

Oklahoma DHS  
Relationship Education

# Equipping TANF Participants with Soft Skills for Employment Success

Presenters:

Jerry Regier | Rhonda Archer | Scott Roby



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office of Family Assistance



# **Integrating Innovative Employment & Economic Stability Strategies into TANF Programs (IIEESS)**

**Jerry Regier – Sr. Project Manager, Public Strategies**

# EMERGING PRACTICE SERIES BRIEFS



## Corporate Partnerships for Employing TANF Participants

NEW HAMPSHIRE: TANF CAREER PATHWAYS PARTNERSHIP

An innovative collaboration forged between governmental agencies, a community partner, and a corporation is now resulting in career pathway jobs for eligible TANF participants in New Hampshire. By building an integrated training model that directly maps the TANF program requirements into a corporate training program, and merging on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities, this team has taken corporate partnership to a new level - with results!



# TANF Works!

Integrating Innovative Employment & Economic Stability Strategies into TANF Programs

EMERGING PRACTICE SERIES | 2018

## Staff Strategies To Improve TANF Employment

KANSAS: CAREER NAVIGATION AND RETENTION SPECIALISTS IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

Employment retention for participants in the Successful Families Program (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF) program is improving with a change in strategy at the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). Adjustments to staffing models have resulted in an increased focus on specialized career development services, meaningful connections to employers and employment opportunities, and innovative post-employment services to support retention.



# TANF Works!

Integrating Innovative Employment & Economic Stability Strategies into TANF Programs

EMERGING PRACTICE SERIES | 2018 - 03

## Technology Initiatives That Support Employment Outcomes

COLORADO: WEB-BASED TECHNOLOGY FOR COACHING TANF PARTICIPANTS

A technology-based coaching platform, implemented by the Larimer County Works Program in Fort Collins, Colorado, has transformed the TANF staff-participant relationship and redirected time and energy towards employment outcomes. Platform-supported processes help build both accountability and a trusting relationship between TANF participants and case managers, incorporating a goal-oriented coaching methodology and an understanding of the role of executive function in setting and achieving employment goals.



# TANF Works!

Integrating Innovative Employment & Economic Stability Strategies into TANF Programs

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# OFA's EMERGING PRACTICE SERIES BRIEFS

- Highlight innovative strategies deployed by TANF agencies that have assisted TANF participants to gain and sustain employment
- These ideas are often in the innovation stage, yet show promise for consideration by other programs based on implementation success and evidence from related research
- Emerging Practices are critical to an on-going learning agenda, and to the ultimate development of rigorously evaluated and documented Promising Practices.

# FORMAT OF THE OFA BRIEFS

## EACH PUBLICATION IS STRUCTURED WITH A SIMILAR FORMAT:

### **The TANF Challenge:**

What Issue(s) Do TANF Programs Face?

### **The Innovative Idea:**

What Solution is Proposed to This Challenge?

### **Align Innovation with Research:**

What is Known That Provides Confidence This Idea Can Work/Will Matter?

### **Program Model:**

What is Being Done?

### **Results:**

What Has Been Learned/Achieved?

### **A Field View of Emerging Practices:**

Perspectives from the TANF Agency

### **TANF Success in Action:**

TANF Participants' Perspectives

# EMERGING PRACTICE SERIES CATEGORIES

- **Corporate Partnerships for Employing TANF Participants**
- **Technology Initiatives that Support Employment Outcomes**
- **Staff Strategies to Improve TANF Employment**
- **Skills Development to Improve Employment Success**
- **Social Capital Initiatives to Achieve Employment Goals**

# SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

## Oklahoma: Relationship Education Training Equips TANF Participants with Critical Soft Skills

Posted: Peer TTA Website

[https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/search/content?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=Emerging+Practice](https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/search/content?search_api_views_fulltext=Emerging+Practice)



## Skills Development To Improve Employment Success

OKLAHOMA: RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION TRAINING EQUIPS  
TANF PARTICIPANTS WITH CRITICAL SOFT SKILLS

The Oklahoma State Department of Human Services (DHS) has long been a leader in the development of innovations in healthy relationships programming. With WorkForward, the agency is preparing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants for employment by bridging its relationship education experience with its job training program. By focusing on soft skills development and navigation of workplace relationships, this integrated approach is laying a foundation for helping TANF participants obtain and sustain employment.

