



Urban Partnerships for Welfare Reform: National Academy

*Utilizing Diversion and Emergency
Assistance Programs*

Diversionary Work Program

Minneapolis



Key Features

- **Diversion From Traditional Public Assistance (MFIP – Minnesota Family Investment Program)**
- **Four Month Program (months do not ‘count’)**
- **DWP - For Families Who Have Not Received MFIP/DWP in Last 12 Months**
- **Benefits Are Primarily Vendor Paid (rent and utilities)**



Key Features

- **Employment Plan Must Be Completed Prior To Benefit Issuance**
- **Meet Employment Goals Quickly – short term and intensive**
- **Goal: Cash Assistance Is Not Needed After Month 4**
- **Income Received after DWP is approved is disregarded**



Key Features

Immediate 100% Sanction For Non-compliance

- **In Hennepin, 48.9% Of Families Are Not On TANF In Month Five (One month after DWP) – Statewide 57.5%**
- **In Hennepin, 50.6% Of Families Are Not On TANF In Month Twelve – Statewide 59.9%**



Key Features

- Median Hennepin DWP placement starting wage: \$9.50/hour
Statewide \$9.00/ hour
Source: MN DHS Program
Assessment and Integrity Division
(4th quarter 2005 data)



Successful Strategies

- Close Cooperation Between Employment And Financial Staff
- System-wide Commitment To Meeting Tight Timelines
- Specialization On Employment and Financial Side



Successful Strategies:

- **One ES staff serves one family unit**
- **Employment Services staff direct flow of services**
- **ES coordinate information flow among all partners by conveying “real time” information between/among partners**



Successful Strategies

- Job retention and career advancement integrated throughout DWP services
- State-driven support for non-native English speakers through SRES
- Marketing, networking and job development are key



Successful Strategies

- Simplify accounting processes
- Remain focused on outcomes
- Strong team definition: result of specializing



Successful Strategies

- Continual assessment of - and response to - rapidly-shifting, diverse DWP client base
- Define “what works:” practitioners share effective/progressive approaches



Surprises

- More Successful With Diversion Than Anticipated
- Drastic Effect On TANF Employment Services Caseload And Participation Rate



Surprises

- Continual fluctuation in demographics of population served
- Positive response from participants to short-term, non-welfare service and strategies



Surprises

- Expedited access results in expedited outcomes, in a short timeframe
- Synergy between/among systems is possible – given excellent planning and commitment from people delivering services



Challenges

- Far More Clients Than Expected Applied For DWP
- Communication Between Partners
- Effect On Traditional TANF Caseload And Participation Rates



Challenges

- Extensive training of staff new to DWP
- Data entry: continual monitoring and updating
- Identifying system problems is complex and demands time – but “worth the effort”



Challenges

- Continuously updating and augmenting services responding to jobseeker needs
- Short-term planning is “status quo”



Replication Advice

- Invest Significant Time To Planning
- Establish Easy To Use Communication Tools For All Partners
- Constantly Review Where Client 'Bottlenecks' May Be
- Educate Policy Makers On The Effect On TANF Participation Rates



Managing During Change

- Keep New Program Specialized
- Develop support from areas not involved in the change
- Recruit Staff Who are dedicated to the successful Implementation of the New Program



Visions for the Future

- One Possible Vision
 - Implement DWP For All New Clients (Federal Participation)



Visions for the Future

- High cost/benefit ratio
- Traditional TANF caseload-size reduction has been (and continues to be) substantial
- Pursue avenues to credit DWP success toward the federal participation rate