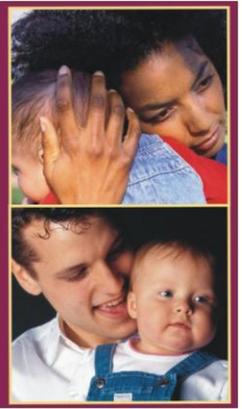


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
 Administration for Children and Families
 Office of Family Assistance



Regions V & VII

State TANF Directors Meeting

September 16 – 17, 2008 • Chicago, IL

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Executive Summary

Rapid Response Technical Assistance Project: Task Order 21 Technical Assistance Event for Regions V and VII

The Rapid Response Technical Assistance Network is an initiative of the Office of Family Assistance within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (Contract: HHSP233200600511G). This report highlights the work performed under Task Order 21 in 2008.

In response to a joint technical assistance request from Regions V (Chicago) and VII (Kansas City), the Rapid Response project team¹ conducted secondary research and telephone discussions on issues, identified as being of concern to the constituent States of these regions. These issues included:

- immediate engagement;
- re-engaging the sanctioned population;
- addressing the needs of TANF customers with multiple barriers;
- providing supportive services; and
- partnering with the private sector.

The promising practices contained in this report are the result of a review of 24 programs. These programs spanned 14 States and one nationwide endeavor. Findings built on both new discussions and previously funded work performed by ICF as part of the Urban Partnerships Initiative Toolkit.²

The report is organized along the key issues outlined above with multiple State program profiles included in each section. Given the interrelatedness of the issues of concern it is not surprising that, in many cases, the programs chosen for inclusion in this volume spanned multiple areas. In this event, the research team categorized each program only once –into its most apparent topical area. We encourage readers to peruse all topical areas for inspiration and ideas.

¹ The Rapid Response project is managed by AFYA, Inc. As its subcontractor, Caliber/ICF International conducted the research for this effort.

² The Urban Partnerships Toolkit is a collection of resources, templates, examples and instruments, which will assist TANF administrators in achieving the goal of supporting families on a path to self-sufficiency. The toolkit is a dynamic resource to help cities address some of the unique issues facing low-income populations, including those associated with substance abuse, poor mental health conditions, former incarceration, recent immigration, learning disabilities and others. The toolkit is available for download via the Welfare Peer TA Network Web site at <http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/upitoolkit/>.

The research team is deeply indebted to our Central Office and Regional ACF colleagues and to our State respondents. Not only did these respondents participate and willingly discuss their programs and challenges, they also agreed to serve as points of contact for any TANF professional who wishes to discuss these programs in more detail. Contact information for all State respondents (alphabetical by State) is included in Appendix A.

The research included in this volume was presented to the constituent States of Regions V and VII, in Chicago, IL, on September 16 and 17, 2008. The research team thanks these member States for their participation and insightful questions about these programs. It is our sincere hope that these States join many others in continuing the dialogue about potentially promising strategies for meeting the demands of today's TANF program.

Findings in Brief

After reviewing all 24 programs contained in this document, the research team extracted key lessons that – despite topical area – seemed to hold true for most successful programs. The research team hopes that these themes may serve as a launching point for program design, implementation and ongoing evaluation efforts. The common lessons identified are listed below.

- Maintain openness of communication – several programs discussed various elements of this, including providing streamlined access to information, avoiding “turf wars,” conducting outreach and marketing, speaking in the other person’s language (especially true for clients and business partners) and maintaining a flexible and positive discourse.
- Focus on finding the “right job” – sites commented regularly on the importance of focusing on getting a client attached to the right job. Some couched this as a focus on retention and advancement, others as being “skill ready” for work and another as “earning a living” rather than simply “getting a job.”
- Embrace an employment model – many of the sites discussed the importance of operationalizing the commitment to employment by changing business practices, culture, messaging and language. They talked about allowing the business and employment culture to permeate all aspects of their work and still managing to balance that with the reality of social services delivery.
- Prioritize flexibility – regardless of the audience, program, site or topic the issue of remaining flexible was continually mentioned. Whether in program design, service delivery, communication, coalition building or simply in the every day management of workflow, flexibility was viewed as an essential element of success.

Participant Response

Feedback from the States, in attendance at the technical assistance event in September, encouraged an exploration of the administrative strategies, costs and program “trade-offs” associated with each of these programs. While we were not able to return to the State programs to ask questions regarding these topics as part of this research effort, we recognize the value of this type of information and encourage consumers of this information to ask State respondents directly.

Other questions centered on the availability of data directly linking these programs to changes in the Federal Work Participation Rate. Most States have only anecdotal and experiential evidence about the value of the highlighted programs. One example is Arkansas’ Work Pays program which extended eligibility criteria to serve additional clients because of their confidence in the positive effect of the program on participation rates and customer well-being. Many States – Arkansas and Utah are examples – are investing in an ongoing evaluation of their programs to better understand these relationships. In addition, States are awaiting final word from ACF regarding their official work participation achievements. When those two types of data become available, States will be better situated to answer these questions.

Generally, the States in attendance found the research to be useful to the extent it may launch ongoing discussion with other States as well as with policymakers in their own States. Future research topics – in addition to the questions outlined above – might include more details on the legislative history – how programs “came to be,” and/or discussions related to specific staff qualifications, staffing plans and specific details of program operations. The relationship of each individual initiative to the larger goals of the TANF program is also an opportunity for exploration.

The remainder of this document includes the research findings and an appendix of contact information for staff from each program.

Please note that neither the authors, ACF, nor Regions V and VII actively endorse any practice contained in this document. The purpose of this document is only to summarize how States and others have sought to improve the operations of the TANF program.

Setting the Context

While not on par with the policy change associated with the original passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) still creates significant impacts for TANF implementation. The DRA specifically refocuses attention on employment services and engaging all customers in appropriate work activities, requiring the focus of the TANF program to return to improving employment outcomes among participants. This intentional refocusing on employment engagement is evidenced in several provisions of the DRA, including caseload reduction recalibration and changes in the requirements associated with Separate State Programs–Maintenance of Effort (SSP–MOE).

Facing these requirements and an increase in the effective work participation rate, State and county TANF agencies are searching for innovative strategies to improve work attachment for TANF families and overcome barriers to work. The agencies must coordinate critical support services to help families sustain self-sufficiency. In order to accomplish this objective, it has never been more critical for the Office of Family Assistance to facilitate sharing across the country and work in collaboration with States to engage hard-to-serve customers in allowable activities.

The research presented in this paper – and the Rapid Response event for which it was completed – exemplify the types of information sharing that will benefit all States and TANF clients.

Topics Covered

- Immediate engagement
- Re-engaging the sanctioned population
- Addressing the needs of TANF customers with multiple barriers
- Providing supportive services
- Partnering with the private sector

This research highlights some of the strategies States and counties have used to manage this transition, serve their TANF clients and still meet their Federal participation targets.

This document begins with an overview of the research methodology, provides highlights of key lessons uncovered in the research effort and then profiles 24 programs across the country. These profiles are categorized along the topical domains illustrated above. Many programs could easily be presented in two or even three of these categories, but each is listed only once.

The research team expresses its sincere gratitude to the respondent programs and to ACF and the States of ACF Regions V and VII for affording us the opportunity to examine these interesting topics.

At the Appendix to this volume, a list of contact persons by State is available. These individuals can provide additional details on their programs.

Research Methodology

In response to the joint request from ACF Regions V and VII, the ICF team identified 24 programs for inclusion in this study. Eighteen of these programs were newly identified and six were known to ICF from a previous OFA-sponsored project. Each of the programs was categorized into at least one of the five targeted domains and many were cross-listed in multiple domains.

Next, we conducted telephone assessments with the newly identified programs, created summaries of the assessments and vetted the summaries with the sponsoring States. For the programs we were previously aware of, we did not conduct new assessments but otherwise followed the same

States Profile

- Arkansas
- Connecticut
- Florida
- Georgia
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- New York
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- Washington

approach. The findings of this research and any errors are solely the responsibility of the authors.

Key Lessons Learned

Throughout this research effort, without regard to which topic a program was categorized into, several common key lessons emerged.

Openness of Communication – Several programs discussed various elements of this, including providing streamlined access to information, avoiding “turf wars,” conducting outreach and marketing, speaking in the other person’s language (especially true for clients and business partners) and maintaining a flexible and positive discourse.

The “Right Job” – Sites commented regularly on the importance of focusing on getting a client attached to the right job. Some couched this as a focus on retention and advancement, others as being “skill ready” for work and another as “earning a living” rather than simply “getting a job.”

Embracing the Employment Model – Many of the sites discussed the importance of operationalizing the commitment to employment by changing business practices, culture, messaging and language. They talked about allowing the business and employment culture to permeate all aspects of their work and still managing to balance that with the reality of social services delivery.

Flexibility – Regardless of the audience, program, site or topic the issue of remaining flexible was mentioned. Whether in program design, service delivery, communication, coalition building or simply in the every day management of workflow, flexibility was viewed as an essential element of success.

Neither ICF International nor ACF endorse any practice contained in this document. The purpose of this document is only to summarize how States and others have sought to improve the operations of the TANF program.

Immediate Engagement

While the clients remaining on TANF caseloads continue to need support services to address barriers to employment and reaching self-sufficiency, the DRA recognizes there are appropriate work assignments for all TANF clients and requires States and communities to work with local employers, community resources and the client themselves to identify and access these opportunities.

Immediate engagement speaks to the importance of placing applicants into work situations as soon as possible. For some sites, applicants must begin participating before they receive their first distribution of cash assistance. For others, the upfront application team is significantly reduced.

Profiles in Immediate Engagement

- Fulton County (Atlanta), Georgia: SHIFT
- Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), Ohio: Prevention, Retention and Contingency
- Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia@Work
- Houston, Texas: Integrated Case Management Teams

In still other sites, changes to the case management philosophy support rapid attachment to employment activities and an emphasis on retention. With the recalibration of the caseload reduction credit, engaging all clients has never been more important for State TANF programs.

