



2017 Linking TANF Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities Meeting

Summary Report

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Overview

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA), held the *Linking Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities* meeting at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Arlington, Virginia on August 14-16, 2017. This meeting allowed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program representatives from around the country the opportunity to learn about promising practices and actionable implementation strategies to improve employment outcomes and economic independence among TANF families.

Over the course of the meeting, attendees attended presentations from experts and program administrators, and participated in peer-moderated InfoSessions, OFA Regional breakout discussions, and a sharing session with OFA leadership. Almost 300 TANF representatives, State and Territory Human Service Commissioners, and federal partners attended the meeting.

This report summarizes highlights from the *Linking TANF Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities* meeting.

Day One – Monday, August 14, 2017

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Speakers:

- Clarence H. Carter, Director, OFA
- Lisa Washington-Thomas, Chief, Self-Sufficiency Branch, OFA

Lisa Washington-Thomas opened the welcome session, sharing that the goal for the peer-driven State Directors' Summit was to help directors incorporate innovative ideas into their TANF programs and she commended participants for accomplishing hard work for vulnerable families. TANF helps improve families' lives, and the conference's spotlight on programs successfully employing the hardest-to-employ could provide examples of how to continue to expand their work.

Clarence Carter welcomed participants with a call to use TANF to help lift families beyond their vulnerabilities. Programs should veer away from serving the most work-ready to meet numerical requirements and instead shift emphasis towards the hardest-to-serve. It is necessary to examine organizations and strategies focused on helping the country's most challenged populations develop their functioning capacity. These populations include the homeless, formerly incarcerated, and those without a work history or literacy skills.

To view this plenary in its entirety, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/linking-tanf-families-employment-and-economic-opportunities-meeting-view-livestream-plenary>.

Opening Plenary Session: Reimagining TANF and the Human Services

Speaker:

- Steven Wagner, Acting Assistant Secretary, ACF

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which supports HHS in fulfilling its overall mission. From becoming more streamlined and efficient to moving to a 21st century workforce, the administration has challenged ACF to evolve and innovate. Reimagining the TANF program and human services starts with putting people at the center of everything the agency does. It includes leveraging the power of data and harnessing the free market to increase effectiveness.

ACF's Acting Assistant Secretary Steven Wagner provided an overview of the vision for the agency and its programs as well as its goal of improving the lives of children and families.

To view this plenary in its entirety, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/linking-tanf-families-employment-and-economic-opportunities-meeting-view-livestream-plenary>.

Strengthening Work - Peer InfoSessions

Meeting participants had the opportunity to take part in two informal peer-moderated sessions¹ to share information on state and local innovations intended to improve outcomes. Each topical discussion focused on how selected interventions and strategies were incorporated into service delivery.

Topic #1: Connecting TANF to Career Pathways with Health Profession Opportunity Grants

Moderators:

- Kailiah Thomas, OFA
- Priscila Silva, OFA

Participants - Session 1:

- Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, and Mississippi

Participants - Session 2:

- Nevada and North Carolina

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program is administered by ACF and was created as part of the Affordable Care Act. HPOG-funded programs provide education and training to TANF participants and other low-income individuals to help them find jobs in well-paying, high-demand healthcare occupations. HPOG focuses on developing career pathways in healthcare and emphasizes building basic skills to help participants secure positions that have opportunities for advancement and sustainability, ultimately leading these individuals on a pathway to financial self-sufficiency.

¹ Notes from both sessions are combined.

States discussed career pathways programs in the culinary arts, commercial driving, and clerical fields. The main challenge identified during the session was engaging clients in activities that do not provide immediate gratification. This is of particular importance for longer-term career pathways models.

Topic #2: Improving Employment Stability through Securing Client Housing

Moderator:

- Julie Starns, Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services

Participants - Session 1:

- District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, and OFA Central Office staff

Participants - Session 2:

- Arizona, California, Georgia, Guam, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and OFA Central Office staff

Housing remains a challenge for many families; however, jurisdictions are developing strategies for reducing housing instability. In some locations, TANF is used for housing, and the state provides competitive grant funding to organizations who work on homelessness to supplement TANF benefits. One example from Louisiana, Providence House, serves approximately 200 families and provides wrap-around services including case management; onsite General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes, daycare, and counseling; savings programs; fully-furnished apartments; and transportation.

States agreed that housing is a major barrier that TANF families face. Moreover, many states have housing shortages and increasing homeless populations, and the TANF grant funding is not adequate to address those barriers while maintaining other services. States discussed difficulties serving diverse populations across urban and rural areas within a state. A few states discussed recent attempts to better integrate TANF and housing services.

Topic #3: Addressing Mental Health Challenges to Improve Employability

Moderators:

- Shomare Braxton, Maryland Department of Human Resources
- Nicholette Smith-Bligen, Maryland Department of Human Services

Participants:

- Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin

Addressing mental health challenges among TANF participants remains a challenge. Effectively assessing and diagnosing mental health issues in TANF populations, and connecting those individuals and families with employment and service resources is priority for many TANF programs. There are significant challenges in engaging TANF participants with mental health

issues who receive medical exemptions from the work participation requirement. Nevertheless, in some cases, state agents or TANF caseworkers are trained to complete assessments, while other states contract out assessments and referrals to partners.

Challenges that still require attention include those caused by geography. As rural states, Montana and Nevada struggle because service resources may be concentrated in one of a few populated areas. Even the use of phone calls or Skype interviews may not be feasible, as access to cell service and the Internet is not reliable across these states.

Topic #4: Designing Two-Parent Family Activities to Address Employment Challenges – Brainstorming Session

Moderators:

- Carol Mizoguchi, OFA
- Gary Allen, OFA

Participants:

- California, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, and Wyoming

The field is still uncertain how best to serve two-parent TANF families. This session was an open brainstorming forum to try and find out more about how states serve this population. State staff indicated if they included two-parent families in their WPR, as well as challenges or best practices with serving this population:

State	Include 2-Parent Families in WPR?	Meet 90% 2-Parent WPR Target?	Serving 2-Parent Family Challenges/Solutions
San Francisco County (California)	Yes		This is the county’s most challenging population to serve.
Florida	Yes		The state reminds couples that both parents are responsible for the family. Previously, they allowed one parent to do all hours but now require both.
Guam	Yes		Requires both parents to participate in work activities.
Hawaii	Yes		Vendor provides case management and support services. The state allows one parent to fulfill all work requirements.
Kansas	Yes		Caseload reduction efforts have helped in meeting their WPR.
Maine	Yes		
Minnesota	Yes		Small number of 2-Parent families in caseload. The state uses a “marriage incentive bill” to encourage 2-Parent family formation.

State	Include 2-Parent Families in WPR?	Meet 90% 2-Parent WPR Target?	Serving 2-Parent Family Challenges/Solutions
Nebraska	No		Expecting their caseload reduction credit to help.
New Jersey	No	No	State legislators are questioning why they do not include 2-Parent families in their WPR.
North Carolina			On corrective action over their 2-Parent family WPR.
Ohio	Yes		
Rhode Island	Yes		Issuing a request for proposals (RFP) for assistance with TANF Redesign, will ask contractor for ideas on how best to serve 2-Parent families.
Tennessee	Yes	No	
Utah			2-Parent families are served through state funds. Use a pay-for-performance model where parents only get their check after they meet work requirements.
Washington, D.C.			Dynamic of 2-Parent families always changing; staff structure case management approach with whole family service in mind. Families attached to a cohort of case managers. D.C. sets hours by individual and sanctions benefits individually for the most part.
West Virginia			2-Parent families are served through state funds and offered the same services as individuals.
Wyoming	Yes	No	This is the hardest population to serve; staff try to serve them based on the individual's needs and strengths.

Topic #5: Establishing Partnerships with Workforce and Education Partners to Build Stable Career Pathways

Moderator:

- Phil Harris, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Participants:

- Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Utah

Phil Harris provided a history of the development of the partnerships Arkansas has created with workforce agencies to build stable career pathways. In 2005, Arkansas used TANF funding to establish the Highway to High Demand Occupations Initiative (now the Career Pathways Initiative) to provide education and short-term training to low-income parents in high-demand, high-wage occupations. Program partners include the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Department of Higher Education, Department of Human Services, and Workforce

Investment Board (WIB). Once deemed financially eligible, Career Pathways Initiative students enroll at one of 25 two-year colleges in Arkansas with Career Pathways programs. They receive assessments, case management, coaching, mentoring, financial assistance, and social services. Since 2005, more than 34,000 Arkansans have enrolled, and over 28,000 certificates and degrees have been awarded.

Session attendees had many shared interests, including:

- innovations in partnerships with employers;
- ways to support local community partnerships;
- exchanging data between programs;
- scaling for consistency in services across the state;
- moving clients to unsubsidized jobs;
- expanding current partnerships;
- how the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) framework will help provide opportunities for participants;
- incorporating employer engagement piece into TANF; and
- serving reentering citizens.

Topic #6: Incorporating Adult Education Activities into Workforce Readiness Training

Moderator:

- Todd Trapp, Assistant Director, Kentucky Department for Community Based Services, Division of Family Support, Frankfort, Kentucky

Participants:

- Arizona, California, Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, D.C., Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Regions IV and IX staff

States discussed strategies for creating educational pathways for individuals who enter their human services systems. Todd Trapp explained that Kentucky created a pathway for TANF participants to receive postsecondary education as well as Adult Basic Education and GED training through their Ready-to-Work and Work and Learn programs. Ready-to-Work is a formal partnership between the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and Kentucky's TANF program. The partnership is designed to help TANF participants pursue postsecondary degrees and credentials. A subset of this program, Work and Learn, is geared towards TANF participants who need Adult Basic Education or remedial coursework before pursuing postsecondary education. Both place students in work-study positions at Kentucky community colleges, and the state funds work-study wages in addition to the salaries of case managers placed within community colleges. Kentucky counts individuals who participate in these programs in their WPR because subsidized employment is considered a core activity.

