



## TANF Program Strengthening

Results from semi-structured interviews of 8 states re-designing their TANF programs

Presentation at ACF Regional TANF Directors' Meeting-Dallas, Texas

Jeanette Hercik, PhD

# The scope of the review

- Conducted in the summer of 2014 for the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) at the request of the Connecticut Department of Social Services.
- Interested in learning how other states had restructured their TANF service delivery systems, intake processes, participant engagement and service coordination efforts.
- Eight states identified as having restructured various components of their TANF programs: CA, CO, DC, HI, NC, SC, WA, WI.
- This in no way implies that these are the ONLY states that are “re-designing” their TANF programs

# The states interviewed: An overview

| State                | County vs. state administered | Average # of recipients (FY2013) | Federal funds available for TANF (2013) |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| California           | County-based                  | 1,355,305                        | \$3,436,088,491                         |
| Colorado             | County-based                  | 39,502                           | \$163,388,080                           |
| District of Columbia | State-based                   | 17,446                           | \$165,987,377                           |
| Hawaii               | State-based                   | 27,081                           | \$134,165,001                           |
| North Carolina       | County-based                  | 38,995                           | \$434,944,624                           |
| South Carolina       | State-based                   | 28,971                           | \$108,483,606                           |
| Washington           | State-based                   | 109,780                          | \$326,239,508                           |
| Wisconsin            | County-based                  | 61,864                           | \$254,266,337                           |

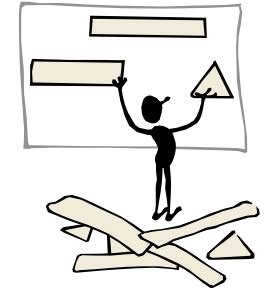
[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/2013\\_recipient\\_tan.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/2013_recipient_tan.pdf)

[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/fy\\_2013\\_expenditures.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/fy_2013_expenditures.pdf)

# What is the Definition of “Re-design”?

- **No common language**
  - Restructuring
  - Program Enhancements
  - Business Process Re-engineering
  - Program Strengthening
  - New Approaches
  - Staffing Adjustments
- **Different Drivers for Re-design**
  - Flexibility
  - Personal Responsibility
  - Accountability

# A sampling of change motivators



- Leadership change and vision.
  - In **Wisconsin** a new Secretary of the department wanted an increased focus on job development and placement. In **Colorado**, leadership recognized the need to move away from a focus on system processes and was more interested in employment-focused outcomes.
- Hard economic times.
  - **California's** move to offer subsidized employment, training and barrier removal services during the recession led to a 2 year flexible welfare-to-work approach where families on assistance could meet the participation mandate with activities that might not have otherwise met federal requirements.
  - **South Carolina** didn't have the staff to do the work and needed to redistribute the work.
- A court injunction and state legislation
  - In **Hawaii**, facing a federal injunction for not timely processing SNAP applications, the state undertook efforts to streamline and more efficiently process safety net program applications. A new state law in **California** required a statewide standardized appraisal in all counties.

# Levers to Make a Difference—Touch Points for Change

- **Intake**
- **Case Management**
- **Support Services**
- **Employment**
- **Post Employment Services**

# Levers to Make a Difference—Touch Points for Change

## ■ Intake

- Eligibility
- Business Process Re-engineering
- Systems coordination—SNAP and TANF
- Technology
- Staffing

## ■ Case Management

- Appraisals and Assessments
- Referrals and Networks (Private and Public)
- Collaborations
- Staffing

# Levers for Making a Difference—Touch Points for Change

## ■ Support Services

- Collaborations
- Technology
- Performance Based Contracts
- Staffing

## ■ Employment

- Employers
- Wage Subsidies
- Education and Training

## ■ Post-Employment Transitions

- Aftercare and On-going Supports
- Subsidies
- Collaborations/Networks—Referrals for Services



# Typology of change: Defining ‘redesign’

| Redesign efforts   | Sampling of relevant states   |
|--|---|
| Intake <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT</li> <li>• Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)</li> <li>• Assessment Tools</li> </ul> | California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawaii, North Carolina, Washington, Wisconsin         |
| Case management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing Changes</li> <li>• Privatization</li> </ul>                              | California, Colorado, District of Columbia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington, Wisconsin |
| Support Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems Collaboration</li> </ul>   | Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawaii, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington                |
| Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidized Employment</li> <li>• Employer Engagement</li> </ul>                        | District of Columbia, Washington, Wisconsin, California, Colorado                                 |
| Post Employment Transitions  | California, District of Columbia  |
| Whole System Changes   | District of Columbia  |

# Intake

## ■ Intake and orientation.

- **Colorado** changed the content and focus of their intake forms to make them more 'participant' focused.
- The **District of Columbia** created videos, brochures and an employment program guide and discontinued classroom training.
- **Washington** state started to use motivational interviewing tools.
- **Hawaii** started to use interviewing scripts.
- **Wisconsin** moved from a group orientation model to a one-on-one model.

