



2014 Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency: Tools for ACF Region V and VII TANF Programs September 4-5, 2014

Summary Report



This technical assistance activity was funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, Regions V and VII and managed by ICF International for Contract No. **HHSP2332009563WC**, Task Order **HHSP2337018T** "TANF Training and Technical Assistance."

James Butler, Federal Project Officer
Renee Rainey, Project Manager
Caterina Bummara, Task Manager



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Day One – September 4, 2014.....	3
Welcome and Opening Remarks	3
State Leadership Meeting with ACF and OFA Leadership and Regional Office Staff.....	4
Policy Updates from the Office of Family Assistance	5
Workforce Attachment Strategies: Subsidized and Sectoral Employment	7
The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)	14
Understanding the Importance of Executive Functioning and Soft Skills to Economic Success.....	16
Closing Remarks.....	18
Day Two – September 5, 2014	19
Homelessness Discussion	19
State Dialogue and Topical Discussion	23
Closing Remarks.....	26

Introduction

On August September 4-5, 2014, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Regions V & VII convened the *Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency: Tools for ACF Regions V and VII* in Chicago, Illinois. This meeting brought together Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program staff from 10 States to learn about promising practices, engage in strategic dialogue, and establish stronger connections and exchanges with peers to improve program outcomes and promote family economic well-being. During the meeting, State representatives shared promising practices for collaborating with State, local, and community agencies to successfully serve TANF participants. Attendees also heard from national experts and ACF and OFA Central Office leadership on a variety of topics related to homelessness and housing stability, innovative workforce development strategies, and Executive Functioning and soft skills development. Over the course of the one and one-half day conference a number of specific topics were examined, including:

- Workforce Attachment Strategies: Subsidized and Sectoral Employment;
- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- Understanding the Importance of Executive Functioning and Soft Skills to Economic Success; and
- Homelessness.

This report summarizes key highlights from the *Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency: Tools for ACF Regions V and VII*.

Day One – September 4, 2014

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- **Gary Allen**, TANF Regional Program Manager, Administration for Children and Families, Region VII
- **Thomas Schindler**, TANF Regional Program Manager, Administration for Children and Families, Region V

Mr. Thomas Schindler, TANF Regional Program Manager, Administration for Children and Families, Region V, welcomed participants to the bi-regional meeting to discuss common goals and outcomes for TANF programs and to share innovative strategies for increasing self-sufficiency for low-income individuals and families. Mr. Gary Allen, TANF Region VII Program

Manager, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, encouraged participant dialogue throughout the meeting before introducing Mr. Mark Greenberg, Acting Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families, and Ms. Susan Golonka, Acting Director, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families.

State Leadership Meeting with ACF and OFA Leadership and Regional Office Staff

- **Mark Greenberg**, Acting Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families
- **Susan Golonka**, Acting Director, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families
- **Gary Allen**, TANF Regional Program Manager, Administration for Children and Families, Region VII
- **Thomas Schindler**, TANF Regional Program Manager, Administration for Children and Families, Region V

During this session participants, including State Commissioners, Secretaries and State TANF Directors and staff, were provided an opportunity to engage in an interactive dialogue with Administration for Children and Families (ACF) leadership, Office of Family Assistance (OFA), and Regional Offices about National and State issues of significance related to the TANF program and Administration priorities for promoting economic and family stability. Discussion points included challenges faced by human services agencies and ways the federal government can support human service agencies; how TANF can be used to support a “two-generation” approach to reducing poverty; challenges and successes in developing employment opportunities for TANF recipients; State successes in providing comprehensive, integrated services to families served by multiple systems; and how the growing knowledge about the role of Executive Functioning and of the impact of toxic stress/adverse experiences in childhood can help stakeholders design programs that will achieve better outcomes for families.

To facilitate dialogue around these issues, participants began the session by providing information about their programs and discussion topics relevant to their States. Topics discussed by participants included:

- Additional information about work participation rates (WPR) and documentation rates;
- Demonstration projects and issues related to subsidized employment;
- Integration of existing eligibility systems and streamlining policies and processes for effective and coordinated benefits delivery among programs;

- Development of new eligibility systems within States;
- Alignment of rules for all Federal programs, integrated delivery of human services, and an interest in learning if number of work eligible activities could be expanded;
- Employment and other barriers for long-term TANF participants;
- Successful partnerships with fatherhood programs and family organizations;
- Mental health referral options and best practices for TANF participants;
- Reviewing work verification plans and quality assurance systems in place;
- Impact of state and congressional leadership changes on State programs and policies; and
- Achieving desired program outcomes amid budget constraints.

