefits of family self-sufficiency; making strategic investments in services and supports; customizing case management and service delivery; emphasizing and incentivizing goal-directed behaviors in progressing toward work; building strong TANF/employment networks; and broadly defining employment-focused outcomes.

The Evolution of Your TANF Program

This session provided an opportunity for States to work together in small groups on developing a storyboard. States participated in an interactive storyboarding exercise on what constitutes a successful TANF program. The exercise facilitated dialogue and ideas on new and innovative strategies for program improvement and partnerships that help TANF participants receive integrated and comprehensive support and what the outcomes of these strategies look like to TANF directors and stakeholders. For the activity, participants were pre-assigned into six groups, with several States represented in each group, and were given a scenario, storyboard, storyboarding panels, and markers. Using their assigned scenario, they were asked to respond to their scenario in the form of a storyboard, using illustrations, sketches, and words. One scenario focused on pathways to employment and family self-sufficiency and the other scenario focused on aligning program implementation with TANF family needs.

State Report Outs

During this session, participants reported out on their groupwork and storyboarding exercise highlights and discussed key program strategies, comprehensive support services, opportunities, and ongoing challenges in their States and Regions. The group report outs are displayed below in **Table One**.

Table One

Group	Storyboarding Highlights
Group One	The storyboarding vision for this group was self-sufficiency for participants through partnerships and the end goal was employment outcomes from a common vision that gets people to work and allows participants to get to needed services. The group also noted that it is important to define "work-ready". Next, they stressed the need for government to be involved. States can partner with community colleges, ED, WIBs, and community organizations.
Group Two	The group reported that they want to see stronger and more beneficial supports after TANF participants get jobs. They would like to offer incentives and stronger work supports, as well as increase the block grant. In terms of intervening with the children of TANF participants, this group suggested looking at school support systems and perhaps making sanctions stronger when children are not showing up for school. Another way to improve TANF programs would be to increase entrepreneurial partnerships, creating an apprenticeship type of program. Finally, the group concurred that upfront assessment is crucial for caseworkers to identify barriers and needs so the case workers know what is needed and what barriers exist.
Group Three	The group discussed that their goal was to provide family-supported jobs for TANF recipients. To move families toward the "American Dream," they stressed the need for good partnerships and collaboration. Some of the suggestions they mentioned were a real-time database with DOL, good partnerships with community colleges, joining forces with the Department of Transportation, improving mental health services, eliminating family violence, and collaborating with SNAP. The group stressed the need to integrate systems and share data. They also recommended a customized comprehensive assessment and universal case management. Overall, this group focused on the need for consistency among TANF programs and partner agencies.
Group Four	The group's vision was the development of career pathways for existing jobs. Their first step was to create partnerships to see what is currently being offered and what else they can provide. They would bring faith-based organizations, DOL, and new employers to the table to examine needs for

	their businesses, as well as deal with courts regarding ex-offenders, community action groups, and substance abuse and mental health service providers. Another crucial component would be reallocating resources. They wanted to review the duplication of services and how to best utilize resources that are already available. Next, they would look at how to develop a unified system for service delivery. Clients do not like repeating their stories multiple times to different agencies; a centralized system would allow for clients to fill out one form.
Group Five	The group reported that their vision was behavioral health focused case management and their outcome was the removal of non-work barriers for TANF clients. They presented two different paths: an infrastructure path and a client/family path. The client/family path would provide individualized, person-centered, yet family-focused case management. Family life can sometimes be a hindrance to a client earning and retaining a job. This group encouraged States to speak to their behavioral health employees to help design a case management system that takes these issues into account. They also reported that peer mentoring is powerful in terms of improving behavioral health. For the infrastructure, they mentioned an evidence-based online assessment of clients' strengths and needs and the importance of data sharing agreements and technology to enable effective tracking and reporting.
Group Six	The group recounted that their vision was self-sustaining employment. They hoped to improve TA for the following targeted groups: young mothers, teenagers, disabled (but not fully disabled by SSI definition), and two-parent families. They would partner with DOL, vocational rehabilitation, extension services, community colleges, and community action agencies.

Day Three – August 14, 2014

Toxic Stress and Homelessness¹³

During this session, presenters explored the research and impacts of toxic stress and homelessness on vulnerable families and discussed ways that TANF programs can utilize existing resources to provide innovative services to support homeless families and help to mitigate toxic stress. Recognizing the fact that effective interventions for vulnerable families often involve holistic support for parents and children, presenters emphasized how TANF programs can instill a two-generation approach to reducing poverty.