Fulton County, GA: SHIFT

SHIFT represents a successful partnership of a performance-based contractor working with the Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Office to divert Atlanta's primarily female, African American TANF applicant population from cash assistance. The SHIFT program helps individuals with recent work experience find, obtain and maintain employment by offering a variety of services, such as employment training, resume help, supervised job search and job coaching.

SHIFT represents a new approach to TANF service delivery by promoting a highly professional atmosphere and consistently work-focused mentality and by offering key supportive services ranging from job readiness training and work clothes to job coaching and follow-up mentoring. As an example of the intense work-focus of the program, SHIFT uses a biometric clock to hold clients responsible for their time. Another strong

aspect of the program is that rather than pushing a customer into a career path, the SHIFT program lets women find their own direction and encourages them to look outside of their own neighborhoods and attain the highest wage possible. As a result, they enjoy a placement rate of approximately 75 percent, with their clients finding jobs at an average hourly wage of \$7.50-\$13.00.

The SHIFT program is 4 weeks long. After the first week of assessment and job skills training, SHIFT conducts a post assessment of 50 questions, which the clients must pass at 70 percent to move on with the program. If a client fails the test, a trainer will tutor them one-on-one to enable them to succeed. Thereafter, the client spends the following 3 weeks in a monitored job search, during which the clients must clock in and out and keep records of their conversations. Sometimes, a trainer will

shadow them on these calls. Close communication is maintained with the DFCS Office to ensure that, if these clients do not find a job within 4 weeks, the DFCS Office is prepared to offer more intensive services and cash assistance.

The program is funded through contracts with the DFCS Office. The strong relationship and high level of communication between these two groups enables for an effective partnership, in which the contractor receives most of its payment on the back end, during job coaching. Also, DFCS pays a flat rate per month to reduce agency costs and ensure that SHIFT receives an appropriate number of clients. In the event that DFCS exceeds the agreed upon number of clients, SHIFT will accommodate the extra customers at no charge.

The SHIFT program attributes their success to a number of factors and does not report any major challenges in the implementation of a program like this one. SHIFT maintains that the program focuses on retention, above just finding a job, and they remind other organizations to maintain high standards.

They suggest that other programs interested in mirroring the SHIFT–DFCS partnership should consider the following: have staff attend one of SHIFT’s “train the trainer” programs, or consider purchasing materials from the SHIFT program.

For county offices, they suggest that agencies visit a program and see it in action before committing to any contractor, and pay close attention to the personalities on the contractor’s staff to ensure that staff can form a strong connection with the clients. SHIFT reports a significant emphasis on job retention with their customers; their goal is to have clients reach at least 90 days. Job coaching is a new aspect of the SHIFT program, as they now use cell phones and laptops to maintain constant communication with working clients. Their goals are to help customers stay employed and make more money. SHIFT invites students to come back and talk to future classes, and they hire students. Finally, SHIFT emphasizes the need for accountability throughout the program, and for leadership to remain willing to continuously reassess and refine the program.

Key to Success

Flexibility – SHIFT espouses the importance of being flexible with TANF customers and partners * Accountability – The SHIFT program also emphasizes the need to treat customers like adults and help them push themselves to successful activity * Compassion – In terms of staffing arrangements, SHIFT highlights the importance of forming a compassionate team of people to work with adults in transition * Communication – Finally, the DFCS office attributes their success with SHIFT to the establishment of an open line of communication, such that clients can be adequately supervised and supported.

Cuyahoga County, OH: Prevention, Retention and Contingency

The Cuyahoga County Prevention Retention and Contingency (PRC) program was developed as part of a State of Ohio initiative to help families reduce barriers to work. Each county has flexibility in implementing the program. Originally developed after the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, the PRC program was implemented in October, 1997.

The PRC program has three components:

- "P", which is use of PRC to prevent somebody coming on TANF;
- "R" to help somebody retain employment; and
- "C", which is all other circumstances.

In 2007, approximately \$2.5 million were used in Cuyahoga County for the PRC program. Approximately 10 percent of the total spent was used for prevention, which is the diversion aspect of the program. The program currently offers a variety of services to be used in emergency situations. An applicant must meet all income guidelines and show that they have experienced a "change in circumstance" in the last year, which has caused their emergency situation. To receive such assistance, applicants must then fall into one of four categories: employed or seeking employment, shelter assistance, families establishing or re-establishing a household, or disaster relief.

The Cuyahoga County Prevention, Retention and Contingency program helps families overcome immediate barriers to self-sufficiency as part of Ohio's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. The program serves as an emergency assistance program for families at or below 200 percent of the Federal poverty level. All PRC funding is part of the TANF program. Benefits and services are specifically tailored for needy and low-income employed families who need short-term help to support an individual or a family during a crisis. The program is designed to divert clients from cash assistance, maintain employment, remove barriers like abuse and neglect, stabilize and/or reunify the family environment and assist in establishing a two parent household. The PRC plan has different service categories and benefits including job preparation, training and retention services, ranging from occupational training to uniforms for training; emergency assistance, diversion and preventative benefits; outreach and community education; and relocation assistance for families impacted by disasters or lead poisoning.

Key to Success

Training the staff and providing information about the program to the community providers has been important in the program's success. The community providers need to be aware of how the program can help the families of Cuyahoga County.

Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia@Work

Founded in 1988, and sparked by an idea from Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), Transitional Work Corporation (TWC) came into being to meet the needs of employers and new job seekers. Philadelphia@Work, was founded on the "transitional work" model and was the result of collaboration among P/PV, the City of Philadelphia, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The support of these three key players, as well as the Pew Charitable Trusts, has enabled the program to grow and succeed. The main objective of Philadelphia@Work is to help low-income individuals who have little work experience find and retain employment. The program works one-on-one with individual clients who must overcome barriers to employment such as inadequate child care, spotty work history, low educational levels, domestic violence situations or substance abuse issues. In this way, the program enables individual clients to gain the experience and skills they need to fit into today's competitive job market.

Philadelphia@Work conducts outreach to employers and leverages existing connections with the city's businesses to develop a network of organizations offering transitional work experience for TANF customers. From the employer's perspective, the program provides job-ready employees, similar to interns, to government and nonprofit agencies in the City of Philadelphia for 25 hours per week, for a period of up to 26 weeks (approximately 6 months). At the same time, clients are able to obtain the skills necessary

to find and obtain full-time work that will advance them toward self-sufficiency. Philadelphia@Work maintains partnerships with over 200 active worksites; it has helped place thousands of clients in meaningful work (70 percent of these jobs offer benefits within the first 6 months), and through structured incentives at all levels of their programs, the program enjoys approximately an 85 percent 30-day retention rate, and a 40 percent 6-month retention rate.

Clients attend 1 week of orientation and assessment and then are placed in a transitional job for up to 6 months or paid work experience. This internship opportunity provides clients with hands-on experience and guidance from a work partner, who acts as an on-the-job mentor. While working 25 hours per week, clients attend 10 hours of professional development training designed to enhance their job skills. At the end of the transitional phase, program staff helps clients obtain full-time employment; thereafter, the staff continues to provide clients with retention services for up to 6 months of full-time permanent employment. This additional support ensures the success of each participant in his or her transition from the world of welfare to the world of work. The program also offers bonuses of up to \$450 to those clients who retain their full-time jobs for up to 6 months. The program has also adapted materials to service clients with limited English proficiency.

Originally, the program targeted women, but due to a rising population of people with criminal records, they now service a 20 percent male clientele.

Key personnel fall into two main groups: career coaches, who provide a continuum of service delivery; and job developers, who identify jobs and conduct the job-match process through weekly job fairs and related activities. The program is uniquely structured so that staff each “own” a caseload and an orientation session, with support from other staff, then the schedule rotates so that no one person has an oversized customer load. The program rewards staff according to the priorities that dictate its compensation from the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation—this is according to enrollment; worksite placement; work participation; placement; 30-day, 3-month, and 6-month retention; and permanent placement.

Philadelphia@Work uses several innovative techniques to effectively integrate technology within their operations. Their MIS department developed new data systems that automated tasks, streamlined paper-flow, moved to a paperless

process, minimized human error and utilized existing technological resources. For example, career coaches can bring a tablet to the worksites and have employers verify their clients’ timesheets. The organization also benefits from the use of bar codes to log benefits and is planning to next implement an automated telephone system to help track their hours. Together, these advancements increase data accuracy, utilize staff time more efficiently and increase participants’ confidence in the program.

The Philadelphia@Work program suggests that agencies interested in implementing a similar program should consider the environment and the needs of their employers to drive the development of their processes. In addition, they highlight the need for programs to establish an expansive and diverse network. The staff emphasizes the importance of location, that a program’s office should be located in an easily accessible area that takes customers out of their usual environments. Finally, a program should consider whether their computer systems are compatible with their partners so that their data sharing is aligned.

Key to Success

Paid work experience to aid a client’s transition into the workforce * Dedicated and loyal staff to continuously support the customers * Partnerships – the program maintains, that without the support of various work partners, they could never afford to maintain the program at its current levels of success * Efficiency of Systems – Philadelphia@Work makes every effort to adjust, apply technological solutions and improve their processes.

Houston, TX: Integrated Case Management Teams

Houston, with a population of 1.9 million people, has the largest workforce board with 63 members. The workforce board in Houston went through a system wide change by reevaluating core values, business practices and resources to better encourage immediate engagement. By implementing a business model, each customer is now viewed as a potential employee for a business. The office was redesigned under this business model; changes included using business language and moving from programs to customer-lead services. The office was redesigned to permit better customer flow. Staffing was reorganized by function, not program, and accountability on all levels was introduced. They operate under three levels of service: basic employment services; expanded level of services, requiring case management; and financial aid services that require assistance from providers.