Topic #7: Building Peer Client Networks to Enhance Employment Opportunities

Moderator:

- Elaine Zimmerman, Regional Administrator, Region I, ACF

Participants:

- Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and OFA Central Office and Regions IV and IX staff

Elaine Zimmerman framed the session by noting how low-income parents and families need to be involved in decision-making processes that affect their livelihood. Agencies and organizations should design horizontal and vertical strategies for parents to help and learn from each other. Under this overarching framework, participants discussed how agencies can build peer networks, grow social capital, and engage low-income parents and families.

States had different approaches to creating peer client networks. To combat the connectivity issue, a group of parents in Oregon created a Facebook page to network with each other and share valuable information. Peer cohort concepts are popular in Missouri, where program participants share their histories, challenges, and future goals.

It appears clear that there is growing understanding about the importance of parent engagement and involvement and the need to build social capital among low-income parents.

Topic #8: Engaging Non-Custodial TANF Parents for Improved Employment Outcomes

Moderators:

- Hilary Davis, Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- Patricia Martinez, Texas Workforce Commission

Participants:

- Alabama, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Omaha Tribe, and OFA Central Office and Regions I, III, V, VI, IX, X staff

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) partners with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to operate the Choices program, which provides short-term employment services to noncustodial parents (NCPs) of children who are current or former TANF participants. The three agencies collaborate to share data, provide funding and services, and track outcomes.

States remain interested in how programs incorporate certain components:

- *Debt forgiveness.* NCP Choices does not include debt forgiveness. It focuses instead on the incentive to attain and keep employment to avoid incarceration for not paying child support.
- *Fatherhood programs.* Choices does not include fatherhood programs as part of the general model, but has conducted two demonstration projects that added fatherhood counseling to the regular Choices services. They were evaluated using randomized

control trials, and results will be available in September, at which point the state may consider how this fits into the Choices program.

Topic #9: Addressing Substance Abuse and Addiction Barriers to Employment

Moderator:

- Bob Krebs, Iowa State TANF Director

Participants:

- California, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and OFA Central Office and Region II staff

Identifying substance abuse among TANF participants is vital to ensuring that they can gain and maintain employment. Iowa uses a creative case management spectrum, with self-disclosure on one end and drug testing on the other. Most states conduct a simple assess-and-refer questionnaire to discover substance abuse issues among TANF applicants. These questionnaires typically include one to three questions on an intake form that ask applicants to self-disclose substance abuse issues. Applicants generally do not get any referrals or treatment unless they self-disclose. Other states use more comprehensive assessment tools like the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI), the CAGE Questionnaire, or The Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10) to conduct an assessment and referral process during applicant intake.

Topic #10: Improving Workforce Participation for TANF Clients with Learning Disabilities

Moderators:

- John Stella, Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
- Amy Kershaw, Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

During this session, discussions identified challenges such as limited support-service funding and difficulty engaging participants in the voluntary in-depth screening required to identify learning disabilities. In addition, caseworkers often have large caseloads, which inhibit their ability to engage harder-to-serve populations such as those with learning disabilities.

The group discussed ways to better engage other agencies to serve this population, including using a state-level partners meeting to learn what other agencies are doing. Missouri brought up the idea of using a client's Individualized Education Plan from K-12 education as a starting point. In Michigan, the vocational rehabilitation department has developed strong relationships with employers, which has allowed the employers to better understand what accommodations are needed for certain employees.

Day Two – Tuesday, August 15, 2017

Plenary Session: The American Safety Net – Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Speakers:

- Clarence H. Carter, Director, OFA
- Robert Doar, Morgridge Fellow in Poverty Studies, American Enterprise Institute
- Susan Dreyfus, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities

TANF is just one part of the American safety net. The safety net encompasses a variety of programs—each often working independently to aid families seeking to overcome poverty. National experts discussed the current state of the safety net and provided recommendations on how the current system can be reoriented and improved to grow the capacity of individuals and to reduce dependency. Clarence Carter participated in and moderated a discussion with Susan Dreyfus and Robert Doar on the role of the safety net and the necessary reforms to improve the socioeconomic circumstances of low-income families.

To view this plenary in its entirety, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/linking-tanf-families-employment-and-economic-opportunities-meeting-view-livestream-plenary>.

Plenary Sharing Session with OFA Leadership

Speakers:

- Clarence H. Carter, Director, OFA
- Susan Golonka, Deputy Director, OFA

In this session, Clarence Carter and Susan Golonka sought to glean honest, engaging dialogue from participants to help get TANF closer to what it was intended to do. State TANF administrators discussed six key questions in small groups (see breakout box) at their tables for approximately ten minutes, and then engaged in dialogue with ACF leadership about their experiences with TANF program administration.

To view this plenary in its entirety, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/linking-tanf-families-employment-and-economic-opportunities-meeting-view-livestream-plenary>.

1. Over the past several years, there has been an appreciably reduced percentage of the TANF block grant and state maintenance of effort funds going towards basic assistance and work-related activities; to what do you attribute the reductions?
2. The WPR calculation is complex. If OFA were to propose legislative adjustments to strengthen the emphasis of states to engage work eligible recipients, what would you recommend?
3. If your state uses a nominal payment to achieve your WPR target, can you share with us how that strategy serves to engage participants in work and help them move towards self-sufficiency?
4. What lessons from 20 years of TANF have you learned that would benefit other safety-net programs seeking to integrate work requirements? What recommendations do you have for reforming the safety-net to be more focused on work?
5. Today, less than one in three eligible families, nationally, are receiving cash assistance from TANF. What are some of the reasons you believe account for the decline in eligible families being served? What are some recommendations you have for increasing the number of families served by TANF and entering the workforce?
6. We understand that many TANF leavers maintain low wages months after exit and over longer periods slip even further into poverty. How can TANF provide a better bridge to training and support to catapult participants into the world of work with a stable trajectory to independence?

Concurrent Workshops

During these workshops, attendees could choose which session to attend.

Strategies to Incorporate Behavioral Science into Program Delivery

Moderator:

- Mary Farrell, Executive Vice President, MEF Associates

Speakers:

- Mike Fishman, President, MEF Associates
- Angela Gaffney, Research Analyst, MEF Associates

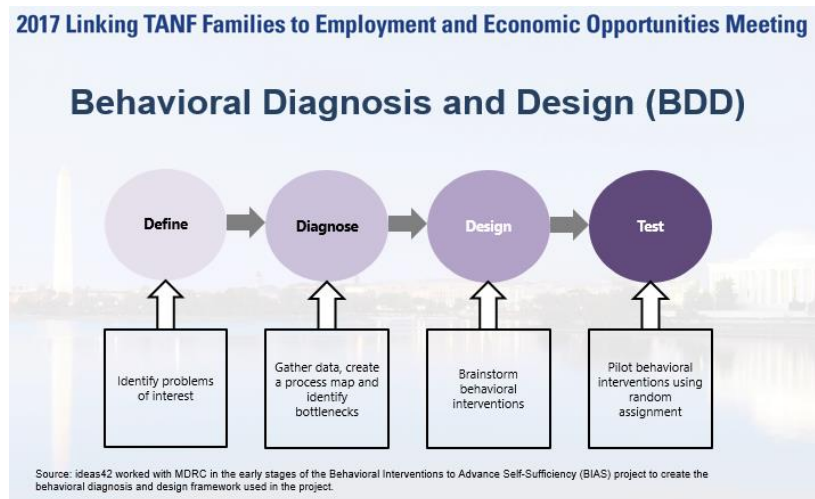
During this workshop, the research team from MEF Associates discussed insights from several behavioral economics projects: Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS), BIAS – Next Generation (BIAS-NG), and Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services. Throughout the presentation, the team introduced a few basic topics in behavioral economics as they apply to TANF participants, and laid out the project framework for diagnosing, developing, and testing behavioral interventions into social service programs. In the last 25 minutes, workshop attendees teamed up and practiced developing intervention ideas for problems that pertained to their own TANF programs.

Attendees engaged with peers to design possible interventions for a TANF branch that had identified poor job club attendance as a problem of interest. Attendees attributed bottlenecks to cognitive overload (orientation information is overwhelming), hassle factors (it is difficult to coordinate transportation and child care), and negative identity priming (initial interactions focus on past failures, may reduce sense of efficacy). After brainstorming, they proposed adjusting the tone of orientation meetings to be more welcoming and adding a staff member to act as a “cross-walker” – a familiar point of contact to check in, review information, and provide positive reinforcement.

TANF Data in Context – Improving Program Outcomes through Information-Sharing

Moderator:

- Sandra Stier, Senior Advisor, Division of Data and Improvement, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation



Speakers:

- Christopher Traver, Senior Advisor and Interoperability Team Lead, Division of Data and Improvement, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation
- Stephanie Acker-Housman, Presidential Management Fellow, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- Kerry Desjardins, Policy Associate, Center for Employment and Economic Well-Being, APHSA
- Jeff Gaskell, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Employment and Income Support Programs, New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Individuals and families in need often use services from several programs and providers. Although program administrators and caseworkers might embrace a holistic view of service delivery, the technologies they use to manage data often lag behind. This workshop examined interoperability and data sharing/analysis and identified successful strategies to modernize technology systems to meet the evolving needs of high-performing TANF agencies. TANF agencies use data to monitor programs, support policies, and maintain confidentiality. It is important to consistently match data with other state agencies to provide flexibility and expand services to participants. Data, especially about participants once they leave TANF, is vital to making educated policy decisions. Post-TANF data is also helpful for ensuring TANF participant confidentiality. The focus of the session was on the power of data, the difficulty of systems change, and how information sharing can deliver efficiencies.