Ms. Amy Sawyer, Regional Coordinator with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), opened the session with a discussion of current federal efforts aimed at tackling the issue of homelessness. She emphasized the importance of this work, noting that in 2013, on average 222,197 individuals were experiencing homelessness on any given night, equating to around 70,960 households. In order to reduce the number of homeless individuals and families with the ultimate goal of preventing and ending homelessness altogether, Ms. Sawyer explained that the federal government has adopted an "Opening Doors" strategy, a comprehensive roadmap for joint action by the 19 USICH member agencies along with local and state partners in the public and private sectors. Since the "Opening Doors" strategy was presented to the Office of the President and Congress in June 2010, USICH has worked with key stakeholders to assist States and localities in implementing different targeted actions to address homelessness including, developing centralized or coordinated entry systems, tailoring intervention and assistance to unique family needs, improving linkages to local mainstream systems, and developing and building upon evidence-based practices. In terms of tailored intervention and assistance, this has meant providing rapid re-housing, assisting with affordable housing, incorporating service-intensive housing intervention, and connecting families to mainstream resources. Ms. Sawyer also noted that the USICH is committed to assisting efforts to identify and prevent youth homelessness, which is often a difficult homeless population to track and serve.

¹³ The PowerPoint(s) from this session are available on the OFA PeerTA Website at: ****insert link****.

Building on Ms. Sawyer’s discussion of specific homelessness interventions, Ms. Rebecca Shwalb, a Family Assistance Program Specialist with OFA, explained ways in which TANF funds can be used to serve homeless families and families at-risk of experiencing homelessness. Ms. Shwalb directed attendees to OFA’s February 2013 Information Memorandum entitled “Use of TANF Funds to Serve Homeless Families and Families At-Risk of Experiencing Homelessness,” and highlighted New Jersey, Massachusetts, Utah, and Washington as States that have effectively used TANF funds to serve homeless families. She also encouraged attendees to utilize coordinating bodies like the USICH and State interagency councils in developing and implementing homelessness interventions, as these bodies are often experienced repositories of best practice information on this issue.

Following Ms. Sawyer and Ms. Shwalb’s remarks, the panel turned its focus from homelessness to the parallel issue of toxic stress. Toxic stress, the prolonged activation of the body’s stress response systems, can have long-term damaging effects on an individual’s learning, behavior, and health. Dr. Mariana Chilton, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Hunger-Free Communities at Drexel University, noted that given the many stressors, from food insecurity and homelessness to substance abuse or mental illness that low-income and vulnerable families face on a daily basis, this population is at a greater risk for toxic stress. Dr. Chilton, provided attendees with an overview of the landmark Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs), a collaboration between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente’s Health Appraisal Clinic in San Diego, which explored the association between childhood stress and lifelong health and wellbeing. The ACEs study, as well as Dr. Chilton’s own research, supports the conclusion that in disrupting the architecture of the brain and impairing cognitive skills, toxic stress has a profoundly negative impact not only on the mental and physical health of parents and their children, but also on lifetime financial stability and educational outcomes.

In addition to providing an overview of ACEs, Dr. Chilton walked attendees through a summary of her own current research efforts, specifically a new randomized control trial with the Department of Public Welfare in Pennsylvania. In Dr. Chilton’s study, she is working with parents with children under the age of six who have reached the criteria of being work-mandatory for 20 hours per week. The study includes a control group referred to TANF services, a second group referred to financial education and matched savings, and a full intervention group referred to trauma-

Figure Six

Category	Subcategory	Example Questions
Abuse	Emotional	Emotional Abuse (Did a parent or other adult in the household...) Often or very often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? OR act in a way that made you afraid you might be physically hurt?
	Physical	
	Sexual	
Neglect	Emotional	Physical Neglect (Did you often or very often feel that...) You didn’t have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? OR your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
	Physical	
Household Instability	Parental Separation	Mother Abused (Was your mother or stepmother...) Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? OR sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? OR ever repeatedly hit for at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or a knife?
	Mother Abused	
	Mental Illness	
	Substance Abuse	
	Incarceration	

informed peer support and entrepreneurship support. Over six-month intervals, the study measured numerous outcomes including income, education, program participation, financial wellbeing, economic security, and maternal and child health and development. Among the pilot group of work-mandatory participants, 37 percent reported experiencing emotional abuse, 43 percent reported experiencing substance abuse, and 31 percent reported having had a household member in prison. Dr. Chilton found the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences to be severe among her study participants, and she emphasized how important it is for States and agencies to take this information into account within their programs. In order to

