ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Establishing Coaching and Motivational Interviewing Practices in TANF Programs

SYSTEMS TO FAMILY STABILITY
NATIONAL POLICY ACADEMY

Lessons Learned from the Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy

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SYSTEMS TO FAMILY STABILITY
NATIONAL POLICY ACADEMY

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Introduction

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseload has declined for many years.[1] Complex causes have driven the decrease. The reasons range from economic shifts to policy changes.[2] Many TANF programs have had high participant exit rates.[3] But many families still return.

This churn has led many to rethink how they deliver TANF services.[4] Some TANF programs have turned to motivational interviewing (MI) and coaching. These techniques aim to increase participant engagement and improve family outcomes.

This brief shares key insights from four Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy state and county TANF teams that adopted coaching and MI techniques.[5]

Coaching and Motivational Interviewing

Coaching is a case management method. It is used by TANF programs to partner with participants and encourage self-motivation.[6] MI is similar. It uses interviewing techniques to help participants pursue goals, explore, and address barriers.

Coaching and MI:

- Support behavior change.
- Use motivational strategies.
- Focus on strengthening staff-participant relationships.
- Explore beliefs around behaviors and life circumstances.
- Emphasize participant choice.[7]

Figure 1: Differences between Coaching and MI[8]

Coaching	MI
Uses active listening to build rapport	Uses empathy to build relationships
Paraphrases to understand	Encourages through affirmations
Asks powerful questions to identify challenges and goals	Examines readiness to address challenges
Encourages goal attainment	Explores uncertainty about change

Although coaching and MI are alike, Figure 1 shows their differences.

MI gives participants chances to safely explore the pros and cons of their goals.[9] Coaching promotes supportive relationships as participants seek to achieve their goals.[10] TANF programs report participants are more likely to pursue their interests, meet program requirements, and obtain desired employment when coaching and MI are used.[11]

Lessons from Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy Teams

Teams from Ramsey County (Minnesota), Utah, Washington, and West Virginia refined current coaching and MI strategies or began new ones during OFA's 2015-2016 18-month Academy. They used these models as a baseline to build their own frameworks.[12] Each team's approach was developed using several common strategies:

- Create your vision and goals.
- Design coaching and MI techniques with your participants in mind.
- Get buy-in from your team and build its capacity.
- Slow down to speed up.
- Build coaching and MI community partnerships.

**To learn more about the Policy Academy, see Appendix A. To read a companion brief on several teams' development and implementation of whole family approaches, visit:* https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/developing-whole-family-approaches-tanf-programs

Below is an overview of each team's Academy work related to coaching and MI. It is followed by team takeaways and experiences designing and implementing each.

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WFS) *(state-supervised, county-administered)*: Refined its current coaching and MI practices. WFS combined coaching, MI, and specific executive skills development (such as time management, organization, and planning) in a TANF-workforce pilot project. Through the pilot, WFS aimed to reduce participant information overload by redesigning or creating new staff and participant tools.

Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) *(state-administered)*: Used coaching and MI in an intensive case management pilot. DWS sought to scale coaching/MI across its TANF program through a comprehensive staff training academy.

Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) *(state-administered)*: Tested enhanced case management and coaching approaches across many local TANF offices. This will help inform statewide TANF case management changes.

West Virginia WORKS (WV WORKS) *(state-administered)*: Standardized and enhanced case management approaches to increase family stabilization and employment outcomes. They sought county buy-in for the state's enhanced case management vision. WV WORKS then built staff capacity around coaching and MI to implement enhanced approaches.

Takeaway Tips on Creating Your Vision and Goals

- Explore promising coaching and MI frameworks to inform your vision development.
- Use visual aids to convey your coaching and MI goals.
- Use those visual aids to get stakeholder support early.
- Share concrete implementation steps you will take to realize your vision.

Create Your Vision and Goals

Several Academy teams created a visioning document that aided coaching and MI strategy implementation. Using visual aids and graphics helped teams establish their goals. It also gave them an early tool to share with stakeholders.