Seventy percent of states have integrated eligibility and enrollment systems, yet 50 percent claimed their data sharing processes lacked clarity. Many states have attempted to improve their data sharing capabilities by upgrading their data management tools, especially regarding real-time access to data verification. However, almost all states believed they needed improvements to program entry. Interest in receiving technical assistance was also widespread, specifically around creating dashboards and portals for caseworkers. Many states claimed they could benefit from hearing examples of other states' efforts of integrating data across many programs.

APHSA's National Collaborative for the Integration of Health and Human Services conducts ongoing work to build collaborations, share best practices, and advance the goals of multi-disciplinary and population-based care. The National Collaborative was established in 2011 and is comprised of local and state health and human services leaders from public and private agencies and organizations. Data analytics allow TANF agencies to understand patterns and trends and therefore make better programmatic decisions about the TANF caseload. To provide client-centered services, agencies need efficient and effective data sharing.

ACF recently created a Division of Interoperability which has taken on business analysis and a coordination role. Some of this initiative's key resources include: 1) National Information Exchange Model; 2) National Human Services Interoperability Architecture; 3) Confidentiality Toolkit; and 4) cost allocation methodology tools. These all aim to help ACF and agencies look at agile developments, create extra flexibility, and encourage collaboration.

Enhancing Family Stability: Assessing Housing Status and Coordinating with Local Homelessness Programs for TANF Agencies

Moderator:

- Larry McDowell, TANF Regional Program Manager, Region VI, OFA

Speakers:

- Norman Suchar, Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, Office of Community Planning and Development, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Tamitha Davis, Deputy Administrator, D.C. Department of Human Services, Economic Security Administration
- Rachel Gwilliam, Family Assistance Program Specialist, OFA

In July 2016, OFA released *Enhancing Family Stability: A Guide for Assessing Housing Status and Coordinating with Local Homelessness Programs for TANF Agencies*. Presenters discussed how a public/private partnership is implementing the strategies discussed in the guide. They provided an overview of the coordinated entry process and the TANF agency's role in quickly connecting families experiencing a housing crisis with necessary resources as efficiently and effectively as possible.

OFA has released resources for TANF agencies to address housing challenges:

- *TANF Info Memo on Family Homelessness*²: discusses the use of TANF funds to serve families experience or at risk of homelessness.
- *Enhancing Family Stability: A Guide for Assessing Housing Status and Coordinating with Local Homelessness Programs for TANF Agencies*³: guide developed in 2016 to ensure TANF agencies take a proactive approach to homelessness and work with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-funded Continuums of Care.
- Other examples of assessment and screening tools: DC Department of Housing assessment tool, and the Department of Veterans Affairs Homelessness Screening clinical reminder tool.

Washington D.C.'s integrated service and case management approach began assessing every family at entry into the program, which included housing needs. D.C.'s TANF Office of Work Opportunity provides integrated case management services for the subset of families in rapid rehousing. A designated employment provider specifically targets families receiving TANF and experiencing housing instability and provides wraparound services to address their housing and employment needs. As integration continues to be strengthened, there is a need to align assessments, launch a household benefit interaction assets calculator, scale the teaming model for multi-system involved families, and develop more tools to address long-term housing affordability for families in rapid rehousing.

HUD operates the Continuum of Care program that is targeted towards a person who is having a housing crisis, to have a coordinated system to access housing help. In some communities,

² <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource/tanf-acf-im-2013-01>

³ https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/enhancing_family_stability.pdf

the Continuum of Care program is a phone line, and in others it has a physical location. Through coordinated entry, states can assess a client's level of need and help that person access a variety of short- and long-term resources.

TANF Programmatic Policy – Answers That You Thought You Knew

Moderator:

- Susan Golonka, Deputy Director, OFA

Speakers:

- Julie Siegel, Director, Division of TANF Policy, OFA
- Peter Germanis, Senior Policy Advisor/National Expert, OFA

OFA discussed TANF programmatic policies, including reporting, work requirements, caseload reduction credits, and Maintenance-of-Effort (MOE) expenditures. During this interactive workshop, participants refreshed their memory regarding TANF basics and asked experts more complicated questions.

Community-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Abuse

Moderator:

- Lauren Frohlich, Management and Program Analyst, OFA

Speakers:

- Michael DeBernardi, Director for Behavioral Health, The LifeLink
- Dr. Lynn Mirigian, Overdose Prevention Research Program Director, Program Evaluation Research Unit, School of Pharmacy, University of Pittsburgh
- Dr. Phillip Graham, Director of Drugs, Violence, and Delinquency Prevention Program, RTI International

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of overdose deaths involving opioids has nearly quadrupled since 1999. More than 183,000 people died from prescription opioid overdoses from 1999 to 2015. The Pennsylvania Opioid Overdose Reduction Technical Assistance Center and the Santa Fe Law Enforcement and Assisted Diversion Program discussed ways that communities can build partnerships to implement evidence-based opioid abuse prevention strategies.

Effective strategies include collaboration between states and pharmaceutical companies, youth public awareness campaigns, data sharing, and strengthening workforce development for TANF participants. Combinations of strategies, especially if they focus on the family, are much more effective than implementing strategies on their own. Better strategies will emerge by understanding shared risk factors, realizing opioids' negative effects on the workforce, and knowing what other agencies are doing to ensure no service gaps or overlaps are created.

Trauma is pervasive in impoverished populations and can occur during service provision. Multiple categories of trauma result in an exponential increase in health-related issues like suicide, drug use, and lung disease. By integrating trauma-informed care through a systematic approach, social services can be more effective. Values of trauma-informed care include safety,

trustworthiness, individual choice, collaboration, and empowerment. A shift towards trauma-informed care involves changes throughout all levels of the social service system and leads to improved partnerships and enhanced collaboration.

Pathway to Prosperity – Success for TANF and WIOA Participants

Moderators:

- Eileen Friedman, TANF Program Manager, ACF Region III, OFA; Sanje Dawdanow, Program Specialist, OFA

Speakers:

- Kate Probert Fagundes, Public Assistance Division Manager, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions
- Bridgett Backman, WIOA/Business Services Division Manager, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions
- James Williams, Executive Director, Mississippi Workforce Development Board

Across the country, the TANF program, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and various agencies work together to maximize skills development and career opportunities for low-income customers accessing multiple programs. Presenters discussed co-enrollment, service coordination, and the use of case management systems that help customers and program managers achieve success. Presenters also provided examples of how enhanced partnerships can improve employment outcomes for low-income individuals transitioning to the workforce.

Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD) uses a two-generation model and is currently being adapted to work with young adults. NdCAD uses a story-telling approach to help young adults envision their futures, in addition to incorporating more engaging, discussion-based models. Ramsey County has worked to co-enroll Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and WIOA participants in NdCAD. They focus on getting parents connected to their cultural roots, and giving them the skills to advocate for their children. Ramsey County has also built community connections through home visiting.

Preventing Teen Pregnancies: The Importance of Evidence-Based Programming

Moderator:

- Veronica Young, TANF Program Specialist, ACF Region IV, OFA

Speakers:

- Dr. Resa Matthew, Director, Division of Adolescent Development and Support, Family and Youth Services Bureau
- LeBretia White, Program Manager, Division of Adolescent Development and Support, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program, Family and Youth Services Bureau
- Tish Hall, Public Health Advisor/Project Officer, Office of Adolescent Health

One of the four statutory purposes of the TANF program is to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) and Office of

Adolescent Health (OAH) within HHS work hard to leverage resources and collaborate around efforts to support evidence-based teen pregnancy programs. Presenters discussed these programs and shared current and future collaboration initiatives.

Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) programs, which operate within the FYSB in ACF, derive funding from a variety of sources, including the Public Health Services Act, Sexual Risk Avoidance Education, Title V, the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014, and Competitive Abstinence Education grants. APP programs are encouraged to target vulnerable youth populations, employ evidence-based curriculum, and work to increase youth access to healthcare and other services through collaboration and referral arrangements. Specifically, the holistic approach to APP requires grantees to implement three of the following focus areas:

1. Financial literacy – *to address poverty prevention;*
2. Adolescent development – *with a focus on self-regulation;*
3. Healthy relationships – *to promote refraining from non-marital sexual activity;*
4. Career and education – *with a focus on goal setting;*
5. Parent and child communication – *with inclusion of parents in programming, as appropriate; and*
6. Healthy life skills – *to promote resisting sexual coercion, dating violence, and substance abuse*

Attendees received an overview of evidence-based and best practices for APP, including abstinence education, Personal Responsibility and Education Programs (PREP), and PREP innovative strategies. OAH's strategic framework supports adolescents through their transition to adulthood. OAH supports evidence-based, trauma-informed, and inclusive education promoting TPP and HIV/AIDS prevention programs. OAH's TPP programs operate under two tiers:

- *Tier 1* funds go toward replicating and increasing the capacity of known evidence-based programs in communities with high populations of vulnerable youth.
- *Tier 2* funds are put towards male-focused programs, and the identification and evaluation of new and innovative approaches to adolescent education.

Addressing the Housing and Behavioral Needs of Vulnerable Populations

Moderator:

- Dr. LaDonna Pavetti, Vice President, Family Income Support, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Speakers:

- Dr. Megan Smith, Director, Mental Health Outreach for Moms Partnership/Yale University
- Peggy Bailey, Director, Health Innovation Project, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- Anna Pineda, Program Director, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids

Presenters discussed an innovative cognitive behavioral therapy intervention delivered by mental health counselors and community ambassadors that has achieved high rates of participation and completion, reductions in depressive symptoms, and increases in lease compliance for residents of assisted housing. Presenters discussed efforts to bring together

healthcare, behavioral health, housing, and human service providers to address needs for people with significant challenges.

