# 2010

# East Coast TANF Directors' Conference

October 19-21, 2010

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## Summary Report

The *East Coast TANF Directors' Conference* was funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance Regions I, II, III, and IV, and managed by ICF International for Contract No. HHSP23320095636WC, Task Order HHSP23337005T "TANF Training and Technical Assistance"

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## Acknowledgements

The Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance Regions I, II, III, and IV (Planning Committee) would like to thank all who participated in the planning and implementation of the first-ever East Coast TANF Directors' Conference. This Conference represented the program and community needs of more than a third of the nation's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) population and was a significant forum for program sharing, peer dialogue, and information gathering in the wake of the Great Recession and in the foreground of TANF Reauthorization. The Planning Committee would especially like to thank Ms. Sharon Parrott, Counselor to the Secretary for Human Services at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Mr. David Lett, Administration for Children and Families Region III Administrator, and Dr. Earl S. Johnson, Director of the Office of Family Assistance. Also, special thanks to our partners in the Food and Nutrition Services Program, the Employment and Training Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and all of the researchers, practitioners, and analysts who presented during the conference.

The Planning Committee had the pleasure of working with a core group of panel moderators and panelists, contract staff, and interoffice staffs from Regions I, II, III, and IV and we are grateful for your tireless attention to detail and to the successful completion of this conference.

Lastly, the Planning Committee would like to show its appreciation to all the State TANF Directors and program staff who remain committed to the lives of low-income and working families and who continue to strive to improve the employment and economic self-sufficiency outcomes for those impacted by unemployment, underemployment, and poverty.

## Background

The current recession began in December 2007. Although the economy grew slowly in 2009 and 2010, many policy officials declare the recovery a "jobless recovery" based on the continuing challenges of the economy to reduce the unemployment rate. The overall unemployment rate hit 10 percent in October 2009, and as of December 2010, it continues to hover around 10 percent. For individuals in poverty the unemployment rate is often over 30 percent.[1] Additionally, according to the most recent US Census data, the poverty rate increased between 2008 and 2009 and now stands at 14.3 percent, and the real median income for families of color declined thrusting more and more children into poverty.[2] As the current recession continues to impact the most vulnerable of families, the TANF caseload inched higher to 4,322,279 individuals and 1,832,113 families in 2010.[3] The economic recession impacted many families and while the US government took steps to shore up the available safety-net, low-income families did not receive sufficient assistance to help lift them from poverty. As Congress prepares for TANF reauthorization, TANF remains an important component of the available safety-net, and the only source of cash assistance for many low-income families.[4]

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 TANF Emergency Contingency Fund (ECF) provided $5 billion to help States, Tribes, and Territories pay for additional economic aid to families impacted by the recession. The ECF was a useful resource for improving the lives of low-income and working families, helping to ameliorate disproportionately high rates of unemployment, increased poverty, and reduced access to social supports. The ECF funded a series of programs for low-income and working families, including a job-subsidy program that subsidized the wages of more than 254,000 individuals.[5] Unfortunately, the ECF has expired and its expiration leaves thousands of families seeking newer outlets for improving their economic situations. A total of 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands had their applications for ECF funds approved. Additionally, 25 Tribes and Tribal organizations had approved ECF applications. Of the total $5 billion awarded, $1.6 billion was for basic assistance, $2.1 billion for short-term aid, and $1.3 billion for subsidized employment.[6]

TANF was last reauthorized in 2005 for five years and would have expired on September 30, 2010. TANF's funding level has remained unchanged since 1996 when it was first authorized and funded at $16.5 billion; thus, its value has eroded by over 30 percent.[7] The result has been that just as low-skill workers

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[1] Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., & Palma, S. (2010). *Labor underutilization problems of US workers across household income groups at the end of the great recession: A truly great depression among the nation's low income workers amidst full employment among the most affluent.* Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.
[2] DeNavas- Walt, C. et al. (2010). *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009.* Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration.
[3] See: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. Caseload Data available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/caseload_current.htm
[4] Zedlewski, S. (2008). *The role of welfare during a recession.* The Urban Institute.
[5] Pavetti, L. (2010). *Going, going, almost gone: Job-creating TANF Emergency Fund set to expire.* Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.
[6] See: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. Emergency Fund Data available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/tanf/apprTANFemerfund.html
[7] Lower-Basch, Elizabeth (2010). *Hearing on welfare reform: A new conversation on women and poverty.* Washington, DC: US Senate, Committee on Finance.

are facing higher and higher barriers to employment[8], fewer than half of eligible families are receiving needed benefits.[9]

As States and localities continue to help families lift themselves out of poverty, it will take innovation and initiative to determine the most effective strategies for moving individuals into employment and lifting families into economic self-sufficiency.

## Overview of Meeting

Held in historic downtown Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the Sofitel Hotel on October 19-20, 2010, the East Coast TANF Directors' Conference was convened by the Administration for Children and Families Regions I, II, III, and IV to outline strategies for responding to the economic downturn in the wake of the ECF and in the foreground of TANF Reauthorization. The first ever East Coast TANF Directors' conference brought together 46 State TANF directors and program staff who represented 24 States and Territories to strategize on ways to move low-income and working families closer to economic self-sufficiency while providing important input on the development of new TANF legislation. Specific topics included subsidized employment, strengthening safety-net partnerships, improving assessments and service delivery for domestic violence victims, and asset development strategies to improve long-term economic development. The format of the meeting was a combination of information sharing and conversation along with panel presentations. It included a day of State information sharing and a design that supported the dissemination of information between State TANF Administrators, Federal policy representatives, and other key stakeholders. Participants were asked to focus their information sharing on challenges they have encountered along with strategies and potential solutions they have used.

One of the primary goals of the meeting was to help individual States think strategically about how to continue programs and services after funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) TANF ECF has ceased and with continued fiscal shortfalls in state budgets. The other main goal was to introduce State TANF Administrators to other Federal programs that are useful to low-income populations and shared clients. The meeting featured interactive panel presentations and discussions that encouraged participants to comment and ask questions.

## Day One

To start off the event, the conference facilitator, Mr. Kent Peterson of ICF International, welcomed the participants to Philadelphia. Mr. Peterson stated that it adds value for professionals to have the time, opportunity, and space to connect with one another. Mr. Peterson explained that the East Coast TANF Directors' Conference provided an opportunity for TANF Directors to spend time working together to determine strategies for responding to the economic challenges faced by families and communities. Mr. Peterson explained that the format of Day One would be split up into blocks of time for participants to engage in dialogue together and encouraged participants to use the time to get to know other participants and to discuss challenges and solutions. He asked participants to begin this conversation by introducing themselves.

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[8] Dworsky, A. and Courtney, M. (2007). *Barriers to employment among TANF applicants and their consequences for self-sufficiency.* Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

[9] U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). (2010). *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Fewer eligible families have received cash assistance since the 1990s, and the recession's impact on caseloads varies by state* (GAO-10-164). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Following introductions, Ms. Eileen Friedman, Region III TANF Program Manager welcomed participants to the city. She stated that the planning of this meeting was a tremendous team approach that included OFA Central Office staff, Carol Monteiro, Region I TANF Program Manager, Joanne Krudys, Region II TANF Program Manager, Darrel McGhee, Region IV TANF Program Manager, State representatives who worked on the planning committee, and the ICF International team. Following this, Ms. Friedman introduced David Lett, Region III Program Administrator from the Administration for Children and Families. Mr. David Lett shared that he believes that this Conference is very powerful as nearly half of the U.S. is represented; 24 States and Territories from four Regions. The opportunity that this event provides is a tremendous vehicle for the participants.

## *National Perspective*

### *Earl S. Johnson, Ph.D., Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance*

The National Perspective was delivered by Dr. Earl Johnson, Director, Office of Family Assistance (OFA), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and Sharon Parrott, Counselor to the Secretary for Human Services Policy at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Dr. Johnson stated that OFA and the State TANF Offices have had an exciting year. He thanked the conference participants for the great job they did last year and this year with the ARRA resources. Without the State commitment to ARRA, OFA could not have served half the people that were reached. ARRA increased hope and opportunity for families and communities.

Next, Dr. Johnson stated that as the new OFA Director, this Conference is an opportunity for him to get to know the State TANF Directors from the 24 States represented. He then highlighted some of ACF's recent accomplishments in which the Conference participants have been engaged.

- OFA implemented the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Initiative and has made some great strides. This initiative is a goal of the President and ACF is behind it.
- OFA announced $80 million for the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG), to channel low-income individuals into employment in an emerging sector that the government believes will offer higher wage jobs in healthcare. There were 32 grantees selected in 2010 and 14 of them are in Regions I, II, III, and IV. This is a really big opportunity.
- The biggest accomplishment is what TANF did with ARRA. ARRA proved that TANF has a big and flexible reach that most people never realized it had. Five billion dollars was spent through TANF with ARRA:
    - $1.6 billion on basic assistance.
    - $2 billion on the short-term non-recurrent benefits population.
    - $1.3 billion on subsidized jobs for an estimated 254,000 individuals.

All of these accomplishments happened in less than a year and a half. Dr. Johnson thanked the participants for this and for reaching these people. The subsidized employment programs were the biggest accomplishment under ARRA, with the establishment of key partnerships in the private sector and with employers. Using the subsidized employment reimbursements provided by the Emergency Fund, States worked to promote longer-term job development activities and accelerated the placement of individuals in jobs. Despite these successes, though, Dr. Johnson recognized that the TANF program has a long way to go to ensure that all eligible families are served. OFA will continue its leadership in the dialogue and information sharing with Congress and other stakeholders.

Dr. Johnson continued by stating that though much has been accomplished, in the coming year, TANF has to do more. For instance, TANF should focus more attention on increasing outreach to eligible families because the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has reported that only 22 percent of poor children receive assistance from the TANF program. Also, ACF is focused on improving collaboration, partnership, and service integration between its departments; under a strategy they are calling *interoperability*. OFA is looking at strategies to streamline processes and create smooth referral pathways into the other programs that exist. Improving service integration is a key to the success of TANF and if done correctly it can improve the provision of services—child care, mental health, economic development, etc.—that are necessary to moving families out of poverty. Dr. Johnson encouraged OFA and TANF to take the lead on moving families out of poverty and think about strategies to integrate safety-net services and work with key partners. Dr. Johnson explained that he was at the Conference to listen to the challenges that TANF programs may have in improving outreach, service delivery, and engagement, and to work with the States to brainstorm about how to bridge those gaps.

Evidence-informed and evidence-based practice has become more important than ever in the provision of social services for low-income and working families. According to Dr. Johnson, the [Obama] Administration is focusing increased attention on determining which strategies have shown stronger outcomes for improving the lives of low-income and working families. Accordingly, OFA and TANF need to capture and share evidence of program success and failure, and programs should work with OFA to better integrate evidence into their strategies. Because it is important for the future of the field that TANF show which interventions are working, Dr. Johnson encouraged everyone to document program impacts and outcomes and to really understand how implementation gets programs to the impacts of greater economic independence. Dr. Johnson thanked Regions I, II, III, and IV for having him and thanked ACF for their hard work.

Ms. Sharon Parrott from the Office of the Secretary as Counselor for Human Services Policy provided additional remarks. According to Ms. Parrott, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius is committed to Human Services and although the Department has a lot on its plate, which includes working on the Affordable Care Act implementation, it remains committed to improving the economic position of children and families. She stated that a lot of the Conference participants will also be working on the Affordable Care Act as a gateway for people around the country. Ms. Parrott then thanked everyone for pulling this meeting together and thanked the States for their work on the Emergency Contingency Fund. Ms. Parrott explained that Secretary Sebelius recently went on a site visit to a subsidized employment program in Illinois and it really provided her with valuable and transformative insight on the subsidized employment program.

While there, she heard stories from people learning about the dignity that having a job brings. Secretary Sebelius is incredibly proud of the role HHS played in developing programs that responded to the employment needs of families during the recession. According to Ms. Parrott, TANF fits into a larger role of Human Services, and Human Services fits into a larger role of the Department.

Ms. Parrott acknowledged that behind each press clipping she has seen about the States at this Conference, a great deal of hard work is involved. HHS is also working hard to get the Emergency Contingency Fund extended. HHS recognizes that the job market is putting a lot of stress on State agencies and there is commitment throughout the Administration to see if it is possible to continue some of the projects the States have started. Ms. Parrott is not sure what Congress will do, but she assured participants that HHS is trying very hard and that she will keep States informed on the progress.[10]

*Question and Answer Session:*

Following the National Perspective, meeting participants had an opportunity to share comments and ask questions. Comments, questions, and answers are listed below.

- Participant Question: Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and TANF are under attack. How do we spin these differently to demonstrate that they really help people achieve economic self-sufficiency?
    - *OFA and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are in conversations about how programs are in better alignment with each other and a more dynamic message is portrayed.*

- Participant Question: How have beliefs changed with the economic recession? Do we see a backlash against TANF and SNAP and/or more tension? Or is there more sympathy for people in these programs?
    - *TANF was a different type of program this past year and served people who usually would not access TANF: a lot of dislocated workers who are beginning to understand the challenges of poverty. However, there is a stigma and some resentment attached to their perspectives on TANF.*

- Participant Question: How do we leverage results from some of our more recent successes with the Emergency Funds?
    - *It is hard for us to get the data to support our stories at OFA. We need responsiveness from States to help us paint these pictures and the message we need to share.*

- Participant Comment: In moving forward with TANF, we need a reauthorization that is more reasonable for States to administer and implement.

- Participant Question: In looking at the State budget analysis for D.C., we have come close to not making our match with many programs– is there discussion about looking at the formula for allocation for TANF?
    - *South Carolina echoes that, as well as Florida. Florida is looking at automating their system due to caseload increases, but this is not helpful when face-to-face services are what people need.*

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[10] As of December 1, 2010, the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Income Support and Family Support and the Senate Finance Committee are reviewing proposals to include the ECF in extended tax relief bills.

- *This is a difficult issue, and there is no getting around looking at the political and Federal fiscal climate. It is unlikely to see infusions of more resources; unfortunately that is the reality with the potential formula issue.*

- Participant Question Directed to Sharon Parrott: Are you looking at a regulatory agenda to restore flexibility and some of the potential ill effects of the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA)?
  - *We are looking at everything and we are very outcome-focused.*
  - *We understand just how difficult the environment is for States.*
  - *Guidance around regulations that would improve outcomes is what would be very helpful.*
  - *Transferring a significant amount of TANF money to Child Welfare IV-E funding – Maryland.*
    - *This is why interoperability is important – utilizing resources across programs.*
    - *Telling a story of how states use TANF dollars is important for Central Office to know – what impacts are these dollars having?*

## *State Directors Information Sharing*

The National Perspective was followed by the State Directors' Information Sharing session, which continued for the remainder of the day. During these facilitated, solutions-focused roundtable updates, Regions I, II, III, and IV State TANF Directors were asked to provide programmatic and policy updates as they relate to their TANF programs, their participants, and the families they serve. With an emphasis on innovative responses to the economy and strategies that can be replicated in sister states, attendees were encouraged to interact with their peers and Federal representatives and seek to not only inform, but also learn. Mr. Kent Peterson facilitated the session.

### *Region I*

#### Connecticut

Connecticut has been experiencing dire fiscal constraints and has had delays in application processing and payments in the TANF program for three months. The State could not meet the base year match for subsidized employment through ARRA funding and the biggest challenge for Connecticut is meeting the work participation rate (WPR). The lack of jobs, low wages, and the limited amount of hours offered to clients has created this challenge.