# CRYSTAL





**CRYSTAL**

- **Relapse into meth after almost 10 years of sobriety caused her to lose her job, house, car, and son**
- **Crystal hit rock bottom and was living on the streets**
- **After some time in jail, she was determined to stay sober so that she could get her son back**
- **She came to TANF Orientation at Public Strategies, and continued into WorkForward**
- **This was her turning point: “29 days after that I had my son back!”**
- **She found confidence in her own voice by building communication skills, which she now uses as a positive force in her life and at her work**

# In the Beginning...

History of Relationship Education and Work Force Development

# In the Beginning...

Federal Welfare Reform

1996

2001 OFA announces Healthy Marriage Initiative

2001

2003

2004

2005

Oklahoma Governor creates Oklahoma Marriage Initiative

1999

# In the Beginning...

Federal Welfare Reform

1996

2001 OFA announces Healthy Marriage Initiative

2001

Local workshop leaders began to adapt the PREP curriculum to serve populations other than couples, including youth, singles and work force development.

2003

2004

2005

Oklahoma Governor creates Oklahoma Marriage Initiative

1999

- **Adaptations increased relevance but there were still missing pieces...**

# Missing pieces

- **Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships**
- **Partner Selection**
- **Intimate Partner Violence**
- **Blending Families**
- **Safety – Personal, Emotional, Commitment and Community**



# The Intersection

Relationship Education Meets TANF

# Building a new curriculum

Federal Welfare Reform

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2001 OFA announces Healthy Marriage Initiative

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Oklahoma Governor creates Oklahoma Marriage Initiative

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PREP meets with TANF Orientation Instructors to receive feedback from experienced frontline staff

2004

2003

2005

# **Rhonda Archer**

## **TANF Program Manager I**

## **BUILDING THE FOUNDATION**

- **Government Agencies (Department of Human Services, Oklahoma State Department of Health etc.) – would serve as the referral source.**
- **Religious Organizations and Oklahoma State University Extension Educators – would serve as trainers**

**How did OKDHS  
get interested in  
Relationship  
Education?**

**Rhonda Archer,  
TANF Program  
Manager I**

# My Journey

- **Attended training provided by the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative for complete understanding of the curriculum to identify appropriate referrals.**
- **Realized that I needed to be more than a referral source.**
- **Became first OKDHS employee trained as an instructor.**

# Relationship Education

## TANF Groups

- PREP taught to TANF participants as part of their TANF Work Program.
- Instructors adapted PREP skills and concepts to apply to parent/child relationships, workplace relationships

## My Community Groups

- Partnered with a local Church that agreed to host classes, provide drinks, snacks and provide on site child care.
- Referrals came from Child Welfare, SNAP, community, etc.

## **I'm no longer employed because...**

“I don't like the way she talks to me.”

“That isn't in my job description”

“I had a conflict with my manager”

“They just don't listen to me”

**What we heard from  
TANF participants**

# Isn't Relationship Education taught at home?

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, What's that??

# Early Successes

- **With Child Welfare office in Midwest City**
- **With TANF Participants**

# If we build it, will they come?

Are people on TANF even interested in RE?

# Yes!

Stanley, S. M., Amato, P. R., Johnson, C. A., & Markman, H. J. (2006). Premarital education, marital quality, and marital stability: Findings from a large, random, household survey. *Journal of Family Psychology, 20*, 117-126.

