



CONFERENCE PRESENTATION SUMMARY

- Event:** Transportation Presentation as Part of the *Arkansas Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) Coalitions Conference*
- Date:** December 16-18, 1998
- Location:** Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center, Little Rock, Arkansas

I. Overview

The ACF Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network coordinated this presentation as part of the Arkansas Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) Coalition Conference in collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS). TEA is Arkansas' TANF program. The conference was hosted by the Arkansas DHS and the State TEA Program Advisory Council. The purpose of this three-day conference was to provide a forum for hundreds of community leaders involved in local TEA Coalitions throughout the state to exchange ideas, make announcements, and hold discussions related to developing services and support for families in their service areas. Topics addressed included transportation, childcare, job training and development, health issues, housing, volunteer issues, and funding development issues. This summary highlights the main points from the transportation workshop presentations and subsequent discussions ensuing from them. The focus of these workshops was to discuss coordinating client transportation services at the local level.

II. Participants

Workshop participants included representatives from local TEA Coalitions working toward community development and barrier resolutions for the TANF population. The coalitions are made up of an entirely voluntary mix of business/chamber of commerce representatives with governmental and nonprofit organizations. The workshop attendance was made up of about one-third Arkansas DHS staff, one-third "volunteers" from the community, and one-third other transportation providers, etc. Various state legislators were also present at the conference. The feature presenters for the transportation workshop were Mr. Reuben Leslie, Jr., Management Analyst, Regional Operations, Texas Department of Human Services and Ms. Jean Smith, Director, Community Development Division, Central Arkansas Development Council.

I. Session Summary

A. Highlights from Mr. Leslie's presentation.

1. The problem:
 - a. Twenty-five percent of low-income households do not have cars; only four percent of households in other income brackets do not have cars.
 - b. People in low-income households are nearly twice as likely to walk to work and on work-related trips as people in other households (Source: US DOT Personal Transportation Survey Report).
 - c. An estimated thirty- percent of all Texans face life without a car (Office of Community Transportation Services, Texas Health and Human Services Commission).
 - d. A typical low-income family may have to rely every day on up to six transportation providers ranging from Head Start buses to vans for the elderly.
2. The solution:
 - a. Throughout Texas, the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS) Regional Operations Divisions' Regional Administrators and their staff choose office locations, co-locate with other agencies serving the same clients, and coordinate or adapt to local public transportation resources or lack thereof. These staff members are responsive to local communities and elected officials.
 1. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has established workgroups such as the Agency Transportation Coordinating Council (ATCC) through its Office of Community Transportation Services (OCTS) which is comprised of eleven various human service agencies.
 - a. The council was established with the idea that a coordinated community transportation system, such as transportation a broker, is an ideal solution to Texas' transportation problem.
 - b. The broker would work with local transportation providers, government officials, and customers to develop a plan that coordinates resources and meets all the transportation needs of the community.
 - c. The broker would receive and distribute all Federal, State, and local transportation funding according to the agreed upon plan. This type of system is being implemented in communities all across the country to allow them to offer more transportation without spending more money.
 - d. OCTS has several local transportation coordination pilot projects in Galveston, Houston, Denton, Bastrop, and El Paso.
 2. Regional Operations State Office staff address local client transportation issues by:
 - a. Coordinating Texas DHS initiatives such as *Charitable Choice* and *Texas Works* that foster community-wide planning to solve difficult human service problems;
 - b. Participating in welfare-to-work planning initiatives of the Governor's office and the US Department of Transportation;
 - c. Coordinating TDHS contractors' compliance with annual data exchange

requirements of Texas Senate Bill 370 and supporting this effort through making lists of transportation providers available to other agencies and the public via the internet.

- b. Texas Senate Bill (SB) 370
 - 1. Effective in 1997, this law mandates that State social service agencies (including DHS) require their contractors and subcontractors in all programs that are allowed to use State or Federal funds for transporting clients to annually provide local transportation providers with certain data on funding, trips, and resources. (This information is currently being collected.)
 - 2. TDHS programs the law applies to include:
 - a. Residential Care and Assisted Living Services
 - b. Day Activity and Health Services
 - c. Refugee Social Services
 - d. Family Violence Services
 - e. The Nursing Home Program
 - 3. The law has specific coordination requirements that affect local communities such as:
 - a. A requirement for Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) to consider and include the needs of health and human services clients in planning public transportation.
 - b. A requirement for TXDOT to annually identify public transportation providers.
 - c. A requirement for social service agencies and their contractors to coordinate with local public transportation providers to maximize local transportation service efficiency and effectiveness.

