



Final Report of Peer TA Activity #167

Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network Site Exchange
Hawaii Department of Human Services to New York City Human
Resources Administration
New York, New York
November 13-14, 2008

Prepared for:
The Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance



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I. Overview

On November 13-14, 2008, the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network sponsored a two-day site exchange to New York City (NYC) Human Resources Administration (HRA). The purpose of the Technical Assistance (TA) was to provide the Hawaii Department of Human Services the opportunity to observe NYC's use of JobStat, which allows the city to set goals, monitor, and measure outcomes of performance indicators established for NYC Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants, workers, job centers, and vendors. Hawaii was also able to learn about NYC HRA's Wellness, Assessment, Rehabilitation, and Employment (WeCARE) program that serves NYC TANF and Safety Net participants who have clinical barriers to employment. WeCARE provides participants with comprehensive biopsychosocial (BPS) assessments and in turn, develops integrated, individualized services to assist each participant in reaching their highest possible level of functioning and self-sufficiency.

The Hawaii team intends to use information learned from this site exchange to enable them to implement a program similar to JobStat to help Hawaii's TANF participants successfully transition out of welfare and into the workforce expeditiously. They believe their entire TANF caseload statewide will benefit from this site exchange and the subsequent implementation of a program that tracks valuable performance data.

II. Site Exchange

a. JobStat: CenterStat and VendorStat Weekly Meeting

JobStat started in 1998 when former New York Mayor Giuliani implemented extensive reforms to New York City's welfare system. JobStat is a program that incorporates data collected and processed from a variety of sources to generate monthly reports used by HRA staff to improve understanding of the performance of New York City job centers and their employees. JobStat was created to establish local accountability, create increased performance, and decentralize welfare bureaucracy. The JobStat program provides local managers with performance data to which they are held accountable and facilitates meetings through which performance can be reviewed and problem-solving strategies developed. Ultimately, the overall endeavor of the JobStat process is to determine ways for serving TANF participants more responsively and effectively. CenterStat and VendorStat are the specific JobStat meetings that analyze job and vendor centers throughout the city.

Participants began the first day of the site exchange by observing the weekly CenterStat and VendorStat meeting at NYC HRA led by Mr. Seth Diamond, the Executive Deputy Commissioner of HRA's Family Independence Administration (FIA). During the CenterStat meeting, Delkab and Linden job centers in Brooklyn, New York were analyzed together using various performance indicators. There are 31 job centers across NYC that are analyzed on the same performance indicators. HRA staff meet with staff of at least two job centers weekly. After meeting with the job centers, HRA staff then meets with the vendor(s) that correspond with each job center to analyze their indicators and provide feedback on their performance. During the Hawaii site exchange, a vendor working with the Linden job center attended this meeting with HRA.

At the CenterStat meeting, the job center and NYC HRA staff discussed September 2008 data for the *Linden* and *Delkab* job centers so they could be analyzed on 34 indicators in five categories. The JobStat Reports generated for the Linden and Delkab job centers provided comprehensive performance indicators, and major areas of success and concern for program managers at the two centers. HRA and Job Center staff were able to plan new strategies to enhance the movement of TANF participants towards self-sufficiency. The categories included:

- Application process;
- Employment process;
- Case management process;
- Fair hearing; and
- Placement/Participation.

Additionally, data pertaining to the job centers' program referral rates for applicants, undercare and full engagement reports were presented for TANF and Safety Net (SN) clients.

At the VendorStat meeting, Career and Educational Consultants (CEC), the vendor for the Linden Job Center, was present. The Hawaii visitors were able to observe the vendor performance measurement process, the same process that takes place at the job centers. CEC consists of 56 employees, including 18 job developers. They operate on an employment first approach. CEC offers computer courses that last between 11 and 13 weeks and soft skills training such as job interviewing and resume writing to their TANF participants. If participants are not work ready, CEC works with local community based organizations or they send them back to HRA to receive services until they are ready. The average Linden CEC vendor participant is 34 years old, and 57% are female. The average amount of time participants have received cash assistance is 21 months.

All vendors with NYC's HRA and job centers use a performance based contracting model, earning money when participants retain a job for 30, 90, and 180 days. At the meeting, CEC was analyzed on 15 indicators in four different categories:

1. Placement Outcomes:
 - % placed within 45 days (applicant);
 - % placed (undercare);
 - Applicants average wage; and
 - Undercare average wage.
2. Retention/Recidivism For Employment:
 - 30 day paid retention;
 - 90 day paid retention rate;
 - 180 day paid retention rate;
 - 3 month recidivism rate;
 - 6 month recidivism rate; and
 - 9 month recidivism rate.
3. Compliance:
 - % applicant FTC reported; and
 - % undercare FTC reported.