In order to tackle some of these obstacles, the State has implemented several innovative strategies. The TANF agency has a strong relationship with the Region I Office as well as Central Office, which is key to any success. Additionally, the State made use of ARRA funding to jumpstart 100 third party programs using non-recurrent short-term benefits. The programs focus on needs such as child care, diapers, job skills, and more. Since Connecticut could not meet the base year match for subsidized employment, they partnered with foundations on this program and others, and the foundations provided private dollars as an ARRA match. The subsidized employment program created 6,500 jobs.

The representatives from Connecticut explained that they were able to partner with foundations by being flexible. Foundations funded the programs that they were interested in, such as summer camps, domestic violence, and back-to-school assistance. The State created foundation buy-in by explaining the idea of the match, and by educating the foundations on how the programs worked and how the funding would be used. The State used an intermediary to accept checks from the foundations. The foundations were also encouraged by the Governor, who focused on the issues and emphasized "one time only" to create buy-in.

## Maine

The State of Maine is struggling with funding issues, and getting the State to commit more funding to TANF is a challenge. There was no increase in State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for ARRA funding and Maine has a higher proportion of children over the age of 12 months, which creates a child care funding issue. Like Connecticut, Maine did not have the 20 percent match for subsidized employment. Implementing a system of work participation verification has been a challenge for the State. Furthermore, Maine has the fifth largest concentration of people with disabilities among the States and this presents a major challenge since disabled participants still count towards work participation rates. An additional challenge is the return of military personnel, who have added to the State's tally of job seekers.

Some innovative strategies utilized by the State include an integrated system of service delivery. The TANF agency works with and meets with partner agencies regularly and since there was no increase in MOE, one third of the contribution is funded by State-sided Child Support funds. Like most States, Maine made use of ARRA funding. The State partnered with utility companies to help with bills for families, initiated a housing stabilization project with the State Housing Authority, worked with Legal Assistance, and partnered with grocery stores and a nonprofit organization to send $100 gift cards for food to every TANF family. Additionally, using the TANF Emergency fund, Maine has provided a monthly special-needs housing allowance of up to $100 to families whose total shelter costs are more than 75 percent of their countable income. Maine increased this allowance from $50 in late 2008.

## Massachusetts

In Massachusetts there are currently 3,000 people in emergency shelters, which have yielded significant costs to the State. Those in shelters are exempt from work requirements, and 80 percent are on TANF. The State of Massachusetts has lost 30 percent of its resources to serve TANF clients. The State has no incentive for those on cash assistance that are also in subsidized housing to work. The benefits in Massachusetts have only increased once since 1988, in 2010. The State TANF agency has also experienced difficulties in partnering with other agencies such as Labor, Housing, and SNAP. Data sharing with and between these agencies has been difficult. Other challenges for the State include WIA funding, as well as WPR issues, as the law exempts families with children under the age of two from working. Massachusetts plans to connect families on Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) to Employment and Housing services by implementing *Welfare to Work* programs with subsidized housing as an incentive. Other innovative strategies utilized by the State include placing an emphasis on getting those who can leave TANF out of the system, to focus on those who cannot. The State also hopes to address its issues with interagency collaboration by better coordinating with and sharing data between TANF, SNAP, WIA, and Housing.

## New Hampshire

New Hampshire has experienced a 24 percent increase in caseload since August 2008, which has put significant stress on staff. In addition to this, the State has had a loss of 20,000 jobs, budget constraints, and a lack of resources. New Hampshire's TANF agency has a limited ability in bringing clients to a centralized location. The State has also struggled with submitting verification information. Due to the 20 percent match required by ARRA, New Hampshire was not able to implement new programs with ARRA funds. New Hampshire would like to see OFA revise the definition of work eligible, and change the WPR definitions and activities so that they recognize the challenges the States face in getting customers to work. The representatives from New Hampshire believe that time spent towards General Educational Development (GED) obtainment and other education and training should not be as limited as they pertain to the participation rate.

In order to address some of the State's challenges, the TANF agency has pulled many contracted services in-house to save money, such as GED training, Child and Family Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation. The State also moved TANF offices that used to be co-located with One-Stops to District office locations. New Hampshire has also changed its processes to better foster client achievement. The State has developed a "portfolio planning for success," which is given to clients at the beginning of the process. The eligibility process has also been changed to include real-time data and auto-enrollment. New Hampshire has implemented "Precision Case Management" to make case management consistent and effective and has emphasized the use of motivational interviewing to identify and address barriers. The agency is also planning the implementation of a Post-TANF Employment Program, consisting of a six month stipend. New Hampshire used ARRA funds to increase Basic Assistance and will continue this by bringing contracted services in-house.

## Rhode Island

Rhode Island has been struggling with funding since the State budget removed funds from the TANF program in 2009. The State government has been downsizing and the agency is dealing with a reduced staff. In 2008, the State cash assistance changed to "Job Search First" and rarely met WPR in that activity. The State struggles with parent attendance and motivation and believes that the down time between activities is too long. Rhode Island has no extra MOE to help with Caseload Reduction Credit (CRC) and like New Hampshire; the Rhode Island representatives would like to see more Adult Basic Education and GED hours count towards the participation rate.

Rhode Island has been working to improve services by operating two subsidized employment programs through contractors using ARRA funds. The State would like to continue these programs without ARRA funding on a smaller scale.

## Vermont

Vermont is dealing with an increased caseload and a decreased staff as a result of the current economy. The State has no funding for new initiatives and is also experiencing strains on information technology, data systems, and in keeping up with the pace of change. TANF participants in Vermont are struggling to access affordable child care, and experience other barriers such as transportation, mental health, and substance abuse. Work Participation verification and documentation are also presenting issues for the

State. The representatives from Vermont hope that in the future, TANF two-parent family WPR requirements and housing restrictions are eliminated. They also expressed that they would like Job Search to become a countable activity.

To help overcome some of these struggles, Vermont is currently utilizing a systems approach and is in the middle of modernizing its system. The State is using a new service delivery system for clients based on teaming and is involving staff in process improvement. Using ARRA funds, Vermont launched a subsidized employment program and hosted a Food Benefit by partnering with food suppliers. With the end of ARRA funding, the State plans to change the subsidized employment program and continue it by reallocating other funds. Vermont has started a pilot program called a “therapeutic work site” where supportive services are provided along with work experience. The State is also piloting a car share program.

### *Region II*

#### New Jersey

New Jersey is experiencing budget constraints and although the TANF caseload growth continues, budget constraints have resulted in the reduction or elimination of some TANF contracted services such as the State’ post-welfare transportation program. New Jersey’s increased caseload is in part due to the new clients whose unemployment insurance benefits have expired. This has been experienced across the State.

Given the State’s budget constraints, New Jersey cannot continue the programs funded with the TANF Emergency Funds. Programs such as subsidized employment (Work Pays), Summer Youth Works, and the Social Services for the Homeless expansion will not continue after September 30, 2010. The Department of Labor will provide *Work Pays 2* which is On the Job (OJT) Training for TANF participants. New Jersey will also be reducing the state EITC from 25 percent of the Federal credit to 20 percent.

The State’s most significant challenges in meeting the Federal work participation rate are the six weeks per year Job Search /Job Readiness of which only four weeks can be continuous, the 12 month Lifetime Limit for vocational training, and the 30 percent Vocational Education/ Satisfactory School Attendance Cap.

#### New York

New York is looking at a huge deficit and recently had to close an $8.2 billion hole in funds. To do this, the State had to reduce investments across the board in such programs as: general transitional jobs, subsidized employment, Wheels to Work, bridge program, and the sanction program. These cuts will take effect in January 2011. New York is struggling with the question of how to sustain programs after ARRA. Working with the State Department of Labor has also presented a challenge for the agency. The State has placed increased emphasis on administrative data collection, which is difficult with decreased resources. Due to the budget issues and lack of resources, the agency is experiencing a shared frustration and feeling of “giving up” among employees. To help improve services, New York representatives believe that OFA should exclude individuals who are eligible, but are not receiving Social Security Income from the WPR, as well as create a more reasonable excused absence policy.

In order to help with some of these challenges, New York expanded EITC programming in the State by maxing out regular contingency funding and ECF funding.   New York was able to draw down $140 million ECF funds for a total of $175 million in back-to-school assistance supplements for more than 800,000 children in low-income families across the state. One-time, $200 grants were given per child to use on school supplies, clothing, uniforms, tutoring, and other essential school items. This was administered by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the state welfare agency. Eligible families received their supplements on their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, which are usually used to access public assistance and food stamp benefits. Other innovative and creative ideas like this can be used to leverage additional ECF funds for low-income families.  In FY 2010 budget, New York allocated increased spending for five new and existing subsidized employment programs: Transitional Jobs Program; Green Jobs Corps; Health Care Jobs Subsidies; Nurse Family Partnership; and the Wage Subsidy Program. The Transitional Jobs Program, a new program in New York, was allocated $5 million, which triggered $20 million in ECF funds for a $25 million state program. It is unclear, however, if the Green Jobs Corps' and Health Care Jobs Program's allocations already include ECF funds or if they were funded with the intention of leveraging additional resources through the ECF. In the future, New York hopes to integrate TANF and SNAP and plans for program and policy alignment. The State representatives believe it is important to provide wrap-around, ongoing services and to ask for a story when talking to local offices and participants, to better demonstrate the impact and importance of TANF.

## Puerto Rico

One of Puerto Rico's biggest challenges is that many potential TANF participants do not know about the TANF program or understand what it is. The Territory recognizes it needs to do outreach to these potential participants and educate them on what the program offers. In Puerto Rico, the education level of participants is generally very low. The agency hopes to work with the Department of Labor more, and is in the process of creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Puerto Rico is working to improve services and systems. The agency recently created a new model to reach more people that want to be self-sufficient. The model includes using delegate agencies, which provide case management services in the form of support, crisis management, workshops/training, job placement and helping participants establish themselves on their own in order to participate in subsidized employment and other work programs. Puerto Rico used ARRA funds for special, one-time programs like summer camps. The agency has formed an MOU with the Department of Labor for a subsidized employment program, and is initiating new requirements in the subsidized employment program to encourage client compliance. Puerto Rico is working to include new non-governmental organizations to aid in participant outreach since the TANF program is not well known. In addition, the agency is working with the University of Puerto Rico to give TANF participants the opportunity to participate in empowerment workshops and gain college experience.

## U.S. Virgin Islands

The Virgin Islands experienced some initial challenges implementing a subsidized employment program using ARRA funds. Initially, the agency planned to work with the hospitality industry, which did not work out and plans were changed to work instead with nonprofit organizations. Though the program has worked well, there have been challenges with employers as employees need supportive services. The TANF agency has had to remind TANF participants that the jobs are temporary but may lead to permanent employment if they work hard. With ARRA funds being depleted, the Virgin Islands are trying to figure out how to move forward with subsidized employment. In addition to these challenges, the Virgin Islands are struggling due to freezes placed on employment and hiring to replace individuals who leave the agency. The agency has also experienced challenges with changes in programs and turnover of eligibility staff, who work on both TANF and SNAP. Finally, the Virgin Islands client-base is made up of many individuals with poor family dynamics and family issues that need to be addressed.

As mentioned above, the Virgin Islands implemented a subsidized employment program using ARRA funds combined with a community block grant to fund the required match. In addition to placing participants in positions with nonprofits, the Virgin Islands also used the Department of Human Services to fill open jobs with subsidized workers. About 15 to 20 percent of the agency's caseload participated in the subsidized employment program. In order to ensure the success of the program, the Virgin Islands has constant interventions with employers to teach them about the workers and their needs, as well as interventions with employees to teach them about job skills and job value. The program has seen some attrition but mostly success. In addition to this program, the Virgin Islands have implemented a cross-training initiative with TANF and SNAP. The Territory has been working on collaboration and plans to continue doing so and expand on current efforts. The Virgin Islands are also trying to expand the agency's involvement in family activities to address common issues with family dynamics. They have done so by hosting conferences, health activities, low-cost family events, and recreation activities.

## *Region III*

### Delaware

The State of Delaware's caseload has significantly grown and is currently 18 percent larger than last year. The State has also experienced budget cuts that have resulted in layoffs of temporary and seasonal employees, and cuts in programs such as child care. The State has reduced TANF case management from twelve months to three to six months and has been forced to eliminate the Cars to Careers program. Due to these budget cuts, Delaware will also not be able to continue the programs it began under ARRA. In addition, the State is experiencing an increase in verification and documentation demands as well as a 15 to 20 percent decline in work participation.

During the past year, Delaware has used ARRA funds to partner with the Housing Department on a homelessness prevention program. The State also implemented subsidized employment programs, which will not continue, but were successful as some clients have been able to retain employment. The State is considering using the TANF grant to foster future subsidized employment efforts.

### District of Columbia

Due to budget cuts, the District of Columbia has been forced to reduce services by 15 percent. The District has not been able to hire new employees, even though there has been a 17 percent increase in caseload since last year. Budget cuts are expected to continue and the agency will be cutting another $11 million. Washington D.C. does not have enough funding to handle its capacity, with a caseload of 17,000, of which 13,000 are work eligible. Aside from funding challenges, the District is struggling because participants are competing for the same jobs, and the education level of participants is low due to the poor public education system. The representatives acknowledged that the District needs to expand time for education and training. They also expressed that they need more flexibility with the WPR rule, as demographics are changing. Finally, the District of Columbia would like help from OFA with getting an SSI advocacy program up and running.

Currently the District is implementing an aggressive initiative to change its program model. To do this, Washington D.C. has hosted focus groups and roundtables to come up with strategies for improving infrastructure. The District plans to personalize client referrals by bringing some services such as orientation in-house, giving clients more choices in training providers to increase buy-in, using different vendors only for job placement, implementing work readiness/job placement programs, and rebuilding subsidized and supported work programs. The job placement and work readiness programs will be more focused on enhancing skills by providing subsidized employees with supportive services. These programs will also be more incentive based. The District of Columbia representatives explained that the District used ARRA funds to collaborate to maximize Maintenance of Effort (MOE), which allowed the agency to continue services that would have been cut. Finally, D.C. is providing training at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to increase program understanding and address needs.

## Maryland

In addition to budget cuts and constraints, Maryland has seen an increase in all public assistance caseloads. While the amount of need has increased, the resources have decreased. As a result, Maryland reduced its energy assistance program to around $7 million and initiated hiring freezes. The State also froze public assistance grants for the first year. Time has also been an issue as the backlog of TANF and SNAP cases was a problem for much of the year and since the State's online application system actually increases processing time. Although, Maryland is meeting the 90 percent two-parent family work participation rate for those remaining in the TANF caseload, it is having challenges with the rate because of those with disabilities that are potentially eligible for SSI but not receiving the benefit, but still receiving TANF. As a result, Maryland's WPR slipped last year. The Maryland representatives also explained that with all the challenges the State is facing, they will likely not have a caseload reduction credit at some point, but the State does not want to have to go to corrective compliance in the future.

Maryland has used innovative strategies to manage its decreased budget and increased caseload, such as moving to an online application system, though this system does not help with time management issues. The State also took two-parent families out of the MOE-funded program and solely-funded them, but will move them back into the State MOE-funded program. Maryland also took out the TANF disabled population and is considering keeping them solely-funded for Year One. Another programmatic change made by the State involved reclassifying positions to fall under the "can hire" category, so that more jobs could be filled.