Attendees received a demo of the Mental Health Outreach for Mothers (MOMS) partnership at Yale University, which serves low-income women in Connecticut and Tennessee who are caregivers to children under the age of eighteen. The objective of MOMS is to set goals that focus on education, stress management, employment, food stamps, and housing to help improve maternal mental health and self-sufficiency. MOMS created Community Mental Health Ambassador positions. These ambassadors conduct group Cognitive Behavioral Therapy sessions that focus on health interventions in non-health settings. The program provides incentives (e.g., diapers) to encourage women to attend sessions more frequently. Evaluations of MOMS revealed higher program attendance, fewer depressive symptoms, and increased job-readiness in the treatment group. The program created a mobile app – MOMba – to allow continuous communication and incentive dissemination for participants.

Improving TANF Client Outcomes through Coaching and an Intergenerational Approach

Moderator:

- Kisha Russell, TANF Regional Program Manager, Region VIII, OFA

Speakers:

- Dorothy Tomiko Hall, State Program Manager, Family Employment Program/Clinical Services, Utah Department of Workforce Services
- Deborah Joffe, Associate Manager, Public Consulting Group, Inc.
- Emily Appel-Newby, Manager, ICF

The Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) has embarked on a philosophical change to become more family-focused across all programs and services. To accomplish this change, the Utah DWS adopted a new case management model and rolled out training on how to engage parents in a more engaging and productive manner. In this presentation, the Utah DWS presented its vision for this innovative approach, shared early results from training evaluations, and invited workshop participants to experience one training activity, The Brain Architecture Game.

The Family Employment Program (FEP) refocused their efforts to work with families so that the children on today's FEP cases will not need to access cash assistance as adults. The agency used an academy process to implement changes, which included preparation lessons, in-person training, post-module surveys on satisfaction and knowledge, follow-up activities, through-put rounds, and reinforcement in subsequent modules. The training modules focused on:

- Coaching training;
- Introduction to human development;
- Case management;
- Motivational interviewing;
- Executive functioning; and
- Trauma awareness

Concurrent Workshops

Overcoming Common Barriers of TANF/WIOA Integration and Collaboration

Moderator:

- Sanje Dawdanow, Family Assistance Program Specialist, Region III, OFA

Speakers:

- Ann Flagg, Acting Deputy Secretary for Programs, Maryland Department of Human Services
- Phil Harris, Assistant Director, Arkansas Department of Workforces Services/TANF Programs
- Odie Donald II, Director, D.C. Department of Employment Services

States that have implemented integrated TANF/WIOA models have been able to provide seamless and streamlined customer service while maximizing the strengths of human services and workforce development systems. Attendees received lessons learned from states that have implemented models of TANF/WIOA integration and were provided practical steps and guidance on several common barriers.

Obstacles to integration include structural and systems barriers like organizational management complexities, information requirements, and management homogeneity. Often both TANF and WIOA value co-location, employer engagement, collaborative client servicing, data sharing, and employer engagement. Collaborative messaging has been used to bolster an integrated TANF/WIOA system in the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS). Staff have co-branded efforts, shared MOU templates, and universal participation in policy workgroups across programs. The State Workforce Plan emphasizes customer service, government efficiency, business-driven strategies, and critical analysis of services.

Coaching for Improved Outcomes: Lessons Learned from Two Counties

Moderator:

- John Disque, Family Assistance Program Specialist, Region VI, OFA

Speakers:

- Deborah Joffe, Associate Manager, Public Consulting Group
- Kate Probert Fagundes, Public Assistance Division Manager, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions
- Cindy Perry, Workforce Program Supervisor, Lane County Health and Human Services

Coaching has evolved as a potentially beneficial strategy for engaging and providing services to TANF families. Leading practices and emerging trends in TANF relating to coaching, focusing on executive function, and adopting a family-centered approach were presented by Ramsey County (Minnesota) Workforce Solutions and Lane County (Oregon) Health and Human Services.

Coaching is a person-centered, strength-based way of working with participants that helps them direct the changes they want to make in their own lives. Coaching can also help build skills related to executive function, which impacts people's ability to succeed in the workforce, in educational attainment, and in relationships.

Before developing coaching workshops for customers, Lane County, for example, first trained staff on executive function skills through the lens of coaching. After training, staff began to use coaching techniques to assist customers in developing executive function skills themselves. In addition, Lane County integrated life skills training with job search workshops and offered standalone classes. They are currently creating 20 new life skills workshops for participants that address executive function skills including:

- Time management, organization, and goal setting;
- Making good decisions;
- Raising issues at work;
- Responding to criticism;
- Taking control of your destiny; and
- Failure of fear and moving on.

Ramsey County developed a systems change centered on essential skills, lifelong learning, coaching, and motivational interviewing. Ramsey County's coaching program included "Coaching Circles" for staff, which included WIOA and TANF teams for cross-program coaching. They also posted coaching tips of the month, and implemented "Life Long Learning Initiatives," cutting-edge, individualized employment programs for TANF participants built on the principles of goal achievement and improving executive function skills.

Tips for implementing coaching in other human services agencies include:

- Train caseworkers and supervisors in coaching techniques first so they can recognize the skills in their own workplace before teaching it to others;
- Follow up, monitor, and evaluate;
- Involve staff at all levels in development and delivery of the new model to build buy-in;
- Give staff the resources needed to provide services to participants who have trauma in their backgrounds that interferes with their executive function skills;
- Have a clear understanding of what life skills are; life skills are not necessarily soft skills;
- Conduct assessments to identify system-wide needs;
- Focus on implementing a connective approach between and within projects;
- Start small, constantly monitor and evaluate impact and outcomes, make changes as needed, and then expand; and
- Promote lifelong learning for participants and invest in staff training and professional development.

Addressing Barriers: Innovative TANF and Behavioral Health Partnerships in Research and Practice

Moderator:

- James Butler, Family Assistance Program Specialist, OFA

Speakers:

- Grant Collins, Senior Vice President of Workforce Development, Fedcap
- Melodie Pazolt, Supported Employment and Supported Housing Administrator, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

- Dr. Mariana Chilton, Associate Professor, Department of Health Management and Policy, Dornsife School of Public Health, Drexel University

Because many TANF participants have behavioral health barriers, states and counties are creating program models that facilitate access to behavioral health services for those participants. This workshop provided a discussion on an ongoing evaluation of the Building Health and Wealth Network, which provides trauma-informed mental health services for TANF participants. The workshop also included two local examples of partnerships between TANF and mental health services: New York City’s Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment program and TANF Supported Employment Pilots in Washington State.

It is unique among behavioral health systems to treat employment as an important condition for recovery. Washington State helped conduct a pilot project based on the employment-first, Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, which is 50 percent more likely to get people employed than general services. By providing supported employment, individuals are more likely to be employed, have decreased arrest rates, and use community-based outpatient mental health services. Starting the job search process quickly is vital, as it promotes clients’ confidence in the process. The IPS pilot increased employment rates, which is especially helpful since many of their clients were potential disability applicants.

WIOA Prioritization of Service and Partners Workshop

Moderator:

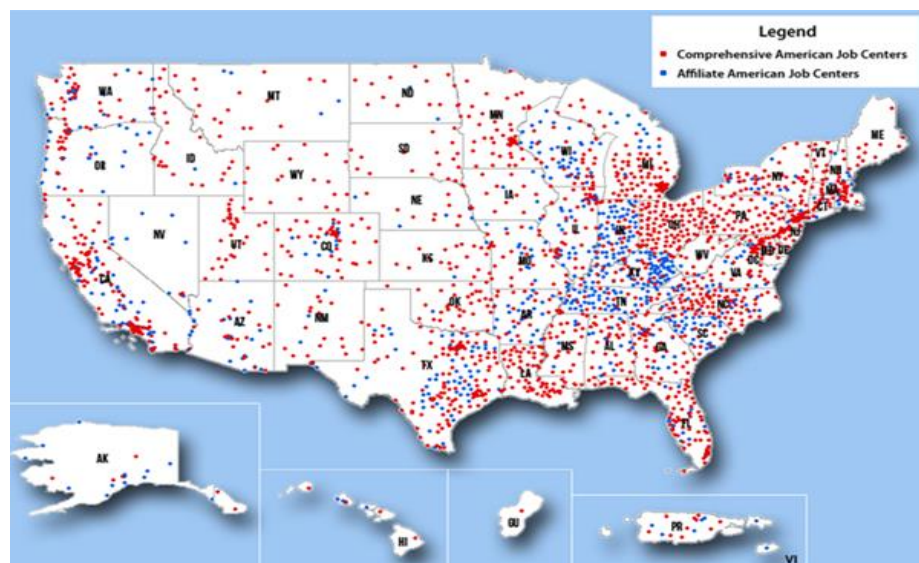
- Caprisca Randolph-Robinson, Family Assistance Program Specialist, Region V, OFA

Speakers:

- Andy Ridgeway, Adult Performance Unit Supervisor, Office of Workforce Investment
- Charlotte Harris, Workforce Analyst, Adult Policy Unit, Office of Workforce Investment

The passage of WIOA provides TANF programs with increased access to employment services to improve participant success. The new law includes a prioritization-of-services requirement that focuses on the employment needs of those with barriers to employment, including TANF participants. Federal workforce partners discussed how the new requirements benefit TANF programs and outlined strategies for engaging workforce partners. Additionally, presenters discussed building stable partnerships and designing systems to improve the employment success of all workers.

WIOA is the driving force behind the nearly 2,500 physical locations and online resources that make up the American Job Center



(AJC) network. These resources offer a full range of services to help Americans find training opportunities, receive industry-recognized credentials, and obtain personalized career services.