Policy Updates from the Office of Family Assistance

- **Mark Greenberg**, Acting Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families
- **Susan Golonka**, Acting Director, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families

Building upon the previous discussion, Ms. Susan Golonka, Acting Director of the Office of Family Assistance, began the session by encouraging attendees to think about how TANF can better serve low-income families as a comprehensive effort. TANF has a clear mission to help low-income families move toward self-sufficiency, and Ms. Golonka asked participants to think about program changes that would better serve those families.

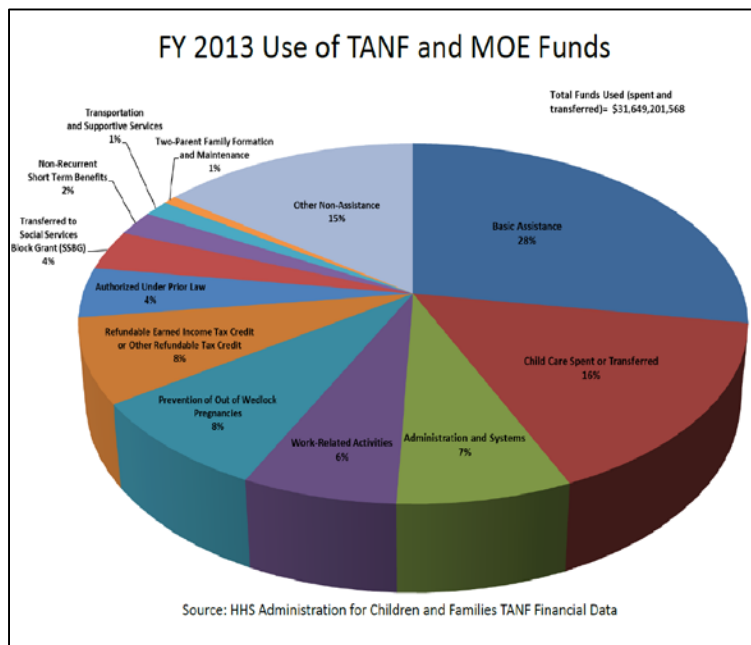
Ms. Golonka also provided updates on two topics. The first was the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) transaction requirement from the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 that requires States receiving TANF grants to maintain policies and practices that will prevent assistance provided under the program from being used in EBT transactions in any liquor store; casino, gambling casino, or gambling establishment; or at any retail establishment that provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment.¹ ACF published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)² in the Federal

¹ The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-112publ96/pdf/PLAW-112publ96.pdf>.

² The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-02-06/html/2014-02488.htm>.

Register on February 6, 2014 that provides instructions on how to submit comments that will help outline ACF's thoughts and decision processes of the Final Rule. ACF has received responses on the NPRM from States, EBT vendors, organizations, and advocacy groups that will inform the design of the Final Rule. The second topic Ms. Golonka reminded attendees about was the quarterly financial reporting form revisions. In Fiscal Year 2015, States will be reporting via a new form with updated categories on their TANF expenditures (ACF-196R).³

Figure One



Finally, Ms. Golonka announced an upcoming TA initiative, a policy academy that OFA is sponsoring, in which approximately eight States will be selected for a 15-month engagement focused on improving employment outcomes. This new initiative's goal is to restore TANF's ability to serve as a safety net and a vehicle to move towards employment. Ms. Golonka reported that additional details about the initiative would be forthcoming.

Mr. Mark Greenberg, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families, remarked that many things can only be accomplished by being together in person, and applauded participants from both Regions for coming to Chicago to engage with one another. Mr. Greenberg next discussed the FY 2013 Use of TANF and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Funds, shown in **Figure One**. The pie chart of TANF financial data shows that the Total Funds Used (spent and transferred) in FY 2013 was \$31,649,201,568, and breaks the funds down by sections, the biggest of which was Basic Assistance at 28 percent, followed by Child Care Spent or Transferred at 16 percent, and then Other Non-Assistance at 15 percent.