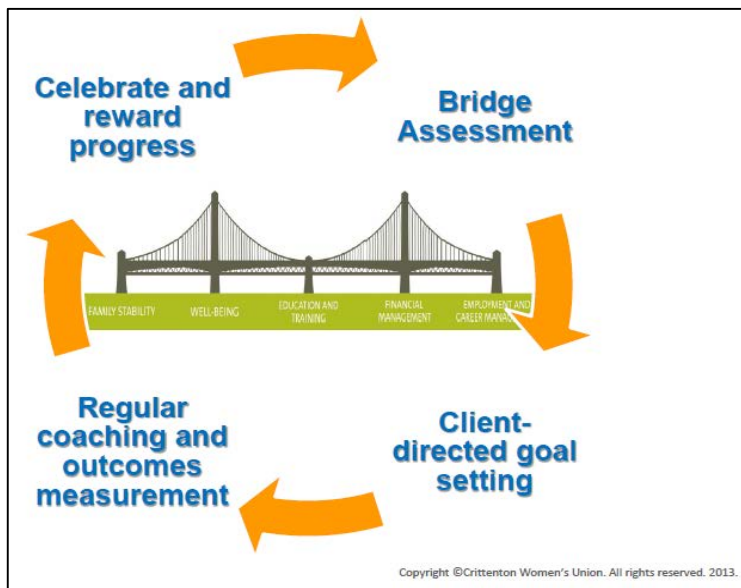
effectively do this, Dr. Chilton stressed the need for everyone working in these agencies to have some exposure to trauma-theory and knowledge of ACEs screening tools (see Figure Six for the ten question tool that Dr. Chilton uses

to screen for ACEs). Dr. Chilton also recommended promoting social connectedness within programs, and avoiding sanctions at all costs.

Continuing the discussion around toxic stress and considering ways to mitigate its harmful effects, Dr. Elisabeth Babcock, President and CEO of the Crittenton Women's Union (CWU), presented attendees with practical ways to use brain science to mitigate stress-related challenges and create new pathways out of poverty. Dr. Babcock suggested that the first steps that programs can take are simple ones that involve changes to program materials and staff training with an emphasis on

Figure Seven

providing participants with brain-science-informed tools, including personal organization strategies, goal-attainment strategies, and strong problem-solving and goal-setting frameworks, to put them on the path to success. For example, CWU's Bridge to Self-Sufficiency Mobility Mentoring Framework (see **Figure Seven**) is a tool for participants that incorporates future-oriented decision making and contextualized decision-making in terms of family stability, well-being, education and training, financial management, and employment and career management, in order to strategically target and reduce toxic stressors in a family's environment. CWU's approach is a holistic one, with the ultimate aim being permanent



improvements in executive functioning-related decision-making skills, like problem solving, weighing options, impulse control, and social skills. Dr. Babcock closed by noting that CWU's Mobility Mentoring program has shown strong positive results, with significant increases in employment, savings, educational attainment, and overall wellbeing, amongst the target population.

Following Dr. Babcock's remarks, attendees engaged the panel of speakers on a range of specific issues pertaining to toxic stress and homelessness. In response to a question on how to train case workers to identify ACEs in program participants, Dr. Chilton explained that it is crucial that caseworkers engage their clients in a non-punitive format and that they ask the ACEs screening questions in a matter-of-fact manner. Dr. Chilton also noted that it is important for program leadership and management to work with caseworkers to ensure that they understand what constitutes an adverse childhood experience, and reiterated the need for staff to be trained in providing trauma-informed care. In response to a related question on staff training, all of the panelists agreed that ensuring that caseworkers are effectively trained with regard to ACEs and toxic stress is especially important when the caseworkers themselves might have experienced the same trauma as their clients. In addition to questions around staff training and recognizing ACEs, the panel responded to questions on food insecurity among SNAP participants and measuring interaction with child welfare agencies. Dr. Chilton noted that in fact many SNAP recipients are still food insecure and expressed her concern that SNAP does not provide families with enough money for food due to the out-of-date data used to calculate SNAP benefits. With regard to measuring interaction with child welfare agencies, Dr. Babcock responded that CWU does not have data on those interactions, while others on the panel explained that oftentimes, clients fear that if they reveal certain things, child welfare services will take their children away.