The State used ARRA funds to start a subsidized employment program that created 100 state jobs as eligibility managers and the plan is to move the subsidized employees into permanent positions as people leave and retire. The program has been positive, though the subsidized workers need a lot of attention, and the agency needs to brush up on social work skills in order to provide supportive services to the subsidized employees. The subsidized employees want to work and have the dignity of holding a job. They are union members and have been successful. Though ARRA funds are ending, the State has been able to keep programs afloat and the agency is applying for new contingency funds. The State is also using carry-over funds to sustain two programs. In the future, Maryland plans to create subsidized jobs in hospitals. Since the TANF agencies need paternity testing services and the hospitals need more workers to conduct the testing, the partnership would be a win-win.

## Pennsylvania

Like most other States, Pennsylvania is experiencing budget falls, hiring freezes, and other financial issues due to the current economy. Although the State has been able to partner with the Department of Labor, they have encountered challenges at times. These challenges stem from differences in language and philosophy. Pennsylvania also cited the “dichotomy of work and education” – the State would like to find a way to combine both work and education. Representatives from Pennsylvania discussed the message that the welfare world is projecting. The “welfare to work” mantra turns people off, and it is important to come up with a national message/marketing strategy about TANF. Last, Pennsylvania would like to work on getting a better mix of activities for those staying in the program longer. The State believes OFA should take a look at partial participation because those hours are worth something and should count towards the WPR. Pennsylvania has implemented new program practices, such as contracting out most TANF programming.

In regard to the budget issue, the State did not want to cut any one program, so they were forced to streamline the system. Though the relationship has been challenging at times, Pennsylvania is collaborating with the State Department of Labor and the agency has a strong relationship with WIA. This new partnership ensures that clients are served in the way the TANF agency wants them to be and that are most applicable to their employment needs. Pennsylvania also made use of ARRA funds in the form of work experience activities. The State spent frugally because they did not want to build up infrastructure that could not be supported. Using the funds, Pennsylvania adjusted the focus from employment to paid work experience. The agency developed an outcome measure (work activity rate) and has more people in work activities now. The State plans to continue the subsidized employment program after ARRA by scaling back and trying to find ways to maximize resources and move funds. They are also looking at strategies for employer buy-in, and have found a happy medium in their program by focusing on both education and work. The representatives from Pennsylvania believe that national branding of subsidized employment to promote the jobs gained by the public by ARRA would be a good idea. There needs to be a conversation about how tax dollars are being spent with both stakeholders and tax payers.

## Virginia

Funding has been the biggest challenge for Virginia as the State’s reserved TANF money has been used up. TANF funding was cut from programs such as: homelessness prevention, domestic violence, fatherhood, and child support. Although the caseload has increased, there is no new funding to cover the substantial increases in caseload. Due to these funding issues, the State could not meet the 20 percent match for ARRA funds. Virginia has found that client success is difficult because TANF participants are competing for jobs when fewer jobs are available. In addition, the State is concerned about participants with medical issues and at times caseworkers are pushing these clients aside because they know they cannot meet the WPR. Finally, Virginia representatives find that the complex rules involved in data entry and reporting are difficult because they take away from meaningful case management.

Virginia used ARRA funds to partner with third parties to get new programs off the ground. Programs included emergency assistance, utility assistance, and subsidized employment. Unfortunately, these programs will end with the funding ending. Aside from the use of ARRA, the State of Virginia has innovative plans for using subsidized employment focused on medical professions and nursing homes.

### West Virginia

West Virginia has been lucky in that they have had no budget constraints or layoffs. However, the State cannot meet the two-parent family rate. West Virginia representatives are also concerned about the disabled TANF caseload. The State is trying to navigate SSI through a vendor program. West Virginia also feels that OFA should work on the policy for unexcused absences because it is not broad enough. ARRA funds have been used by West Virginia for several innovative programs. First, the State implemented a paid child support pass-through by partnering with the Child Support office. They used both the TANF and Child Support systems for eligibility. The partners used the SNAP caseload to determine what families would get a check. In addition to this pass-through, West Virginia created subsidized employment programs in two Workforce Investment Act (WIA) areas and is looking to rollout the program in more WIA areas since it was a success. ARRA fund were also used for back-to-school payments, to raise cash assistance checks, and for Summer Youth Employment programs. In addition, West Virginia has created two State-only programs, one of which is for college students.

## *Region IV*

### Alabama

In the State of Alabama there are 90,000 uninsured children that are eligible for insurance and the State is collaborating with CHIP and Medicaid. The 20 percent match required by ARRA was a challenge for the State, but the agency was able to make it work. The WPR in Alabama is 37.4 percent and the representatives are worried about penalties. The State has also been working on the use of SAS software which has been a long struggle. Alabama's representatives believe that with Reauthorization, that partial participation could be counted towards the WPR.

In order to combat the high numbers of uninsured children, Alabama implemented Express Lane Eligibility and the next step will be an automated system. The State is also at the table on the health insurance exchange and the agency wants to learn more about what that means for TANF. Alabama is rolling out a new system, www.myalabama.gov, a Web-based portal for applications for Unemployment Benefits, SSI, and TANF. The State will begin the pilot for the Web site in November 2010 in three counties and the hope is that it will make it easier for citizens to access services. Alabama is focused on improving data collection and technology. The State agency prides itself in its TANF and domestic violence collaboration which has been going on for over ten years. Finally, the State used a county by county model for a subsidized employment program funded by ARRA. The program created 2,900 subsidized jobs including 782 for youth. The program ended on September 30, 2010 and the State will only be able to continue it for the disabled population. ARRA funds were also used to provide a heating allowance, cooling allowance, and school clothing.

## Florida

Florida representatives expressed that the State is having difficulty with documentation for the WPR. The agency is working on a new system to help with this.

Using ARRA funds, Florida implemented a subsidized employment program. A large mortgage company in the State recently laid off Call Center workers, so the agency created a Call Center to provide subsidized jobs. The participants are temporary State employees and will be moving into career services positions when jobs open up. The State earned a lot of positive accolades and media coverage for this project and it is using SNAP dollars to keep the program going for the next year. In addition to this program, Florida is also working to integrate a new case management system to assist with WPR documentation issues. TANF participants are provided with client user accounts and can log onto the system. This leaves time for more in-depth, one-on-one case management.

## Georgia

TANF and SNAP caseloads have risen in Georgia and the State is also experiencing major budget constraints; the TANF program receives no State dollars. Georgia is slated for program cuts; however, the State is implementing Georgia GROW: Georgia Reengineering Our Work. Currently, Georgia is looking to change its business process and build capacity.

Innovative strategies utilized by Georgia include an education program as well as a subsidized employment program made possible through ARRA. It was so successful in outreach for the subsidized employment program that the agency saw an overwhelming number of applications from both potential employers and employee and had to turn some away. The State received over 10,000 applications for employees and over 2,500 for employers. The program provided jobs to 2,300 adults, who worked for private employers or became state employees working as eligibility staff; Georgia plans to retain 300 subsidized employees who will become case managers. Many of the 750 employers from the private sector who participated also plan to keep employees on, at least through December 2010. The State made clear to employers from the beginning that they would have to provide the 20 percent match. In addition to this program, Georgia made use of non-recurrent short-term benefits by partnering with the United Way on the “Fresh Start” program. The program provided up to $3,000 for each participant to wipe out debt and avoid eviction, foreclosure, or to pay utility bills. The State also worked with the Atlanta Gas Light Company which gave the agency a percentage back of what was collected, helping over 17,000 families.

## Kentucky

Kentucky has experienced 18 rounds of budget cuts and has lost $20 million in general funds per year. As a result, the State has had to lay-off workers even though the caseload has increased and suspended the KCHIP program. Kentucky faces many issues, including low educational achievement, a large refugee population with language barriers, and citizens with a history of substance abuse. Kentucky’s WPR is at 49 percent. The representatives from Kentucky believe that data sources and verification need to align across programs and would like to see OFA bring this up with Congress. The 30 percent cap on education also hurt Kentucky’s WPR, and the State would like to see something done about this.

Working to address some of these issues, Kentucky has taken an integrated approach in its program model. The State implemented a Kinship Initiative by contracting with Medicaid Services. Kentucky also partnered with the Office of Employment and Training on a Work Subsidy program which was 100 percent subsidized. The program served 9,000 and was a success, but the State will not be able to continue it without ARRA. Kentucky also partnered with the State's Asset Building Coalition on an Asset Initiative. Other collaborative efforts include a partnership with the University of Louisville to review and streamline processes. One way the State has improved processes is by focusing on the integration of an electronic case file system. Kentucky also moved the TANF assessment to the eligibility system in order to get participants into activities more quickly and efficiently.

## Mississippi

Mississippi experienced a 12 percent budget cut in 2010, and there are plans for another four to five percent cut in 2011 across the board. Due to these cuts, the TANF agency cut back on prevention and intervention services, which makes it difficult to be flexible. The lack of available jobs coupled with the low education levels of customers also presents a challenge. Mississippi has a limited ability to provide short-term training and would like to learn strategies. The State also needs to work on meeting the two-parent family rate.

Mississippi's current efforts to improve services include looking at other funding options to continue the subsidized employment program that was created using ARRA funds. The State was able to transfer 10 percent of funds to child care, which is an important supportive service. Due to the current economic climate, Mississippi is taking a conservative approach.

## North Carolina

North Carolina suffered a $2.5 billion shortfall in 2009 and a $3 billion deficit this year. The State was forced to do a staff reduction in child support, as well as reductions in child welfare (foster care and adoption). Around TANF, child day care is a major issue due to lack of funding. In North Carolina the SNAP caseload has increased but the TANF caseload remains flat. The State has experienced a loss of manufacturing and textile jobs and the rural counties are struggling most with job loss. North Carolina representatives would like to see OFA eliminate the two-parent participation rate. In preparation for budget cuts next year, North Carolina has put plans in place for five, ten, and 15 percent reduction plans; obviously people are hoping only the five percent plan will be necessary.

North Carolina also created a subsidized employment program that serviced 24 counties. The program exceeded expectations and received positive media coverage. The State also implemented a "pay after performance" strategy, which increased WPRs. Other solutions utilized by North Carolina include collaboration with other agencies in the form of leadership teams. The State also created a new automated system called "NC Fast."

## South Carolina

In South Carolina, State funds were cut by 40 percent and the State has a $52 million deficit this year. Both TANF and SNAP have increasing caseloads. The 90 percent two-parent family rate is a challenge for South Carolina. The State would like to see it eliminated – currently two-parent families are in a State-funded program. South Carolina representatives would like to see OFA change how the TANF grant is allocated – it should be allocated based on poverty. Partial participation should count towards the WPR.

All funds in South Carolina are allocated, with $42 million going to Child Welfare. The State moved 100 TANF workers to work on SNAP and provided a 50 percent salary match. The State has also implemented a new policy of $75 per month maximum benefit. South Carolina used ARRA funds to run a subsidized employment program, and spent down all ARRA funds.

## Tennessee

In Tennessee the TANF caseload has increased by 10,000 over the past year. On top of this, the State also has budget constraints. Within the Tennessee client base, there are major drug and alcohol, mental health, domestic violence, and illiteracy issues. The State also has the same WPR issues as expressed by the other States and believes that States need to be able to count less than fulltime work towards the WPR – some employers cannot offer fulltime hours.

Currently, Tennessee is thinking about ways to sustain programs funded by ARRA. ARRA funds were used by the State as a new child care funding source and for a subsidized employment program.

### *Common Themes and the "New TANF Population"*

As thousands of families continue to be impacted by the economic downturn, they are turning to the safety-net to provide relief with food assistance, income assistance, and medical coverage. Although the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 contained more than $100 billion in safety net provisions to help lessen the impact of the recession, State budgets and social service programs continue to be battered by the recession and deep, widespread deficits. As a result, many States are reducing social safety programs to low-income and working families.

Common themes between States were noted following the State Directors Information Sharing Session. For example, most States cited issues and challenges due to budget constraints, budget cuts, and staff layoffs. Many States are also seeing increased TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid caseloads. It was noted by Dr. Earl Johnson that many States expressed struggles working with the "new population" of TANF participants.

Many States have referenced the participation of a new, albeit small population of highly skilled and highly educated individuals that are seeking emergency assistance to reduce the burden of the economic downturn. These individuals often have work histories and fewer barriers to work, but may be timing out of unemployment or unable to find permanent employment. Dr. Johnson asked participants to describe in more detail the non-traditional client. States described the new TANF population in the following ways:

- Participants with mortgage payments;

- Participants in need of a one-time emergency assistance payment and not wanting ongoing cash assistance;
- Participants in living in suburban areas – "suburbanization" of poverty;
- People who never thought they would need services;
- Caseload exploded in new areas;
- Population of people relocated to the State;
- People with longer work histories;
- People from well-to-do communities;
- More participants with Associates/Bachelor's degrees;
- New clients are surprised by limitations of assistance;
- Younger participants with younger children;
- Mostly women and single mothers;
- Laid off workers;
- Some increase in two-parent families from affluent areas; and
- Medicaid populations.

The participants explained that this population is difficult to serve because there is a "gap" in the system that was built to serve—for the most part—less work-ready and lower-skilled populations with more barriers to employment. According to the State participants, the current TANF programs are not built for the middle class and are not aligned with the needs they have, such as being able to pay a mortgage and quickly move them into employment services. The agencies in the suburbs also have difficulty dealing with such high increases in caseload and shifting client demographics.

### *Day One Wrap Up and State Reflections*

Following this State Directors Information Sharing session, Mr. Kent Peterson wrapped up Day One of the Conference. Mr. Peterson encouraged the conference participants to talk to one another, Federal staff, and event speakers at the Networking reception.

## Day Two

### *Developing and Sustaining Subsidized Employment Programs for TANF Participants*

Mr. Sykes introduced the members of the subsidized employment panel which included State representatives from model programs, the Department of Labor, and the National Transitional Jobs Network. Panel representatives for this session discussed strategies used to develop and sustain employment programs for TANF participants. These programs were made possible by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that gave States the opportunity to create programs that are much broader in scope. During the session a range of participant outreach and employer engagement strategies were discussed. The session not only highlighted successful strategies, but also discussed pitfalls to avoid when implementing these strategies.

The members of the subsidized employment panel included:

- *Cheryl Sparkman, TANF Director, Division of Economic Assistance, Mississippi Department of Human Services*
- *Diane Cook, Policy Specialist, Rhode Island Department of Human Services*
- *Barbara Guinn, Director, New York Office of Temporary and Disability Insurance, Center for Employment and Economic Supports*
- *Wanda Franklin, Families First Director, Tennessee Office of Family Assistance*
- *Amy Rynell, Director, Social IMPACT Research Center and National Transitional Jobs Network, Heartland Alliance*
- *Melissa Young, Associate Director National Transitional Jobs Network*
- *Jeffrey Gabriel, Federal Project Officer, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration- Region II*

*Cheryl Sparkman, TANF Director, Division of Economic Assistance, Mississippi Department of Human Services*

Cheryl Sparkman, TANF Director, Division of Economic Assistance, for the Mississippi Department of Human Services started off the session with a video telling the story of a Mississippi man named Roger Thomas. Mr. Thomas was a car salesman who was making six figures when he lost his job and his wife was forced to go back to work, meaning they had to sell their house and declare bankruptcy which caused strain on their family. Lee Bush, owner of a garbage hauling company, was able to use Mississippi's STEPS program to hire people in order to bring in more business, without having to pay large salaries. Mr. Bush's company hired Mr. Thomas for a subsidized job for six months. While working for Mr. Bush, Mr. Thomas landed a large federal contract for the garbage hauling business, but the funding has yet to come through. Counselors for the STEPS programs were also unemployed before they began working. The STEPS program itself has hired a total of 132 individuals and the program has led to over 3,000 jobs at over 1,200 businesses throughout Mississippi. Job subsidy programs similar to this one exist in 32 States.