Mr. Greenberg addressed making changes to TANF programs. Although an available pathway to change is through legislation and federal regulations, the path towards legislative changes can

³ More information and instructions on this topic can be found on the OFA PeerTA website at: https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/uploadedFiles/revised_acf_196r_196_instructions_-nh_15_md.pdf.

be long. However, ACF and OFA can help States and Territories by providing policy guidance through posting questions and subsequent answers online.⁴ Further, Mr. Greenberg urged those involved in TANF redesign efforts that the best way to start is to begin with a clear vision of what States want to accomplish.

The last point Mr. Greenberg made was regarding research. ACF is an evidence-based administration and they take evidence seriously in the TANF program, as well as all other areas. One of the biggest challenges is that sometimes the evidence does not answer questions about what is happening now. OFA is attempting to make research more practical. An example of this is through a major experimental design they have undertaken on building career pathways to sustainable progress in the labor force in which they are working closely with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Further, some ongoing research efforts that will help human services become more evidence-based include the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program, and research efforts around subsidized employment, job search, early childhood adversity work, trauma-informed care, two-generational strategies, and working with non-custodial parents.

Workforce Attachment Strategies: Subsidized and Sectoral Employment

- **Betty Toelle**, TANF Program Manager, Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services, Nebraska Subsidized Employment Pilot Project
- **Stan Koutstaal**, Ph.D, Program Manager, Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program
- **Kathleen Cloutier**, Executive Director, Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center

The goal of this session was to provide specific strategies for using subsidized and sectoral employment for improving workforce participation and employment outcomes for TANF participants. Participants were engaged in issues relating to workforce attachment strategies, particularly subsidized and sectoral employment.

To begin the conversation, Ms. Betty Toelle, TANF Program Manager, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, introduced the Nebraska Subsidized Employment Pilot Project and their Good Hires program, in partnership with Goodwill Industries. The Good Hire program was slated as a four year engagement that allocated \$1 million per year of the four year program,

⁴ TANF information including Q & A can be found on the ACF website at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource-library>.

and sought to provide subsidized employment in four Nebraska areas: Omaha, Lincoln, Northern, and Central/Western Nebraska.

After providing the overall program structure, Ms. Toelle discussed the challenges that presented themselves while working through the pilot program. Among the challenges identified, were providing participants with an understanding of the program goals and the program's role as the employer, as well as working with individuals who had reached their "job search limit". Additional concerns included dealing with referral processes for individuals to enter the Good Hire program. Ms. Toelle informed meeting attendees that in order for an individual in Nebraska to be considered for the program, that individual needed to be "work ready" and identified as such, versus remaining in programs dealing with on-the-job-training (OJT), which in Nebraska are funded through TANF.

During the course of the program, one concern was making sure that there was adequate and proper support for rural Nebraska areas, as well as monitoring of how the funding was spent. Of the funding earmarked for this program, there was a 10 percent limit placed on spending on administrative personnel, and \$600,000 of the funding was to be spent on subsidies. With an outline of some of the issues that were currently being experienced by Nebraska Subsidized Employment Pilot Project, Ms. Toelle laid the ground for discussion for the subsequent presentation.

Ms. Kathleen Cloutier, Executive Director of Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island offered additional information regarding employment outcomes through a discussion of her organization, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island (DIIRI), a training provider and a human services organization whose mission is to work with vulnerable populations to integrate them into the community and help them achieve self-sufficiency. Ms. Cloutier provided background on DIIRI, noting that DIIRI is a large organization serving 15,000 individuals across many service areas. DIIRI resettles approximately 150 refugees each year, who are allowed access to benefits almost immediately because of their refugee status. Almost 80 percent of the individuals served by DIIRI live in Providence, with about 13 percent of the Rhode Island population being foreign born.

DIIRI initially developed programming based on what it thought the populations needed. But, after sending out several surveys and conducting focus groups, DIIRI discovered they were not adequately providing needed services to clients. With this, DIIRI staff realized they needed to incorporate a holistic approach to providing services. To implement this approach, DIIRI has begun to do a full assessment of people's needs and goals.