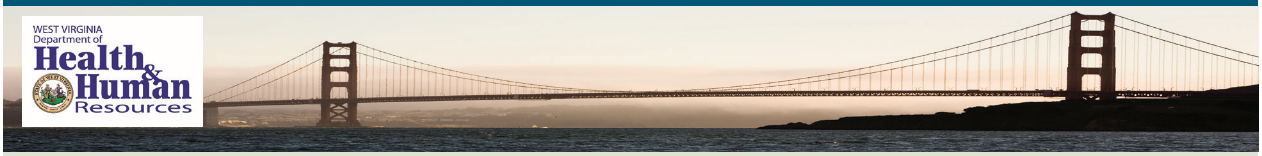
Program leaders and staff could easily react to and weigh-in on the visioning document. Later, several teams used it to guide implementation. It also supported evaluation planning. Each visioning document clearly stated the team's coaching and MI mission. It also included concrete steps the program and participants must take. Teams refined or created new vision documents during the Academy. Some learned about promising coaching and MI frameworks and adopted aspects of them.

West Virginia

WV WORKS was introduced to Economic Mobility Pathways' (EMPath) Bridge to Self-Sufficiency® during the Academy. EMPath's model uses a bridge to symbolize how families can achieve future economic security.[13] When West Virginia joined the Academy, it had already explored coaching and MI strategies. But the state knew adopting the strategies would require county buy-in and state support. Intrigued by EMPath's approach West Virginia developed its own bridge model. The state took several months to refine it to ensure it identified concrete supports to help families achieve self-sufficiency (Figure 2 and in Appendix B).[14]

Figure 2: West Virginia's Bridge to Stronger Families

Bridge to Stronger Families



Family Stability/ Well Being
- Any Barriers
- Family Dynamic
- Referrals to
- Community Resources
- Trauma Interview
- Relationship Issues
- Substance Abuse
- Transportation
- 2 Generation Approach

Job Development/ Job Readiness
- Supportive Services
- CL – College
- VT – Vocational Training
- CS – Community Service
- CWEP – Community Work Experience Placement
- SPOKES
- Work Activities
- Participation

Employment
- Measurement Tool
- Supportive Services
- Getting a Job
- Interviews
- Applications
- 2 Generation Approach

Stronger Families
- Measurement Tool
- Self-Sufficiency
- PL – "Poverty Level"
- EAP – Employment Assistance Program
- Job Retention Case Management
- SPOKES Job Retention Module
- 2 Generation Approach

WV WORKS analyzed TANF data to assess what pillars of support were needed in its bridge. They found common challenges facing participants. Examples include substance abuse, childcare, and transportation. The early and careful creation of its vision became a critical tool for WV WORKS in sharing its coaching and MI strategy.

Ramsey County, Minnesota

In 2014, Ramsey County began to shift to a coaching and MI model, recognizing that program participants are the true expert in their lives. A person-centered, goal-driven, and relationship-based approach would put TANF participants in charge of their own self-sufficiency journeys. Like West Virginia, EMPath's model informed Ramsey's approach. When Ramsey County joined the Academy, they were developing a *Lifelong Learning Initiative* (LLI) pilot, an intervention grounded in brain science and an understanding of how adversity impacts participant decision-making and self-determination.[15] The pilot focused on increasing participant engagement, promoting education, and connecting participants to employment. It was implemented by Ramsey WFS direct services team and a local TANF employment services partner.

To support its person-centered framework, Ramsey County created a participant self-assessment to gauge individual's strengths and challenges. The tool was called *My Bridge of Strength*. It used a bridge as a visual aid to show steps a participant may take to achieve their goals (Figure 3 and in Appendix B). During the Academy, Ramsey County used *My Bridge of Strength* (and its related Goal Action Plan) as core tools and from them developed other LLI-focused resources such as a *Getting to Know You Questionnaire*, *Executive Skills Questionnaire*, *My Profile*, *My Pathway*, and *My Task-Plan-Do Review*. These new resources became vital for staff training and helped scale Ramsey County's coaching and MI approaches.

Figure 3: Ramsey County's My Bridge of Strength

Name:

Date:

Case #:

RAMSEY COUNTY
Workforce Solutions

My Bridge of Strength

Family Stability			*Well-Being*			*Education*	*Financial and Legal*		*Employment*
Housing	*Dependent Care*	*Transportation*	*Health*	*Children's Behavior*	*Social Support*	*Education*	*Financial*	*Legal*	*Workplace Skills*
I have stable and safe **unsubsidized** housing	I have **reliable** child care and **back-up**	I have **reliable** transportation and **backup**	**No** health concerns affect my employment	Behavior **does not limit** my employment	I have **consistent and effective** social support and/or **a leadership role** in the community	I have at least an **AA degree or higher**	My income is **stable**, I am current on my bills, I **have** money for saving or spending	I have **no** current legal issues	My **strong** workplace skills enhance my employability and support career advancement
I have stable and safe housing that is **subsidized**	I have **reliable** child care but **no backup**	I have **reliable** transportation but **no backup**	Health concerns **sometimes affect** my employment	Behavior **sometimes affects** my employment	I have **generally reliable** social support that is growing	I have **a high school diploma, GED, or entry-level certificate or a post secondary certificate**	My income is **stable**, I am current on my bills but I **don't have** money for saving or spending	My legal issues **are not work related** and **do not take work time**	My workplace skills **support** my employability
I am living in **temporary** housing, **unsafe** housing, or am **at risk of losing** housing	I have child care but it is **not reliable**	I have transportation options but they are **not reliable**	Health concerns **often affect** my employment	Behavior **often affects** my employment	I have a **limited** social support network with few positive influences	I am **attending** high school, GED, entry-level certificate classes, or other training	My income is **sometimes enough** to cover my basic living expenses	My legal issues **take me away** from work some times	My workplace skills **often interfere** with my employability
My family has **no** housing	I have **no** child care		Health concerns **prevent** my **employment**	Behavior prevents my employment	I have **no** social support; my network is draining or destructive	I have **no** high school diploma, GED, or entry-level certificate	My income is **not enough** to cover my basic living expenses	I work **certain jobs**, or I have **lost jobs** because of my legal issues.	I need to **work on my workplace skills** in order to obtain employment

Strengths:

*Workplace skills include, but are not limited to, decision making, communication, conflict resolution, problem solving, anger management, time management, crisis management, planfulness, relationship skills, prioritizing, grooming, and other capabilities that facilitate job performance.

My Bridge is adapted from the Crittenton Women's Union Bridge To Self-Sufficiency and the Minnesota DHS Employability Measures.

Takeaway Tips on Designing Participant-Focused Techniques

- Support local innovation and flexibility in designing coaching/MI approaches to match community needs.
- Revisit applications, assessment forms, brochures, and service plan templates. This increases ease of use.
- Ensure assessments and service plans are strength-based and driven by participant's goals.
- Test strategies before implementation. This helps to identify ways to reduce burden or duplication of efforts.

Design Coaching and MI Techniques with Your Participants in Mind

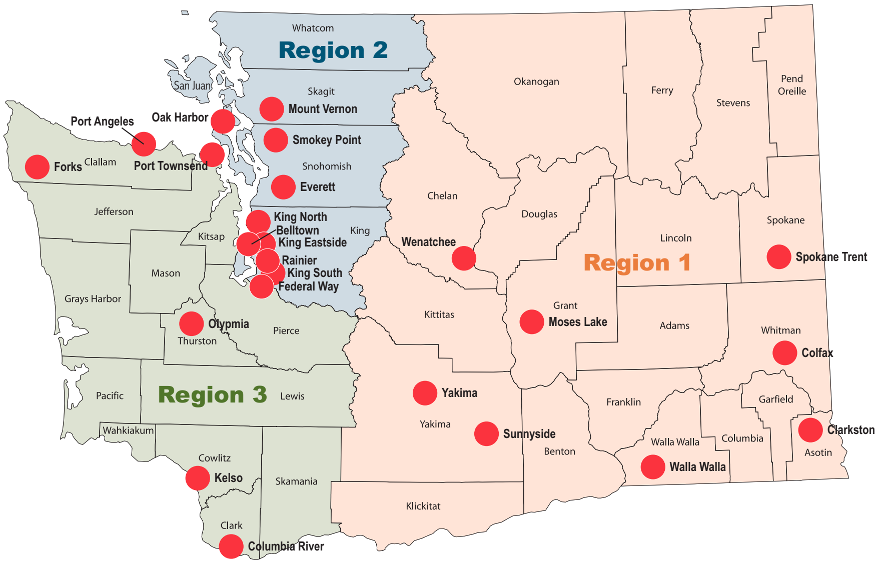
Each Academy team that adopted coaching and MI did so to improve participant engagement. Each team took a hard look at its current practice. This helped teams to see how they could be more participant-friendly and -driven. Several teams changed assessment forms and service plan templates. This helped them to focus on participants' goals. It also made the forms and templates easier to use and understand. Several teams tested these new strategies before implementation. They mocked up what the experience would be like for TANF participants to ensure ease of use and to reduce burden.