- Interest was highest among...
  - **Never married - 82%**
  - **Younger respondents – 77%**
  - **Low-income - 72%**
  - **Children in the household**
  - **More education**
  - **Higher frequency of attending religious services**

# Building a new curriculum

Federal Welfare Reform

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2001 OFA announces Healthy Marriage Initiative

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RE Curriculum is developed by PREP and piloted with TANF customers

2004

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Oklahoma Governor creates Oklahoma Marriage Initiative

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PREP meets with TANF Orientation Instructors to receive feedback from experienced frontline staff

2003

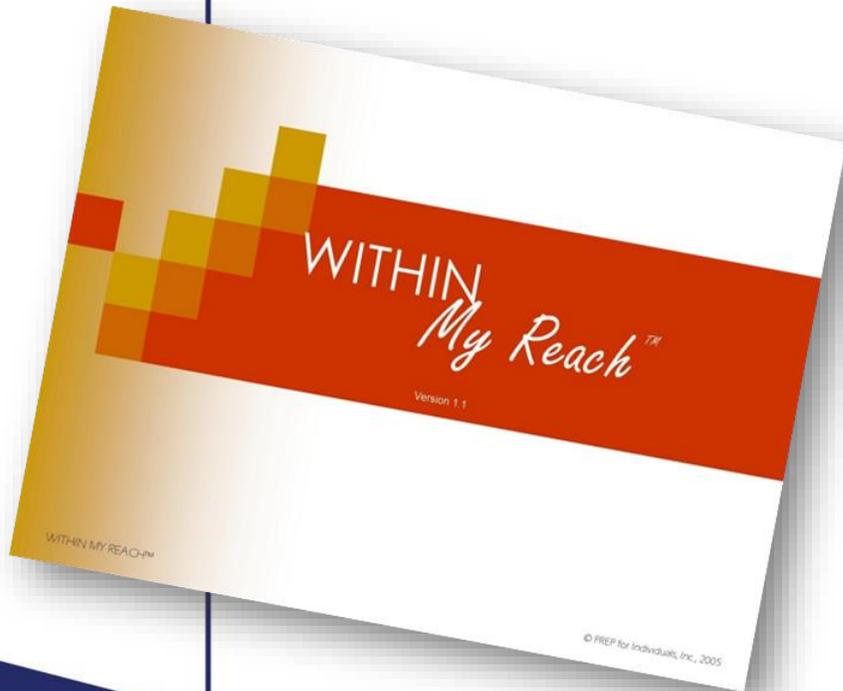
# Within My Reach

Integrating Relationship Education into TANF Orientation

# Training DHS Staff

- **OKDHS Leadership and Staff are trained in Within My Reach**
- **TANF Orientation Staff and CDS's are trained as instructors**
- **Within My Reach is integrated into TANF Orientation**

# WMR meets TANF needs



- **Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships**
- **Partner Selection**
- **Intimate Partner Violence**
- **Blending Families**
- **Safety** — Personal, Emotional, Commitment and Community

# OKDHS TANF Today

Workforce  
Development  
and  
Relationship  
Education  
Skills Training





FAMILY AND  
**WORKFORCE**  
CENTERS OF AMERICA

# St. Louis

Full Integration of Relationship Education with Work Force Development

# Strengthening Relationship Educations and Marriage Services

**STREAMS – St. Louis**

# Family Workforce Centers of America – St Louis

## What we did...

- Integrated WMR into workforce development curriculum
- Trained Instructor in the newly integrated curriculum
- Facilitator support calls at the end of every cohort
- Remote observations to support calls

## What FWCA reports...

- Added benefits getting two curricula at once
- Has increased participants success in keeping a job
- Increased ability to effectively handle negative situations at work



# Denver

## TANF & HMRF Grantee Partnership

# MotherWise and Denver County Human Services

## Collaborative Partnership

- Pregnant new enrollees offered MotherWise (MW)
- MW case manager coordinates with TANF worker
- TANF sees MW as extended support for their new mothers

## MotherWise Workshop



# Questions?

Comments, Curiosities...

# Looking Forward

Next Steps

Oklahoma DHS  
Relationship Education

# Equipping TANF Participants with Soft Skills for Employment Success

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