DIIRI recognizes the friction between work and education in that most people cannot do both. To combat this, access to education has to be flexible enough to consider child care, transportation, and other barriers. DIIRI has tried to be flexible in terms of class offerings, the opening of a computer learning center, and offering Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESL). In addition, Ms. Cloutier provided a sampling of the basic supports offered by DIIRI, including:

- Intake Assessment;
- Individual Service Plan Development;
- Case Management;
- Translation Services; and
- Citizenship Services.

Ms. Cloutier concluded with a discussion of the program's outcomes from July 2013 to June 2014. It was noted that during this time Rhode Island's unemployment rate ranked third highest in the country, so program success was not only imperative in helping individuals, but also understood to be a work in progress. Of the 264 students participating in DIIRI programming, 98 participants or 37 percent were employed, with an average starting wage of \$9.16 an hour. Out of these, 76 percent stayed employed for more than 90 days and 71 percent were no longer receiving cash assistance. She concluded her presentation by summarizing strategies for improved outcomes, indicating that for low-literacy individuals, continued education is the key for lifelong self-sufficiency. Additionally, Ms. Cloutier noted that a minimum of one year should be allowed for ESL and General Educational Development (GED), and she stated that providing transportation and child care would allow people to focus on their education without having to worry about stressful barriers.

Finally, Ms. Cloutier suggested integrating refugees and U.S. born citizens into programming. She has found that this creates learning communities that are helpful for motivating and inspiring one another. The final speaker, Dr. Stan Koutstaal, Program Manager, Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) Program provided an overview of the HPOG program and its programmatic goals – to provide education and training to TANF recipients and other low-income individuals for in-demand, well-paying healthcare occupations. Dr. Koutstaal led by discussing the Job-Driven Training Checklist and how the HPOG exemplifies elements of job-driven training. Dr. Koutstaal began by providing information to the participating attendees regarding HPOG. HPOG, which is a five-year grant program, is approaching the end of its fourth year and aims to educate and train TANF participants and other low-income individuals. The



goal of this training is to provide access to better jobs in within the healthcare realm for program participants. Healthcare sector occupations are the target of this grant because of the continued growth and opportunity for employment within this sector. The HPOG program consist of 32 grantees, including local workforce investment boards (WIBs) community colleges, community- and state-based organizations, and Tribal programs. Over the five year period, HPOG had initially projected to serve 30,000 students, but as of September 2014, HPOG programs had enrolled over 30,000 people, as well as having already provided training for more than 50 healthcare occupations.

Dr. Koutstaal continued by providing additional background of the key component to the HPOG program, the Job-Driven Training Checklist, which as aforementioned aims to provide education and training to TANF recipients and other low-income individuals for in-demand, well-paying healthcare occupations. The Job-Driven Training Checklist was first mentioned in the State of the Union Address in January 2014. President Obama later signed a Presidential Memorandum for workers and assigned Vice President Biden a 180-day action plan to make training programs more job-driven, integrated, and effective, for occupation in high-demand and would provide the highest likelihood of the individual gaining employment. In order for this to occur, the HPOG program involves a strong focus on labor-market information and forming partnerships with area programs to support the programs. The Job-Driven Training Checklist was developed with the help of representatives from multiple Departments, including DOL, HHS, and ED. And was provided to the President and Vice President on the same day the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – which was discussed later in the meeting. The Checklist consist of the following: Engaging Employers, Earn and Learn, Smart Choices, Measurement Matters, Stepping Stones, Opening Doors, and Regional Partnerships. Below, Dr. Koutstaal provided participants with an overview of each of the elements, used an HPOG program to provide an example of each step in action.

Engaging Employers

This Checklist element describes the importance of working with employers to determine hiring needs and design training programs with the local area in mind, while still being responsive to needs as they arise. The Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB), an HPOG example, partnered with Aurora Healthcare to provide Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training. The training is provided in a hospital setting which allows for hands-on learning and more readily translates to job opportunities by area hospitals. This partnership was in response to limited training placements available to TANF participants that would adequately equip them for post-training employment. Training was relocated through a philanthropic gift, and MAWIB was willing to pay fees for TANF participants and other low-income individuals to receive

training. Additionally, Aurora Healthcare was willing to reinvest the fees to cover the cost of relocation. The most recent employment data indicates that the partnership has been successful in meeting overall goals.