Washington

Washington DSHS supported 16 local pilots, located in 25 offices, during the Academy (Figure 4). Many tested coaching and MI techniques. While common elements exist across pilots, the state encouraged each site to test approaches relevant to its population or capacities. For some this meant focusing on young parents. For others, it emphasized families who had returned to TANF. Some focused on adapting early assessment tools. Others made changes to their whole case management approach.

A Seattle-area pilot (Region 2) focused on how it initially interacted with TANF participants.[16] The pilot team created new assessment forms aimed at building rapport between staff and participants. The forms asked questions, like: "what would it look like if the TANF program was successful for you?"

Figure 4: Washington Pilot Site Locations



and "what personal goals do you have in mind?" Before implementation, the Region 'road tested' the assessment with staff. This simulation helped the Region refine the assessment. It helped them simplify language, making it easier to follow. It also ensured it was strength-based.

The coaching model for DSHS' Wenatchee pilot in north-central Washington stressed early positive engagement. When designing its approach, the Wenatchee team mapped out steps a participant must take to access a service. They also reviewed bus routes to gauge travel time by public transportation to commonly referred providers. Stepping into a participant's shoes gave the team insights into how it could better coordinate coaching services. It provided insights on how to increase participant engagement through co-located services and joint case planning.

Utah

Utah began piloting an intensive case management model that addressed intergenerational poverty in 2014 before it joined the Academy. The pilot was called Next Generation Kids (NGK) and adopted coaching and MI strategies to support parents and children. In the pilot design phase, Utah drew from promising research and community partners' experiences.

The team implemented early participant-guided conversations. These in-person talks focused on building a relationship of trust between case manager and participant, including a full assessment of the family's needs. Utah also worked with participants to identify goals directed by them and that led to a credible plan of support. Utah also simplified and shortened its TANF Family Employment Program (FEP) Customer Agreement to make it easier for participants to read and process.

Get Buy-In From Your Team and Build Its Capacity

Moving to a participant-driven case management approach required a shift in many teams' organizational cultures. To do this program leaders and staff needed to see how coaching and MI aligned with their own goals. To gain buy-in, several Academy teams engaged supervisory staff early. They helped design and review coaching and MI curricula. Their support gave more time for staff to learn and practice new approaches. Teams also developed practice tools for frontline staff and supervisors. Desk guides and other quick references helped frontline staff integrate training into daily practice. Supervisor training offered tools to support staff implementation.

Takeaway Tips on Getting Buy-In and Building Capacity

- Show stakeholders how coaching and MI align with *their* goals.
- Provide staff with foundational information showing why coaching and MI are needed before building skills.
- Engage supervisors early. Offer them tools to support staff implementing new techniques.
- Develop coaching and MI tools staff can use in daily practice.
- Invest in ongoing professional development on promising coaching and MI practices that incorporate staff input.

Ramsey County, Minnesota

Ramsey County WFS used MI for years before implementing the LLI initiative. When LLI was introduced, WFS staff struggled to see the value of adding coaching and executive skills development. In response, Ramsey County held trainings in 2015 on its *My Bridge of Strength* model, coaching, and executive functioning. The goals were to show why the LLI framework was needed and how it could benefit participants *and* staff. It also helped staff see *when* to incorporate MI, coaching, and executive skills development. Ramsey County created resources for staff that showed when and how to use each technique, depending on a participant's work readiness (Figure 5). They showed, for example, how to use MI to identify family strengths or challenges. They also showed how coaching can help participants devise and implement an employment plan.

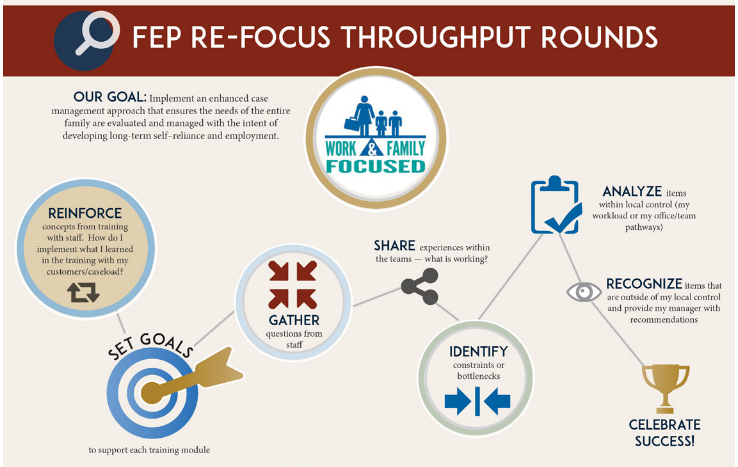
Figure 5: Ramsey County's Tiered Approach

West Virginia

West Virginia also introduced coaching and MI through training. Sessions focused on getting staff to understand their importance before building staff capacity. This paved the way for support and training on how coaching techniques could improve participant outcomes and engagement.

