

**ACF Region IX
State and Territorial
TANF Strategic Session**



**Disabilities
and TANF**

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ACF Region IX State and Territorial TANF Strategic Session

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Disabilities and TANF

Disability Navigator, WorkSource for Dallas County, Texas Workforce Commission

The Disability Navigator is a dedicated staff member within the One-Stop system devoted to building capacity within the workforce system to serve disabled populations, forming collaborative community relationships, and increasing employer understanding of working with disabled populations. Through an agreement signed in 2002, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and Social Security Administration (SSA) co-funded the Disability Program Navigator Initiative to help people with disabilities find job opportunities. The Initiative involved the creation of Disability Navigator positions located at DOL-funded One-Stop Career Centers throughout the Nation. In each region in Dallas, the Disability Navigator acts as the main resource within the center, providing training for One-Stop personnel on supporting disabled populations; conducting community outreach to agencies serving the disabled; and educating businesses about disabled workers. The Disability Navigator position is a novel approach to offering seamless services to disabled individuals. In Dallas, staff have received high level training in assisting persons with disabilities in the One-Stop Centers and a countywide community advisory group was created to exchange information and referrals within agencies working with disabled populations.

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Learning Needs Screening Tool, Northwest Center for the Advancement of Learning, Payne & Associates, Inc.

The Learning Needs Screening Tool is a utility that can be used to screen for learning disabilities as part of a comprehensive social assessment. It is a brief, oral interview developed through an intensive research project on a welfare (TANF) population for the State of Washington Division of Employment and Social Services Disabilities Initiative. It is a voluntary, self reporting tool that is best used during the early stages of services. There are some background questions pertaining to demographic information such as gender, age, and educational attainment, followed by thirteen questions about school and life experiences that may have impacted the client's education. Scoring on these items indicates whether or not the client should be referred for additional assessment.

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Link to Tool:

<http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/upitoolkit/case/casemanagement/assessmentreferral/learning/tools.cfm#programTabs>

Promise Jobs Disability Specialist Initiative

The Initiative, implemented statewide in 2006, operates as a partnership between Iowa's Promise Jobs, the State's TANF employment program operated by the Iowa Workforce Development agency, and Iowa Vocational

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Rehabilitation Services (IVRS). Disability Specialists are located in eight Iowa workforce centers operating Promise Jobs across the State including Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Mason City, Sioux City and Waterloo. TANF participants who appear to potentially have a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency are referred by their case manager to the Disability Specialist. The Specialists provide enhanced assessment, intensive case management services, accommodation services information, and networking with and referrals to IVRS. To train the Specialists, Iowa hired a consultant, Disability Consulting, LC. The consultant used a research-based curriculum entitled "Tools That Answer the Needs of Frontline Workers," which covered techniques of case management, disability identification and assessment, and legal and employment issues. For more information, please see:

<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/creatingtanf.pdf>.

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Strategies to Empower Participants (STEP)

STEP is a collaborative program formed from among the Louisiana Department of Social Services/Office of Family Support, University of New Orleans, Rehabilitation Services, and the Office of Addictive Disorders. The STEP program screens single parent families receiving public assistance for "hidden disabilities." The Office of Family Support refers participants to the University of New Orleans for assessment, which includes learning disabilities, ADHD, mental health and substance abuse. Upon assessment, the University refers to Rehabilitation Services and the Office of Addictive Disorders. The streamlined process has helped better identify barriers and place more participants in jobs. From June 2002 to June 2005, New Orleans served 19,522 TANF participants and screened 1,557 for "hidden disabilities." Among the individuals they screened, 1,048 were referred for services and 508 were determined to have learning disabilities or ADHD.

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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Reach-Up Program, Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Since 2001, VR Vermont has worked with the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to help TANF recipients who have been identified as having a disability that is a barrier to employment. These recipients are referred by DCF to VR for services. They are provided with a specialized VR counselor who also serves as the TANF Reach-Up case manager. This means a single counselor provides all services, thus blending the resources of both VR and DCF to provide intensive vocational services and case management. VR Reach-Up clients are single mothers in their 20's or 30's who are experiencing a disability that affects their ability to obtain or keep a job. Disabilities, often trauma based, include depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, bipolar disorder, and other personality disorders. The program is the result of many years of learning about ways to assist TANF participants stabilize their lives and obtain meaningful employment. Several program innovations and a new program model have been developed from the VR Reach-Up program. These innovations take place at both the individual and systems levels.

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Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation, Employment (WeCARE) Program WeCARE was implemented in 2005 by the New York City (NYC) Human Resources Administration (HRA) in response to the high

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number of TANF participants who had clinical barriers to employment. These barriers can include a medical condition that is either not diagnosed or under control, a mental health issue, and/or a substance abuse issue. The program is designed to provide comprehensive services to these participants through a variety of services including a biopsychosocial assessment, creation of an individualized service plan, referrals, case management, vocational rehabilitation, skills training, and job development or assistance in obtaining federal disability benefits. Since WeCARE's inception, the program has been able to move 900,000 people off of cash assistance. NYC currently has between 1.2 and 1.4 million people on cash assistance. WeCARE is operated by two contractors in the five NYC boroughs: Federation Employment and Guidance Service (FEGS) Health and Human Services and Arbor Education and Training. WeCARE serves about 24,000 people daily.

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