



Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Summary

Requesting Agency:	Maryland Department of Human Resources
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TA Event:	121
TA Requested:	DHR requested TA regarding integrating work experience into the treatment experience and how to better focus ex-offenders on workforce participation.
TA Goal:	The meeting focused on developing partnerships to address the challenges associated with universal engagement for TANF clients. Partners were given the opportunity to learn strategies for developing meaningful partnerships with substance abuse treatment providers and the Department of Corrections to engage substance users and ex-offenders into work experience to better the lives of children and families.
TA Format:	Roundtable
Sample Evaluations:	<p>Evaluations from the event suggest that participants strongly agreed that the Roundtable event was a success. Selected highlights from the evaluations include:</p> <p>"There were several ideas/ways to meet customer's needs and agency needs that will be discussed with program staff that hopefully will assist us in meeting our goals."</p> <p>"Dr. Shankman's presentation was wonderful, very informative; great handout. Steve Williams & Marian Bland's presentations were informative and provided us with a wealth of information and ideas."</p> <p>"The strategy of combining the agencies was represented. Also, the information presented was placed in a binder to take home as a model and reference material (was very helpful)."</p> <p>"I would like to have seen more topics on how to incorporate the ideas into our programs. More of 'this is what to do and how to do it'. Getting social services staff involved in FIA programs."</p>

Analysis:

Since welfare reform passed in 1996, welfare offices nationwide have focused specific efforts on working with families that are difficult to move to self-sufficient employment, such as those presenting the multiple barriers of substance abuse, mental health issues, disabilities, and/or ex-offenders. For many social service agencies, it can be difficult to partner with substance abuse treatment providers and corrections to fully engage these clients into employment, even though these agencies carry the common goal of self-sufficiency for their clients.

Recognizing these realities, the Maryland Department of Human Resources made a Technical Assistance (TA) request to the Welfare Peer TA Network. Specifically, Maryland requested TA regarding helping stakeholders strategize together and work with outside experts about ways in which work experience can be brought into the treatment experience and to better focus ex-offenders on workforce participation as a positive way of turning their lives around. Additionally, Maryland would like to align themselves with treatment partners to better understand how to integrate the work experience into their treatment continuum so that people leave treatment not just sober but also ready and willing to work.

Peer TA, working closely with DHR staff, convened a two-day roundtable which included ninety (90) attendees- County directors, managers, supervisors and front line staff, DHR staff and Federal regional representatives.

The Roundtable included a presentation from the ACF Regional Administrator, who provided the Federal vision for collaboration across systems. Peer TA brought in speakers from the around the state including the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Participants heard a presentation on the Second Genesis Treatment program, which uses work as a treatment mechanism for substance abuse. Additionally, Taunya Lowe from the DeKalb Technical College in Georgia gave a presentation titled "Understanding the Power of Recovery." Participants from the Lower Eastern Shore and Baltimore City gave presentations on collaboration best practices in Maryland. The Maryland Governor's Office for Children included a presentation on the need to aid children with incarcerated parents. Participants were also given the opportunity to hear about collaborations in New York City with social services and substance abuse treatment.

Roundtable discussion sessions were used to allow for interaction, networking and strategizing. This culminated in an action planning exercise aimed at developing strategies suitable and capable of local implementation.

Evaluations submitted by attendees indicated that this program was a success for beginning the collaboration between state agencies to better serve the TANF population.

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