Upon entering the office, a greeter meets the customer at the door, listens to the customer and directs him or her to the service he or she wants and needs. TANF applicants are provided a unique work orientation brochure and taken to the next available employment counselor for orientation. All TANF applicants are required to attend a work orientation. The work orientation lasts 30 minutes and is available any time from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every weekday. The orientation process allowed the office to be more effective and cut down on paperwork. Job readiness is assessed at this first visit and support services can be immediately put into place such as childcare and transportation. By providing support benefits immediately, applicants can begin the job search process. The model is strictly a work-first, employment focus- 99 percent of language is around work. The functions of counseling and tracking for customers are kept separate with two

different workers. Program tracking specialists track and enter cooperation hours allowing employment counselors and personal service representatives to provide more and better employment and personal counseling services for customers. Houston also implemented a "Transition Team" to help their staff. They gave presentations to 32 One-Stop Centers, incorporated feedback from staff and conducted follow-up reviews of progress.

If given a chance to reinvent the program, Houston would do the following differently: listen better, internally communicate more often be more direct, repeat messages more often, and monitor progress more frequently. Although they experienced challenges, such as resistance to change from "programs" to "services" language, limited data systems and staff competencies, Houston has seen success in their program. By implementing better customer service, service delivery and improving staff skills, the caseload has reduced from 14,000 to 8,000 ('02-'05). Houston has increased eligible customers served from 80 percent to 94 percent ('04-'05). Participation rates have increased from 30 to 47 percent.

Houston is currently working on expanding their program, as flexibility and making service and process tweaks on a regular basis can increase program longevity and better serve a changing population. Currently, they are exploring ways to use technology to increase and improve communication to customers through videos on their Web site and possibly utilizing text messaging to keep in contact with customers about job opportunities. Additionally, they have implemented a staff Q/A page on their Web site designed for staff

Key to Success

Having the partners at the table since the project's inception * Opening the lines of communication early can best support staff and customers

Reengaging the Sanctioned Population

to ask questions and share answers on the program, which has increased communication and has been a huge success. Designed as a prevention method to motivate participants to comply with the TANF program requirements, the DRA reinforced sanctions that withhold benefits for noncompliance. Failure to comply with program regulations, devoid of good cause, can result in a reduction in the amount of cash benefits provided to a TANF client. Mimicking the consequences for non-performance in the work world, sanctions promote participation in countable work activities and hours to help promote self-sufficiency and require clients to participate in the necessary work experience and training to secure and maintain employment. Not only is it important to impose sanctions as penalty

Profiles in Sanction Reengagement

- San Diego, CA: Sanction Pilot
- Santa Cruz, CA: Sanction Reengagement Team
- Seattle, WA: Reengaging Sanctioned Clients
- Cleveland, OH: Safety Net Program

for noncompliant participants, the reengagement of sanctioned individuals is essential for improving the wellbeing of children and families served by the TANF program. Case managers observe that sanctions can serve as a tool which can help them identify the cause of noncompliance. Once this cause is determined, case managers can work with clients to overcome barriers to employment and meet the program requirements.

San Diego, CA: Sanction Pilot

The San Diego Sanction Pilot was designed to achieve three goals: to increase participation and employment objectives, to gain insight into the factors that led to non-compliance and sanction and to develop strategies to keep others from failing or falling through the cracks. It services a population of primarily single parents with one or more children, often with barriers such as substance abuse or mental health challenges, as well as a lack of information about TANF policies and childcare.

In the first few months of the pilot program, from March to June of 2007, the pilot cured a total of 49 sanction cases, whereas comparative agencies cured anywhere from 4 to 17 cases. The key innovation here is the assignment of all sanctioned cases to one case manager who can follow-up with the family and targets them for reengagement. In

the first quarter of 2008, this project cured and reengaged a total of 66 participants.

The Sanction Specialist case manager adopts two primary responsibilities: first, he or she focuses all efforts upon the reengagement of sanctioned populations; second, he or she tracks and documents all progress. When the clients have to come into the office for yearly CalWORKS eligibility redetermination, the Specialist will attempt to reengage them. In addition, the Sanction Specialist uses letters, phone calls, home visits and collaborations to reengage a client. Once the client agrees to work towards a sanction cure, the Sanction Specialist reviews paperwork, rights and responsibilities, childcare offerings, the client profile and benefits associated with participation.

During this time, the Specialist also assesses the client for new barriers to work. Based upon the client information, the Specialist sets a schedule for the client. For example, the Specialist may mandate that the client must participate in 2 uninterrupted weeks of Job Club to reinstate their benefits. Thereafter, the client must continue to participate in assigned Welfare to Work activity until that client achieves self-sufficiency or reaches the 60 month time limit.

Because San Diego cannot completely drop a non-participating family from their welfare caseload, the sanctioned participants remain in the denominator and lowers their work participation rates, in turn, affecting State and county program objectives. San Diego has piloted this program to reengage sanctioned clients and ensure that all families and individuals being served appropriately improve their reported participation rates.

The staffing of this program requires the designation of one case manager to become the Sanction Specialist. This staff is later responsible for all documentation around the caseload, including the number of sanctions cured each month, methods used to reengage that client,

participants requiring continued guidance and support, participants who have been in contact with the Sanction Specialist but have not yet been cured, participants in curing status, participants not responding to reengagement efforts, and Welfare to Work cases transferring in/out, or closing. The Sanction Specialist develops key partnerships with the following groups: human service specialists, employment case managers, job developers/WEX specialists, community college or other training programs, alcohol and drug programs, mental health services and childcare centers.

The San Diego Sanction Specialists offer several keys to consider when implementing a similar practice. An agency needs to first evaluate their personnel and determine who is right for this caseload, also considering whether it possesses the manpower to dedicate someone to this role. Next, the agency should collaborate with other groups, such as the Public Housing Authority. The agency should develop guidelines and agreements for transferring Welfare to Work cases once they have been cured and the agency must develop the tools necessary for reengagement and tracking.

Key to Success

Individual Attention – to the sanctioned caseload under one case manager * Creative methods of reengagement – for example, the Sanction Specialist realized that “official” looking documents were ignored by clients, whereas letters that had a friendly, personal look were better received * Partnerships – these ensure that the clients have the necessary supports for reengagement and also helps to ensure that when a client is cured, his or her benefits are processed immediately—any delay in this process will cause clients to doubt the value of their participation in the employment services programs * Training – Sanction Lead Supervisor provided training to the partner Human Service Specialists on how to refer and register Welfare to Work participants, how to implement exemptions, how to impose and rescind a sanction and basic policies * Flexibility – of the Sanction Specialist as per WTW program rules and regulations, as many clients will not immediately reengage.

Santa Cruz, CA: Sanction Reengagement Team

As a response to the requirements of TANF Reauthorization in 2007, California counties were required to submit plans to the State outlining how they planned to meet the work participation rate. As reengaging sanction clients was a key area for improvement, Santa Cruz County proposed the implementation of a Sanction Reengagement team as part of the pre-existing Social Work Unit. Funded through TANF, the program has been successful in reengaging sanctioned clients, and is anticipated to have increased the work participation rate in Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz previously had the Social Work Unit in place, which was already charged with making any referrals to other agencies for TANF clients. The staff in the Social Work Unit conducts domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse assessments, and refers the client to the most appropriate agency. The team also supports homeless families that are receiving TANF. Therefore, it was a natural fit to add the Sanction Reengagement program to this team with experience in addressing barriers to work.

The program received funding cuts due to the State budget, which forced the team to assess which parts of the program were working and were not working. Constant assessment of what works and what does not work is key to supporting the program. Major State budget cuts have created challenges for the program, as staff was reduced from seven to three. The staff reductions caused an increased need for communication across divisions within the agency. Due to the budget and staff cuts, the program stopped the home visit

portion of the reengagement process, but was able to continue to implement the meetings when a client was at a recertification appointment, which has been found to be more time and cost effective.

This program operated with three parts to reengage sanction clients. (Recently, the home visiting was cut and the recertification process was introduced due to the budget and to the assessment that this phase was the least successful in reengaging sanctioned clients.)

1. Sanction Cure Clinic– the clinics are taught on a monthly basis to convene sanctioned clients together to reengage. The Social Work Unit extracts a list of sanctioned clients from the computer database and reviews the sanctioned case with the Employment Training Specialist. Upon review, all the sanctioned cases in Santa Cruz County are invited to attend the Sanction Cure Clinic. The clinic consists of a presentation of the requirements of complying with the CalWORKS (TANF) program with the group, followed by individual meetings with the caseworkers. The Social Work Unit has found that one-third of clients attend this clinic to reengage. The incentive to attend is for clients to increase their cash benefit and receive additional services through TANF.
2. Home Visiting– the Home Visiting occurred if the client did not attend the Sanction Cure Clinic. A social worker would go to the home of the person– however, they found

this not as cost and time effective as many people were not at home.

3. Annual recertification process– the Social Work Unit partnered with the Eligibility Workers to engage clients when they come for their annual recertification, which is mandatory. The Eligibility Workers log into the database when the client is coming in and contact the Social Work Unit, who then plan to meet with the sanctioned client at that time.

The staff works with the Eligibility Workers and Employment and Training Workers to best meet the needs of the sanctioned clients. The key staff present at the Sanction Cure Clinics and work with the Eligibility Workers as well as the Employment Training Workers to engage their clients that have been on sanction. The team is an in-house Social

Work Unit, but they keep open lines of communication with providers to identify when a person is at risk of being sanctioned.

The main key to success is staff communication from the Social Work Unit staff to the Eligibility Workers and to the Employment Training Specialists. Communication across units can be a challenge, but once the lines of communication have been opened, the work is much easier to complete.

Another key to success has been tightening up the process, through a new database, to sanction the clients as quickly as possible upon noncompliance. They have found that when clients are sanctioned immediately after noncompliance, they tend to engage faster.