West Virginia WORKS trained about 280 staff in foundational concepts and then implementation support. Implementation trainings included tips and tools staff could use when addressing sensitive topics, such as substance abuse or unhealthy relationships. A supplemental training for supervisors focused on how to support staff in using new coaching and MI techniques.

Figure 6: Utah's Supervisors Supporting New Staff Learnings



Utah

For Utah, building staff capacity became the cornerstone of its Academy efforts. Despite early success with its Next Generation Kids (NGK) pilots, DWS knew that NGK's intensive approach would not be scalable across the state's TANF program. But they wanted to find other ways to embed NGK's promising MI and coaching strategies. The team created the Refocus Training Academy to train all TANF staff in using coaching and MI strategies.

The Training Academy kicked off in February 2016 and delivered six courses on MI and coaching at nine locations over 10 months. The coaching training was integrated into pre-existing case management instruction. It included sessions on human development, initial engagement, assessment, employment planning, implementation, evaluation, and retention. Later modules on trauma and executive skills helped staff understand how these experiences or capacities affect participants' ability to meet program requirements. TANF supervisors were vital in designing and reviewing trainings. They also helped to refine content and gave staff time to participate. Supervisors also attended supplemental trainings on staff coaching. They learned about staff observation, modeling, and offering immediate feedback (Figure 6).[17] To ensure training translated into sustained practice, DWS prepared tools to support staff. The tools included MI flash cards and desk aids on broaching sensitive topics. They also gathered staff feedback to refine coaching and MI training and inform future instruction.

Slow Down to Speed Up

Each Academy team used coaching and MI to change how it initially interacted with TANF participants. This often included increasing the time staff worked with participants upfront. This longer first engagement focused on identifying participant's goals. It also broke up early assessment tasks and built rapport. Teams surmised that these efforts would result in earlier identification of participant challenges. They would also better maintain participant motivation during engagement. To build early rapport, several teams created new service planning tools to identify participant's goals. Many teams met with participants in the community, and they hosted case planning meetings that included partner providers. Several teams also shifted staff duties to allow enhanced upfront engagement. Some also reduced caseload sizes for case managers or automated routine tasks.

Ramsey County, Minnesota

Initial engagement driven by participants was at the center of Ramsey County WFS' coaching and MI strategy. To build rapport and encourage participants to guide planning, Ramsey County used subjective and objective tools for both participant and staff completion.

Prior to the Academy, Ramsey County created My Bridge of Strength, a participant self-assessment. It helps individuals identify their strengths and challenges to getting a job. The participant completes the assessment during initial meetings at the TANF office. They choose statements they feel best reflect their situation relating to family, finances, workplace skills, health, and transportation. They also complete an executive skills profile to identify their capacities related to task initiation, planning, and organizing priorities. In tandem, staff complete an objective employment measure to rate participant's work-readiness. Staff use MI techniques (such as paraphrasing and active listening) at each initial session. This helped to complete the assessments. It also fostered meaningful dialogue about the participant's plan forward.

Washington

Several Washington DSHS pilots also altered how they initially engaged TANF participants. Like Ramsey County, they used self-assessment tools. They also created new, user-friendly goal planning forms that reflected participant priorities. Some changed their orientation sessions by scheduling them at convenient times for potential TANF participants. Some offered light refreshments, and child care on-site. Several pilots also broke up long assessment protocols. They only completed modules focused on immediate needs at first engagement. They scheduled a convenient time for participants to return and continue assessment. Washington's Region 2 pilot created a personal roadmap form for TANF participants to complete, which was integrated into their service plan. The roadmap uses a simple format to identify and plan for each participant's expressed wishes. Called WOOP (Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, and Plan), the roadmap became a tool participants could easily use to track their progress, take ownership over, and celebrate successes (Figure 7).[18]

Washington's Wenatchee pilot also focused on early engagement. It implemented other coaching strategies to engage participants throughout their case too. Pilot leadership urged case managers to meet participants in neutral, convenient locations. They also encouraged weekly meetings at the beginning of a case to build rapport. To allow case managers more time with participants, they were given reduced caseloads. Financial eligibility tasks were handled by other staff.