## ■ Assessment tools.

- **California** will be using OCAT (a version of OWRA).
- **Wisconsin** is moving to develop career and vocational assessments and has a web-based 'barrier' screening tool.
- In the **District of Columbia**, a TANF assessment became a mandatory condition of eligibility.

# Case Management

- **Triage of participants to services and employment.**
  - **California** through OCAT implement upfront or early engagement strategies.
  - **Washington** changed to a live navigator to help participants access services and employment opportunities
  - **Colorado** moved to a more participant-centered and family approach to screening and assessment.
- **Organizational and staffing changes.**
  - **Washington** reorganized program workers so that some worked on financial eligibility, while others worked exclusively on case management activities.
  - **Hawaii** also moved from a ‘traditional’ case management to a task-based, triaged approach.
- **Contracting solutions.**
  - **Wisconsin** implemented shorter performance-based contracts with outside vendors.
  - **South Carolina** moved to performance based vendors

# Case Management

## ■ Case plans.

- **Colorado** redesigned its Individual Responsibility Contracts to become Family Plans and encouraging equal participation between families and workers.
- **North Carolina** refers to and sees their plans as Mutual Responsibility Agreements, which are outcomes plans that include work activities. Each plan captures a range of things, from child immunizations to unemployment claims eligibility.

## ■ Case management approaches.

- Some **California** counties are focused on creating a separate caseload for family stabilization and looking to decrease social worker caseloads in family stabilization cases.
- **Washington** state began using predictive modeling tools to help identify support services families may need.

## ■ Technology changes.

- **North Carolina** created a customized case management system, NC-FAST (North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology), that manages work activities and individual plans and has started electronic payments through direct deposit or on to EBT cards.
- **District of Columbia** created the CATCH TANF case management system, which looking at attendance data also more easily captures and calculates transportation stipends.

# Support Services

- **Increased collaboration with other human service agencies.**
  - **Colorado** employed a ‘general business model’ to coordinate change through different programs using the same systems-- improving coordination between TANF and food assistance, Medicaid and workforce investment programs.
  - The **District of Columbia, Hawaii, North and South Carolina and Washington** increased coordination with food assistance.
    - For example, in **South Carolina**, eligibility workers are ‘generic’ and may assess both SNAP and TANF.
    - In **Washington**, TANF worked with SNAP partners regarding financial eligibility to ensure they had the right waivers in place.

# Employment

- **Work activities.**

- In **California** core work activities were expanded to include, for example, vocational education, job search, job readiness activities, job skills training (added for adults on aid for first two years).
- **South Carolina** requires participants to complete 30 hours in a job readiness program before their TANF application can be approved (JUMMP-Jobs Upfront Mean More Pay).

- **Employment Opportunities.**

- **North Carolina** Job Boost Program focused on subsidized employment initiatives and specific employer engagement efforts.

# Transitions-Post Employment Supports

- **California's** subsidized employment program participants may remain in their placement even if they 'income out' of TANF.
- **Washington** state eliminated post-TANF supports but are leveraging their SNAP program to help post-TANF participants.
- The **District of Columbia** offers post-TANF supports, including child care and Medicaid.

# Whole system change: the District of Columbia

- Lacked understanding of what participants needed
  - Only able to see 1/3 of its work eligible caseload
  - Relied too heavily on contractors
- Changed intake process
  - Eligibility
  - Assessment
  - Referral processes
  - Service delivery
  - Performance Tracking and outcome metrics
- Began the process in 2009, which was followed by legislative changes



# Early outcomes

- **Very early in the change process for most.**
- **Most states reported that restructuring may not result in immediate positive outcomes due to the complexities and indirect effects change may generate.**
- **Some states have made early gains in business process efficiencies and increased work participation and retention.**
  - **Hawaii** Maui office has increased timeliness of SNAP applications from 29% to 95% within three months of implementation.
  - **Washington** state could handle a near doubling of their SNAP caseload with 500 fewer full time employees, while staying within expected timelines.
  - **District of Columbia** is tracking several outcome measures, has seen increases in its work participation and job retention rates. Before redesign participants were keeping their jobs, on average, for 60 days and today about 50% of participants placed in employment retain employment for six months or longer.

# Advice from the States

- **Programs interviewed identified several elements critical to successfully redesigning their TANF programs. These were:**
  - Observe change processes in other states first.
  - Pilot changes in a few locations before full implementation.
  - Avoid over reliance on technology.
  - Seek staff buy-in.
  - Seek participant buy-in.



# Thank You!

Jeanette Hercik, Ph.D.

[Jeanette.Hercik@icfi.com](mailto:Jeanette.Hercik@icfi.com)

703-225-2209