Key to Success

Communication is key.
Empower all stakeholders to communicate directly with their partners.

Seattle, WA: Reengaging Sanctioned Clients

The 2007– 2009 biennial budget includes a proviso which directs the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to collaborate with community partners and represented staff to identify additional services needed for WorkFirst parents in sanction status and families whose benefits have been terminated after 6 months of sanction. The proviso also requires the department to contract with community-based organizations (CBOs) to deliver these services, provided the services compliment the work of the department and do not supplant existing staff or services. Lastly, the department is required to gather client feedback and assess client satisfaction with the program.

The Pathway to Engagement program started statewide in November, 2007, after collaboratively working with community partners and represented staff to determine program services and outcomes. The department implemented this program by offering outcomes-based contracts to interested CBOs.

When a parent is placed in sanction for refusing to participate as required, their cash benefit is taken out of the monthly grant amount. Upon month 6 of sanction, the case goes to a sanction review panel to determine if it is appropriate for a full family sanction.

The purpose of the Pathway to Engagement program is to provide additional services that can help families in long-term sanction, and families who have terminated from cash assistance as a result of a non-compliance sanction, prepare for life after WorkFirst and facilitate the family's access to community resources. This program also provides additional services to assist parents to meet with their WorkFirst worker in order to begin reengaging in WorkFirst activities.

All services are **voluntary** and for interested parents, the contractor conducts an in-person interview in the parent's home whenever possible. Pathway to Engagement contractors contact referred parents to see if they can work together to develop an **exit plan** that can help the family support themselves without a monthly cash grant. As part of the exit plan, the contractor helps the family connect with available and appropriate community resources.

The contractor also encourages participation in WorkFirst services. If the parent is willing to reengage, the contractor develops a **re-connection plan** and facilitates a meeting with the parent's WorkFirst worker to begin the reengagement process. Many of the contractors also provide other services for TANF clients, which made this program an easy addition to their current work. The contract is outcome-based and contractors only get paid upon reaching the desired pay points: 1) completing an exit plan and/or 2) reengaging the client.

Partnering with local CBOs allows for different and effective ways of connecting with this population. Additionally, the outcome-based, rather than process-based, nature of the program allows for it to be a cost-effective program for the State of Washington.

Key to Success

Operationalize a commitment to open communication. In this example, contractors are granted access to the Washington Management Information System.

Cleveland: Safety Net Program

The Safety Net program was first developed in August, 1999, for sanctioned families losing cash assistance. The program was designed to mitigate risk to children, reengage clients with their workers and link families to community resources to help them make ends meet during the sanction period. Cuyahoga County contracted with 10 community-based organizations on a performance-based contract, and providers were paid for effort to engage, a completed initial appraisal and a completed follow-up appraisal. In the first 12 months of the program, 1,000 referrals were made.

Additionally, the Child Safety Review program was

developed in August, 2000, to provide outreach, and a home-based assessment for families who hit time limits and had no known source of income. The goal of the Child Safety Review was to address immediate health/safety issues and engage participants in income-generating activities. Through this program, there were approximately 1,900 referrals made the first 9 months of the program. Until June, 2001, the Safety Net program and Child Safety Review program were operating as separate contracts, and then they were merged together as a combined program to eight providers. The program continues to provide support to time limited clients through case management and

providing referrals for community services to meet client needs, in the area of mental health and physical disabilities (for themselves or a family member).

In 2007, the Safety Net Home Visiting Services were extended to individuals found to be non-compliant with their self-sufficiency plan prior to a sanction being implemented. The goal for the home visitor was to assess whether the client may have had “good cause” for their non-compliance and reengage them with the coach in order to prevent the sanction. Today, home visitors enter appraisal results into a fillable PDF on a laptop while in the home. Appraisals are e-mailed to the self-sufficiency coach via certified e-mail for continued data entry.

Once TANF clients hit the time limit (which is 36 months in Ohio) or they are non-compliant with their work requirements, they are referred to the Safety Net program. Within 15 days, the client is contacted by the contractor to engage

immediately. The provider then visits the home of the client to address immediate needs, and conduct an initial appraisal. Cuyahoga County offers Emergency Voucher Assistance to the client to address immediate barriers. They also conduct a 2 week follow-up to make sure the client is utilizing the referrals and conduct a follow-up appraisal within 30-45 days.

The program serves TANF clients who have been sanctioned or time limited, so they are not subject to meet participation rates. Keys to success include having a committed provider who can conduct outreach immediately and consistently. With sanctioned clients, the provider often serves as a liaison between the worker and the client, which is helpful in the reengagement process. The Emergency Voucher Assistance also supports clients by addressing immediate needs, such as seasonally-appropriate clothing for children.

Key to Success

Follow-up! This program conducts a 2 week follow-up and an additional appraisal within 30-45 days.

Identifying and Working with Barriers

Given the focus on employment, job retention and advancement contained within DRA, States and counties are searching for innovative ways to mitigate employment barriers, connect clients to stable work, foster job advancement and stabilize placements often disrupted by crises large and small. Programs profiled in this section range from those targeting clients with disabilities to integrating social work and employment services models.

Profiles in Barriers to Employment

- Los Angeles, CA: Riverside GAIN
- Anoka County, MN: Partnerships for Family Success
- Ramsey County, MN: ARMHS
- Vermont: Reach Up/Vocational Rehabilitation Partnership
- Utah: DWS Social Work Unit
- New York: WeCARE
- California: Communication Across Barriers
- Nebraska: Home Visitation
- Arkansas: Work Pays Program
- Ohio: Shared Youth Vision Partnership

Los Angeles, CA: Riverside GAIN

The Riverside Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program serves applicants and recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The GAIN program markets the benefits of work participation to customers, discusses the seriousness of the customers' responsibility to their families and closely monitors the progress of customers through the various components. The initial phase of the program begins with Initial Contact Case Management (ICCM) which focuses on four tasks: helping applicants identify alternatives to welfare, identifying candidates for diversion, informing applicants about welfare and preparing applicants for GAIN. Thereafter, GAIN presents a full range of activities, such as job search preparation and assistance, life skills training, basic education, assessment, occupational skills training, post-secondary education and on-the-job training. GAIN also provides childcare assistance and ancillary items to participants during program activities.

The Riverside GAIN program demonstrates proven success in work retention studies, indicating that an increased number of customers take advantage of retention services and demonstrate increased employment and earnings in the 2 years following the program. After the customer passes through the ICCM phase and is presented with resources and empowered by the GAIN program's work-first philosophy, the customer enters a written action plan or contract in which that customer works with an Employment Services Counselor (ESC) to undergo an appraisal, set personal goals, receive supportive services, participate in job search and complete an assessment. After obtaining work, the customers are encouraged to maintain employment and seek career advancement

through promotional and educational opportunities. Formal job retention services occur when cash aid is terminated. Following the date of termination, customers who are employed are eligible for 1 year of supportive services such as child care, transportation, etc.

Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) staffing and training is specifically designed to contribute to the success of the GAIN program. In addition to separating the ICCM staff from the ESC staff, the offices leverage co-located staff that focus on issues like mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence. The department implements comprehensive training that is driven by assessment activities, in which Riverside conducts an environmental scan and surveys all level of employees to identify training needs. As a result of successful management of both office operations and employees, Riverside DPSS is able to better retain their GAIN staff, thus, positively impacting the quality and continuity of social service delivery.

The success of Riverside GAIN around the issue of work retention also stems from effective partnering with employers including the Riverside County Temporary Assistance Pool (TAP) program, which permits GAIN customers to test into employment with the county. Also, the Community Action Partnership (CAP) works alongside GAIN to mirror and support the job readiness and work attachment process and the Economic Development Agency assists with employment development. GAIN also partners with community colleges and adult schools to

provide further education and training once customers have obtained meaningful work.

The Riverside GAIN program offers the following as points to consider when organizing an agency to support customers in work activities. The first consideration involves the degree to which an organization consistently supports a message. In Riverside, customers continuously receive a message that emphasizes the benefits of work

from all staff and partners. Outside of the message and mission, Riverside suggests that agencies remain flexible to the needs of their customers—becoming too structured detracts from an agency’s ability to service and respect individuals. Lastly, the agency emphasizes a need to stay away from punitive communication, citing that customers respond best to flexible and positive support.

Key to Success

- Mission/Vision – Riverside has a clear mission and vision, which helps to ensure that all staff work toward the same goals.
- Staffing –Riverside develops its staff and selects like-minded individuals who truly believe in the potential for customer success.
- Buy-in throughout the organization – Riverside set its goals and took steps to ensure that the shared mindset runs throughout the agency. This translates to improved customer service and performance, as it is reinforced by training.

Anoka County, MN: Partnerships for Family Success

The foundational work for Anoka County’s Partnerships for Family Success (PFS) program began in the fall, 2003, and in February, 2005, expanded as part of the State of Minnesota’s Department of Human Services Integrated Services Project (ISP). The Integrated Services Model became a priority for the State Department as a result of legislation that authorized eight grants to Minnesota Counties. The program is funded through TANF dollars from the State and also with Anoka County funds. Through the program, Anoka County serves 85 percent TANF families and 15 percent non-TANF families. The non-TANF families are funded through county funds. Since April 1, 2005, 988 cases have been referred to the program, and 728 cases have been opened. Anoka County has an Integrated Human Services Division, which includes members of the Corrections, Social Services, Mental Health, Income

Maintenance, Employment Services and Community Health Departments. The Integrated Services Project team works together to meet the needs of the hardest-to-serve families. Prior to the program’s inception, an evaluation was completed looking at the families who were receiving services from multiple departments, and it was found that the common denominator among the cases was that many were receiving TANF. Anoka County applied for the ISP grant, which was a natural progression as the county leaders already had a steering committee in place. It has been a challenge implementing the program, as it can be costly. Additionally, Anoka County also expressed difficulty with delivering comprehensive, holistic services in a “work first” environment. However, the program’s successful

outcomes have made it a worthwhile investment, and PFS staff is committed to the program and providing quality services to families.