WIOA also defines certain required One-Stop partners. More specifically, Section 121(b) of WIOA identifies nineteen required and additional One-Stop partner programs. TANF is one of the required partners, unless a State's governor sends notice to opt out to the Secretary of HHS and Secretary of Labor. Required One-Stop partner programs have specific governance, operations, and service delivery roles within the AJC network.

Services may be delivered in one of three ways:

- Option 1: Physically located at the AJC;
- Option 2: Having an appropriately trained staff member from a different partner program; or
- Option 3: Direct linkage through technology (phone, mobile, app), but the direct linkage must connect to a person.

WIOA Title I is the most likely place where TANF partnerships can be formed because TANF populations are automatically eligible for these services.

WIOA Title III is known as the Employment Service program. It provides basic employment and career services to all job seekers across the board, and provides a critical labor exchange link between job seekers and business, with an emphasis on helping unemployment insurance (UI) claimants find quality work. The program was created in 1933, under the Wagner-Peyser Act, for individuals on UI. Now, everyone is eligible.

State and Local Workforce Boards are required to develop policies for prioritizing services to low-income adults, including TANF participants. U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL's) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) encourages TANF programs to be part of the state planning process and familiarize themselves with the process for referring TANF participants to WIOA programs.

Increasing Work through Stable and Strong Employer Connections

Moderator:

- Lauren Frohlich, Management and Program Analyst, OFA

Speakers:

- Gene Patnode, Business and Industry Manager, Division of Family Assistance, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
- Jonathan DaSilva, Learning Center Manager, CVS Health
- Lauren Smith, State Director, Office of Apprenticeship, New Hampshire Department of Labor
- Lynn Wilder, Acting Bureau Chief, Bureau of Welfare to Work, Division of Family Assistance, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
- Tamila Lay, Director, Bureau of Employment Programs, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

Building dynamic relationships with employers is a strategic way to increase the employment success of TANF participants. Employer engagement provides TANF programs with needed information to design training activities and to coordinate placements that can lead to better outcomes for both employers and employees.

CVS Health partners with the State of New Hampshire in the CVS Health Pharmacy Technician Training Program, where TANF participants can move through pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs that count toward participation in approved activities. This program provides a free training pathway for TANF participants to complete the training and certification to be a pharmacy technician while being paid and with the promise of a full-time job upon completion of the program. There are several key elements:

- *Employer-driven.* CVS Health has been the driving force behind the model, approaching the Workforce Board and proactively identifying their need for trained pharmacy technicians in New Hampshire.
- *Visual, measurable, and repeatable.* The program was designed to have clear stages and incentives for participants as they progress.
- *Front-loaded.* The program provides all training and certification up front, with the promise of a job upon completion.

CVS Health has a Workforce Initiatives team that is dedicated to developing training programs and connecting with schools and other stakeholders to create opportunities for communities. They work with apprenticeship programs to create opportunities within CVS Health, both during and after training. Once individuals have completed their training, they can continue along established career pathways within CVS Health, both within retail stores and within the other domains of the larger CVS Health enterprise.

These programs build on the Competency Model, which provides the “building blocks” to advance in a specific industry pathway. This includes five tiers, which include personal effectiveness; academic, workplace, and industry-wide and industry-sector technical and management competencies; as well as occupation specific requirements.

Another program, the Keystone Education Yields Success Program (KEYS), uses a “people-centered” approach that focuses on providing services and support to people who want and need them, even if they are eligible for an exemption. Through collaboration between the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Pennsylvania Commission of Community Colleges, the KEYS program provides services and supports to TANF and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to complete school and move towards employment and self-sufficiency.

Student facilitators function as case managers for the fourteen participating community colleges and work with students to develop a service plan, support students during stressful periods, and facilitate peer support groups. They make referrals for support services and academic counseling and assist students in maintaining participation in required activities to retain compliance and benefits. The program also has pre-enrollment services, where staff work with potential participants to clarify their goals and make sure they are committed to attending school and working towards a specific goal or occupation. After graduation, the

facilitator provides job placement and retention services, and supports the student through the transition to employment.

Relationships Matter: Interpersonal Skills for Success at Work and at Home

Moderator:

- Shantel Mickens, TANF Program Specialist, ACF Region II, OFA

Speakers:

- Kay Reed, Executive Director, The Dibble Institute
- Nick Mata, Director of Special Programs, CalWORKs, Guardian Scholars, Santa Monica College

Interpersonal competencies are key to getting and keeping a job and to building a stable home life that nurtures and protects children. This workshop explored the rationale behind teaching social and emotional interpersonal skills from the perspective of both the employer and employee, with a special focus on young adults.

The Love Notes program integrates relationship skills with pregnancy prevention, violence prevention, parenting skills to prevent adverse childhood experiences, and workforce readiness. Relationship skills are the same skills needed to succeed in work, and bettering relationship skills can improve employability. Industries such as manufacturing, healthcare, and professional services all require soft skills such as communication and teamwork, which are the same soft skills taught in relationship skills classes. Improved relationship skills do not only improve employability, but can make families safer for children.

The Dibble Institute created the Love Notes curriculum, which has been used as a workshop series for CalWORKS recipients. The curriculum is engaging for participants and has allowed CalWORKS to go into deeper lessons about relationship skills. Most participants want to learn about interpersonal relationships, and the skills taught through the Love Notes curriculum allow students to step back, reflect, and take charge of their relationship.

Attendees considered three questions:

- How have I seen poor work and family relationships derail TANF participants from reaching their goals and dreams?
- How might I integrate relationship skills programming in my agency?
- What other questions do I have about implementing relationship skills in my program?

Promising Approaches for Assisting Families with Substance/Opioid Abuse

Moderator:

- Mary Farrell, Executive Vice President, MEF Associates

Speakers:

- Barbara Ramlow, Director, Targeted Assessment Program, University of Kentucky
- Daisy Goodman, Clinical Assistant Professor, The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice

Substance abuse assessment and subsequent treatment can help TANF participants obtain and maintain employment, especially if there is evidence indicating that substance abuse contributed to their failure to comply with work activities. This workshop highlighted promising approaches for assisting families with substance/opioid abuse, including how TANF programs can assess or develop partnerships to identify and triage services.

Funded completely by TANF funds, the University of Kentucky's Targeted Assessment Program (TAP) identifies and addresses barriers to self-sufficiency by incorporating evidence-based practices, motivational interviewing, and strengths-based case management. The program has shown that the presence of multiple barriers is the highest predictor of non-participation in work activities. Rates of substance and alcohol abuse are almost twice as large for TANF participants than the general population. TAP staff engage clients, perform extensive outreach, and conduct comprehensive assessment. The program also provides consultation, training, and pre-treatment services.

The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice focuses on assisting peripartum women with an opioid use disorder. The risks of untreated opioid use disorders for pregnant women include poor nutrition, tobacco use, psychiatric issues, intimate partner violence, unemployment, and homelessness. Babies also face possible prematurity, low birth weight, and deficits in motor skills, attention, and emotional regulation. Established in 2013, the treatment program provides weekly group counseling, supportive services, child care, and pediatric care. The program aims to conduct evidence-based universal screening and intervention for substance and alcohol use, improve substance use outcomes for mothers, and decrease risks for an adverse childhood. Focusing on mother and infant care can serve as a way to maintain motivation, and integrating employment assessment and support with treatment is a promising practice to facilitate recovery.

Rapid Cycle Evaluation: An Approach to Evidence-Based Decisionmaking in TANF

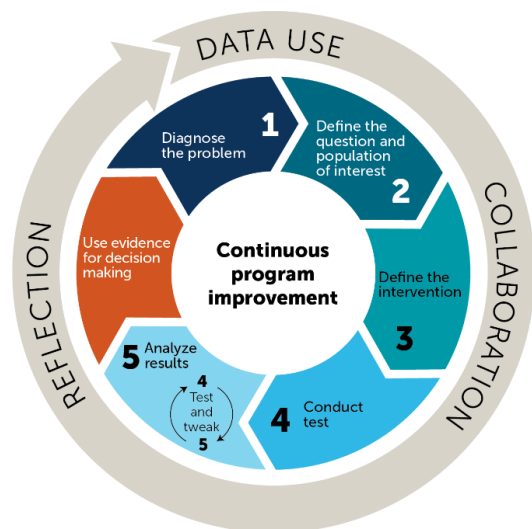
Moderator:

- Carol Mizoguchi, Family Assistance Program Specialist, OFA

Speakers:

- Annalisa Mastri, Senior Researcher, Mathematica Policy Research
- Jonathan McCay, Program Analyst, Mathematica Policy Research

The increasing availability of data has fundamentally changed the way in which we make everyday choices, creating new opportunities to quantify and analyze aspects of our lives and work. This workshop provided an overview of rapid cycle evaluation and discussed its use in TANF programs. This workshop also discussed Project IMPROVE: Improving Program Outcomes via Evidence-Based Technical Assistance, an OFA initiative to help TANF agencies embed evaluation and learning into decisions about policy and practice.



Traditional program evaluation, which is often researcher-driven, lasts for multiple years, and answers the question, “does it work?” Alternatively, rapid cycle evaluation (RCE) uses similar methods to the traditional program evaluation, such as randomized control trials, but it is focused on program improvement and is agency implemented. It also measures the impact of changes to program operations or service delivery structures, and answers the question, “can it be improved?” RCEs are conducted over a brief time horizon, making them far less expensive than traditional evaluations.

Situations best suited to RCE include:

- Strategies to improve engagement and follow-through (e.g., behavioral nudges);
- Variation in the combination, dosage, or intensity of services;
- Operational changes to improve efficiency;
- Different communication and marketing approaches; and
- Effectiveness of a high demand, oversubscribed program.