The program developer, Stan McMorris, sought to create jobs that would last and used stimulus dollars as basic "seed" funding that was used to reimburse employers for the one-third of the salary over a six month period that they paid out to each participant. During this period, the subsidy gradually decreased and this provided an increased incentive for employers to invest more in training and supervision of the employees. This in turn provided an incentive for the retention of workers beyond the subsidy because of the investments employers had made in them. Of the 3,000 individuals who have signed up for STEPS, 348 have finished their six month commitment, and most of these have stayed on with their employers. The STEPS program sees these early numbers as a good sign and believes they bode well for the future of the program.

To develop the STEPS program, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security partnered with the TANF agency. They developed an aggressive advertising campaign to promote the program. Employers who participated signed a contract stating that they would try to hire the subsidized workers after the subsidized employment period ended. The STEPS program used the 2009-2010 poverty guidelines to determine participant eligibility and as of October 1, 2010 the program had 3,236 participants in a variety of jobs. A 20 percent match was made through TANF funds, which included employer's cost for supervising and training new employees. The jobs had an average hourly wage of $8.65 per hour. The STEPS program is currently attempting to gather data on employers retaining employees after the subsidized period. The State created two related programs: Summer Steps for TANF-eligible students, and Mississippi New STEPS to help individuals start new businesses, providing grants of $5,000. There have been 142 applications for the small business program and 42 of them were approved.

*Diane Cook, Policy Specialist, Rhode Island Department of Human Services*

Diane Cook, Policy Specialist at the Rhode Island Department of Human Services discussed subsidized work programs in her State. In 2004, Rhode Island began a transitional jobs program through existing contractors who were involved in job search and employment placement. Initially, this program did not take off, but the State realized ARRA funds could be leveraged by counting the cost of training for employers as the required 20 percent match under ARRA. The Rhode Island Department of Human Services and the Department of Labor collaborated on a second model that subsidized wages at 100 percent for employers. Eligibility was set at 225 percent of the poverty level and interest was strong, necessitating the creation of system for application. Overall, the program was successful: of the 4,000 job seekers who applied to participate, 3,000 were deemed eligible, the program approved 312 of 365 employers who applied, and of the 1,700 jobs that were posted, 730 people were placed in jobs.

Many lessons were learned while developing and implementing this program. Multi-agency collaboration is difficult and often requires more time and Ms. Cook stressed the importance of flexibility and communication when collaborating. She also stated the necessity of a shared data collection system to streamline eligibility and to track new hires and outcomes. Finally, she encouraged those developing programs to hold off on advertising until the program is ready to be implemented.

*Barbara Guinn, Director, New York Office of Temporary and Disability Insurance, Center for Employment and Economic Supports*

Barbara Guinn, Director of the New York Office of Temporary and Disability Insurance at the Center for Employment and Economic Supports, shared information on New York State's subsidized employment program. She started off by explaining the program design and implementation. The program was a $49 million investment, of which $45 million was funded by TANF and $4 million was funded by the State. This program was a combination of an existing program expansion and a new program. The approach was client/customer centered and the program provided necessary job creation and a competitive advantage for employment opportunities for those with limited work histories and skills.

The initial scope of investments in the program was determined by the State's appropriation process and included:

- $10 million increase in existing Wage Subsidy Contracts with community vendors
- $25 million to social services districts to support Transitional Jobs program
- $7 million to the largest social services districts to support a Health Care Jobs program
- $7 million to competitively selected districts to support a Green Jobs Corps program

The agency decided not to make any additional new investments unless specifically approved by the legislature, which did not come forward. Due to this, the conversation shifted, and the State was not able to expand the program beyond what had already been planned. This lack of authorization from the legislature, combined with the competition for TANF funds, a determination that New York State could earn all available TANF ECF based on increased spending without new program creation, and the short period of ECF availability, heavily influenced the program's scale. The State retained but did not increase investments in Summer Youth programs. Program investments increased the placement goal to about 5,000. As of July 1, 2010 New York had reached 75 percent of this goal.

The existing Wage Subsidy programs in New York State serve TANF-eligible residents with incomes up to 200% of poverty and most served the low-income unemployed. Similarly, these new initiatives funded by ARRA were all targeted to public assistance participants. Because investments were targeted to meet the needs of specific populations of customers, no mass marketing or outreach was conducted. In the future, New York hopes to expand Wage Subsidies to a more broad-based program—not just including individuals receiving public assistance.

Forty-nine of the State's 58 social services districts subsidized employment operated programs, most of which had not previously operated such programs. The programs were intended to meet the needs of the target population—mostly clients without high school degrees, with literacy deficits, and often with limited formal occupational training. Because the goal was not only to provide an income but also increase participants' skills, more complex program models were needed that provided both employment and occupational skill development. The program was modeled after the New York City Parks Opportunity Program, which has always been intended to help people build skills while being paid. The program also provides time during the work week for increasing skills, GED course work, and specific job skills training, so participants will be better able to secure permanent employment after the program.

Ms. Guinn stated that the new programs were successful because most counties wanted to participate and were interested. The State provided a lot of Technical Assistance to counties, and held an in-person conference as well as hosted conference calls to discuss issues. The State also provided models for MOAs and other documents. The program also required a lot of employer buy-in because the State was working with the private sector. Another reason for the programs' successful implementation came from the use of an intermediary as the "employer of record" which streamlined the process for the State.

In order to ensure participant success, the State posted case managers on site at the job sites to address issues and call no-shows. The State also made sure every model included information for participants on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other tax credits for working individuals. With the program ending, participants have had the most success securing permanent employment in the healthcare sector, where the State leveraged training that was available through other State programs in operation. The Green Jobs sector is more difficult, since it is a challenge competing for jobs with construction workers and others who have been laid off who have significant work experience and more skills.

*Wanda Franklin, Families First Director, Tennessee Office of Family Assistance*

Ms. Wanda Franklin, Families First Director at the Tennessee Office of Family Assistance presented how the State of Tennessee, specifically, Perry County, used ARRA funds for a subsidized employment program. She prefaced her presentation by stating that the State will not be able to continue the program past ARRA and did not run a program before ARRA. In order to implement the program, Tennessee used

ARRA funds from the state in five counties chosen based on unemployment rates. Perry County (population 7,600) was doing well before the recession because they had two automotive employers, but one downsized and one moved to Mexico. Those employers provided the greatest amount of employment in the county, and it was devastating for the community when they left.

After providing this background information, Ms. Franklin showed a video on Perry County's subsidized employment program called *Return to Perry County* from the Tennessee Department of Human Services. The video focused on Governor Phil Bredesen's decision to implement a plan to get the people of Perry County back to work. The subsidized employment program started off with a series of job fairs. Small businesses and other employers in the County in need of workers were invited to attend, as well as County residents in need of employment. As a result of the connections made small businesses were able to grow their companies quickly, stay open more hours, and provide better service to their customers. Program participants gained not only a job and a wage, but job skills that can be applied in the future. Since the stimulus ended on September 30, 2010, about one-quarter of the program participants were hired as permanent, non-subsidized employees.

Following the video, Ms. Franklin went on to describe the program components. The program provided 300 jobs with 67 employers that were 100 percent subsidized through ARRA funds, as well as free tuition for one year at the County's community college. Participants were paid an average wage of $10 per hour. Additionally, the State hired a rural economic development consultant to assist with program goals and implementation. Tennessee contracted with the South Central Alliance on a series of seven job fairs that took place once a week for seven weeks. Job seekers, employers, families of dislocated workers, and the community were invited. People went to work immediately, money went back into the economy, people got their dignity back, and the unemployment rate went down.

Though the program was a success, the State did encounter some challenges. For example, there were some cases of preferential hiring of family members among some of the family businesses, ineligible applicants, and employers who only wanted to use contract labor. In the end, unfortunately, this is not a continuing program so while even though one-third of participants are keeping their jobs, two-thirds will be once again unemployed.

*Amy Rynell, Director, Social IMPACT Research Center and National Transitional Jobs Network, Heartland Alliance*

Ms. Amy Rynell, Director of the Social IMPACT Research Center and the National Transitional Jobs Network presented the results of a new study from the Social IMPACT Research Center entitled "Put Illinois to Work Provides Vital Relief for Illinois Businesses and Disadvantaged Workers" which details the results of a transitional jobs program in the state of Illinois.

Ms. Rynell explained that Put Illinois to Work (PITW) is a public-private collaboration. The PITW transitional jobs initiative was contracted from the Illinois Department of Human services to a private nonprofit organization called Heartland Human Care Services. Through the program, over 27,000 people were put into subsidized jobs, thirty-nine percent of whom had not worked in the two years prior to the program. The 4,280 employers involved in the program were primarily for-profit businesses or nonprofit organizations; most were very small with less than five employees.

Results show that the program yielded high levels of satisfaction from both parties. One in four employers reported their businesses were financially unhealthy or very unhealthy before the PITW program, but the majority reported that their businesses were financially healthier after participating in the program. Businesses saw an increase in productivity and quality of work. Ninety-five percent of the employees said if they were offered a job at their work site they would take it. While half of the employers said they would hire half or all of the transitional employees if they were financially able to do so, only 13 percent of the employers reported that they were financially able to do so. The PITW program was funded in large part by the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund and it was the largest ARRA-supported adult jobs program in the nation. Much of the program's success is due to its collaborative efforts.

*Melissa Young, Associate Director National Transitional Jobs Network*

Ms. Rynell's colleague, Melissa Young, Associate Director of the National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN), presented next on a synthesis of lessons learned from different States' subsidized employment programs. To develop this synthesis, NTJN interviewed state TANF Directors and staff and also followed States over the course of their programs. States that were interviewed in September 2010 include California, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. States that provided program information and materials for the study include Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, and Pennsylvania. Questions asked of States focused on program goals, challenges, innovation and state benefits, employer experiences, program structures, lessons learned and future plans for subsidized employment programs.

Ms. Young explained that States came away from the subsidized employment programs with similar experiences. For example, States shared common goals for their programs. These included goals such as: employ as many people as possible – as quickly as possible; provide the opportunity for participants to gain work experience; meet state TANF work requirements; and support employers and communities to stimulate local economies.

In terms of programmatic structure, States' approaches varied. The length of the subsidized jobs differed from four to five months to nine to twelve months. Program size also varied and included anywhere between 2,500 to 36,000 people. Both rural and urban communities were targeted. Populations targeted included families on cash assistance or at risk of being on cash assistance, low-income youth (summer jobs programs), people with criminal records, families with incomes up to 200 percent of poverty, and people exhausting Unemployment Insurance benefits.

The NTJN research also showed that States were flexible and open to adapting their programs based on participant needs. State programs provide varying direct employer subsidy levels from 50 percent up to 100 percent. One State used graduated subsidy levels of the subsidy period and some programs had graduated degrees of job responsibility based on employability. This was coupled with supportive services and robust case management with employers in nonprofit systems or highly supportive private employer systems.

Ms. Young explained that in many cases the subsidized employment programs in the States strengthened infrastructure and developed new partnerships within the State. The States strengthened or developed payroll processing systems for temporary employees, improved their marketing and recruiting strategies, developed or partnered to use centralized State databases, and made gains in human capital. As a result of the programs, States also reported that participants had high motivation to work, a greater participation in work activities, greater self-esteem and outlook, and experienced a positive “multiplier” effect on family members. From implementing these programs, States identified the components in the callout box to the right as important keys to program success.

Ms. Young concluded her presentation by stating that State interest in running these programs in the future is high, but how they will do it is another question. Without the guarantee of Emergency Contingency Funds, State programs will change. They will be scaled back, have more defined target populations, and likely move to a 50 percent subsidy instead of 100 percent. There is also concern over the strength of WIA partnerships moving forward. This partnership was critical to program success. States are uncertain the Department of Labor will come to the table in same way without the promise of the Emergency Funds.

### *Jeffrey Gabriel, Federal Project Officer, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration- Region II*

In order to wrap up the subsidized employment panel, Mr. Jeffrey Gabriel, Federal Project Officer at the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), presented on subsidized employment from the Department of Labor’s point of view. He started off by describing the history of the TANF-WIA partnerships. These programs began to diverge after the year 2000. The “demand-driven” environment and the fact that employers are viewed as customers makes for a tough match, since TANF programs are, by mission, serving individuals who may not have the experience, skills, and education that employers want.

However, ETA and ACF began partnering again in recent times as a result of the recession and the availability of Recovery Act funds, leveraging existing infrastructure to grow or regrow certain relationships. Several States found opportunities for collaboration, despite challenges. For example, Maryland used TANF and WIA funds together for youth employment in 2009; despite any conflicting goals, the partnership just made too much sense to ignore. Pennsylvania also showed leadership in combining TANF and WIA funds to create a collaborative subsidized employment program in which 5,000 different employers participated, 35 percent of whom were private for-profit companies. Finally, West Virginia, a State that was originally hesitant, came on board in May 2010, working with ACF and ETA at the Federal level to get a subsidized employment program going and had almost 1,500 placements just among youth.

Mr. Gabriel concluded his presentation by discussing the future of ACF-ETA collaboration. The economy is still struggling, so employers and potential workers are still in need. ARRA activities have reestablished partnerships, infrastructure, and policies in support of subsidized employment and localities need to promote innovation to continue programs on a smaller scale after ARRA, so that the partnerships and infrastructure are not wasted.

## *Strengthening Safety-Net Partnerships and Frontline Perspectives*

This session, focused on the value of collaboration for client success, was moderated by Professor Susan Curnan of Brandeis University. Building and maintaining strong partnerships among the various programs is essential to improving the available services for families. During this session representatives outlined strategies for improving partnerships, including providing real-world examples and research-based recommendations for streamlining processes and reducing duplication.

Representatives included:

- *Leo Miller, Grants Officer, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration*
- *Matt Rager, Program Manager, Youth Employment Services, Indianapolis Private Industry Council*
- *Stanley Koutstaal, Ph. D, Program Manager, Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program, US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance*
- *Monica Hawkins, Division Director, Office of Public Housing, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Philadelphia Regional Office*

*Leo Miller, Grants Officer, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration*

Mr. Leo Miller, Grants Officer, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA) started off the session and presented on pathways to partnership. Although 'partnership' is a term that is deemed important, it is often vague in its definition. In order to form a true partnership, there must be a reason for collaboration, an opportunity to do so, and a shared vision. Further, there must be dialogue surrounding important issues. Partnerships are successful when those who are doing the work are listened to and an environment of respect is created. DOL has discretionary funding to connect with Department of Human Services' agencies and partner on programs such as transitional jobs. Mr. Miller provided an example of a successful partnership in Philadelphia. DOL has a *Pathways Out of Poverty Initiative*[11] in Philadelphia, but they were experiencing difficulty with recruitment. Eileen Schilling of the Department of Public Welfare partnered with the grantee to improve recruitment. Other examples of successful collaboration in Philadelphia include:

- ETA and HHS subsidized employment and summer employment;
- $67 million into Philadelphia's persistently dangerous schools;
- Philadelphia Pathways out of Poverty Network; and
- Marcellus Shale Project.

Partnerships, Mr. Miller concluded, involve more than just funding instead of talking about the funds, he suggests talking about the clients being served, similar services needed, and how agencies can work together to fill each other's gaps.

