

**TANF at 15:
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX
DURING TOUGH TIMES**

**Roberta Rehner Iversen, PhD, MSS
University of Pennsylvania
School of Social Policy & Practice**

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(riversen@sp2.upenn.edu)



WHAT *IS* THE BOX, REALLY?

**Social Agency
Financial Support Agency
Employment Agency**



The “Revolving Squeeze”

Move 50% participants to work, worry about
decreased funding →
Staff pressured to get more participants to work, but
most programs can't do it, especially now with fewer
jobs →
More worry about getting 50% WPR →
More pressure on staff →
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.



UN-BOX TANF

DON'T TALK ABOUT.....

Shhhhhh..... Welfare

Shhhhhh.....Poverty

Shhhhhhhh..... “Safety nets”

Old rhetorics → dependency, reliance, stigma



UN-BOX TANF

DO TALK ABOUT.....

Similarity to middle-income parents in Great Recession

44 million adults work full time but are still poor

Work in context of continuum of work supports

Fraction of unemployed adults with deep-seated challenges



**UN-BOX TANF:
Change the Name of the Program**

**TANF
to
FAMILY MOBILITY PROGRAMS
in
Departments/Offices of
Economic Mobility**



A. Challenges to helping participants get to work

- 1. Today's economy and labor market**
- 2. What can education really do?**

B. Ideas for helping participants get jobs

- 1. Lessons from workforce development**
- 2. Partner with local business and WIA**
- 3. Extend and deepen data capacities**

C. Ideas to make sure that no participants get left behind

- 1. Maximize 20% exemption**
- 2. Ramp up assessment practices – e.g. CES-D & whole-family orientation**
- 3. Substitute flexible, individualized programming versus uniform requirements**



Challenges to Helping Participants GET TO WORK

1a. Today's economy and labor market:

Not enough jobs

- **After 2001 recession: 2.8 applicants for 1 job**
- **After Great Recession: 4.3 applic. for 1 job**
- **Across-industry demand shortfall**



Challenges to Helping Participants GET TO WORK

1b. What kinds of jobs and skills?

The “middle-skill jobs” debate

(Middle skills = less than bachelor’s degree, but some post-secondary education/training)

- **Middle-skill jobs will be prevalent and secure (Holzer, 2009)** [e.g. clerical, sales, construction, installation/repair, transportation/material moving, medical therapists & aides (respiratory, recreational, radiation), carpenters, heavy vehicle maintenance specialists, heating and air conditioning]
- **Middle-skill jobs are declining across occupations (Autor, 2010)** [e.g. Bookkeeping, clerical, administration, sales, repetitive production, craft and operative positions, and registered nursing]
- **Low-skill jobs will remain prevalent** [e.g. janitors and cleaners, home health aides like CNAs, construction laborers, security personnel] → **basic education & literacy**



Challenges to Helping Participants GET TO WORK

1c. What will future jobs pay?

- Minimum wage 1947 = \$3.40/hr
- Minimum wage equiv. 2010 = \$32.71/hr
- Actual minimum wage 2010 = \$ 7.25/hr

Family of 3 (1 adult, 2 children): 2009

Typical leaver wages (FPL)	No H.S. degree	H.S. degree
\$7 to \$8/hr \$15,600/yr (85% FPL)	\$10.46/hr \$21,764/yr (118% FPL)	\$14.11/hr \$29,352 (160% FPL)



Challenges to Helping Participants GET TO WORK

2. What can education do? *We don't really know.*

Nuances re: rising gap in earnings due to education:

- Content versus “signal”
- Rise in relative earnings/falling *real* earnings
- “College grad” category includes professional & grad degrees, whose earnings are more than B.A.
 - 1979-2009: 4-yr degree 10%
 - » : post-BA degree 26%
- Gap influenced by non-wage benefits

The Jury is Still Out!



Ideas for Helping Participants GET (DECENT) JOBS

- 1. Draw on lessons from workforce development field (wfd) - particularly sector-based training and post-employment support**
- 2. Partner with local businesses – make the “business case” and “turnover case”**
- 3. State-level policy leverage for integrated services**
- 4. Partner with WIA → job creation; community service employment**
- 5. Extend and deepen data capacities**



Ideas to Make Sure That NO PARTICIPANTS GET LEFT BEHIND

- 1. Make maximum use of 20% exemption and referrals**
- 2. Expand and intensify assessment practices**
 - CES-D (Radloff, 1977; Radloff & Locke, 1986)**
 - Whole family assessment (Iversen & Armstrong, 2006)**
- 3. Individualized programming vs. uniform requirements**
- 4. Consider new models, such as Conditional Cash Transfer programs**



NO MORE BOXES

- 1. Let's get rid of TANF box**
- 2. Let's partner with local and regional businesses & workforce dev't orgs toward maximizing job possibilities**
- 3. Let's advocate with local & federal policymakers for fair, helpful, and workable Family Mobility Program components**

Thank you



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