In Larimer County, Colorado, many clients were not submitting their time sheets, the required reporting for Works Program (TANF) participants. To help solve this problem, Larimer County tested high-touch and low-touch behavioral interventions. They decided to use a low-touch approach with existing TANF participants, and a high-touch approach with new TANF participants. The low-touch intervention involved sending a reminder postcard. The high-touch intervention involved handing out a brochure at orientation that explains the time-keeping process with tips, a planning email sent out to participants, a reminder postcard sent to participants, and a prize lottery for on-time submitters. Participants were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group within each strategy.

They tracked submission timeliness and found that for the low-touch strategy, those who did not receive post-cards turned in timesheets on time more frequently. For the high-touch strategy, those eligible for lottery showed the highest percentage of on-time timesheet submission for at least one month out of three months used. However, the control group showed the highest rate of on-time timesheet submission over a three-month basis.

Evaluation that serves program improvement is an accessible process compared to traditional evaluation. It is also a decision-focused evaluation that builds local research capacity and encourages iteration and continuous quality improvement. Project IMPROVE, sponsored by OFA, aims to improve TANF programs’ policies and capacities for using evidence, developing evaluation practices, documenting progress and processes, and revising program components by using evidence and evaluation data.

Helping TANF Recipients Find Employment and Advance in the Labor Market: Evidence from OPRE's Employment and Training Research

Moderator:

- Hilary Foster, Senior Social Science Research Analyst, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Speakers:

- Bret Barden, Research Associate, MDRC
- Robin Koralek, Senior Associate, Abt Associates
- Daniel Litwok, Senior Analyst, Abt Associates
- Asaph Glosser, Senior Research Associate, MEF Associates
- Nicole Constance, Social Science Research Analyst, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

During this session, five researchers presented about Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE)-sponsored subsidized and transitional employment and career pathways programs. All programs prioritized serving low-income people and TANF participants, and all showed promising signs of increasing employability, employment, educational attainment, or some other aspect of welfare. All presenters emphasized the importance of partnerships between the agencies that received grants and community resources.

- *Subsidized Transitional Employment Demonstration*: Three programs, Paid Work Experience (PWE) and OJT in Los Angeles, and Jobs Now STEP Forward in San Francisco, used randomized control trials to study subsidized employment models in which public funds paid some or all of participants' wages. In general, these three studies align with research suggesting subsidized employment programs can increase short-term earnings, but those earnings are often difficult to sustain following the conclusion of the subsidy period.
- *Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG)*: This largescale randomized control study evaluated a series of ACF grants that funded professional training for high-demand healthcare professions to TANF participants and other low-income people, using a career pathways framework. The study used a randomized design and included average effects for 13,717 people served across 42 programs. Data collected on services provided found that nearly all programs provided case management and financial supports and many included soft skills training, occupational training, and academic support. HPOG participants enrolled in short-term courses, such as nurse aide training, had the highest completion rates, while long-term courses had the highest dropout rates. On the quantitative side, the short-term impact study showed that HPOG participants are already reporting higher enrollment in training and higher receipts of academic, career, and financial support than those in the control group – often by a margin of ten to twelve percent. Regarding the secondary outcomes HPOG hopes to address, such as employment, TANF receipts, and earnings, the results are small or insignificant at this point in time but may grow over a longer timeframe.
- *Pathways for Advancing Careers in Education (PACE)*: This is another career pathways study conducted in twelve states to increase employment and training for low-income

people. The sites all employed a randomized design. Health Careers for All, an HPOG and PACE grantee in King County and Seattle, Washington, placed particular emphasis on engaging TANF participants in the program through early and strong buy-in from regional TANF leadership, the co-location of PACE navigators in TANF offices, and shared access to the TANF case management system. TANF participants were more likely to enroll in nursing assistant programs than non-TANF recipients (50 percent versus 40 percent), likely due to the shorter duration of the program, but the two groups were otherwise indistinguishable.

One of OPRE's goals is to connect TANF participants to industries with growing demand, jobs allowing for self-sufficiency, and opportunities for advancement. OPRE has worked to identify and catalog resources for TANF administrators, including a resource guide and lists of the most promising occupations by state, a brief on how to use Labor Market Information, and analyses of promising professions that require low levels of education, are projected to grow in coming year, and are high-demand in a state.

Improving TANF and Workforce Development Programs: Lessons Learned from Listening to Dads

Moderator:

- Carol Monteiro, TANF Program Manager, ACF Region I, OFA

Speakers:

- Eugene Schneeberg, Senior Technical Specialist, ICF International
- Stacey Bouchet, Senior Technical Assistance Specialist, Public Strategies
- Dr. Antwan Wallace, Director of Research and Evaluation, Center for Urban Families (CFUF)

For many TANF and responsible fatherhood programs, workforce development and financial empowerment are important programmatic elements. Traditionally, workforce development programs have not included parenting skill-building as a key component. WIOA provides an opportunity for TANF, workforce, and fatherhood programs to bridge this divide. This interactive workshop shared how TANF and workforce development agencies can integrate client-centered approaches to meet the needs of fathers and families.

The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC), funded by OFA, offers monthly webinars, administers the Fatherhood.gov website and hotline that families can call about custody and parent issues, and runs the DadTalk blog.

The CFUF's Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project and Couples Advancing Together program serves areas with high proportions of reentering parents. Many of these parents carry child support arrearages, so they often face barriers to work, economic stability, and healthy relationships.

Attendees learned about findings from listening sessions with the CFUF's noncustodial fathers.

- Finding #1: The biggest concern was economic barriers. Noncustodial fathers had difficulties with housing, workforce training, and soft skills. They often had difficulty communicating with the mothers of their children, and all the fathers owed child support.

- Finding #2: The fathers underwent workforce programs that integrated holistic and pragmatic strategies. Fathers explored what it means to be a father, learned self-regulation, and practiced skills to be able to take care of themselves and their families. The program tried to help fathers get “quick wins” such as legal advice, expungement, help with paternity establishments, wraparound services, TANF referrals, healthcare, counselling, job referral and placement, child support or custody agreements, vehicle eligibility, or a child support debt forgiveness program.
- Finding #3: WIOA has the potential to transform workforce solutions for low-income, non-custodial parents. A workforce leader suggested that workforce agencies and TANF can play a role in helping noncustodial fathers find employment.

Plenary Session: Examples of Employment Excellence

Moderator:

- Clarence H. Carter, Director, OFA

Speakers:

- Tony Vinson, Recruitment and Intake Coordinator, Culinary Job Training Program, D.C. Central Kitchen (Washington, D.C.)
- Michael Jones, Senior Program Manager, Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action (Dunbar, West Virginia)
- Josh Cramer, Vice President, National Center for Families Learning (Louisville, Kentucky)
- Chris Megison, President and Chief Executive Officer, Solutions for Change (San Diego, California)

During this session, presenters from partner programs shared the strategies that have helped them increase employment outcomes for various hard-to-employ populations. OFA Director Clarence Carter moderated the session.

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is an organization that promotes community service-based learning for families in rural and urban areas. NCFL has expanded outreach efforts for low-income children to include their parents, and now targets family literacy with the Dual Generations Program in communities throughout the country. Based on the theory that parents can translate skills into positive community change while also serving as role models to their children, the model aims to teach parents to take ownership of their communities through education and community organizing. In addition, by targeting development in technical skills, creativity, problem solving, and organizing, the Dual Generation Program also trains parents in skills that employers look for. An independent evaluation of 27 program sites found that 40 percent of parents showed growth in employable skills and 50 percent got a job or a better job.

The Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action (KISRA) operates a Fatherhood Initiative program. Most fathers in the program tend not to be “dead-beat dads” as much as they are “dead-broke dads.” High unemployment and underemployment rates provide a big barrier to supporting and engaging with their children. KISRA also operates health and employment initiatives, which target populations with mental illnesses and histories in psychiatric hospitals.

These initiatives provide transportation assistance, medication monitoring, and supplemental income to reduce recidivism inside hospitals.

The next program, DC Central Kitchen, strives to provide culinary training and job placement for cohorts of ex-convicts and low-income people through a fourteen-week program. DC Central Kitchen provides recruited participants from halfway houses, transitional homes, and drug and alcohol treatment centers with culinary certificates and job placement assistance upon completion. Beyond culinary skill, the program also provides professional development, self-empowerment, and internship work experience.

Finally, attendees learned about Solutions for Change, a San Diego-based organization that aims to help homeless families find permanent housing and employment. The program emphasizes accountability, and uses social enterprise as a means of providing families with services to get out and stay out of homelessness. The keystone program within Solutions for Change is Solutions Academy, a “boot camp” for homeless parents that provides job search assistance and teaches parenting skills and financial literacy. Solutions Academy assists with transitional housing and community service, with the general hope that providing individuals with a sense of community connectedness and purpose will provide motivation and inspiration.

To view this plenary in its entirety, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/linking-tanf-families-employment-and-economic-opportunities-meeting-view-livestream-plenary>.

Day Three – Wednesday, August 16, 2017

Concurrent Workshops

During these workshops, attendees could choose which session to attend.

Improving Employment Outcomes through Relationship Skills

Moderator:

- Stacey Bouchet, Senior Technical Assistance Specialist, Public Strategies

Speakers:

- Sandino Thompson, Director of Urban Services, Public Strategies
- Marc Taylor, Senior Project Manager, It’s My Community Initiative

Because there are many overlaps between skills that promote healthy family relationships and the soft skills that employers seek in new employees, some Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) grantees are working to integrate employment preparation and family skills training. This workshop discussed promising strategies from several research-based curricula as they can be applied to HMRF content and integrated into work-readiness education. Stacey Bouchet and Sandino Thompson presented examples of strategies that promote strong families through employment training and relationship skills.