4. Center Vendor Indicators:
 - Fair hearing request rate for vendor placements;
 - % of center's placements from vendor; and
 - % of good cause granted.

During both of the meetings, HRA reviewed job and vendor performance and questioned center directors and staff about inconsistencies on performance. HRA offered advice to center staff for performance improvements. HRA presented performance indicators for all job centers so that center directors could see their individual performance in relation to the other job centers and vendors. Most participants in the site exchange commented that the meeting seemed beneficial and they liked the accountability it placed on job and vendor centers to perform at their absolute best.

b. Bureau of Eligibility Verification (BEV) Discussion

During a working lunch session, Hawaii was able to ask questions of NYC HRA staff and also meet with a staff person from NYC's Bureau of Eligibility Verification (BEV) who shared insight on the Bureau's operations. BEV is a department created in 1995 tasked with conducting interviews and background checks on TANF participants to prevent fraud. BEV consists of 900 staff that work with over 240,000 participants per year. BEV is made up of two divisions: an In-House division and a Field division.

The In-House division screens applicants in all five boroughs of NYC. Applicants receive an appointment with BEV one week after they apply for benefits at HRA. Each participant is assigned to an investigator, who tries to match applicants with various information including their motor vehicle, social security number, bank records, health records, criminal records, wages, credit report, and NYC marriage license. Following a face-to-face interview, the investigator tries to verify all the information via telephone. If there is no suspicion of fraud, the applicant is approved and sent back to the HRA job center.

If a case is deemed suspicious, BEV's Field division conducts a home visit to obtain collateral information about the case before the applicant is recommended for ineligibility. Of all TANF participants who apply and are referred to BEV, 25% never show up and another 25% are recommended for ineligibility.

c. Wellness, Assessment, Rehabilitation, and Employment (WeCARE) Presentation

On Thursday afternoon, Hawaii staff conducted a site visit to NYC HRA's Wellness, Assessment, Rehabilitation, and Employment (WeCARE) program. The WeCARE program was implemented in 2005 by NYC HRA in response to the high number of TANF participants who had clinical barriers to employment. These barriers can include medical conditions that are either not diagnosed or under control, mental health issues, and/or substance abuse issues. The program is designed to provide comprehensive services to participants utilizing a variety of services including a biopsychosocial assessment, creation of an individualized service plan, referrals, case management, vocation rehabilitation and skills training, job development, and assistance in obtaining federal disability

benefits. Since WeCARE's inception, the program has moved 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 New York City boroughs: Federation Employment and Guidance Service (FEGS) Health and Human Services which serves the boroughs of the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island; and Arbor Education and Training which serves the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. This presentation took place at the Arbor WeCARE facility in Brooklyn. Between the two contractors, WeCARE serves about 24,000 people a day.

Mr. Michael Bosket, Director of WeCARE Operations at HRA spoke about the background and structure of WeCARE. WeCARE was developed from a much smaller program called PRIDE. WeCARE is being replicated in various countries including Finland and South Africa, as well as other municipalities within the United States.

Mr. Bosket noted that New York State's constitution and the city charter grant individuals over 60 months to receive cash assistance so WeCARE serves both TANF participants as well as individuals in the state funded Safety Net (SN) cash assistance program. Participants are referred to WeCARE from their local HRA job center. When the participant completes an employability plan with their case worker, a medical and mental health section is included. If an issue is identified, they are automatically referred to WeCARE. Participants are assigned a WeCARE site based on their zip code.

Mr. Bosket described how a participant navigates through the system while in the WeCARE program. After a participant is referred to WeCARE, they complete a biopsychosocial assessment at a medical site. The assessment includes a comprehensive intake, a physical exam with a board certified internist, as well as the following exams:

- Vital check;
- Urine;
- Blood;
- Electrocardiogram (EKG); and
- Body Mass Index (BMI).

Participants that need specialty care, such as cardiology, receive a referral to a specialist for an additional medical evaluation. Mr. Bosket noted that the job of WeCARE physicians is not to diagnose and treat a participant as in the conventional doctor-patient relationship. Instead, their purpose is to determine if a medical and/or mental health problem will affect the participant's employability. This entire process is designed to take less than four hours in one visit.