*Matt Rager, Program Manager, Youth Employment Services, Indianapolis Private Industry Council*

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[11] See: http://pwib.org/downloads/Press.release.on.Pathways.out.of.Poverty.Grant.FINAL.pdf

Mr. Matt Rager, Program Manager, Youth Employment Services, of the Indianapolis Private Industry Council addressed partnerships and networks for employment programs. The Indianapolis Private Industry Council supports several employment programs including Youth Build and Apollo-13 Workforce Re-entry Program. Mr. Rager works on the Youth Employment Services (YES) program, a youth program for individuals ages 18 to 25 that began in 2003. In order to be eligible for the program, participants have to be out of school and unemployed, or chronically underemployed. The YES program includes evaluation of employment preparedness, job training, job placement, and employer specialists who located job opportunities. The YES program created a flexible funding structure using vouchers, which allow participants to address multiple barriers to employment. The value of these vouchers ranges from seven dollars to get a State ID card, to over $1,000 for job or postsecondary training.

In order to implement the program, YES sites worked with anywhere from six to 15 different community based organizations. The development of performance based contracts created common outcome goals that shared deliverable definitions and the YES Network holds quarterly meetings to promote communication and case file reviews to establish common expectations. Further, YES has a Web-based reporting system to document outcomes and generate invoices for reimbursement.

Many organizations came together to support the YES program. The program has served over 3,000 participants since 2003, with 1,766 individuals securing a job or postsecondary placement as a result of the YES program. Of these, 1,052 have retained their job for at least 60 days, 630 have been at the job for more than 180 days, and 353 have been employed for at least a year. Additionally, 521 participants have earned their GED and 554 have completed training towards an advanced training certificate. Mr. Rager attributes the success of the program to the solid foundation created by identifying community based organizations that understood employment expectations and had demonstrated performance. Several other programs have been modeled after the YES program, including: Apollo-13 Re-Entry, Connected by 25, a program for current and former foster care youth, and YouthBuild Indy, a Department of Labor program.

### *Stanley Koutstaal, Ph. D, Program Manager, Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program, US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance*

Dr. Stanley Koutstaal, Program Manager of the Health Profession Opportunity Grant program, discussed this discretionary grant program that is starting. The purpose of this program is to provide education and training to low-income individuals, including TANF participants, in preparation for work in the healthcare field. Grant projects should create opportunities for developing and sustaining a health professions workforce that has accessible entry points, that meets high standards for education, training, certification, and professional development, and that provides increased wages and affordable benefits, particularly for low-income individuals and other entry-level workers. Grantees also provide financial aid, child care, case management and other supportive services to assist participants in achieving success; some have proposed extending this support to temporary housing as well. Grantees must form working partnerships with the State agency administering TANF, local workforce investment boards, state workforce agencies, and state offices of apprenticeship in order to administer the grant.

The $67 million grant will fund 32 organizations in all regions and 23 States. There are five Tribal applications and 27 other eligible entities. In Regions I, II, III and IV, entities in District of Columbia, Florida, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina have been funded.

The program at Bergen Community College in New Jersey, which has been funded at $4.7 million, seeks to provide a broad spectrum of training. The initial training will focus on demand occupations in long-term care and additional training will focus on the field of allied health. Another program, at Hostos Community College in New York, anticipates having 924 participants in a nurse assistants program and 118 participants in a contextualized Nurse's Aid GED program.

TANF agencies will be partnering with grantees in a variety of ways. They will participate in advisory groups and assist in creating partnerships. They will also be involved in outreach, recruitment, and referral of participants to the programs. Due to the flexibility in the grant dollars, it is incredibly important that grantees work with TANF to coordinate services. There is a limitation on the grant money in that it cannot be used to subsidize work. This may be an excellent opportunity for TANF to partner with grantees to provide funding.

*Monica Hawkins, Division Director, Office of Public Housing, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Philadelphia Regional Office*

Monica Hawkins, Division Director of the Philadelphia Office of Public Housing for the Philadelphia region spoke about the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) program. With the Public Housing Reform Act of 1998, the Department of Housing and Urban Development took a different approach by combining past programs. There is now a greater emphasis on supportive services leading to self-sufficiency and moving from welfare to work. ROSS project coordinators provide life skills training, employment related services, and stipends. Under ROSS, housing authorities can administer a Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program. TANF participants participating in the Family Self Sufficiency program each must create a plan for how they can leave welfare for one year after the expiration of their contract. During their period of participation, residents contribute to an escrow account based on increased earned income that they can use at the completion of the program for a variety of purposes.

After discussing the ROSS program, Ms. Hawkins introduced the HOPE VI program, a HUD initiative aimed at transforming public housing. Public Housing Authorities are obligated to provide supportive services to HOPE VI residents, either directly or through partnerships with contractors, to help them achieve self-sufficiency. Public Housing Authorities, or their contractors, must address the needs of individual family members, provide links to relocation services, and provide case management services.

Building upon the HOPE VI program is the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods Demonstration Grant Program. This program is designed to revitalize and preserve public and assisted housing communities. The goal of the program is to transform distressed neighborhoods into viable, mixed-income communities by linking housing improvements with other neighborhood services including schools, transportation, and access to jobs. In the 2010 fiscal year, Public Housing Authorities, local governments, nonprofits, or for-profit entities willing to partner with a public agency were eligible to apply for the grant. There are two different types of grants that can be applied for: a two year transformation planning grant and a five year implementation grant. Applications for this program were due October 26, 2010.

## *TANF and Domestic Violence: Building Opportunities for Victim Safety and Economic Stability*

*Anne Menard, Director, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence*

Ms. Anne Menard, Director, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, moderated this panel that addressed the intersecting issues of poverty and domestic violence. Domestic Violence is a pattern of abuse and includes more than just physical abuse. For example, in the context of TANF, abuse could include sabotaging employment or school. Poverty escalates rates of domestic violence, and particularly for poor women. Women with abusive partners often use welfare as a bridge out of violent relationships, with between 40 and 60 percent of current welfare recipients having experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives. Most victims of domestic violence both want to work and receive child support, so long as it can be done in a safe manner. In 2008, an eight-state study of 3,400 individuals in domestic violence shelters found that 93 percent of domestic violence survivors needed help with economic issues.

A survey of 600 respondents, consisting primarily of individuals who provide direct services to domestic violence victims, was conducted in 2009 in 50 States and the District of Columbia. This survey found that TANF is an important resource for victims, and that when it works well, it makes a significant difference for victims. In these cases collaboration between Domestic Violence, TANF, and Child Support agencies is observed. It also involves the support of trained responders. Often, however, TANF does not work well for victims. The application process can create barriers, the benefits are too low and often delayed, and screenings are inconsistent and ineffective. Disclosure of violence does not always lead to help, and often notification of family violence specific waivers and services are ineffective. In some cases, the responses make the situation for the victim less safe. Child support enforcement is also inconsistent in addressing safety and financial concerns.

In order to make TANF more effective for domestic violence victims, additional services are required. These services include employment assistance, child care, relocation support, and transportation. Additionally, Child Support and TANF employees need to be trained on issues of domestic violence. A shorter application process requiring less documentation would result in victims receiving services in a timely manner. There should also be flexibility in work requirements. Access to mental health, substance abuse, and trauma services would further assist domestic violence victims.

Following this introduction about the link between TANF and domestic violence, Ms. Menard explained that the domestic violence panel around State experiences would be structured as an interactive session. Therefore, the panelists were asked to respond to specific questions. The panel was made up of the following speakers:

- *Terrie Reid, Interim TANF Director/Deputy Commissioner for Family Resources, Alabama Department of Human Resources, Family Assistance Division*

- *Janet Fender, Director Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance Domestic Violence Unit*
- *Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Programming Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance*
- *Carolyn Stevens, Welfare Specialist, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence*

*First Panel Question: How is the domestic violence community involved in your State's response to the issue and what did you all do?*

*Janet Fender, Massachusetts:* Ms. Fender first stated that understanding the limits of the budgets and stress the States are under, it is clear that what was implemented in Massachusetts is not going to be possible right now for many States. It would be so beneficial to the families if all States could have some domestic violence support in their TANF agencies.

There was originally a lot of concern around domestic violence after welfare reform. In 1994 the Governors' Commission formed a committee to look into Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and domestic violence. When the State of Massachusetts started this AFDC working group, group members surveyed the population of the welfare recipients at the time. The group found that 68 percent of the recipients had been involved in domestic violence at one point or another. One-third was currently in domestic violence situations. These findings provided the group with leverage to go to the Welfare department. In the end, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) received funding from the State to form a small domestic violence unit with a staff of five. From implementing the program, the speakers also found that the participants did not want waivers, as was commonly expected - they wanted to go to work and they wanted to go safely.

*Terrie Reid, Alabama:* Ms. Reid provided background information on the domestic violence efforts in Alabama. The Governor of Alabama knew that domestic violence was a major barrier to self-sufficiency. He supported the agency's efforts to combat it.

*Second Panel Question: What do case workers do when they encounter a family with a domestic violence issue?*

*Janet Fender, Massachusetts:* Massachusetts trained everyone in the system when the program first started with a grant. The Unit created a brochure. Whenever anyone came in they were to be asked about domestic violence and if they said yes they were given that brochure. The Unit placed posters in the lobby and in the bathroom and did training for anyone who would be working with domestic violence issues. If a worker finds domestic violence in a case, they are to make a referral to the Domestic Violence Unit right away. The specialist will do an assessment on the victim's safety, resource needs and spend time with the participant. The average number of consults in a year is 7,000.

*Stephanie Brown, Massachusetts:* The specialists help the client figure out how to navigate other systems. The specialists have contacts in each office. They help them get through those systems quickly. They do as much as they can to prevent people from having to get into other systems. A big part is keeping people out of systems that we really do not want our clients in.

*Janet Fender, Massachusetts:* Welfare is the best prevention agency there is out there. We are able to meet with a young mother when she is three months pregnant, when the issues are just arising.

*Terrie Reid, Alabama:* In Alabama if a client is a domestic violence victim they have their own advocate who works with them. We contract for this assistance, so it is not State employees. We contract with them on a sole source basis. The program in Alabama started in 1998. The agency formed a group, had an advisory committee, did a pilot, and had training for job staff and all department employees. We have had 38,000 referrals over the last 10 years. We have worked with and actively assisted about 1,400 victims this year.

*Third Panel Question: Discuss the biggest challenge for TANF agencies in responding to domestic violence.*

*Terrie Reid, Alabama:* Every state is struggling with budget issues. It is important to protect our domestic violence contract because it is so valuable. As budgets tighten and as rolls are growing, needs grow. But the money stays the same, so we are faced with a lot of tough decisions. We have not gotten to that point in Alabama yet but are on the way. We have issues with staff attrition.

*Stephanie Brown, Massachusetts:* Ms. Brown explained that with creating a unit in other State TANF agencies, funding will be the issue. In Massachusetts the domestic violence workers are advocates. It is hard to understand domestic violence unless you have heard stories and really have experience with it. Trust is an issue with fully integrating the advocates. Allowing the advocates to navigate the other systems and help people navigate the system is valuable. Dealing with the number of survivors is challenging. If you have staff asking the right questions and providing the help and resources, people will disclose the domestic violence issues.

Employment is the goal for the advocates so they can focus on overcoming barriers, getting resources, navigating systems while also having safety issues to contend with constantly. All other barriers are compounded for domestic violence survivors. States have to recognize that we need the domestic violence world as a partner. We have to work through the misconceptions and mistrust. If we have that common goal, we can manage it and make it work. TANF agencies are now in the position where they can reach out to potential domestic violence partners. Even if States do not have the funding now, it does not mean you they cannot start the conversation.

*Fourth Panel Question: Tell a success story from their time working on this issue.*

*Janet Fender, Massachusetts:* Ms. Fender started off by stating that domestic violence victims are so traumatized. Coming into a situation where they are asked to answer tough questions, many are in survival mode. This makes them either very aggressive or very passive. To get beyond that, we can help them navigate through the system. The Department of Transitional Assistance is one place where batterers will allow their victims to go because they want their benefits. Ms. Fender told the story of a woman who was being held hostage by her boyfriend inside their home. She told him she needed to go to the Department of Transitional Assistance to renew her benefits. Since he wanted the benefits as well, he allowed her to go, but accompanied her. While he waited in the waiting room, she spoke to the receptionist and asked for the staff member who works in the Domestic Violence Unit. The receptionist, like all employees, has been

trained to deal with domestic violence. She immediately called the Domestic Violence Unit staff as well as the Police. The Police arrived shortly thereafter and arrested the batterer.
*Following this story, Ms. Menard wrapped up the conversation by asking the fourth panel member, Ms. Carolyn Stevens from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, to speak about her State's approach to domestic violence training.*

*Carolyn Stevens, Welfare Specialist, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence*
Ms. Stevens began her presentation by explaining Pennsylvania's new approach to training: E-Learning. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) has a commitment to training for domestic violence. The first initiative began in 1998 when the Department trained every case worker and staff person in the welfare offices. DPW trained about 5,700 workers in 57 trainings. The case managers brought up the need to also train the clerical workers, receptionists, and other office staff. From this, another 2,000 workers were trained. After this, there was the question about the new hires since the time of the training.

The E-Learning came about after hearing the County Directors asking for a refresher course. DPW was willing to pay Bloomsburg University to help the Department develop the E-Learning. In the long-run, it saves money. One E-Learning training is focused on general domestic violence and one is on domestic violence policy. The entire staff did not need the policy training, which is why DPW separated it.
The E-Learning course has a full voice over, so the trainees do not have to read through. It is self-paced, and can be stopped at any time. It ends by listening to victim's voices telling their stories. The training relates domestic violence to the case manager's work. It also provides background on why some of their regular processes may not work for domestic violence victims, due to issues such as confidentiality, ability to work, etc. Training like this allows for more consistency among case workers on their responses to domestic violence.

Ms. Stevens did a run through of the E-Learning tool and explained that users are required to answer quiz questions at the end of each section. All staff is required to do the domestic violence training within two months. Ms. Stevens stated that the domestic violence training is something she is willing to share with other States although some of the information is State specific.

*Questions and Answer Session:*

- What were the most effective policy changes your States made around domestic violence?
    - In Alabama every worker does an assessment for it and if there is an issue then they do a referral.
    - Massachusetts implemented every waiver we could around the Family Violence option.
    - Pennsylvania uses a form that allows any victim to get benefits if they are identified as a victim without waiting for everything to go through. That was the State's biggest policy change.
- Mandatory assessment seems redundant. How do you make accommodations to participation when clients can get waivers but want to work?
    - It was challenging in the beginning to determine the role of the advocate. States have to figure out what that right balance is.
- What do you think about sanctions as it relates to domestic violence? We are missing people who wind up going through the sanction process because we are not identifying them.

- In Pennsylvania we give them a form that allows them to speak up if they are a victim. It is their last chance to identify that before being sanctioned.
- It is a concern as well in Massachusetts. I do not have a solution for it.

## *ASSET Initiative: Improving Economic Independence*

This session, moderated by James Gatz, Manager of the Assets for Independence (AFI) program, focused on the Administration for Children and Families' ASSET Initiative, which is bringing financial literacy education, matched savings projects, access to federal tax credits, and other asset-building strategies to more families throughout the nation. The asset building approach is enabling low-income families to move from living paycheck-to-paycheck to financial stability and security. Presenters provided an overall asset building framework and perspectives on working with TANF agencies. The panel also featured a former TANF participant from Kentucky, who used a variety of financial asset building tools to become self-sufficient.