Many TANF families are involved with multiple assistance programs, and therefore must report to multiple people across programs. Caseworkers should use a career coaching model to quickly

identify clients' immediate needs, work to navigate barriers using the resources they currently have, and maintain relationships with clients even if referrals must be made for services at other agencies. Many of these strategies incorporate behavioral science, including visual tools to simplify information and career pathways frameworks to help participants see a way forward.

Attendees received a few examples of successful programs, including Washington State's Strength in Families program. Strength in Families operates in four prison systems and provides support to fathers nine months before and up to nine months after release, as they reengage with families and pursue employment. Its goal is to reduce recidivism and build skills that can be applied in family and employment settings. Dads Matter, a fatherhood program in Pennsylvania, integrates responsible fatherhood activities into WIOA programs. The program is co-located with Head Start early childhood services and a private industry council, and uses a warm referral system to connect fathers with job training in high-demand, local oil and gas industries while providing soft-skills and relationship training.

It's My Community Initiative's True Dads program, a twelve-week program which targets low-income fathers ages 18 to 24, uses the PREP curriculum for the first half of programming. During this time, the program encourages fathers' co-parents to join, with hopes that both parents can participate in curricula related to relationships, parenting, and economic stability. Dads then select a track for the next six weeks: parenting (18 hours), relationships (18 hours), or work training (60 hours). The work training program is sports-themed, and each dad is assigned a coach to help them through the more intensive employment workshops provided by Work Ready Oklahoma. Coaches act as the key go-between to connect participating dads and the Work Ready Oklahoma team, help to narrow down the job search process to jobs in which their clients are interested, and complete referrals to SNAP and other assistance programs.



The True Dads model has shifted after incorporating lessons learned from the first iteration, which included six weeks of core content and then six weeks of an intensive track. After integrating employment training into the first six weeks of programming, uptake and initial placement wages increased. True Dads participated in a randomized control trial to test a visual tool that incorporated behaviorally-informed strategies to increase participation. The visual tool is intended to improve the two-hour intake process, and dads complete a survey and receive incentives to provide feedback.

Stronger Together: Partnering with Child Support Enforcement to Support Non-Custodial Parents in the Workforce

Moderator:

- James Murray, Senior Advisor, Office of Child Support Enforcement

Speakers:

- Scott Lekan, Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement
- Elaine Sorenson, Technical Advisor, Office of Child Support Enforcement
- Pamela Olesen, Program Manager, Community Assistance Division, Jefferson County Human Services

Child Protective Services partners with federal, state, and tribal agencies to increase the reliability of child support paid by parents when they live apart. Approximately sixteen million – or one in five – children in the United States are supported through child support payments, 29 percent of whom fall below the poverty line. Currently, about 70 percent of parents make their child support payments on time. To address the challenges of the remaining 30 percent, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) aims to facilitate partnerships between agencies to reduce barriers. This workshop highlighted successful collaborations between TANF and Child Support that can help practitioners better serve families.

OCSE's key goals have shifted in recent years, from a focus on recovering welfare costs and financial support and on consequences for failing to pay child support, such as debt and incarceration, towards a focus on reliable payments, sending money to families, facilitating debt prevention and compromise, and providing services to families with barriers. OCSE's Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization regulations⁴ require states to increase transparency, incorporate research-based practices into programming, and provide notification about incarceration rules, while also increasing states' flexibility to unbundle services and close unworkable cases.

OCSE's collaboration with TANF agencies provides an opportunity to improve families' relationships with the child support process. The programs serve many of the same families, and by partnering to provide wraparound services and personalized communication with families, OCSE and TANF can jointly promote successful child support through securing parents' self-sufficiency and employment. Recent research has investigated employment programs run by child support programs, and results show that enrolling noncustodial parents in employment programs has increased child support payments and participation among high-risk populations.

Funding for employment programs can be complicated, as child support services are not allowed to use Title IV-D funds – which provide funding for the child support program – for employment services. However, TANF funding has been used successfully for employment services for noncustodial parents under purposes II and IV. MOE funds can also be used to pay for work activities for noncustodial parents, even if they are not receiving TANF assistance.

⁴ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/resource/final-rule-flexibility-efficiency-and-modernization-in-child-support-enforcement-programs>

Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP), a Colorado program, provides an example of supporting noncustodial parents through TANF. PEP uses a “one family, one plan” philosophy and aims to streamline services supplied by various providers. On the child support side, the focus was on early intervention and determining if non-payers fell into the category of “unwilling” or “unable.” After classifying families, staff could spend more time on intensive cases that required wraparound services. In many cases, noncustodial parents need employment assistance to earn enough to support their child, so PEP used a career pathways framework to navigate employment opportunities.

Using Mobility Mentoring Coaching to Forge New Pathways Out of Poverty

Moderator:

- Jacqueline Jackson, TANF Program Specialist, ACF Region IV, OFA

Speakers:

- Jennifer Lowe, Vice President of Shared Learning and Member Networks, Economic Mobility Pathways
- Nicki Ruiz de Luzuriaga, Associate Vice President of Capacity Building, Economic Mobility Pathways

Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath) (formerly Crittenton Women’s Union) has developed a psychosocially-informed coaching approach called Mobility Mentoring® that uses new learning from brain science to strengthen program design and results. During this session, speakers introduced participants to Mobility Mentoring and learned how this coaching model augments and improves executive function skills. Participants explored how Mobility Mentoring and Bridge to Self-Sufficiency® are integrated into TANF programs to increase self-sufficiency outcomes.

The Mobility Mentoring model is a coaching, professional practice of partnering with clients so that participants may acquire the resources, skills, and sustained behavior changes necessary to attain and preserve their economic independence. The four elements of Mobility Mentoring are: coaching; the bridge to self-sufficiency, a theory of change to open conversations with people about where they are, and shift to a conversation about where they want to go; goal setting about where they want to go, and how EMPATH is going to help them get there; and incentives tied to goal setting.

The Mobility Mentoring approach uses brain science-informed design principles to SCORE:

S – Simplify and Scaffold: By simplifying access, rules, requirements, language, and materials, programs can decrease the tax on people’s brains. Centralizing the point of entry for services across systems is one way to simplify, which allows people to use their brain capacity for other work. EMPATH also scaffolds services when possible. The bridge to self-sufficiency is the most prominent example of scaffolding. It is structured with five pillars: 1) family stability, 2) health and wellbeing, 3) financial management, 4) education and training, and 5) employment and career. Each benchmark is broken down into smaller benchmarks, such as moving from being homeless to safely housed, or unemployed to working.

C – Coach: Coaching is framed as a partnership, rather than a typical case management relationship where staff do things for participants. Coaching is built on the idea of “co-investment,” which maximizes people’s own investment in their self-sufficiency.

O – Outcomes: This component helps people to reflect on their own success and stay motivated. Tracking outcomes also helps staff to stay motivated.

R – Recognition: Strategies to recognize accomplishments include notes, wall art, ceremonies, shout outs, progress charts, incentive systems rewards for completed goals, lottery systems, or extra privileges like tangible assets and services.

E – Expectations

Practical Approaches in Coordinating 2-Parent Family Activities

Moderator:

- Carol Mizoguchi, Family Assistance Program Specialist, OFA

Speakers:

- Todd Bland, Chief Deputy Director, Welfare to Work Division, California Department of Social Services
- Belit Burke, TANF Administrator, State of Oregon Department of Human Services

In this workshop, speakers from the California Department of Social Services and Oregon Department of Human Services shared their experiences and strategies serving two-parent families. Each representative discussed his or her unique philosophy in addressing this special population.

The California Department of Social Services’ California CalWORKS (TANF) program provides SNAP, child care, and refugee services. CalWORKS provides financial help and services to single- and two-parent families, and the program does not consider two-parent services as a separate program. Two-parent families make up about ten percent of the TANF population in California, and these cases spend slightly less time on aid, with a similar sanction rate to single-parent cases. Eligibility, benefit policies, service delivery, and access to child care and special program components are the same for single- and two-parent families. Two-parent families often face the same barriers as single-parent families.

The Oregon Department of Human Services serves two-parent families similarly to California in that they treat two-parent households the same as one-parent households and focus on poverty reduction, engaging families, and allowing participants to be leaders. The State revised its policy to support two-parent families by eliminating deprivation, addressing unique living situations, and extending to a 5-year time limit. Oregon has a family engagement model that includes family coaching and goal setting for strengths and barriers, and offers subsidized employment and summer youth employment programs. Their goal is to provide a continuum of service. Service delivery innovations include an employment and training initiative that includes local support service projects and community-based involvement.

Real-World Strategies for Improving TANF/WIOA Coordination

Moderator:

- Damon Waters, Family Assistance Program Specialist, OFA

Speakers:

- Anna Cielinski, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for Law and Social Policy
- Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke, Assistant Deputy Director, Family Support Division, Missouri Department of Social Services
- Michael Quinnine, Career and Employment Center Program Manager, Rubicon Programs
- Vi Ngo, WIOA Manager, Rubicon Programs

WIOA provides TANF programs with increased opportunities to link participants to the workforce. Using information gathered from the Center for Law and Social Policy's (CLASP) Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success and findings from a case study of strategies for targeted populations, presenters provided attendees with a series of real-world strategies for strengthening the TANF and WIOA partnership. They also highlighted key findings from the field and worked with attendees to better understand how to integrate similar approaches locally.

A recent CLASP paper examined coordination between TANF and WIOA. The study's sample included a self-selected group of State TANF and WIOA directors from 26 different states and revealed ten strategies that may increase coordination between TANF and WIOA. The most common strategies shared were job resource rooms and braided funding streams, while the least common were single case managers and team case management. The survey also revealed valuable opportunities for TANF participants, such as increased job placements and better access to the labor market, and for agencies, such as cost savings and efficiency. Common challenges to coordination include different performance measures and communication problems stemming from agencies' cultural differences. Overall, the study recommended states increase communication between TANF and WIOA agencies, track and share important data, and use state flexibility under TANF to allow more participants to meet their requirements through trainings.