Utah

Utah's NGK pilots also reduced caseload sizes to increase staff-participant interaction. NGK's case managers (called family success coaches) supported 10 to 18 families at once. They used MI during initial conversations. This helped motivate participants to reflect and normalize their TANF

Takeaway Tips on Slowing Down to Speed Up

- Enhance initial engagement through MI and coaching to build trust and rapport early.
- Use self-assessment tools to help identify strengths and participant-driven goals.
- Alter individual service plans to focus on participant-identified goals.
- When possible, meet with participants in the community or in their homes.
- Consider holding joint case planning meetings or co-locating services.
- Adjust infrastructure to support upfront staff time to work more closely with participants.
- Consider reducing caseload sizes and shifting tasks. This includes TANF eligibility determinations to other staff.

Figure 7: Excerpt from Washington Region 2's Personal Roadmap

WOOP

WISH
What is your WISH? What do you want for your family?

OUTCOME
To achieve your WISH, you need to know what an outcome could look like. Together we can recognize when you're getting closer to your WISH…what are three things you recognize as outcomes or results?

OBSTACLE
Life is not perfect…what kind of problems are in your way that need to be fixed or removed so you can reach your WISH?

PLAN
The Plan part of the WOOP helps to overcome our obstacles by building a plan that helps conquer them. What kind of plan do you have in mind to make your WISH a reality?

experience. Family success coaches met participants weekly and often in the community. They also hosted case planning meetings with partner organizations relevant to each participant's service plan. This helped to streamline services. It also ensured participants could access needed services quickly.

In scaling its coaching and MI efforts, Utah focused on automating early routine tasks. This allowed staff more upfront time with participants. Utah reconfigured its online assessment tools to identify strengths and challenges facing the whole family, rather than the participant alone. Utah also adapted brochures and applications to simplify processes for applicants. This helped reduce confusion that may otherwise hamper staff-participant engagement.

Build Coaching and MI Community Partnerships

Each Academy team sought to extend its coaching and MI strategies to organizations to which it would refer participants. Fully partnering with participants meant that community partners had to be on board too. Identifying helpful resources for participants had to happen sooner. Services had to be integrated and not duplicative. Academy teams mapped out and connected with community providers. To embed coaching and MI across systems, several teams supported cross-trainings with partner organizations. These trainings focused on why coaching and MI are important to better integrate case planning. The trainings also helped to solidify referral pathways.

West Virginia

West Virginia WORKS disseminated its bridge model soon after development. It was sent to the state's 54 counties to gain buy-in and start implementation. Several counties, however, shared concerns. While the bridge helped to identify employment barriers, the counties reported not having the community resources to implement it. In response, the West Virginia Academy team worked with each county to map out its community resources. They prepared county-specific supportive service resource guides. These guides became a key first step in helping counties create local partnerships to apply their coaching approaches.

Washington

Several Washington DSHS coaching and MI pilots also spent time upfront mapping community resources and building partnerships. Washington's Moses Lake pilot forged partnerships with child support, child care, housing, and mental health community agencies. At the start, they held weekly meetings with partner agencies. This helped create a shared understanding of how partners would work together and use a coaching approach. These frequent early meetings solidified referral paths too and led to the co-location of some services.

Washington's Wenatchee pilot also focused early on community partnership development. The team invited partners to participate in trainings Wenatchee staff received. The trainings focused on understanding the effects of adversity, coaching, and MI principles. Many partners, including from the community college, action councils, and life skills programs, attended. This cross-training promoted a shared understanding of participant needs. It later helped guide partners to coordinate case management and co-locate child support and TANF services.

Takeaway Tips on Building Partnerships

- Map out and connect with relevant community resources.
- Invest time to develop community partnerships that support your coaching and MI goals.
- Cross-train staff and partners on the value and implementation of coaching and MI techniques.
- Establish referral pathways between organizations.
- Use warm hand-offs and coordinate joint case planning to integrate and streamline services.

Conclusion

During the Academy, the Ramsey County, Utah, Washington, and West Virginia teams began planning, implementing, and refining coaching and MI strategies. Their goal was to improve TANF participant engagement and outcomes. Though their contexts and priorities varied, the teams shared several common approaches, which others may consider when applying participant-driven coaching and MI techniques (Figure 8). If you are interested in incorporating coaching and MI strategies in your program, OFA's PeerTA Network can help. To request technical assistance, visit: https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/request-technical-assistance.