The vision of the PFS program is “a service delivery system that is accessible and integrated, which strengthens families’ self-sufficiency and improves connections to the community.” It was from this vision that the mission of “working in partnerships with families to improve lives now,” was also adopted. The Anoka County Partnership for Family Success Program (PFS) is located within the One-Stop Center in the county. Families receiving multiple services in the county are referred to the program. Once a family is referred to the program, the intake worker reviews the case, meets with the family, coordinates with the referring party and then conducts a mental health screen, physical health screen, learning disability assessment and a employability functional assessment. Upon these screenings and assessments, the intake worker writes a report outlining the family’s needs. An intake review committee reviews the referral and upon approval, the case is assigned to the PFS program. The program is voluntary, and most clients stay in the program for an average of 12 months.

While the case is open, the case manager works with families to build a case plan, which is renewed every 3 months and redone every 6 months. The caseworkers carry only 15–20 cases, which allows for intensive case management. PFS has an advisory committee, that includes all department heads and two community members, which meets on a quarterly basis. The critical staff is made up of project manager team supervisor, four social workers, a public health nurse, a rehabilitation counselor/job counselor, a disability advocate, two corrections and one IM/Housing case manager and an intake worker. Members of the PFS team work closely with other agencies to gain referrals such as child welfare, mental health and Social Security Advocacy. Since project inception, there has been no staff turnover within this team.

PFS provides integrated services for families involved with multiple county programs and the staff focus on the larger barriers to employment and stabilizing the family, by addressing social service, mental health and medical needs as well as changing behaviors and lifestyles. The program’s goal is to stabilize the family, reduce the amount of services, increase self-sufficiency and support the family to use services in the most appropriate manner.

Key to Success

* Receiving buy-in early on from high level management * having committed staff * networking among agencies to bring partners to the table * and clearly define a division of labor among staff and partner agencies in order to fully integrate.

Ramsey County, MN: Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS)

The Ramsey County ARMHS program started in 2005 as a result of the State of Minnesota's Integrated Services Project. It is entirely funded through TANF funds and serves TANF recipients with mental health disabilities. The Ramsey County Workforce Solutions Department, which provides employment services to TANF recipients and administrative oversight of TANF services for Ramsey County, applied for the grant. Agencies, that Ramsey already contracted with, were encouraged to become ARMHS certified, resulting in three current TANF service provider agencies becoming certified Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Service (ARMHS) providers. In addition, Ramsey County (Workforce Solutions) contracted with four ARMHS-certified providers to ensure all participants in need received appropriate services. Adding the ARMHS services to the TANF program allowed Ramsey to provide wrap-around service delivery that was holistic and an essential component for the wellbeing and success of the families served.

Fiscally sustaining the provision of ARMHS services for TANF recipients has been challenging in that the reimbursement system for ARMHS services allows reimbursement for face-to-face rehabilitation services, but not for time spent conducting outreach to the family. Additionally, there are some financial constraints as this program is expensive to run. The administrative data collection is very time consuming and expensive.

This program serves as a voluntary program for clients. The ARMHS workers meet clients in their homes, or in the community if preferred, to discuss program rules and conduct initial

assessments, resulting in a determination of program eligibility. The program is designed for TANF clients with mental health conditions who have difficulty engaging in work activities. Upon eligibility, the worker conducts a detailed treatment plan to include day-to-day progress measures, which often involves discussion of the client's medication management protocol.

The initial assessment is done by a licensed clinician to diagnose a mental health illness. Upon diagnosis, the client undergoes a functional needs assessment to receive the most effective services. The staff for the ARMHS project hold small caseloads in order to address the needs of the ARMHS clients. Most of the rehabilitative services are conducted at the home of the client, which supports clients that have transportation barriers or can become overwhelmed in large situations. The worker helps support the client in meeting work activities by stabilizing the family, and then supporting the client in getting and keeping a job. ARMHS workers work closely with the Employment Services staff, and they meet on a regular basis to discuss mutual case management services.

The Urban Institute is currently conducting an evaluation of the program, and found that in a sample of cases: 75 percent participated in therapy or counseling; 50 percent received help with a physical health issue; 40 percent received assistance in applying for SSI; 35 percent participated in employment related services; 30 percent received assistance with a child-related issue such as assistance with child care, child protection issues, parenting

issues, mental health issues and referrals for assessment; 25 percent received assistance with household-related issues 15 percent received assistance with housing issues; and 10 percent attended a support group. These services were not necessarily provided by ARMHS workers,

but may have been included in an ARMHS treatment plan and/or a TANF employment plan. This program has been successful in engaging clients with mental health disorders.

Key to Success

ARMHS key to success is communication across staff. Other information about this program can be found at <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/conductingindepth.pdf>.

Vermont: Reach-Up/Vocational Rehabilitation Partnership

VR Reach-Up is a special program designed to provide vocational counseling, case management, support services and job search/placement assistance to welfare recipients in Vermont who possess a significant disability-related barrier to employment. Since 2001, VocRehab (VR) Vermont has worked with the Department of Children and Families, Economic Services Division (DCF/ESD); to help TANF recipients who have been identified as having a disability that is a barrier to employment. These recipients are referred by ESD to VR for services. They are provided a Master's level VR counselor who also serves as the TANF Reach-Up case manager. This results in a single counselor that provides all services, thus blending the resources of both VR and ESD to provide intensive vocational services and case management. The Economic Services Division provides \$1.7 million per year to VR to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals on TANF who have a disability. VR contributes additional funding to support disability related services and employment.

A large number of VR Reach-Up clients are single mothers, who are experiencing a disability that impacts their ability to obtain or keep a job. Disabilities, often trauma based, include depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, bi-polar disorder and other personality disorders. The current program is the result of 5 years of learning about ways to assist TANF recipients stabilize their lives and obtain meaningful employment.

A three-way or "hands-off meeting" takes place between the referring ESD case manager and VR counselor when a client with a disability has been identified as eligible for VR services. VR Reach-Up has 13 full time employees (FTEs) providing VR counseling services. Each counselor has an Employment Training Specialists (ETS) to assist in providing intensive wrap around services. Clients in the VR-Reach-Up program also have access to the full array of VR services.

However, where VR or TANF Reach-Up clients may see a case manager or VR general caseload counselor one time per month, VR Reach-Up program staff see their customers approximately three times per month. VR Reach-Up program staff provide vocational rehabilitation services and play an active role in supporting treatment plans with mental health and substance abuse services. Caseloads are capped at 40 customers to ensure capacity to provide intensive services. Strategies in place include coping skills groups, access to full vocational evaluations, funding for psychological evaluations and intensive job readiness and job search assistance services. VR Reach-Up works closely with job development and ETS staff to develop and support trial work experience placements. In the work experience placement, clients can “try out” work in a supported way, while building both soft and occupational skills. Employers have the opportunity to “try out” a potential employee at no risk and there is no obligation to hire the participant. Clients earn a small stipend and have frequent (often daily) contact with ETS staff to ensure a positive experience. In cases where the VR Reach-Up counselor determines that the client’s disability prevents employment, within 12 months, a referral is made to the VR Social Security Specialist to work on an application for Social Security benefits.

VR Reach-Up utilizes a supported employment model which has its origins in working with developmentally disabled populations. The Vocational Rehabilitation agency is a customer-focused organization utilizing data driven decision making. VR Reach-Up ETS staff operates with the freedom and flexibility to provide a wide range of resources to their Reach-Up clients. Modification of the work requirement (for TANF clients) is a central concept to the VR approach. Instead of the

perception that TANF participants are being deferred (stopping the clock and thus relieving individual responsibility for complying with the TANF timeline for employment) VR Reach-Up describes its process as a modification and/or gradual increase in work participation. The concept of modification has implications for both the participant (they are still responsible) and VR Reach-Up’s partnering agency, DCF/ESD by reducing the perception that participants in VR Reach-Up are avoiding TANF requirements or sanctioning penalties.

The VR Reach-Up program has grown annually from 200 participants at its inception to currently over 1,200 participants (about 15 percent of the total DFC caseload). Participants who have successfully left the program for work have a 64 percent retention rate after 18 months. Increased participation is attributed to better screening, cross agency training and collaboration.

Several program innovations and a new program model have been developed out of the VR Reach-Up program. These innovations take place at both the individual and systems levels.

Individual level innovations. VR Reach-Up focuses on three concepts that underlie the supported employment model: 1) treatment addressing the identified disability, 2) individualized support and 3) tailored employment experiences. VR has wealth of resources that can be provided, including a job developer, job coach, home visits and various assistive technologies. This results in stability and an increased likelihood that VR Reach-Up customers maintain stable employment.

Systems level innovation. VR Reach-Up utilizes cross agency integration to reduce boundaries, facilitate partnering and relationship building with DCF Reach-Up staff. This includes cross agency training and joint case review meetings that contribute to improved communication and collaboration.

New Model. A new model of service delivery for VR Reach-Up was developed in order to increase participation rates of Reach-Up clients that were consistent “no-shows” for therapy and other employment related activities. The new model facilitates caseload movement and addresses, the predominately mental health, barriers of

participants. It combines group therapy, work skills enhancement and work experience placements that can support participants in gradually increasing work participation while learning how to overcome functional barriers. The model encourages development of a support group growing out of the group therapy experience and incorporates a process of using group affiliation to establish employment and career goals, training and other employment seeking activities. The model is demonstrating early successes in helping to de-mystify mental health therapy, developing positive informal support services and helping clients develop concrete skills to problem solve.

Key to Success

In addition to the features described in the Tips for Implementation section above, the successes of VR Reach-Up can be attributed to several other factors. VR Reach-Up staff has Master’s level training and some have prior experience with TANF, having worked for ESD. All VR Reach-Up counselors are fully qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors under guidelines of the Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Counselors are trained to be flexible and customer service oriented, providing individualized services to clients. The wealth of employment resources and access to mental health/substance abuse treatment also contribute to the effectiveness of their work with TANF clients.