B. Highlights from Ms. Smith's presentation.

- 1. Emphasis for removing transportation barriers and building local collaborations should be on building upon existing programs, agencies, and funds that are currently available.
 - a. The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, (Mack Blackwell Transportation Center) recently released a research study by Dr. Darlene Butler on the economic benefits of transit in Arkansas. She found a greater cost/benefit ratio than in road/highway construction to be in transit expenditures.
 - b. A "White paper" was recently made available by the Arkansas State Transportation Coordinating Council that lists all the state legislative barriers to using certain vehicles (vans, school buses, etc.) for social service clients.
- 2. Several local approaches in Arkansas were highlighted
 - a. Garland County supports a transportation service that offers non-traditional hours and is operated by a mental health provider .
 - b. Two different types of approaches are exemplified by Hot Spring/Clark Counties (individualized: one client at a time) and Columbia County (group: several work-related clients, etc.).
 - c. One local program operates \$25 per hour multi-agency shared vehicles.
 - d. DHS funds client car co-ops (help buying a car in exchange for giving rides to other

- TANF recipients).
- e. Several counties arrange reverse commutes across county lines.
2. Various topics relating to clients of local human service providers were discussed:
 - a. It is more expensive to pay for auto insurance, loans, and repair than it is to pay for a ride.
 - b. “Trip chaining” saves time and money.
 - c. Non-car owners have more money to spend on necessities.
 - d. Use Medicaid transportation to go to the doctor’s office when possible.
 - e. Look for discounted passes for children, elderly, and the disabled.
- C. Discussion points relating to both presentations:
1. *Access to Jobs* funding and the time allowed to apply are limited. Many local providers expressed frustration at the short time frame the Federal Transit Administration allowed for the processing of the required paperwork.
 2. Earned income tax credit (EIC) was another issue for many providers in Arkansas. Potential recipients could submit a W-5 form to their employer to apply for an advanced earned income tax credit. This money could then be used to purchase a vehicle. For more information and a free promotional kit on the tax credit, visit the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’ Web site at <http://www.cbpp.org/eitc98.htm>. The kits are available as part of that organization’s public service campaign. They are available for public agencies, businesses, and community organizations to use in promoting the Earned Income Credit. The Internal Revenue Publication 596 has information on how to file for the EIC. More details are available at http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/plain/tax_edu/teletax/tc601.htm.
 3. Insurance requirements for local transportation service providers were another topic of discussion. One source of information recommended was the recently released study “A White Paper- Issues Concerning the Usage of Semi-Public and Private Vehicles for Public Transit Purposes.” The paper was a combined effort by the Arkansas Insurance Department, the AR Department of Education, the AR School Board Association, and the Arkansas Transit Association. The paper may be obtained by contacting Mr. Jim Gilbert, Public Transit Administrator, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department. His phone number is (501) 569-2000. Another source for more information suggested was the Arkansas State Transportation Coordinating Council.
 4. The Arkansas DHS sponsors a web page and continuous on-line conference system’s use as a resource for statewide teamwork and communication on specific issues. It is available at <http://www.cosmicwarehouse.com>.
 4. A closing discussion of interest centered on private enterprises that want to get involved or get started as local transportation providers. They were advised to collaborate with any existing programs or agencies and to try to tap into existing funding as much as possible. The presenters pointed out that there are enough agencies and support services available for any new organization to get started without having to “reinvent the wheel.”
- D. **Final Remarks**

Workshop attendees agreed that information sharing was a critical strategy for local TEA Coalition members to improve upon their coordination efforts in providing local transportation. In consideration of the limited resources and sometimes restrictive operating guidelines that most local transportation providers have, participants concluded that learning about the practices of others should prove to be very cost-effective.

For further information on Texas' initiatives or Senate Bill 370, visit the TXDHS web site at <http://www.dhs.state.tx.us/regops/trans/intro.htm>. A briefing paper entitled "Coordinating Client Transportation Services" also provides more information at the same Web site.

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For other information, or to learn more about the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, visit our Web site at <http://www.calib.com/peerta> or contact the following individuals:

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