The state of Missouri is promoting TANF/WIOA coordination by encouraging physical co-locating with WIOA partners and directing focus towards career pathways, stackable credentials, and short-term trainings. Missouri's large caseload reduction credit allows for flexibility in program design with long-term outcomes in mind. Upcoming changes will emphasize activities for self-sufficiency, more adaptable supportive services, and after-hours case management. Finally, performance outcomes and incentives will be based on participants, rather than contractors, meeting and exceeding WPRs.

A local level example of TANF and WIOA coordination, Rubicon Programs operates a One-Stop and a Career and Employment Center (CEC) under a WIOA contract for job readiness programs in Alameda County, California. When participants enter the program, they go through an orientation, then enroll in the program, and attend sessions like Job Search and Assessment Workshops. These activities prepare participants to receive vocational planning and employment services from Rubicon Vocational Counselors. To help facilitate this process for participants co-enrolled in CEC and WIOA, CEC career coaches work alongside WIOA counselors and communicate through weekly meetings and internal spreadsheets. This institutional

structure makes it easier for TANF participants to access WIOA services, since it works around TANF participants' schedules and provides them with support rather than creating additional barriers.

Evidence-Based Strategies to Prevent Unplanned Pregnancies

Moderator:

- John Disque, TANF Program Specialist, ACF Region VI, OFA

Speaker:

- Tara Mancini, Public Policy Manager, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

In line with TANF's purpose to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy helps identify, develop, and promote a variety of policy options that advance the goals of reducing teen and unplanned pregnancies among single young adults. The organization – founded in 1996 and grounded in nonpartisan, evidence-based policies – aims to reduce unplanned pregnancy, and in turn decrease poverty rates and foster stronger educational outcomes across all racial and ethnic groups. This workshop discussed recent research and evidence-based strategies in the area of unplanned pregnancy.

The National Campaign works with states across the country to introduce unplanned pregnancy education and materials into colleges and public assistance offices. In Colorado, the organization launched a holistic family planning initiative by providing training and contributing birth control to safety net clinics. Teen pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates have been declining across all states and ethnic groups. The National Campaign views this decline in terms of the intersection between information, access, and opportunity. Through their recent “whoops-proof birth control” campaign, The National Campaign provides interested individuals with online information about birth control options.

Improving Employment Outcomes for the Most Vulnerable and Hardest to Employ

Moderator:

- Deborah List, Associate Deputy Director, OFA

Presenters:

- Andrew Freeberg, Director of Community Programs, Goodwill-Easter Seals of Minnesota
- Rhonda Shipley, Development Director, RecycleForce
- Greg Shirbroun, Research and Evaluation Coordinator, RecycleForce
- Catherine Pitchford, Senior Manager, Economic Success, CFUF

Goodwill-Easter Seals of Minnesota eliminates barriers to work and independence by providing holistic services ranging from assistance with interview clothing to industry-specific job training programs. Using the revenue generated by its recycling business, RecycleForce helps formerly incarcerated individuals rebuild their lives by providing gainful employment and comprehensive social services. The Center for Urban Families addresses the key challenges of Baltimore's urban

families by creating opportunities for economic and financial security through work and by providing access to other key interventions and supportive services.

Goodwill-Easter Seals of Minnesota operates multiple programs, including the FATHER Project, which helps low-income, noncustodial fathers improve economic stability, and FAST X, which assists health-exempted TANF participants with disabilities connect to employment. The core principles of these programs are engagement, education, employment, and employment retention. FAST X integrates supported employment with mental health treatment and aims to begin the job search process immediately after a client expresses interest in working. They use a partnership model with co-located services to increase access to families and potential referrals. A third important program, the Lifelong Learning Initiative, utilizes an executive skills-informed coaching approach and IPS employment services to create a different, more productive mindset about social service provision.

RecycleForce is a transitional jobs program for formerly incarcerated individuals in Indianapolis. Program participants help recycle electronic waste in a warehouse with reserved space and equipment. As a nonprofit with a revenue strategy, the program puts clients to work within four days of application and provides wraparound services in an employment-focused manner. Keys to this program's success include immediate wage work, not screening out individuals based on a perceived lack of readiness, engaging alumni as mentors, and a strong reliance on research and data for continuous improvement.

CFUF approaches service provision through a holistic, collaborative lens. To achieve stable, well-paying employment, it is necessary to address other personal issues members may be experiencing. As soon as possible, members are assigned a life coach and receive housing, mental health, and transportation services. Alongside a workforce development component that permeates its work, CFUF provides Responsible Fatherhood and Couples Advancing Together programs. Employers are valuable to the organization's success since they act as mentors for members and provide funding for trainings.

Career Pathways and Guided Group Discovery: Paving the Way to Employment

Moderator:

- Amy Gonzalez, Supervisor of Workforce Systems Policy Team, U. S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy

Speakers:

- Rebecca Salon, Project Director, LEAD Center; National Disability Institute
- Larry Russock, Program Director, Employment Day Services, St. John's Community Services

This workshop discussed the involvement of TANF participants in inclusive career pathways and the rationale for using guided group discovery as a universal design approach. Attendees heard an overview of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), which partners for technical assistance with the National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD Center) to focus specifically on economic advancement for individuals with disabilities. The LEAD Center, ODEP's technical assistance center (part of the National Disability Institute), has a mission to improve employment

outcomes and self-sufficiency across the entire spectrum of disability, both at the individual and system levels.

In support of the Inclusive Career Pathways model to serve individuals with disabilities and those experiencing barriers, ODEP awarded a series of customized employment grants between 2001 and 2006, all of which targeted capacity building within AJCs for TANF participants and chronically homeless individuals. This model relies on Customized Employment, a strategy in which caseworkers help individuals create profiles or alternatives to traditional resumes that can better showcase ability, gain access to networks of employers, and make proposals for customized jobs. A key component of this model is guided group discovery, which is intended for individuals that lack the technical training and career networks to gain employment. Guided group discovery involves working in group settings to discuss self-empowerment, confidence boosting, and peer support, with a focus on what individuals *can* contribute to the workforce, rather than what skills or training they may lack.

One example is a site in Philadelphia that employs these strategies in a program serving homeless men seeking jobs, as well as an afterschool program for high school students. The program for homeless men facilitates group discovery at an emergency homeless shelter weekly for five weeks, and emphasizes a “work first” approach to get men immediate income. Group discovery sessions aim to teach participants how to speak about the strengths and skills they *can* offer. The youth program serves students from an arts-focused high school and incorporates professional development customized for professions in art, music, and design. The most prominent barriers for future employment in this population are high rates of intergenerational poverty (with many parents on TANF) and low expectations for educational attainment. The program emphasizes trauma-informed care and mentorship.

The LEAD Center works with states to increase employment outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities and other barriers to employment. An evidence-based practice called Discovery has been used to better understand an individual and their unique skills and abilities and how those talents can be best utilized through a job. Participants will also learn of another practice called Customized Employment (CE), a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. Both highly effective strategies can be applied with TANF participants that have disabilities or other complex barriers to employment.

Resources:

- ODEP’s website: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/>
- The LEAD Center’s website: <http://www.leadcenter.org/>

Performance-Based Contracts: Models for Improved Customer Outcomes and Program Efficiency

Moderator:

- Leah Rubio, Senior Project Manager, Public Strategies

Speakers:

- Sisifo Taatiti, Assistant Director, Utah Department of Workforce Services
- Linda Richardson, Section Chief, Program Integrity and Performance, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
- Janice Peters, Deputy Administrator, Division of Family and Economic Security, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

This session was rooted in conversations at OFA regional meetings where states had the opportunity to learn about implementing performance-based contracts, share their experiences, and ask questions. The session was guided by participant-identified questions and challenges about performance-based contracts.

Wisconsin and Utah both utilize performance-based contracting in their TANF programs. Attendees received an overview of the two states' performance-based contracting structures and strategies, as well as lessons learned from the process, including best practices and challenges.

Closing Plenary: TANF/WIOA Integration – State and County Innovation in Action

Moderator:

- Susan Golonka, Deputy Director, OFA

Speakers:

- Ann Flagg, Acting Deputy Secretary for Programs, Maryland Department of Human Services
- Brandon Butler, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, Maryland Department of Labor
- Amy Kershaw, Associate Commissioner for Programs, Massachusetts Department of Technical Assistance
- Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke, Assistant Deputy Director, Family Support Division, Missouri Department of Social Services

The task of establishing and maintaining partnerships among TANF, workforce development, education and training, and support services is crucial to improving outcomes for individuals and families. Several states have developed strong partnerships with great potential to meet the changing needs of not only individuals and families but also employers and the labor force. This closing plenary session highlighted these innovations in action and discussed their challenges and successes. Panelists discussed their state's vision for implementing WIOA, particularly with respect to TANF participants.

To view this plenary in its entirety, visit: <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/linking-tanf-families-employment-and-economic-opportunities-meeting-view-livestream-plenary>.

Closing Remarks

Speaker:

- Clarence H. Carter, Director, OFA

Clarence Carter concluded the *2017 Linking TANF Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities Meeting* by reflecting on the shared learning environment created during the three-day convening. He shared that the regional manager of the hotel where the meeting was held was moved by the sessions and conversations, and discussed his own challenges keeping certain jobs filled. Mr. Carter stressed that attendees added value to their customer base just by being present at the meeting. Mr. Carter reminded attendees that the country needs them to innovate, collaborate, cooperate, and break down barriers to be able to help Americans create their own version of the American dream.