Utah: Department of Workforce Services Social Work Unit

Utah's Social Work Services program has been in place since before the 1996 Welfare Reform. It is fully TANF funded and had been modified over the years to meet the changing needs of TANF clients. The Unit houses a team of Licensed Clinical Therapists (LCTs) that are located across the State of Utah, as well as an Intervention Specialist. To support program flexibility, it is important to have a program coordinator that is clear on the mission and vision of the team so staff know what to expect. As a result of TANF implementation, the State of Utah instituted a 3 year time limit on the TANF program. In 1998, University of Utah's Social Research Institute (SRI) began a study on the time limited TANF participants. When the first customers hit the time limit in 2000, SRI conducted follow-up research. Researchers proposed a position at SRI called an "Intervention Specialist" to take referrals from interviewers to complete an intervention or referral as needed.

In October, 2000, the position was replicated within the Department of Workforce Services as part of the Social Work Unit. The program provides clinical services to TANF customers only, but also offers crisis intervention/resource referrals to all customers as needed. The 21 LCTs are located across the State and cover 35 Employment Centers. The LCTs provide clinical interventions, evaluations, monitoring, case management, brief therapy, consultations and collaboration/brokerage. The unit receives referrals for clients who have experienced substance abuse, domestic violence and mental illness. The LCTs promote problem-solving strategies using a strength-based approach. Through the clinical case management and evaluation, the LCTs are able to identify how mental health has been a barrier to work. LCTs do

not carry a caseload, but monitor between 20 and 50 TANF cases. They conduct an evaluation that looks at mental health, stressors, family and other factors. Upon evaluation, the LCT shares a report with the TANF caseworkers (called Employment Counselors), and the LCT and Employment Counselor work together to formulate a plan for the customer and offer referrals. The program also uses a variation of the "CAGE" alcohol assessment tool to assess for substance abuse, and a tool called "TALE" to evaluate clients for domestic violence issues. If the customer is found to have an issue, they receive a mandatory referral to the program for intervention. The clinicians also collaborate closely with the TANF employment counselors. Both use the same online system called UWorks to record their notes so that they can be viewed by other staff members who are working with the customer. Employment Counselors are also able to view a joint calendar in which they can make appointments directly on LCTs calendars, so as soon as a customer is referred, they have an appointment. The Intervention Specialist works solely with customers who have closed for non-compliance or have reached the State's time limit. The Specialist receives a monthly report with the leavers and makes contact with every customer that reaches the time limit. The Specialist makes contact through the phone and also conducts home visits in the greater Salt Lake area. The Specialist works with the family to provide an opportunity to ask questions, offer information and community resource referrals. After DRA, the program has become more strength-based as well as increased its focus on employment and job readiness. The LCTs have held an open door policy to support the early identification of

serious barriers to work, and are available to provide consultation at any time.

They have received recent in-service training to support engaging the “hard to serve” population and identifying best practices for serving customers with chronic, long-term

physical/mental health conditions. They have also focused on a more streamlined system for referring customers to SSI. Serving as an in-house program has made this easier to function without contract staff. The co-location of the LCTs within the employment centers has also been helpful to the program.

Key to Success

Be Creative * Embrace Change * Adopt a Flexible Attitude * Focus on Self-Sufficiency * Explore Opportunities for Innovation * Develop the program before hiring staff so staff roles are clearly defined

New York: WeCARE

WeCARE (Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment) is a New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) program that serves New York City TANF and Safety Net (SN) recipients who have clinical barriers to employment. The program was designed to provide a comprehensive assessment to the significant number of people remaining on public assistance in New York City that have complicated clinical barriers to employability including medical, and/or mental health conditions.

WeCARE completes a biopsychosocial (BPS) assessment to determine each participant’s functional capacity and then develops a continuum of integrated, individualized services that address each participant’s barrier(s) to employment and assists them in reaching their highest possible level of functioning and self-sufficiency. WeCARE provides several services:

- a comprehensive biopsychosocial (BPS) assessment, including a physical examination, laboratory tests, review and consideration of clinical documentation

provided by the client, complete review of systems, and specialty evaluations when indicated;

- an individualized comprehensive service plan;
- referral and linkages to treatment for unstable medical and/or mental health conditions;
- case management;
- vocational rehabilitation, skills training and education, job development, placement and retention; and
- assistance in obtaining Federal disability benefits.

The NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) contracts with two vendors, FECS Health and Human Services Systems and Arbor Education and Training, to provide WeCARE services. The program received its first referrals in February, 2005. At any one time, there are approximately 24,000 participants participating in WeCARE. As part of eligibility determinations, all NYC TANF and SN participants take part in an employability assessment.

Those participants who report a medical and/or mental health barrier to employment are referred to WeCARE to complete a BPS assessment. This assessment is conducted by a team consisting of a social worker, primary care physician, and if necessary, one or more medical specialists. Assessment results are used to determine the client's ability to participate in work activities and the WeCARE service pathway to which they should be referred. Clients, who are able to work with accommodations or supports, are assigned to the vocational rehabilitation service component where vocational evaluation and assessment, in conjunction with the BPS assessment, are used to match clients to a work placement site where they are most likely to succeed. Recipients, who need stabilization for an untreated or unstable medical/mental health condition prior to employment, are referred to a wellness plan where their primary activity is participating in appropriate treatment activities. Recipients who are unable to work and appear to be eligible for Federal disability benefits are referred to a case manager who guides them through the SSI/SSDI application process. Those whose clinical conditions do not affect their ability to participate in work activities are referred back to their case worker for engagement in traditional employment services.

All clients that are referred to the vocational rehabilitation component complete a diagnostic vocational evaluation, which identifies the clients strengths and weaknesses. Upon completion of the evaluation, the clients develop an individualized plan for employment that includes placement in unpaid work experience (WEP) opportunities, education and training, job readiness and job search activities. WEP coordinators communicate with both the WEP site supervisors and the client.

The WEP sites sign a formal agreement to provide clients with supervision and training as a condition of their participation. The coordinators visit employers on a monthly basis. Both the coordinator and the case manager support the client on the work experience. During WEP participation WeCARE job developers assist the participants in finding and retaining employment. Most recently, a WeCARE provider reported job retention rates of 90 percent after 30 days.

By July, 2008, a total of 7,921 WeCARE participants obtained employment. In the second year of WeCARE, over 2.5 times the number of participants obtained employment compared to the first year. In the third program year, the number of placements increased an additional 27 percent. If the current placement trend continues, it is projected that there will be a 17 percent increase in placements in the fourth program year. As of July, 2008, there have been a total of 9,445 WeCARE Federal disability awards. In the second program year, almost eight times the number of participants obtained Federal disability benefits as in the first year. In the third program year, there were more than twice as many awards as in the second year. HRA projects that the number of awards will increase an additional 20 percent in the fourth program year.

From February, 2005, through July, 2008, there have been 23,474 successful wellness plan completions. In the second program year, there were almost four times as many wellness plan completions as in the first, with a further increase of 20 percent in the third year. HRA projects a slight increase in the fourth program year.

Key to Success

Conducting holistic assessments * Integrated services * Escalating outreach services
* Keeping a clinical focus and support * Developing proactive wellness plans *
Working with Vocational Rehabilitation by conducting a vocational evaluation

California: Communication Across Barriers

Dr. Beegle is the President and Founder of Communication Across Barriers and Poverty Bridges, non-profit organizations. From a family of migrant workers, Dr. Beegle lived the effects of generational poverty as a child. She was on welfare in 1986, and found herself in a hopeless situation. Through a pilot program, at the time, in Oregon, she was able to build hope and was able to get her GED, her B.A., and eventually, her doctorate. Through media studies, she realized that many people in poverty, as well as those working with this population, operate on media-constructed stereotypes. For 18 years, she has been doing work with Communication Across Barriers to break down the stereotypes and support self-sufficiency among the low-income population.

Communication Across Barriers provides training to caseworkers and other stakeholders providing services to the low-income population. The key to the training is showing how to help people get out of poverty through effective communication skills. Dr. Beegle grounds her training in research and uses the perspective of those in poverty to train the workers. She recently completed work with the State of Washington's Department of Health and Social Services to change their language to become more client-focused. For example, the language changed from "get a job" to "earn a living" and

"caseworkers" became "coaches."

Poverty Bridge is a non-profit organization run by Dr. Beegle that works with human services clients to motivate them by increasing self-esteem and self-worth and giving them hope. The program focuses on dealing with the shame and hopelessness that this population feels from media cues of poverty and the low-income population.

Programs can be most successful when clients can first focus on self-esteem issues and increasing hope. Dr. Beegle has completed conferences with TANF recipients that focus on a strengths-based approach first, which transitions into strategies to help clients build networks. The program engages community members to serve as navigators for the participants. These navigators help connect people to resources and opportunities around the community. The conference has been most successful due to a local community steering committee that guides and engages in the process. In order to more effectively support clients through networking, the navigators also have access to the "Making A Difference" Web site which is designed to help match people with opportunities- similar to a Craig's List Web site.

Key to Success

Programs can be most successful when clients first focus on self-esteem issues and increasing hope.

Nebraska: Home Visitation Program

The Nebraska Home Visitation program started in 1998, in two rural sites covering seven counties. When the program was ended in 2007, 66 rural counties were covered under the program. As a way to help TANF participants meet the requirements of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, the University of Nebraska Extension was funded through a grant from the State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), with TANF dollars. The program aimed to serve the hard-to-serve, rural TANF population. Most were between the ages of 27 and 28 with two to three kids. The program served a population of 80 percent Caucasian, and some non-English speaking Hispanics. Just prior to the program's end, they had begun to serve larger numbers of Native Americans. The program had three to four methods of evaluation, and Mathematica Policy Research also evaluated the program.