Taking Action – Implementing Change and Measuring Success: What Do You Have to Do to Get Where You Want to Go?

This session was designed to propel the State and Territory TANF representatives in attendance forward in implementing program changes designed to improve family self-sufficiency and stability. Mr. James Butler, Family Assistance Program Specialist at OFA, opened the session, explaining to attendees that they would be walking through a structured planning process for identifying potential opportunities for change as part of an ongoing program improvement process, and would be provided with examples of low-burden strategies for testing the success of a planned change. Mr. Butler explained that the session would also provide an opportunity for attendees to identify specific TA needs and opportunities to encourage evidenced-based program improvement.

In order to jumpstart the planning process, Dr. Michelle Derr, Senior Researcher at Mathematica, asked attendees to consider the following questions:

“Does what you are implementing match what you are expecting to occur?”

“What is your goal and what are you doing to achieve that goal?”

“What is the intervention you are doing to achieve that goal?”

“How can you have more intentionality about what it is you’re trying to achieve?”

After thinking of goals that they wanted to achieve for their programs, attendees completed a worksheet that included the six categories listed below (**Table Two**).

Table Two

Intervention	Program Outcomes
Current Services/Resources	Current Outcome Goals
Opportunities for Change	Desired Outcomes

The goals that were shared were diverse, but equally valuable and important. Dr. Derr noted that having intentionality and thought is critical in goal setting; she suggested thinking of the ideal end goal first, and then detailing concrete steps to get there. For example, in terms of a policy/program change, the plan needs to have broken down steps. States must be able to recognize that some policy changes may be multi-year processes. A State cannot implement mental health services for TANF clients overnight, so it is crucial to make changes that are small, incremental, and testable.

To help attendees further understand this, Dr. Derr asked them to discuss the specific changes needed to achieve the goals they had identified and to discuss how to figure out if the changes are successful. New Hampshire, for example, shared that they want to explore social media as a means of connecting to their clients and hoped that it might allow them to connect clients more efficiently to services in times of crisis. Another State shared their goal of finding better ways to serve their multi-barrier population, along with their first action-oriented step of holding a meeting with key stakeholders.

In leading attendees through a structured discussion of their goal setting and action planning steps, Dr. Derr let attendees know about a component of the Family Self-Sufficiency and Stability Research Consortium (FSSRC), called the Advancing Welfare & Family Self-Sufficiency Research Project (Project AWESOME), which helps connect States looking to implement program changes with research needed to effectively do so. Project AWESOME also conducts opportunistic experiments, using random assignment and administrative data to test the impact of program or policy changes. Dr. Derr noted that the FSSRC also includes a data center designed to help States improve the quality of their own data systems and improve their use of data. The goal of the FSSRC and Project AWESOME, as

noted by Dr. Derr, is to help build States' capacities to effect program changes internally through bringing what is learned in the research world about evidence-informed practices back to the policy and program world.

Following Dr. Derr's presentation, Ms. Louisa Jones, Principal at ICF International, closed out the session by asking States to think about and discuss what new ideas they learned at the meeting and what TA they might need to implement programmatic or policy changes. States completed an interactive worksheet and reported out to their tables and the group at large. For example, Maryland shared that they have an idea to pilot up-front family services to TANF families, as they think it could be effective with homeless families or families in transition. Rhode Island shared that one of their first steps in redesigning their TANF program will be to schedule stakeholder input sessions so that the process can be thorough and thoughtful from the beginning.

Closing Remarks

Following the Taking Action session, Ms. Eileen Friedman, TANF Region III Program Manager, provided closing remarks for the 2014 TANF Directors East Coast Meeting. She briefly discussed the highlights of the last two and one-half days, reiterated the workshop's goals, and thanked TANF representatives and other key stakeholders for attending. Ms. Friedman passed the microphone around to participants and asked them to describe the meeting in one word, with "energizing," "motivating," "informative," and "holistic" as common refrains. Ms. Friedman encouraged the participants to reach out for any TA they may need in the future, whether it be through the regional offices, the OFA PeerTA website (<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/>), or through other available OFA resources.