If the intake process determines that the participant is fully employable, they return to the job center to work with their job specialist. If the participant does have medical conditions, the physician meets with the participant and discusses the next steps. Participants are generally expected to have one of four outcomes after the biopsychosocial assessment:

- The client is fully employable. Six percent of participants are determined to be fully employable.

- The participant is employable with limitations and begins to work with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to complete a Diagnostic and Vocational Evaluation (DVE) and an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE). Forty-three percent of participants move into VRS.
- The participant is temporarily unemployable and begins to work with the Wellness Rehabilitation program which is approximately 60 days. Thirty percent of participants fall into this track.
- The participant is unemployable and is assisted with applying for Federal Disability payments. Fifteen percent of participants begin the process of applying for disability payments.

Between 2005 and September 2008, 83% (190,753) of participants completed their biopsychosocial assessment. From the assessment, 45% are referred for specialty medical services. A number of individuals are determined to require emergency medical intervention. The most common medical problems found are psychiatric, orthopedic, respiratory, cardiac, and diabetes. In addition, many individuals with medical or mental health limitations to employment have co-occurring substance abuse disorders.

Mr. Bosket highlighted for the group the elements of WeCARE that make it successful in assisting participants. These include:

- Providing holistic assessments;
- A continuum of integrated services that go from assessment to rehabilitation to self-sufficiency under one umbrella contract;
- Clinical focus and support;
- Proactive wellness plans to facilitate compliance with treatment;
- Having “one-stop shops” for participants;
- Upfront comprehensive evaluation to inform vocational rehabilitation services; and
- Case management services which can include home visits.

d. Job Center Tour

On Friday morning, Hawaii staff took a tour of the Waverley job center in Brooklyn, which is considered a “model” job center. A “model” job center is different from a regular job center in that it is color coded by floors and participants are given colored coded tickets depending on their reason for coming to the center and corresponding with the colored floors. Also, electronic kiosks are located at the “model” centers so participants can access certain information about their benefits quickly and easily.

All participants are required to be fingerprinted and have their picture taken for identification purposes. At Waverley, new participants and those with an appointment are given a blue ticket and are routed to the blue floor. Participants who need Food Stamps are given a green ticket and are routed to the green floor; and participants who do not have an appointment are given a lavender ticket and are routed to the lavender floor. The lavender floor is the nexus of activity. The floor is set up so participants sit in a waiting area and wait for their ticket number to show up on an electronic display screen. Staff calls each ticket number three times before moving on to the next number.

Each case worker at the job center is assigned around 175 participants. Case workers make sure to refer their participants to a vendor if they are employable. (A vendor representative is located at the job center to conduct employment orientations). If participants are not employable, case workers either refer them to WeCARE or to the Special Needs Unit. (The Special Needs Unit consists of master's level social workers who assist participants with substance abuse issues). Case workers also work with participants to help them receive other services and resources such as housing (referrals to Homeless Diversion Unit and Central Rental Assistance Unit are made) and child care.

e. Vendor Center Tour

Hawaii Department of Human Services staff took a short tour of the CEC vendor center on Friday, the same center that was analyzed at the VendorStat meeting the day before.

The vendor center is located in an inconspicuous location, next to a barber shop in Brooklyn. When participants first enter the center, they are fingerprinted to provide verification of their identity and attendance at the center. This helps NYC HRA with federal reporting requirements. Participants attend orientation and are given basic reading, mathematics, career, and other assessments to determine their interests and skills. Participants are given soft skills training and are then eligible to take classes to become certified in Microsoft Office, customer service, and more. Upon completion of a class, they receive a certificate of completion and can start applying and interviewing for jobs. Staff at CEC have close relationships with many employers throughout NYC to help with job placement. CEC job developers and staff also have the ability to read case notes about their participants from the participant's HRA case worker through a system called New York City Way. This enables the job center case worker and vendor center job developer to constantly communicate about any challenges their participants might be having and keep them updated on their progress.

f. Employment Meeting with NYC HRA Senior Managers

On Friday afternoon, Hawaii Department of Human Services participants sat in on a weekly meeting with top NYC HRA employment and systems staff reviewing issues and initiatives. Staff from Hawaii shared their particular successes and challenges and also some of the projects they have been busy implementing in Hawaii. Hawaii Human Services Director Lillian Koller provided a brief overview of Hawaii's Rapid Work Initiative and the SEE Hawaii Work program for NYC HRA staff.