Nebraska DHHS already had a strong relationship with the Extension program and requested that Extension apply for a grant. The program had started to deal with the fact that transportation and childcare were key barriers to work, and the home visitation program mitigated those barriers by providing in-home services. The program was developed through a team of Nebraska TANF staff, local educators in the field and the University; and the clientele feedback allowed for the program to be most successful. Continued budget cuts and gas price increases were a continued challenge. Extension was able to develop partnerships with

other agencies to reduce territorial issues and work together through effective marketing of the program.

The goal of the program was to help families become more stable at the time of employment. It provided individualized, tailored services to clients in rural areas. The program was based on a 15 topic curriculum, called "Survive, Strive, Thrive," which was continuously developed throughout the life of the project. The 15 topics included goal setting, making good decisions, building self-esteem, coping skills, anger/conflict management, stress management, building healthy relationships, developing good character, communication skills, time management, child development, strong families, positive parenting, money management and creating a healthy home.

The staff met with clients once a week on average for 1 to 2 hours, and incorporated others in the home into the session. The program sought to provide information to stabilize the family, but also information that was applicable to the workplace. The staff consisted of 10 educators and 1 Program Coordinator. The 10 staff members, with Master's level educations, traveled within their site delivering the in-home services. The coordinator provided educator support, marketing, networking and local-level work. The team also assembled an advisory group that met once every 6 months.

Key to Success

Obtain the right staff to do the home visitations; it is critical to have staff with time management skills and who are able to handle crisis in the home. Additionally, the individualized nature of the curriculum allowed for clients to feel empowered and get the skills they needed for the workplace. For more information, the program's curriculum is for sale on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Web site, at

<http://extension.unl.edu/pubs>.

Arkansas: Work Pays Program

The Arkansas Work Pays program is designed to support former Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) clients as they move into employment. Arkansas noticed a trend by which clients placed in employment would return to the TANF caseload when they encountered even the smallest of crises. In order to maintain employment placement, Arkansas implemented Work Pays. Specifically, Work Pays is designed to bridge the gap between employment and self-sufficiency by providing ongoing supportive services, a modest cash benefit and a four-tier bonus structure. Work Pays bonuses are as follows:

- bonus 1 = \$400 for clients who stay employed for 3 consecutive months;
- bonus 2 = \$600 for clients who stay employed for an additional 6 consecutive months;
- bonus 3 = \$800 as an exit bonus for meeting work requirements for 21 out of the 24 months on the program; and
- bonus 4 = \$1,200 when a clients' earnings exceed 150% of the Federal poverty level and they leave the program.

In order to be eligible for the program, former TEA clients must meet certain eligibility requirements including but not limited to care and custody of a minor child, work participation standards, a cash assistance receipt history, have an income below 150 percent of the Federal poverty level, and they must apply within 6 months of leaving the TEA program.

Arkansas Work Pays is administered by dedicated case managers who work with clients to maintain employment and increase earnings. Work Pays is an employment program and this permeates the business operations and client interactions in the program.

Key to Success

Case managers develop a career advancement plan that focuses on job retention and advancement goals, securing benefits for the family and ensuring the family has ongoing access to supportive services to mitigate potential crises that could disrupt employment.

Ohio: Shared Youth Vision Partnership

This project began as an effort to engage youth offenders leaving institutions. Many of these youth reenter society around the age of 18 with little work experience and additional barriers to employment. The local area communities were also communicating that it was difficult to serve this population through Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars as many were not ready for work, and local WIA areas were concerned with performance measures. The Ohio Shared Youth Vision began through a State-level brainstorming session, and the State looked at TANF as a way by which services could be extended to the youth offender population.

As a result of the growing need to serve this population, a collaborative effort between the WIA and TANF partners began through a proposal from the State to the local level for a pilot project. The counties involved had to return a portion of their local WIA youth formula funds, which were exchanged for TANF funds, with the intent to develop youth workforce-focused programs. The State received a Federal waiver to allow the local formula dollars to be added to the discretionary dollars. The WIA funds returned to the State were utilized via an interagency agreement for the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) to increase reentry services. The program is currently being evaluated by the University of Cincinnati.

The local areas have flexibility to utilize the TANF dollars; however, the statewide discretionary dollars used to fund the TANF/WIA/DYS program for youthful offenders must have three phases of service delivery:

- Phase I: pre-release activities as assessment and evaluation;
- Phase II: employment and education activities, youth incentive programs, youth parenting education and transportation for youth on parole; and
- Phase III: intensive case management, follow-up with community- and faith-based agencies, family mentoring and other activities.

The TANF dollars allowed for these youth to be better served, and it was found that the employment rate was **higher** than 40 percent on average after changing the funding stream. Current data also shows 39 percent are in post high school education. As part of TANF dollars, the agencies could use Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) plan dollars, which are short term funds designed to provide the youth with money to meet their immediate needs. Local areas have used TANF dollars in accordance with their PRC plans to implement a summer employment jobs program, a drop-out recovery program, enhanced WIA programs and other programs for youth.

This program has been a success for all agencies involved and has better served Ohio's youth. A challenge has been getting local agencies on board as the budget can be tight but by explaining the logistics of the program and the small amount of funds needed to make it work, the State has been successful in engaging local areas.

Key to Success

Bring all partners to the table and open the lines of communication * Keep good data on employment * Use a holistic approach to engage partners, including families * Be creative with funding

Innovations in Supportive Services

Supportive services, for the purposes of this research, are those programs or service offerings designed to ameliorate potential barriers to employment placement and/or retention. The potential overlap between this section and that dealing with overcoming barriers was significant so we focused here on child care and transportation programs.

Three programs are highlighted in this section – two related to transportation and one focusing on child care. Another unique feature of this section is the inclusion of a nationwide program – the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility and its United We Ride program.

Profiles in Supportive Services

- King County, WA: Jobs Access Transportation Program
- Florida: Child Care Executive Partnership
- Nationwide: Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (United We Ride)

King County, WA: Jobs Access Transportation Program

King County Metro Transit helps individuals understand the range of transportation alternatives available to them. The overall objectives are to improve information about Metro services, increase and improve services for clients of the agencies, service affordability, increase retention and coordinate transportation funding of agencies. Through the Jobs Access Van program, vans are supported or leased to Neighborhood House and other agencies including SKCAC Industries, Worksource Solutions/Cliffside Vocational Institute, King County Work Training program, Central Area Motivation program, YouthCare, Center for Career Alternatives, Seattle Urban League, CASA Latina, Seattle School District and Renton Technical College. The program also supports vanpools formed by entry level employees from ABM Maintenance, SeaTac Baggagehandlers, UW Maintenance, as well as

VanShare vans. Metro Transit developed the Transportation Resource Training program and Residential Transportation Coordinators. The JARC FlexCar program under a demonstration grant, was started in 2003, and is a partnership between King County Metro and Flexcar.

Metro Transit initiated the Jobs Access Transportation program in 1996, in response to welfare reform. With a grant from the Washington State Agency Council for Coordinated Transportation, demonstration van programs and commuter bonus voucher programs were implemented.

In 1999, FTA Jobs Access Grant of \$740,500 was awarded to implement the current program. In 2004–2005, FTA awarded \$2 million in JARC earmark to King County Metro

and provided \$2 million in match. Funding for the Job Access program generally includes a coordination of fund matching from various partner agencies.

Metro Transit in partnership with Hopelink has implemented the Residential Transportation Coordinator (RTC) program which trains multilingual individuals to help their neighbors find transportation solutions and services. The RTC program serves as the primary community resource for information about alternatives to driving and/or car ownership and transportation strategies to get to training and employment. RTCs are located in Hope VI affordable housing homes and are fluent in languages other than English. These individuals offer peer-to-peer counseling to other residents in their neighborhood. RTCs help to bridge the language and cultural barriers for immigrants and refugees in the King County area. Because they are from the area, these individuals are motivated to give back to their own communities and are well connected within their communities. They help individuals understand the transportation services available to them. RTCs are hired as contractors to Hopelink and earn up to \$599 annually.

The JARC FlexCar program deploys cars at various employment training, affordable housing, community college and community agencies sites. Department of Social and Human Services and Employment Security Department staff use the cars to send TANF recipients to job seeking sites, interviews and training. At-risk youth, under the U.S. Department of Labor funded Youthbuild program are also provided with GED preparation and testing and on-the-job construction learning sites, including Seattle Housing Authority and Habitat for Humanity. The program emphasizes the role that car sharing can play in helping low income individuals who are seeking employment,

education, training or other activities associated with gaining employment. In addition, Metro also operates the Domestic Violence Transportation program, funded with Washington State Department of Transportation Paratransit, that uses taxis to take victims to advocates. The domestic violence program is in partnership with the YWCA and 10 to 12 other agencies. Through the Human Services Ticketbook program, Metro also provides these agencies with bus tickets for pre-planned trips by their clients.

Metro also uses Jobs Access and Reverse Commuter Funds to support training through its Transportation Resources program, including the 2.5 hours Transportation Resources Workshop that provides information about transportation resources available. Workshops are coordinated through public agencies, nonprofit and social service organizations. Participants receive training using the Transportation Resources Index, Metro's Web-based customer information system. The Web site was created for use by social service agencies, One-Stops, housing authorities, community service agencies and individuals. The Web site averages 1,700 hits per month. A companion Transportation Resources Training program was developed in 2004, to provide training for employment, human service community service, and housing support agency staff on how to access transportation resources for their clients. The program additionally provides information through job fairs sponsored by agencies such as Office of PortJobs; Welcome Wagon kits, provided through Neighborhood House in housing authority sites; and information about transportation alternatives

provided through Solid Ground, as part of the Working Wheels program.