*James Gatz, Manager, Assets for Independence Program, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services*
Mr. Gatz started off the session by explaining that the goal of the Office of Community Services (OCS) is to make sure families succeed. Essentially, OCS does exactly what the conference participants do from the perspectives of those families and is just supporting them in different ways. OCS administers Assets for Independence, a demonstration program focused on providing Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and a suite of related services. OCS funds organizations all across the country to help families get ahead financially. The asset approach is key to success for many struggling families.

Following this introduction, presenters discussed specific aspects of the ASSET initiative. Presenters included:

- *Denise DeVaan, Senior Consultant, Assets for Independence Resource Center*
- *Christa McMichael, Former TANF Participant, Owensboro, Kentucky*
- *Mary O'Doherty, Project Director, Economic Empowerment Program, Kentucky Domestic Violence Association*

*Denise DeVaan, Senior Consultant, Assets for Independence Resource Center*

Ms. Denise DeVaan, a Senior Consultant for the Assets for Independence (AFI) Resource Center provided participants with an overall understanding of assets. She stated that she and the States present share a common hope and fear. The fear is that so many of the families that are on the edge might not make it for a very long time. They also share a hope that if they can work together better and connect the dots better, live by the law, there are pathways out of poverty. That hope and fear is what keeps people going during these times.

Ms. DeVaan quoted Dr. Michael Sherraden, author of *Assets and the Poor*. Dr. Sherraden wrote, "Few people have ever spent their way out of poverty. Those who escape do so through saving and investing for the long term."

Financial assets come in the forms of tangible and intangible assets:

- Tangible assets are: money savings, bonds, stocks, property, equipment, and tools.
- Intangible assets are: human capital (who you know, networks), credit, and access to credit.

She explained that financial asset building tools include: saving and drawing credit, financial education classes and coaching, and "getting banked" (using safe financial products). Financial education classes and coaching help individuals build and improve credit, reduce debt, and create budgets and spending/ savings plans. Classes and coaching can also help connect families to common tax credits. If you add the State and Federal tax credits together, these families can claim several thousand dollars. The key is to connect families to Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites offering free tax preparation.

Financial asset building leads to financial stability and security, as Ms. DeVaan explained. It helps people move from living paycheck-to-paycheck to budgeting, planning, and saving for future goals. Financial assets matter. They create stronger, healthier families, enhance self-esteem, contribute to long-term thinking and planning, and lead to more community involvement. They also improve hopes for the future. For example, parents start to expect their children to graduate.

Ms. DeVaan described the Assets for Independence program. Participants save in Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) which are matched by Federal funds and other sources. Participants also attend financial education classes and asset classes. Using the money in their IDAs, participants purchase a financial asset which can include their first home, higher education or training, and/or a small business. Concluding her presentation, Ms. DeVaan stated that there are available tools on the ground if agencies can connect the dots in their programs.

*Christa McMichael, Former TANF Participant, Owensboro, Kentucky*

Following Ms. DeVaan's presentation, Ms. Christa McMichael, a former TANF participant from Owensboro, Kentucky was asked to tell the story of her journey to economic self-sufficiency. Ms. Michael purchased a home a year ago, became a nurse, and recently purchased a car. When Ms. McMichael came to Kentucky five years ago with two kids she had a GED and was on TANF, but decided she would have to "swim or I would sink." Ms. McMichael established residency and started school. Despite challenges with childcare and working 20 hours a week, while taking care of her family she succeeded with assistance from a dedicated case manager.

She introduced Ms. McMichael to a program called *Work and Learn* where participants can go to college while on TANF. Ms. McMichael during this period was also introduced to the IDA program where she learned that every dollar she put in a savings account it would be matched two dollars. She filled out an application for the Economic Empowerment Program and was approved the next day. She said the financial education classes she received through the IDA program taught her so much, including how to clean up her credit. In fact, Ms. McMichael's credit score improved over 150 points from taking that class and because she did not need student loans anymore because her savings for tuition in the IDA were matched. Everything she learned from the program she now gets to teach her kids, and her children see that she is independent and values education. Ms. McMichael closed her story by saying that she believes IDAs should be a requirement for TANF. They teach people things that will help them along in life. Without TANF and the IDA program she would not be standing here today.

*Mary O'Doherty, Project Director, Economic Empowerment Program, Kentucky Domestic Violence Association*

Following Ms. McMichael's story of success, Ms. Mary O'Doherty from the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association's Economic Empowerment Program provided information on the structure and background of her program. The program is an economic empowerment program for survivors of domestic violence and participants get IDAs, financial education, credit building, micro loans, and free tax preparation. Ms. Christa McMichael is a good example of someone who took advantage of all the aspects of the program.

The program has 200 accounts open and about 150 of the participants have purchased assets. One-third to one-fourth of program participants is receiving TANF. Most of the participants are really engaged for about two years. The program model includes a "Savings Plan Agreement," which is a contract between the participant and the advocate. The program allows for emergency withdrawals but staff tries to keep that from happening, so the program has an emergency fund to help for things that may come up such as car repair bills, hospital bills, etc. The program is funded by banks, corporations, and foundations. The Economic Empowerment Program also has several grantees that are not domestic violence programs.

The focus of the program is on credit building and the program created a micro-loan program to help assist with doing that. To really improve a credit score, people have to use credit wisely. Ms. O'Doherty and other staff had to come up with a way to encourage participants to use credit, so they came up with micro-loans. The program does not charge interest on the loans. Participants pay them back in a 12 month term. The program reports their payments to the credit bureau. That is how Ms. O'Doherty's program has built-up participants' scores.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is also important to this work. Program advocates spend a lot of time talking about tax time, tax returns, etc. The EITC will probably be the largest infusion of cash into the person's household. So it is really important that the program helps participants save it. The program contracts with coalitions that provide free tax preparation services.

Following this description, Ms. O'Doherty discussed current AFI IDA projects. There are 400 projects, 79 of which are in Regions I, II, III, and IV. The programs are run through partnerships with financial institutions and tax networks. There are over 75,000 IDA accounts and the number is growing. Eighty percent of the accounts are owned by women, and many are from single parent households. The IDA is the first bank account for most participants. To be eligible for AFI IDAs, participants must be:

- TANF eligible <u>or</u> EITC eligible or annual household income less than 200% FPL (about $44,000 for family of four); <u>and</u>
- Household net worth less than $10,000 excluding value of a residence and one car.
- IRS ruled that savings and match does not count as asset for other federal benefits.

Examples of AFI IDA grantees include community action agencies, governments, credit unions, faith-based organizations, youth agencies, and housing organizations.

*Denise Devaan, Senior Consultant, Assets for Independence Resource Center*

Next, Denise DeVaan provided detailed information from a nine year study on the Michigan IDA Partnership. The partnership includes five regions with a total funding support of $12.5 million. TANF provided one-third of its total support. The remaining came from the State Housing Authority and private foundations. In implementing the partnership, challenges were encountered. These included securing a non-Federal match, securing adequate direct support funds for clients, and expanding eligible uses, such as transportation and home improvement (energy efficiency upgrades).

Results of the study found that States and localities are using TANF funds for IDAs and related services. Support from TANF agencies is needed to help participants access safe financial products, choose affordable tax preparation, and claim tax credits. Ideas for developing and strengthening partnerships between TANF and IDAs, financial education, and AFI grantees are also needed.

*James Gatz, Manager, Assets for Independence Program, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services*

To conclude the panel discussion, moderator James Gatz provided more information on the ASSETS Initiative. The Initiative is ACF's effort to bring asset building services to more low-income families across the country to support other programs such as Head Start and child care. It is a three-year initiative.

Strategies involved in the Initiative include financial education, access to financial services, consumer counseling, credit/debt counseling, IDAs, tax preparation services, and other Federal benefits. It is important for TANF agencies to refer participants to these organizations that are already doing this, as they do not have to pay for it. The Initiative is a partnership between OCS and the Office of Child Support Enforcement to bring asset building there, focusing on noncustodial parents. It is also a partnership with Head Start. In addition, OCS is partnering with the Office of Refugee Resettlement on a project to bring IDAs to refugees. They Office also launched a special project for victims of domestic violence. OCS recognizes the value of using asset-based strategies for domestic violence victims.

Mr. Gatz asked meeting participants to think about how we can work together. How can we connect TANF families and providers to the asset building philosophy? Participant ideas included:

- Provide posters and flyers for TANF offices to let participants know about IDAs and asset building.
- Train staff to know about assets.
- Connect asset building opportunities to the services TANF participants are already receiving. Serve the participant where they are at instead of requiring them to go to multiple locations for services.
- Make sure OCS and OFA are improving agency communication.
- Move beyond just trying to get participants into a job.
- Maryland is focused on financial literacy. IDAs were cut out of budget. They suggested trying to show how successful IDAs are and that it is an investment, not just money being spent.
- New Jersey works collaboratively. There is a statewide coalition comprised of partners in government and business. Through those networks they try to get the word out about the EITC. They have successful collaborations at the local level who promote asset building. They have a State EITC as well as the Federal credit. People can get a max of $7,000 if they apply for both.

- New York is the largest EITC State in the nation, and they used TANF to help expand it. The State has a online system where they can pre-screen for many programs. New York also has a noncustodial advanced EITC that was created in 2005. The State runs VITA sites in 27 local social services agencies. New York has a lot of IDA programs but no State funding for them; they are mostly run by credit unions.

### *Day Two Wrap Up and State Reflections*

Kent Peterson wrapped up the day by asking participants to think about each panel from the day and jot down one thing that they found most important. He asked them to also write down one thing they will do after leaving this meeting. Some participants shared the "important" things they learned. These included:

- How important it is to do domestic violence screening;
- E-Learning around domestic violence;
- Thinking about Food Stamps; and
- DOL funding.

Participants also shared what they plan to do as a result of the day's panels which included:

- Talking to State's domestic violence coordinator about domestic violence screening;
- Leveraging as much private money as possible; and
- Sending DOL partners the research found on the jobs program in Illinois (from the Social IMPACT Research Center).

## Day Three

### *Selected Topics Forum*

The Selected Topics Forum included the following presenters:

- *Rosemary Field, SCHIP Coordinator, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services*
- *Stacy McQuillin, Director of Operations, Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP)*
- *Michelle Derr, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.*

### <u>CMS: Express Lane Eligibility</u>

*Rosemary Field, SCHIP Coordinator, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services*

The use of automated enrollment strategies has gained more attention with the increased focus on service integration among safety-net programs. These automated enrollment strategies provide an opportunity for TANF, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) agencies to enroll eligible children simply and quickly into coverage.

In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act delinked cash assistance from Medicaid, which led to some children losing their coverage. This led to State efforts to find, enroll, and retain eligible children. Since inception in 1997, enrollment has increased steadily to 6.1 million children in FY 2005. This was complemented by a 6.8 million increase in children enrolled in Medicaid from 1997 to 2004. As a result, between 1997 and 2005, the percentage of low-income, uninsured children dropped from 22.3 percent to 14.9 percent. In 2009, there were nearly eight million children enrolled in CHIP and six million enrolled in Medicaid. There are 7.3 million uninsured children in America, and nearly five million are eligible for Medicaid. It is imperative that these remaining children be enrolled in coverage.

The Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) includes many provisions designed to give States the tools to effectively enroll eligible children in Medicaid and CHIP. Express Lane Eligibility is one more tool to aid in this process. CHIP offers bonus payments to offset the cost of increased Medicaid enrollment and the Express Lane program is eligible for this bonus. The State of Alabama received $39 million for their use of Express Lane.

Under CHIPRA Section 203, States can use findings from Express Lane agencies and State tax returns to determine eligibility for Medicaid and/or CHIP. States may automatically enroll and renew children in Medicaid and CHIP. If a State uses Express Lane only for Medicaid, they are still required to evaluate a child for the CHIP program or other programs.

Under CHIPRA, the Express Lane agency is required to notify the child's family that information will be disclosed to Medicaid and a CHIP agency. A State's regular eligibility and enrollment process is not Express Lane eligibility. TANF and Medicaid are based on the same application in a shared data system. For TANF agencies to be approved for Express Lane eligibility there must be new information entered that is not already available to the Medicaid agency. Financial eligibility determinations are made based on several criteria. Express Lane eligibility is viable so long as it is made within a reasonable period of time. Generally, differences in definitions and methodologies for determining income do not matter. However, they will matter if the child is determined ineligible for Medicaid and CHIP, the child is deemed ineligible for Medicaid by eligible for CHIP, or if the child is subject to premiums. Citizenship status must be confirmed in order to be eligible for Medicaid and CHIP.

There are several options used by States for screening and enrolling children. The first option establishes a Medicaid screen threshold which is generally 30 percentage points above the income threshold for Medicaid. Children who are at or below this threshold are automatically enrolled in Medicaid, and those above this threshold should be evaluated for CHIP. A second option is to enroll a child in CHIP temporarily if the child meets Express Lane eligibility and then perform a full screening. The benefit of this option is that it does not require parents or caretakers to resubmit information that is available elsewhere. The third option is automatic enrollment which is possible when information from Express Lane and other sources leads to an eligibility determination. This option requires the informed consent of the family and child, but does not require consent for the renewal or continuation of services.

In order to maintain the integrity of the Express Lane program, States must have systems and codes to identify children enrolled through Express Lane Eligibility. These eligibility determinations are subject to review and a distinct error rate measurement. The Express Lane program must report to Congress by September of 2012. This report will include the percentage of children who have been erroneously enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP. It will also evaluate whether Express Lane improves the ability of States to identify and enroll low-income, uninsured children in Medicaid and CHIP. Finally, they will evaluate the costs of using the Express Lane program to identify and enroll children in Medicaid and CHIP as compared to the costs otherwise incurred to enroll these children.

*Stacy McQuillin, Director of Operations, Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP)*

Following Ms. Field's Federal perspective on Express Lane Eligibility, Ms. Stacy McQuillin, Director of Operations and the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP) explained how the State of Louisiana is using Express Lane Eligibility. The whole purpose of the Express Lane program is to ease the eligibility process for family. Express Lane refers to the use of data held by other social service partners or agencies to identify individuals who may be eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP or another social service, evaluate their eligibility for benefits, and enroll them or renew their benefits, as appropriate.

In Louisiana, TANF and SNAP are the biggest Express Lane agencies. Easing the process is of particular importance in Louisiana due to historically high poverty rates. Further, five percent of children remain uninsured and Express Lane Eligibility is an important resource to reach those remaining 40,000 children. In Louisiana, several internal factors have led to the implementation of Express Lane Eligibility. Primarily, fiscal constraints have reduced the number of eligibility staff members and the caseload of the remaining staff has grown. The agency had successfully implemented administrative simplifications in the past to reduce caseworker load, and they saw the Express Lane program as a tool for simplification. It started by using SNAP determinations made by the Louisiana Department of Child and Family Services to determine Medicaid eligibility. In February of 2010, a file of all SNAP eligible children was sent from the Department of Child and Family Services to the Department of Health and Hospitals and an Express Lane Eligibility case was created for those children that were known to the Medicaid eligibility system, but were not certified at the time. This initial match captured all children active in SNAP but not enrolled in Medicaid at the time of Express Lane Eligibility implementation. This process is repeated monthly, enrolling children new to SNAP into Medicaid and Louisiana plans to have this process occur daily by early 2011.