Figure 8: Summary Takeaways from Academy Teams Designing and Implementing Coaching and MI

Create Your Vision and Goals

- Explore promising coaching and MI frameworks to inform your vision development.
- Use visual aids to convey your coaching and MI goals.
- Use those visual aids to get stakeholder support early.
- Share concrete implementation steps you will take to realize your vision.

Design Coaching and MI Techniques with Your Participants in Mind

- Support local innovation and flexibility in designing coaching/MI approaches to match community needs.
- Revisit applications, assessment forms, brochures, and service plan templates. This increases ease of use.
- Ensure assessments and service plans are strength-based and driven by participant's goals.
- Test strategies before implementation. This helps identify ways to reduce burden or duplication of efforts.

Get Buy-in from Your Team and Build Its Capacity

- Show stakeholders how coaching and MI align with *their* goals.
- Provide staff with foundational information showing why coaching and MI are needed before building skills.
- Engage supervisors early. Offer them tools to support staff implementing new techniques.
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- Invest in ongoing professional development on promising coaching and MI practices that incorporate staff input.

Slow Down to Speed Up

- Enhance initial engagement through MI and coaching to build trust and rapport early.
- Use self-assessment tools to help identify strengths and participant-driven goals.
- Alter individual service plans to focus on participant-identified goals.
- When possible, meet with participants in the community or in their homes.
- Consider holding joint case planning meetings or co-locating services.
- Adjust infrastructure to support upfront staff time to work more closely with participants.
- Consider reducing caseload sizes and shifting tasks. This includes TANF eligibility determinations to other staff.

Build Coaching and MI Community Partnerships

- Map out and connect with relevant community resources.
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- Cross-train staff and partners on the value and implementation of coaching and MI techniques.
- Establish referral pathways between organizations.
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Appendix A: An Overview of the Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy

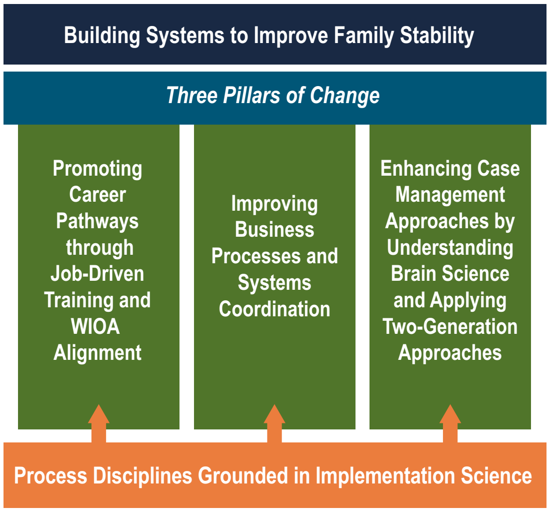
The 2015-2016 Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy (Policy Academy or Academy) was an 18-month initiative. It was sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (OFA). During the Academy, eight state and local teams designed and built systems to improve family economic security. The Policy Academy supported teams in:

- Aligning TANF and workforce systems.
- Improving business processes and system coordination.
- Enhancing case management through coaching, MI, and whole family approaches.

Support was grounded in implementation science principles[1] and evidence-based technical assistance (TA)[2] (Figure A-1).

In March 2015, OFA invited state, territory, and local TANF agencies to participate in the Academy. The Academy offered a timely chance for teams to reassess their programs. It also helped programs create approaches that build on new knowledge and opportunities. OFA received 23 applications from state and local agencies. Following a rigorous selection process, Colorado; Connecticut; Maryland; North Carolina; Ramsey County, Minnesota; Utah; Washington; and West Virginia were selected. Selection factors included organizational capacity, previous work toward intended goals, proposed approaches, and potential challenges.

Figure A-1: Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy Framework



The Policy Academy Approach

A Policy Academy is a strategic, intensive long-term TA approach. It focuses on leading change in human service systems. Academies provide an innovative and exciting process for state and community teams. They help teams create and build infrastructure for systems change and design new or improved policies. OFA has used the Academy model before in its Urban Partnerships (https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/100) and Rural Communities Initiatives (https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/99). Academies often offer dedicated coaching staff for each team. They also offer support from experts, individualized TA, peer exchanges, and intensive, in-person retreats. The model encourages programs to build strong collaborative teams to implement desired change. Participating teams often assign a team lead to garner buy-in from stakeholders and guide action plan development.[3]