III. Action Planning and Conclusion

At the end of the two-day site exchange, Hawaii staff met to synthesize information they learned and begin action planning on next steps. David Camporeale, Family Assistance Program Specialist from the Office of Family Assistance facilitated this session. A few of the positives that participants noted from the site exchange included:

- The efficient way the job center tracked participants' movement through the center;
- The use of photo and fingerprint images as a means of tracking people;
- NYC HRA's approach to performance and accountability;
- NYC HRA's performance rating comparison and threshold graphics;

- Their consistency of meetings, indicators, and performance from HRA to vendors; and
- Vendors are paid for job retention not for placement.

A few of the pitfalls or challenges that participants noted included:

- The need for centers and vendors to explain how they are going to get improved outcomes;
- The potential need for different vendors to collaborate payment for training, and skills, testing, and placement instead of being in constant competition;
- Verification of accuracy of data; and
- The need for Hawaii to potentially test different performance indicators that are focused more on outcomes as opposed to process.

Overall, the Hawaii participants indicated that the site exchange met their technical assistance needs, and they were able to start identifying their specific goals and next steps through the action planning session. They were able to glean knowledge they believe will enhance Hawaii Department of Human Services' programs and operations and most importantly, improve the well-being of their state's TANF participants and families. The Welfare Peer TA Network was excited to have hosted this successful event and looks forward to continued collaboration opportunities with TANF professionals in Hawaii.

Further materials related to this event are located on the Peer TA Web site at <http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/>, including similar JobStat site exchange reports from 2004 with Maryland Department of Human Resources and 2002 with counties from California Department of Social Services.

Also, please see the New York HRA/FIA Web site at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/html/programs/fia.shtml> for more information about their operations and services.

Appendix A: Agenda



Welfare Peer TA Site Exchange
JobStat: Using Data to Achieve Outcomes
New York, New York
November 13th—14th, 2008

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH, 2008

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 8:15 a.m. | Meet in Hotel Lobby |
| 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | Welcome, Introductions, and JobStat Overview and Orientation
Address: 180 Water Street |
| 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. | JobStat/VendorStat Meeting Observation
Site visit participants will observe an actual JobStat meeting held at New York City's Human Resources Administration (HRA). Participants will watch as Job Center Directors, Regional Managers and HRA staff meet to review the performance of New York City's Job Centers and discuss improvement strategies. Participants will receive a step-by-step account detailing the information discussed and the anticipated next steps. A period for questions and answers will be made available. |
| 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. | Working Lunch – Question and Answer Session with Seth Diamond (lunch to be provided by NYC) |
| 2:00 – 2:30 p.m. | Transition to WeCARE site in Brooklyn (by van) |
| 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | Introductions and Overview of WeCARE |
| 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Tour of WeCARE Site in Brooklyn, NY
Workers of various staff levels will be on-hand to address programmatic questions and concerns raised by participants. A focus on diagnosis aspect, talking with case managers, etc. |
| 5:00 p.m. | Transition Back to Hotel |

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH, 2008

- 8:15 a.m. **Meet in Hotel Lobby**
- 9:00 a.m.– 10:20 a.m. **Walking Tour of Job Center**
Workers of various staff levels will be on-hand to address programmatic questions and concerns raised by participants. Participants will observe individual job roles and functions through job shadowing.
- 10:20 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Walking Tour of Vendor Center**
Workers of various staff levels will be on-hand to address programmatic questions and concerns raised by participants. Participants will observe individual job roles and functions through job shadowing.
- 11:45 a.m. – Noon. **Break**
- Noon – 1:00 p.m.
(Hawaii and WPTA team will leave meeting early) **Employment Meeting (at JobStat Site – 180 Water Street, Manhattan)**
Participants attend a weekly meeting with top employment and systems people reviewing issues and initiatives. New York and Hawaii participants will have the opportunity to discuss mutual challenges, issues, and initiatives.
- 1:00 p.m.– 3:30 p.m. **Lunch and Facilitated Action Planning Session (at JobStat Site – 180 Water Street, Manhattan)**
Hawaii staff will meet to synthesize learning and begin initial action planning of next steps. Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network staff will facilitate this session. Lunch will be on own.
- 3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. **Meeting Wrap-Up (at JobStat Site – 180 Water Street, Manhattan)**
This technical assistance event will end with a debriefing of the site visit. Participants will be asked to provide feedback by completing event evaluations for project staff.

Appendix B: Participant List

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