For the newly certified children, the Medicaid eligibility system uses the Social Security Administration's citizenship data to confirm each child's citizenship status. Once approved, an approval notice is sent to the individual through an Express Lane agency and the agency is responsible for explaining the services available to the child, how to access those services, and to inform the individual that the child's Medicaid cards will arrive in the mail. Under CHIPRA guidelines, guardians are informed that use of the Medicaid card confirms their consent for their child to be enrolled in the program. Children receive twelve months of continuous eligibility, unless the Department of Children and Families notifies the Department of Health and Hospitals that the child has moved out of the State or is deceased. During the month that a child turns 19, their case is flagged for review for eligibility in other programs. Express Lane Eligibility is also used for renewal of children certified using the new Express lane process and for those certified through other avenues.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospital chose to use SNAP as an Express Lane agency because the highest percentage of uninsured children live in SNAP eligible households with incomes between 50 and 100 percent of the federal poverty level. They also chose SNAP because of the high rate of participation, compatible information technology systems between the two departments, and similar eligibility requirements. Since the roll out of Express Lane Eligibility, approximately 20,000 children have been enrolled in Medicaid.

The implementation of Express Lane Eligibility was not without its challenges. In the beginning, it was extremely difficult and time consuming to work through all of the details. It also required major systems changes, the time-consuming dissemination of policies and training materials, and investment of many resources. Ms. McQuillin recommends starting with Medicaid when moving to this system. She also noted that the challenges were worthwhile when the numbers of children who have been enrolled in Medicaid are considered. Louisiana is now looking to add language to their State tax returns, allowing parent to opt to enroll their children in Medicaid if their income falls within the appropriate parameters.

## Employer Resource Networks (ERNs)

*Michelle Derr, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.*

WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) was a Federal initiative first launched by the US Department of Labor (DOL) in November 2005. WIRED represented a significant policy shift for the Labor Department. WIRED sought to broaden this portfolio to more actively engage workforce development organizations, especially local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), in the process of building innovation-based regional economies. Michelle Derr, Ph.D, Senior Researcher, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. spoke about one model for Employer Resource Networks through the WIRED grant. Disadvantaged populations often have difficulty getting jobs and agencies serving disadvantaged populations often have difficulty engaging employers and this initiative presented an innovative strategy for bridging those gaps. The Employer Resource Network originated through a partnership between a local TANF agency and a welfare case manager onsite at Cascade Engineering who supported TANF participants working there.[12] This model was expanded through the Department of Labor WIRED grant and aligns with several ACF and DOL initiatives.

Employer Resource Networks (ERNs) bring together small and medium sized businesses, allowing them to pool their resources for employee support and accomplish together what they cannot accomplish individually. Their services are targeted at entry-level workers, but are open to all employees. The primary focus of these networks is on job retention with a strong emphasis on skill building. They further expand their capacity by creating public and private partnerships, and by allowing employers from different industries to work together. Partnerships with TANF, the Department of Labor, community colleges, vocational training providers, and nonprofits allow these businesses to leverage their resources.

ERNs provide short-term, “high-touch” case management for employees. This includes specialized resources and supports. The training is driven by the individual needs of employees and can include: life skills, financial literacy, asset building, and English Language classes. The Grand Rapids Michigan Network was looking to add a two and four year degree program onsite. Further, they provide assistance with the Earned Income Tax Credit, a wellness program, and a smoking cessation program.

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[12] For more information on Cascade Engineering, please refer to the Welfare Peer TA Network’s comprehensive program overview highlighted in the urban partnership initiative section available at: http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/uploadedFiles/Rapid%20Response%20Final.pdf.

ERNs require employers to buy into the network. They then contract with local agencies to provide direct services. There are public and privately funded job retention specialists. The publicly funded specialists work with individuals who have an open case at the Department of Social Services, while privately funded specialists work as needed. By using training providers and nonprofit agencies, ERNs leverage resources so that they are not just promoting job retention, but also advancement. They also follow a geographically centralized and sector-based approach. At the onset of the program, agencies agreed to provide 75 percent of the costs, while employers cover 25 percent and over the course of a three year period, the ratio would flip so that employers were covering 75 percent and the Department of Social Services covered the remaining 25 percent.

Many different parties benefit from ERNs. Employers benefit from the higher retention rate, between 85 and 90 percent. The return on their investment ranges from 150 to 200 percent. Employees get access to supports that allow them to stay employed and build job skills. Community colleges are able to expand their enrollment and grant opportunities by quickly bringing together a group of students. Further, it creates a mutually beneficial relationship between public and nonprofit agencies and the business community. Human Resources staff noted that Employer Resource Networks expanded the resources available to their company. Employees liked the program because of the support they received. Employers in the network itself did not see one another as competitors.

The profile of a group of businesses best suited for involvement in an Employer Resource Network includes several factors. These businesses should have a range of wage scales and jobs at different skill levels, providing opportunities for employment and growth. They should also have similar training and employee service needs. Those involved in the network should also rely on one another to create an economy of scales. Finally, they must be willing to share costs, establish partnerships with public and nonprofit agencies, and collaborate with other businesses.

In order to create a successful Employee Resource Network, Dr. Derr suggests following the following steps. First, it is essential to identify, recruit, and educate stakeholders to obtain a buy-in to the network. Second, the funding that will cover startup and ongoing expenses must be identified and once funding has been established, an administrative infrastructure and service model must be created that accounts for the needs of the workers and the available resources. This process is founded in collaboration between the network businesses. There are eight Employee Resource Networks in Michigan, one is starting in Wisconsin in association with the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) program, and another is starting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with the Health Profession Opportunities Grants (HPOG). Dr. Derr believes that this model could be implemented in a long-term way, so long as it is customized to the community in which it exists.

*Question and Answer Session:*

Following the session, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. The questions and answers are outlined below.

- What happened initially when employers came together?
    - Dr. Derr cited the Human Resources Department at Butterball Farms as an example.

- It is a good idea to find that person in your community who has a strong connection with employers.

## *Meeting the Needs of Diverse TANF Participants*

Presentations on meeting the needs of diverse TANF participants were led by:

- *Eskinder Negash, Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)*
- *Kenneth Tota, Deputy Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)*

*Eskinder Negash, Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)*

In this session, conference participants were provided with the opportunity to hear from the Director and Deputy Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Mr. Eskinder Negash, Director of ORR began by defining "refugee." A refugee is someone outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution, on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees come to the United States to build better lives for themselves and their families. The Refugee program started in 1980. When the program began, Vietnamese refugees made up a large portion of all refugees.

The refugee population in 2009 was 80,000[13] and in 2010 it was 75,000 and ORR serves 20,000 Cuban and Haitian entrants, while providing services to victims of torture and victims of human trafficking. Since 1980 close to three million refugees have moved to the United States and they hail from a variety of countries. Refugees bring with them different backgrounds and morals which contribute to our Nation and many contribute by starting new small businesses. In fact, immigrants are twice as likely as Native-born Americans to start a new business and more likely to apply for a patent. As a result, the poverty rate of the refugee population has fallen over the years and is currently around 20 percent.

It is a very difficult time for refugees due to the current economic recession because they do not have the support system and do not know how to navigate the various social service systems. ORR is now processing refugees from 70 different countries, and they are diverse and the need to learn the language and integrate into the system quickly is challenging. But their backgrounds and ability to survive while under the threat of persecution help give them the skills to survive and navigate the United States system. The job of ORR is to link these individuals, families, and communities with the services that meet their needs and it is important that ORR work together with other agencies such as OFA to improve the quantity and quality of services. Refugees are eligible to receive up to eight months of refugee cash assistance and States may use MOE funds to provide TANF services to legal immigrants who are eligible for TANF but for the Federal bar during the immigrant's first five years in the United States. Refugees do not come to this country because they hear about TANF and food stamps. They do not come for hand outs, but for a hand up. TANF

[13] Data provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. A link to the complete presentation is available at: http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/uploadedFiles/Ken%2011am%20TANF%20Presentation%2010-20-10-final%20508%20compliant.pdf

is a foreign language to them and they do not hear about it until coming here and they also do not understand why TANF is available. TANF is not going to be their destiny but their bridge. ORR wants to make sure that the populations they serve are part of TANF leaders' decision-making processes and ORR is committed to working with OFA and believes the agencies can work together to have a positive impact on these families. Mr. Negash offered to provide the conference participants with any information they need on refugees because "together we can help newly arrived refugees achieve the American dream."

*Kenneth Tota, Deputy Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)*

Next, State representatives heard from Mr. Kenneth Tota, the Deputy Director of ORR. Mr. Tota provided information on ORR programs and services, and specifically discussed the refugee populations in the States of Regions I, II, III, and IV. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) projects that 16 million refugees exist throughout the world. The United States receives the largest number of refugees. Each year, the United States President sets a limit on the maximum number of refugees that can enter the United States from each region of the world. Mr. Tota noted that this year was unique because the Department of Health and Human Services was involved in these conversations. The ceiling amount is 80,000 refugees. In his presentation, Mr. Tota showed a table which depicts the Presidential Determination for Refugees by Region.[14]

In fiscal year 2010, about 74,000 refugees entered the United States, coming very close to the 80,000 cap. Mr. Tota provided information on where refugees came from in 2010. The greatest number of refugees – almost one-fourth of the total – came from Iraq and Afghanistan. The pattern of who has been coming has been fairly consistent over the last two years and will continue in fiscal year 2011. The States in Regions I, II, III, and IV make up about 67 percent of all refugee arrivals. Mr. Tota provided information on where refugees settle, noting that a very large amount come to Florida due to the State's proximity to Cuba. New York follows with the second highest number of refugees. Mr. Tota showed more State-specific data in his presentation.[15]

Mr. Tota discussed how
refugees enter the United States and become enrolled in ORR programs. The State Department's Reception and Placement program meets clients at the port of entry, coordinates their initial living arrangements, and refers them to ORR or mainstream programs. When asylees come to the United States, they are granted status here. Given their status, refugees are eligible for the same benefits available to American citizens. If refugees are not eligible for mainstream benefits, ORR provides Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) for up to eight months. ORR State-administered services also include but are not limited to language training, employment, and adjustment assistance, and are available to refugees for their first five years in the United States. Each state has a Refugee State Coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the administration of RCA, medical assistance, and the social service components. Mr. Tota highlighted that States also have State-administered Targeted

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[14] Ibid

[15] Data provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. A link to the complete presentation is available at: http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/uploadedFiles/Ken%2011am%20TANF%20Presentation%2010-20-10-final%20508%20compliant.pdf

Assistance programs which are available to counties and contiguous areas with unusually large refugee and entrant populations. The program provides employment related services to assist refugee families who have been in the country longer, who are under-employed, and who need a second wage earner in the family.  Mr. Tota estimated that approximately 40 percent of refugees will receive RCA or assistance through one of ORR's alternative programs. The remaining 60 percent of refugees will be referred to TANF based on their eligibility.

National Voluntary Resettlement Agencies, also known as "Volags," are community service providers who typically refer refugee cases to TANF based on their initial screening. The Volags in the United States include: Church World Service (CWS), World Relief Corporation (WR), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and the State of Iowa.

Mr. Tota shared ORR's performance data for refugees receiving ORR RCA assistance for their first eight months in the United States. The national average among the States is that 40 percent of the refugee population is employed with an average wage of $9.02 at 180 days. This number has dropped from the past 50 percent average due to the economy. Sixty-one percent of this population is employed with benefits.  Nevertheless, there is a higher percentage of refugees with severe and long-term medical needs than in years past because of the trauma and torture this population has experienced. A greater number of the population are highly skilled and therefore have high employment expectations, which creates a challenge. For example, if a refugee was trained to be a medical doctor in Iraq, he or she will still need recertification in the United States. Conversely, a portion of the refugee population has a low level of skills due to years in a refugee camp setting. This population has limited English proficiency and may have limited proficiency in their native language. Additionally, the percentage of families with females as the head of the household has increased.

Mr. Tota concluded his presentation by discussing ORR initiatives that are under development. ORR is looking at service provision and ways the Office can be more interoperable. The Office has reached out to stakeholders and is looking at social services dollars – changing the allocation of these funds based on needs. ORR is also working on a Housing Waiver that grants emergency housing funding for those on verge of eviction and provides placement coordination and orientation services based on specific needs. Mr. Tota stated that ORR is working better with the Department of State and OFA to enhance its services. ORR is also working with the Center for Disease Control to provide more medical screening for refugees overseas. This makes it more about treatment rather than screening when the refugees arrive here. ORR is also looking at case management funds, which are in the President's budget for career laddering, and longer-term case management focused on addressing barriers.

*Question and Answer Session:*

Following the session, participants were given the opportunity to ask Mr. Negash and Mr. Tota questions. The questions and answers are outlined below.

- Is there a way for refugees with high skills to get faster certifications (i.e. Iraqis who were doctors before coming to the United States)?

- o *Requirements for their education are different here, so they are to do a lot of recertification, especially for doctors. The challenge is for them to do the recertification and also work. We are working on two programs to see how it goes for doing both of those. We are discussing this issue and taking it very seriously.*

- I was surprised that Haiti was not listed as a major source due to the earthquake. Why was that?
  - o *Refugees have a well founded fear of persecution from the government. Most of the Cuban refugees are processed out of Cuba and some just come in. Congress recognizes the need to help the Cubans and Haitians. The new Administration after the earthquake granted all Haitians temporary status so that the ones already here can actually work and stay. Our number is a projection based on the prior year, but Congress makes a decision each year to allow a certain number (80,000) total from all countries.*
  - o *Many Haitians that came in before the earthquake came in on Visas and many were also dual citizens or US citizens living in Haiti, so they were not technically refugees.*

## *A New Vision for a New Decade: Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Families and TANF Participants after ARRA and Beyond*

*Elizabeth Lower-Basch, Senior Policy Analyst Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Inc.*

Ms. Elizabeth Lower-Basch from the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) gave the final presentation of the Conference. Ms. Lower-Basch focused her comments around revisiting the work-based safety net for an era of unemployment. She started off by thanking the State representatives for all of their work with the Emergency Fund and for drawing down all that money. The subsidized employment programs made a difference for hundreds of thousands of people, and so did all the other projects that States were able to create and enhance with the Emergency Fund.

Ms. Lower-Basch then provided detailed background information on the impoverished population in today's economy. This population is less skilled and more vulnerable and many are poor single mothers. Recent research has identified a growing number of low-income single mothers who tend to be very poor and face serious barriers to achieving economic self-sufficiency for their families. This group includes long-term welfare recipients as well as those who left welfare without stable employment, often referred to as "the disconnected." In addition, there are 15.5 million poor children in this country and we the child poverty rate is nearly 21 percent. The poverty rate for young children (one in four) is higher than it is for overall children (one in five). Social development falls behind when young children live in poverty. Child poverty creates lasting consequences for children and society. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to drop out of school and have out-of-wedlock pregnancies. The longer people live in poverty, the worse their outcomes are.

By keeping our eyes on the prize, it becomes obvious that there is a gap between what we are able to do today and where we are going. Ms. Lower-Basch stated that the economy is not going to rescue us from this problem. We need 11.5 million new jobs just to get back to the unemployment rate we had before the recession. The most optimistic say it will take two years to get back, others say it will take up to five years. Creativity and innovation will help States and localities create new jobs and address the needs of their TANF participants. For example some States are simplifying and modernizing their benefit access and creating a continuum of benefits access effort. To simplify benefits access, States are using Express Lane Eligibility, information sharing, and providing redetermination of several programs at once.

There are 942,000 households with children receiving SNAP benefits that have zero cash income but that are not receiving TANF. Ms. Lower-Basch encouraged States to determine why this may be the case and if partnerships and collaboration can also assist the transition from unemployment benefits to TANF. States can also build on the success of the Emergency Fund and continue subsidized jobs efforts which have been so valuable to families and employers, and they tell a story about TANF. They are something that people could be excited about. Subsidized jobs are a way to think about a decent standard of living for a lot of families. It is important to continue these if at all possible. With more time to plan and negotiate with employers, States can implement or continue these programs on a smaller scale.