The Jobs Access Committee consists of senior staff from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) WorkFirst, the Employment Security Department, the Seattle Jobs Initiative, the King

County Jobs Initiative, the Seattle Housing Authority, the King County Housing Authority, the community and technical colleges, Seattle public schools, the Office of PortJobs, the WorkForce Development Council (WDC), King County Welfare to Work, Washington Works, the Urban League and Sound Transit.

Key to Success

This information and more can be found at <http://transit.metrokc.gov/tops/tri/tri-main.html>.

Florida: Child Care Executive Partnership

The Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) was created in 1996, by the Florida Legislature. The program was created to be a public/private partnership, assisting employers in meeting the needs of a growing segment of their work force, working parents. At the State level, the CCEP is administratively assigned to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI). Funding is authorized by the legislature through the AWI Office of Early Learning (AWI OEL). This Federal funding is part of the Federal Child Care and Development Fund, a portion of which is dedicated to the CCEP Program. The program is guided by a statewide board, appointed by the governor. The CCEP board is responsible for determining the program's annual budget, distributing program funds to local early learning coalitions and making policy decisions regarding the administration of the program. The board is supported by the Office of Early Learning which provides board staff support, marketing and technical assistance.

At the local level, early learning coalitions make

funding decisions, administer the program, manage contributions and conduct eligibility determinations for families who wish to participate in the program. The CCEP provides a dollar for dollar match to the employers funds to assist with childcare costs for their employees. Eligible employees must be at or below 200 percent of the Federal poverty level to participate in the program. The program emphasizes the importance of investing in employees to local area employers, which can reduce employee turnover. The marketing aspect includes business networking, media press releases and face-to-face outreach to businesses in the community. The program also educates the employers on the tax benefits for implementing such a program for employees.

In the 2008–2009 fiscal year, the State of Florida allocated \$15 million of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) to this program. In the past year, the program has seen an increase of 38 percent in business

participation, which equates to 66 new businesses this year.

The board members, being in the business community themselves, have been successful in encouraging other employers and business leaders to take advantage of the CCEP program. Additionally, the program has been effective by marketing to the “right” businesses– large,

national corporations are often difficult to get on board in the local areas due to national employee policies. Businesses based in the State and local community are easier to engage and more willing to participate. Effective marketing illustrates that the CCEP is a worthwhile investment to employers by reducing turnover and decreasing absenteeism.

Key to Success

This information and more can be found at <http://www.ccep.bz>.

Nationwide: United We Ride

The United We Ride program was founded in 2004, through an Executive Order by the President to coordinate human service transportation, and is funded through the Department of Transportation. The program was developed with specific goals:

- promote interagency cooperation and the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to minimize duplication and overlap of Federal programs;
- facilitate access to the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation services within existing resources;
- encourage enhanced customer access to the variety of transportation and resources available; and
- formulate and implement administrative, policy and procedural mechanisms that

enhance transportation services at all levels; and develop and implement a method for monitoring progress on achieving the goals of this order.

The Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility supports the United We Ride program. This program supports States and local communities in developing transportation systems through collaboration and coordination of organizations in their communities.

The program is built on the fact that coordinated transportation services can best support communities by reducing duplication of effort and utilizing community resources that already exist. The Council is composed of various partner agencies that administer or have the ability to fund transportation services and share a commitment to improving transportation services, which include representatives from the Departments of Transportation (DOT), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Labor (DOL), Education, Interior, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Agriculture (USDA), Veterans Affairs, the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, the Attorney General and the National Council on Disability.

The Council is charged with the task of working with States and local areas to review transportation gaps and reduce duplication for transportation services. The program also supports capacity building in local areas by building partnerships and coordination plans. As a result of the program, eight pilot sites have been funded to coordinate resources to best serve those who most need transportation services, create centralized points of access for clients to access transportation services and to increase service delivery. The Council also provides “State United We Ride Grants” to support States in developing coordinated transportation plans, and 45 States

have received these grants. The grants are funded not only through the United We Ride program, but also through the Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration. The second phase of these grants was to let 32 States implement State action plans to utilize Transit Passes, enhance emergency preparedness planning and track costs to be more accountable.

The Council also has a technical assistance and training facility where “United We Ride” ambassadors have conducted site visits to States to support the development of coordinated transportation plans. In 2004, only 5 States had such plans– but as a result of the program, over 40 States now have human service transportation coordination plans.

The Ohio Works First program has been recognized in Holmes County, Ohio. Holmes County initiated a plan to support TANF clients move from welfare to work by developing a work plan which provided an overview of current transportation providers, unmet transportation needs, a transportation strategy and resources needed to implement the plan. Once the plan was developed, the County partnered with community members to improve access to transportation for this population.

Key to Success

This information and more can be found at www.unitedweride.gov.

Partnering with the Private Sector

States and counties have successfully turned to private employers for the development of employment training programs. Many of these programs eventually result in employment placement for TANF clients.

This section highlights two such programs. These programs have taken different approaches to engaging with the private sector. In the first example, a local social services entity serves as an intermediary helping to connect TANF clients with private sector employers. In the second instance, local employers connected directly with social service agencies in response to the frustration associated with high-turnover in their workforce.

Profiles in Private Sector Partnerships

- Kansas City, Missouri: Engaging Employers and Supporting Workers in the Workplace
- Cascade Engineering

The core message learned from these types of programs is that private sector employers, departments of social services and the low-income workforce/TANF client all share the common goal to advance employment opportunities, promote job attachment and retention and to build the local economy through successful attachment to work.

Kansas City, Missouri: Engaging Employers and Supporting Workers in the Workplace

The Community Work Support initiative began in October, 2007. The Local Area Investment Commission (LINC) has been contacted by the State of Missouri to run this program, reporting to the Department of Social Services, Family Support Division (TANF). The program came out of an Urban Partnership Initiative meeting where stakeholders from Kansas City were discussing innovative ideas for addressing barriers to work. Funded through TANF, LINC has convened and selected partner agencies to work together to better serve the population.

It has been difficult to engage clients with the mobile nature of the population (changing addresses and phone numbers) but LINC has continued to follow-up. Additionally, communicating as a contractor with the Family Support Division and Workforce Development can be difficult— especially with two data systems that the contractors cannot access. LINC has been able to communicate with these agencies to gain information needed from the data systems.

The State of Missouri contracts out with community providers to immediately reengage sanctioned clients. Community organizations conduct assessments to identify the barriers and connect the client back to Workforce Development or into SSI. Recently, the State added a transitional childcare program, if someone goes to work and they lose eligibility for TANF, the State will help cover the costs of child care.

Kansas City specifically contracts out to the Local Investment Commission (LINC) to implement the

Community Work Support initiative, which started in 2007. LINC is working with sanctioned and conciliated participants in removing barriers and getting them engaged in a work activity or closing out their case, if that is appropriate. The strengths-based case managers follow the clients for at least 6 months to make sure they stay engaged as best they can. Additionally, the case managers support the clients in navigating the system. The program thrives by the collaboration among the Family Support Division and the local Department of Workforce Development.

Key to Success

When LINC meets with partners from the Community Work Experience initiative, they share case scenarios—so people can have a better understanding of what really goes on and it adds a personal touch to the program. Additionally, LINC convenes focus groups with participants to gain knowledge on what is working with the programs as well as how they can do better.

These groups allow LINC to best serve Missouri's families.

For more information, visit <http://www.kclinc.org/>.

Cascade Engineering

This program was developed as TANF agencies in Michigan were having difficulty engaging local area employers. Businesses can often get discouraged from hiring ex-offenders or public assistance recipients due to high turnover; however, by creating a partnership between employers and social services, recipients can be better served and businesses also benefit.

This model first began in Michigan through a meeting with one large employer who had invited

other local business Human Resources representatives. Upon meeting together with the Department of Human Services, the business CEOs were then brought on board. At a morning breakfast meeting, the CEOs heard a presentation by another local business CEO, and were asked to contribute \$1,500 a month to the program. By allowing the businesses to run the program and be “in control,” it allows for a successful partnership.

The goals of the employer partnership to be achieved by working together are as follows:

- understand the economic environment to determine strategic priorities;
- assess specific business needs which may determine a focus for an initiative;
- evaluate collaborative workforce retention and development approaches; and
- identify community champions.

The “SOURCE” follows the Cascade model (Southwest Organizations Unifying Resources for our Community and Employees). As a part of SOURCE, the businesses partnered with over 40 non-profit and educational institutions for barrier resolution, advancement and/or asset building for their employees.

SOURCE is a non-profit agency designed to provide support to employees of any member organization. SOURCE provides needed services to employees such as transportation assistance, education, counseling and a variety of other services to support job retention. Through the SOURCE program, the State of Michigan saved around \$1,017,000 in 2003, by training 1,047

employees and conducting barrier resolutions to save jobs. “The design of the model is founded on a demand driven/solution-based system for sustainability. This demand (business) driven organizational structure reaches its full potential when purposeful strategic alliances are forged and pursued between government, non-profit and business.” Previous to its involvement with the SOURCE program, Cascade had developed a Welfare-to-Career program. As a result, Cascade’s worker turnover went from around 16 percent in 1999, to 4 percent in 2005. Cascade focuses on “On Boarding,” which includes an assessment and orientation training. The Welfare-to-Career program began in 1991, designed by Cascade founder and CEO Fred Keller, who championed the cause of ending generational poverty. As a result of the program, Keller recognized that all employees needed to confront their own stereotypes around class- those in poverty and those in the middle class. Now, every employee is required to take “Hidden Rules” training. Additionally, Cascade Engineering has a DHS social worker onsite to serve the public assistance recipients. The salary for the worker is paid by Cascade and the State in equal measures.

Key to Success

Make sure that every person is assessed for barriers * Change the organization’s culture to accept the commitment to support the low-income population * Educate all employees- not only new employees, but existing employees as well * Create a support system for welfare recipients to move into long term careers * Get an employer that is willing to be a champion! The local Chamber can be a great partner * Get businesses to host the meeting with employers, do not have the meeting at human services.

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