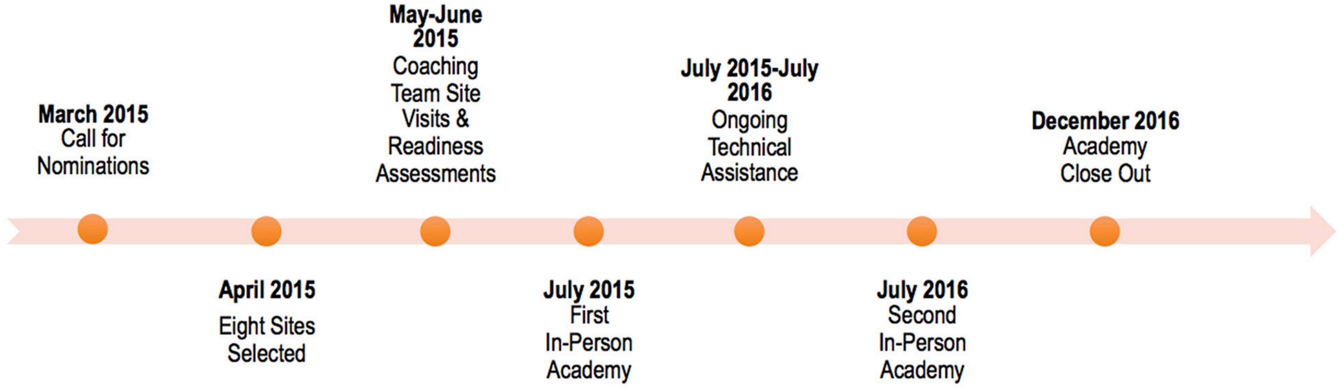
Systems to Family Stability TA Delivery and Timeline

Adhering closely to the Policy Academy model, this Academy included two in-person retreats. It offered in-person and virtual site exchanges, and webinars. It also provided team-specific print materials through an online resource hub (Figure A-2). Each team was supported by dedicated coaches. Coaches were experienced training and technical assistance providers with deep knowledge in state and local human service systems, TANF, workforce development, and business process improvement.

Dedicated Coaching

Coaches helped teams assess their readiness for change by completing readiness assessments with each team. These assessments asked teams about their exploration activities, justification for their Academy focus, existing organizational capacities, and proposed implementation activities. Coaches worked with teams to develop logic models to identify short and long-term goals. Coaches also supported creation of detailed strategic action plans. Coaches met virtually with teams monthly to refine and update action plans. They also discussed implementation challenges, and connected teams with expert consultants and peer teams.

Figure A-2: Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy Timeline



In-Person Retreats

In July 2015, OFA hosted the first of two in-person Academy retreats. During the first retreat, teams continued to build their logic models and strategic action plans. Participants had access to Academy faculty with wide expertise to support team planning. Faculty provided learning opportunities through presentations and one-on-one TA as teams built their action plans. Faculty were also available throughout the Academy. They offered specialized in-person and virtual TA. In July 2016, teams met again to share progress. They reflected on their work, and mapped out future plans.

Expert Consultations

Sites received 21 expert consultations during the Academy. They included TA on:

- Rapid cycle learning and evaluation.
- Measuring success in whole family approaches.
- Using labor market information.
- Building organizational capacity.

Coaches developed specific products for teams. This helped to share information with team's stakeholder audiences, implement specific action steps, or connect with promising practices. These products ranged from infographics to customized curricula, promising practice abstracts, and instructional videos.

Systems to Family Stability TA Delivery by the Numbers

- **2** In-person All Team Retreats
- **5** Site Exchanges
- **17** Coaching Site Visits
- **5** Academy-Specific Webinars
- **22** Products Developed
- **21** Expert Consultant Engagements

Peer Exchanges

Coaches also facilitated virtual and in-person site exchanges between teams to advance dialogue and learning across similarly situated teams. Exchange topics ranged from whole family approaches and child support system engagement to motivational interviewing and staff training. Exchanges were further supported by five all-team virtual exchanges. This allowed teams chances to share progress, facilitators, and challenges.

Other Information Sharing

Teams also joined in five Academy-specific webinars, which matched teams' interests and implementation stages. Early topics focused on asset mapping and logic models. Later webinars addressed staff training and whole family assessments. OFA also created a Resource Hub (https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/388) on the OFA Peer TA Network (https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/) for Academy teams to access new and relevant literature and research. Coaching teams also distributed email alerts to teams sharing abstracts from relevant resources. Topics included: career pathways, community partnerships, and disconnected youth.

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