Next, Ms. Lower-Basch urged the State representatives to think more about education and skill building. Only about six states are doing Ready to Work and getting the 30 percent on vocational education. States could expand education and training as work activity options. States should also work on partnerships and collaboration in order to take advantage of all the programs and resources that are being funded by other program that can benefit TANF participants. Last, Ms. Lower-Basch encouraged States to tell their stories, accomplishments, etc; and tracking and reporting data in order to make the case for the importance of TANF in the lives of so many families.

*Question and Answer Session:*

Following the session, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. The questions and answers are outlined below.

- Massachusetts: The same kind of pressure is not really being put on the education system when it comes to teen pregnancy prevention and support. It is our entire burden. I wonder how we can broaden the discussion of poverty to hold other systems (such as education) accountable for poverty.
    - The education world is being dragged in the direction of accountability with mixed results. There are some initiatives focused on young parents staying in school through the Department of Health and Human Services.
    - Education and training is not the only solution for all TANF participants.
    - If your local education organizations are not providing the services your clients need, you could start that conversation.
- New York: We do not report on things that do not count. Why would we report the hours people participate in programs when it does not do us any good because of the ridiculous WPR we have to meet?
    - The data does not tell you what you need now, but it helps with the big picture. I will never be able to get Congress to provide more funding and support without it.

## *Closing Remarks*

Following Ms. Lower-Basch's presentation, Dr. Earl Johnson, Director of OFA, offered the closing remarks for the 2010 East Coast TANF Directors' Conference. He stressed that TANF is not the only thing that needs to be worked on in order to achieve healthy communities. The mission is for each TANF agency to do what they can, and to recognize that everyone can do a little bit more. In order to do this, States need to bridge relationships with departments and agencies in order to address issues of poverty. It is essential that the work being done aligns with what is valued as important, in a manner that is respectful and mindful. OFA's current vision is to create opportunities for the development of healthy communities; a vision that TANF is a part of. Dr. Johnson explained the necessity of a consistent, hopeful message to pass on to State delegations. Positivity, he stated, is what will help move TANF participants forward and build an environment of hope that will build the self-confidence necessary for participants to secure jobs. He encouraged the State TANF directors to continue to "push" in order to keep all agencies true to the mission. Dr. Johnson hopes that States will "push" him so he can push his staff and other stakeholders to stay true to OFA's mission.

He thanked the conference participants for their hard work, commitment, and the knowledge they brought to the room over the past week. He appreciated hearing from the States and the fact that they shared honestly him and his colleagues. He thanked Carol Monteiro, TANF Region I Program Manager, Joanne Krudys, TANF Region II Program Manager, Eileen Friedman, TANF Region III Program Manager, and Darrel McGhee, TANF Region IV Program Manager for hosting the event. He also thanked the ICF International staff and the hotel for making the accommodations so wonderful.

## Summary

In 1996 the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) ushered in sweeping and dramatic changes to the social welfare system in the United States by creating the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The implementation of the TANF program at the State and local levels brought about significant decreases in the number of low-income families receiving public welfare from approximately 4,543,397 cases in 1996 to 1,832,113 families in 2010.[16] As the *Great Recession* continues to hammer low-income and working communities, there is increased need for a more focused dialogue about how to reach the growing number of low-income mothers who face significant barriers to employment[17] and the growing child poverty rate.[18]

In 2011, the US Congress will begin the process of reauthorizing the TANF program an important topic for public debate will be the status of those still receiving benefits, but also those who have left the TANF caseload, but are not moving closer to economic self-sufficiency.[19] The TANF programs in ACF Regions I, II, III, and IV, represent more than half of the cases in the country and the *East Coast TANF Directors' Conference* offered a fresh opportunity for TANF administrators and other stakeholders to discuss the important issues facing not only the programs, but also the clients and families they serve.

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[16] See: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. Caseload Data available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/caseload_current.htm#2010

[17] Blank, R. & Kovak, B. (2008). *Helping disconnected single mothers.* Brookings Institution, Brief #38.

[18] Mather, M (2008). *U.S. child poverty rates increase despite rising national incomes.* Washington DC: Population Reference Bureau.

[19] See: *TANF "Work First" Policy Helps Perpetuate Single Mother Poverty and Employment in Low Wage "Women's Work."* The Women's Legal Defense and Education, Fund, 2010; Lower-Basch, Elizabeth and Mark Greenberg (2008). *Single Mothers in the Era of Welfare Reform.* Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC; ICF International (2009). *Promising Practices—Responding to Increasing TANF Caseloads.* Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, US Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

Unemployment remains high across the country, and the safety net is fraying and leaving many families with limited options.  As referenced previously, the most recent Census data indicate that 20.7 percent of children are currently living in poverty and since the start of the recession in 2007, the child poverty rate has grown by 2.7 percent.  Reauthorization of TANF offers an opportunity for stakeholders to present recommendations to policymakers on how to meet the ever-changing economic needs of low-income and working families. Thousands of families from Maine to Florida are being challenged by increased unemployment, continued underemployment, and growing economic need. The 2010 Administration for Children and Families East Coast TANF Directors' Conference held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the Sofitel Hotel provided TANF stakeholders to share visions and strategies and work with peers to outline a set of core values necessary for improving the lives of low-income and working families.  The meeting which was a collaboration between TANF Regions I, II, III, and IV contained a series of targeted sharing sessions, and panel presentations and conversations and this year's meeting provided information on improving programs and services beyond the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act and in the foreground of the reauthorization of TANF, the Workforce Investment Act, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, all of which represent important components of the social safety net.  The confluence of work supports, workforce development, and education are growing in significance and this conference laid the foundation for a year-long dialogue around enhancing services, increasing opportunities, and improving lives.

# Appendices

# 2010 East Coast TANF Directors' Meeting

**October 19-21, 2010**
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

# AGENDA

| | **Monday, October 18, 2010** |
|---|---|
| 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. | **Registration** |

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|---|---|
| 7:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. | **Registration and Networking** |
| 9:00 A.M. to 9:15 A.M. | **Welcome**<br><br>*Kent J. Peterson*, Facilitator<br>ICF International<br><br>*Eileen Friedman*, TANF Program Manager<br>US Department of Health and Human Services<br>Administration for Children and Families- Region III<br><br>*David Lett*, Regional Administrator<br>US Department of Health and Human Services<br>Administration for Children and Families- Region III |
| 9:15 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. | **National Perspective**<br><br>*Earl S. Johnson, PhD*, Director<br>United States Department of Health and Human Services<br>Administration for Children and Families<br>Office of Family Assistance |
| 10:00 A.M. to 10:15 A.M. | **Break** |
| 10:15 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. | **State Directors Information Sharing**<br><br>During these facilitated, solutions-focused roundtable updates, Regions I, II, III, and IV State TANF Directors will provide programmatic and policy updates as they relate to their TANF programs, their clients, and the families they serve. With an emphasis on innovative responses to the economy and strategies that can be replicated in sister states, attendees will interact with their peers and Federal representatives and seek to not only inform, but also learn.<br><br>*Kent J. Peterson*, Facilitator<br>ICF International |
| 12:30 P.M. to 1:45 P.M. | **Networking Lunch** |
| 1:45 P.M. to 3:30 P.M. | **Continuation of State Information Sharing** |
| 3:30 P.M. to 3:45 P.M. | **Break** |
| 3:45 P.M. to 4:45 P.M. | **Continuation of State Information Sharing** |
| 4:45 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. | **Day One Wrap Up and State Reflections**<br><br>*Kent J. Peterson*, Facilitator<br>ICF International |
| 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. | **Networking Reception** |

8:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. **Networking**

9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. **Developing and Sustaining Subsidized Employment Programs for TANF Participants**

Representatives will discuss the strategies used to begin or significantly ramp-up subsidized employment programs to create new job opportunities as a result of the enhanced federal TANF funds made available through the Emergency Contingency Fund. A range of participant outreach and employer engagement strategies will be discussed. Program administrators will highlight successful strategies as well as pitfalls to avoid. Conference participants will also discuss funding options to continue subsidized employment programs absent additional TECF.

Moderator:

*Russell Sykes*, Deputy Commissioner
New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Panelists:

*Cheryl Sparkman*, TANF Director
Mississippi Department of Human Services
Division of Economic Assistance

*Donalda Carlson*, Associate Director
Rhode Island Department of Human Services
Division of Economic Support

*Barbara Guinn*, Director
New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
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*Jeffrey Gabriel*, Federal Project Officer
US Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration- Region II

*Wanda Franklin*, Families First Director
Tennessee Office of Family Assistance

*Melissa Young*, Associate Director
National Transitional Jobs Network

11:00 A.M. to 11:15 A.M. **Break**

11:15 A.M. to 12:45 P.M. **Strengthening Safety-Net Partnerships and Frontline Perspectives**

During these tough economic times families rely more and more on the social safety-net and the combined services meant to improve economic self-sufficiency. Building and maintaining strong partnerships among the various programs is essential to improving the available services for families and during this session representatives will discuss the importance of partnership and outline strategies for improving partnership. Panelists will provide real-world examples and research-based recommendations for streamlining processes and reducing duplication. Conference participants will be able to engage the panelists and peers on applicable topics and activities.

Moderator:

*Susan Curnan*, Director
Center for Youth and Communities
Brandeis University

Panelists:

*Bill Jenkins*, Coordinator
US Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Services
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*Dave Gagliardi,* Coordinator
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*Leo Miller,* Grants Officer
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*Matthew S. Rager*, Program Manager
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*Stanley Koutstaal*, Ph.D., Program Manager
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*Monica A. Hawkins*, Division Director
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US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Philadelphia Regional Office

12:45 P.M. to 1:45 P.M. **Networking Lunch**

1:45 P.M. to 3:15 P.M. **TANF and Domestic Violence: Building Opportunities for Victim Safety and Economic Stability**

Domestic violence and poverty are intersecting issues in the lives of too many families. Violence can make the climb out of poverty unattainable and poverty often makes it more difficult to escape violence or deal with its effects. For victims to be safe, they need to be free from their partner's violence and control and be able to meet their family's basic human needs. TANF can play an important role as an economic bridge to greater safety. Conference participants will engage in peer to peer questions and answers in an effort to improve strategies for assessing and serving victims of domestic violence.

Moderator:

*Anne Menard*, Director
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Panelists:

*Janet Fender*, Director
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
Domestic Violence Unit

*Carolyn Stevens*, Welfare Specialist
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

*Stephanie Brown*, Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Programming
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

*Terrie Reid*, Interim TANF Director/Deputy Commissioner for Family Resources
Alabama Department of Human Resources
Family Assistance Division

3:15 P.M. to 3:30 P.M. **Break**

3:30 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. **ASSET Initiative: Improving Economic Independence**

This afternoon session will focus on the Administration for Children and Families' ASSET Initiative, which is bringing financial literacy education, matched savings projects, access to federal tax credits, and other asset-building strategies to more families throughout the nation. The asset building approach is enabling families with low incomes to move from paycheck to paycheck and toward financial stability and security. The panel will feature Christa McMichael, former TANF participant from Kentucky, who used a variety of financial asset building tools to become self-sufficient. Other presenters will provide an overall asset building framework and perspectives on working with TANF agencies.

Moderator:

*James Gatz*, Manager
Assets for Independence Program
US Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Services

Panelists:

*Denise Devaan*, Senior Consultant
AFI Resource Center

*Mary O'Doherty*, Project Director
Economic Empowerment Program
Kentucky Domestic Violence Association

*Christa McMichael*, Former TANF Participant
Owensboro, Kentucky

5:00 P.M. to 5:15 P.M. **Day Two Wrap Up and State Reflections**

*Kent J. Peterson*, Facilitator
ICF International

8:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. **Networking**

9:00 A.M.to 10:45 A.M. **Selected Topics Forum**

*Kent J. Peterson*, Moderator
ICF International

CMS - Express Lane Eligibility

The use of automated enrollment strategies has gained more attention with the increased focus on service integration among safety-net programs. Many states are taking steps to integrate automated enrollment systems in SCHIP, TANF, SNAP, and other service areas and they are finding that these systems assist in achieving program objectives essential to client success. This presentation focuses on the use of Express Lane Eligibility and automated enrollment strategies to improve intake services for social service clients. Key discussion items include increased participation of eligible individuals, improved efficiency, and reduced errors.

*Stacy McQuillin*, Director of Operations
Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP)

*Rosemary Feild*, SCHIP Coordinator
US Department of Health and Human Services
Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Employer Resource Networks (ERNs)

This presentation focuses on Employer Resource Networks (ERNs), an innovative, employer-based model that pulls together a consortium of small-to mid-size businesses to provide job retention services, works supports, and training opportunities for entry-level employees, many of whom are receiving public assistance. ERNs also include strong partnerships with other service delivery systems and organizations such as social service agencies, workforce development agencies, chambers of commerce, and community and technical colleges. Examining the key features of the ERN model may encourage TANF administrators to develop new services or enhance existing ones within their communities.

*Michelle Derr*, PhD, Researcher
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

10:45 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. **Break**

11:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. **Meeting the Needs of Diverse TANF Participants**

The TANF program provides states with tremendous flexibility to assist low-income individuals and families obtain and maintain employment and improve economic self-sufficiency. This presentation outlines strategies for meeting the needs of legal immigrants and refugee families and highlights frontline experiences working with diverse immigrant groups. Also, attendees will hear from the Office of Refugee Resettlement and gain a better understanding of ways to improve interoperability between TANF programs and programs that serve immigrant groups.

*Kenneth Tota*, Deputy Director
US Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

11:30 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. **A New Vision for a New Decade: Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Families and TANF Participants after ARRA and Beyond**

*Elizabeth Lower-Basch*, Senior Policy Analyst
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Inc.

12:00 P.M. **Adjourn**

# 2010 East Coast TANF Directors' Meeting

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# 2010 East Coast TANF Directors' Meeting

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# 2010 East Coast TANF Directors' Meeting

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# 2010 East Coast TANF Directors' Meeting

**October 19-21, 2010**
**Sofitel Hotel**
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

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# Evaluation Summary

The Administration for Children and Families Regions I, II, III, and IV convened the first ever East Coast TANF Directors' Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on October 19–21, 2010. The conference brought together 46 State TANF directors and program staff who represented 24 States and territories, to strategize on ways to move low-income and working families closer to economic self-sufficiency while providing important input on the development of new TANF legislation. Specific topics included subsidized employment, strengthening safety-net partnerships, improving assessments and service delivery for domestic violence victims, and asset development strategies to improve long-term economic development. Highlights from the evaluation results include:

- The majority of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the meeting was helpful, met expectations, and ran smoothly.
- General comments about the meeting were that the information presented was relevant and interesting and attendees had a positive experience.
- A common suggestion from participants was to pare down the number of presenters and provide even more time for interaction among States. Some noted that all the information was helpful but it was hard to absorb so much at once.
- The session titled "TANF and Domestic Violence: Building Opportunities for Victim Safety and Economic Stability" received the greatest amount of positive feedback with 85% to 95% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the positive evaluation criteria.
- Suggestions for additional topics included: data collection and OFA guidance; creating and maintaining partnerships particularly with other public benefit systems; and networking time.
- Attendees enjoyed the location, accommodations, and the meeting room.

The total number of evaluations filled out was 48. Some participants did not evaluate every session or answer each question, so some totals are less than 48. The overall feedback from the event was that it was a success and attendees were able to leave with helpful information to take back to their home States.