Earn and Learn

The next Checklist item entails offering work-based learning opportunities with employers as training paths to employment. Such “earn and learn” opportunities include on-the-job training, internships, pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships, such as those offered by Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC), a community college HPOG grantee. EGCC has made efforts to engage employers and identify challenges employers are facing; from these steps, the program learned that employers were having difficulty devoting time and resources to help new employees adjust to a new work environment. As a result, Project HOPE, a program on community college campuses, including EGCC, designed an on-the-job training contract that reimbursed employers for instructors’ time. The on-the-job training contract ensures new hires are well-trained and reduces employee turnover. Consequently, EGCC now has strong relationships with 40 employers and serves as a prime example of working to establish earn and learn initiatives for HPOG program participants.

Smart Choices

Smart Choices consists of making better use of data to drive accountability, informing what programs are offered and what is taught, while offering user-friendly information for job seekers to choose programs and pathways that work for them and are likely to result in jobs for individuals. With this, the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium, an HPOG program in New York, seeks to be responsive to the needs of employers and local economic conditions. When the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium applied for the grant they had relationships with some local healthcare employers and surveyed them for their workforce needs. Based on the results they offered training for six occupations:

- Direct Support Professional;
- Medical Billing Clerk;
- Pharmacy Technician;
- Medical Office Assistant;
- Licensed Practical Nurse; and
- Health Information Technician.

During the second year of the grant, the program reexamined the needs of its employers. Based on the information gathered the Consortium was able to reduce enrollment targets for some occupations and some other new targeted occupations were added, including:

- Home Health Aide;
- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for Registered Nurses (RNs), which cover tuition and training related expenses associated with health related demand occupations; and
- Surgical Technology Training.

Additionally, Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development convened roundtable meetings with employers, allowing the program to learn not just what occupations were in-demand but also what expectations employers had for the workers in those positions. Based on what they learned more attention to soft skills training and workplace readiness was implemented. By working directly with employers, Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium was able to tailor programs to prepare students for jobs that are in-demand.

Measurement Matters

This Checklist element captures the need to measure and track employment and earnings outcomes. The HPOG program engages in large amounts measurement and evaluation. Currently, 25,000 HPOG participants are enrolled in a healthcare occupational program, with 17,000 having completed at least one program, and 14,000 have become employed. Data is collected at an individual level and can be aggregated to get a picture of how each grant is doing, moreover by aggregating data across all grants a picture of the HPOG program is doing can also be attained.

HPOG program grantees are familiar with the data as they submit semi-annual reports, allowing HPOG staff within the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) evaluate individual program TA needs, as well as overarching trends among HPOG grantees overall.

Stepping Stones

The fifth element of the Checklist, Stepping Stones, recalls the progressive nature of effective training, allowing for each experience to build into another. The educational experiences cut across work-based training and education services, constructing a career ladder for each participant, ultimately leading to career, not simply a job. The College of Menominee Nation, an HPOG grantee in Wisconsin, provided the grounds for this portion of the checklist. Their career pathway starts with a thorough assessment process, where the student and program staff work together to create an individualized success plan for the student. After assessment, students enter an intensive “boot camp” to address academic readiness issues, such as basic education,

time management, test-taking, study skills, critical thinking, financial literacy, and building learning communities. The student is also provided with targeted support services, such as child care or transportation assistance, to help them overcome barriers to completing their education or moving into employment. Students then take a short-term training (120 classroom hours) as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and are then assisted in finding employment.

Opening Doors

The goal of “Opening Doors” is to break down barriers to accessing job-driven training and hiring for any American willing to work. Dr. Koutstaal discussed the South Carolina Department of Social Services, who uses the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) tool. Through the use of this tool, South Carolina case managers were able to approach participants’ desires, objectives, strengths, and barriers from a holistic perspective. Consequently, conversations between case managers and participants regarding barriers such as domestic violence and substance abuse among other topics were discussed and because of this holistic understanding there was an increase in the number of individuals assessed.

Regional Partnerships

The last portion of the Checklist describes the importance of coordinating American Job Centers, local employers, education groups, and more to make the most of limited resources. The San Diego Workforce Partnership is a highlighted HPOG program for developing Regional Partnerships. The Workforce created a common customer group, including themselves, four community-based organizations, California Health and Human Services Agency, CalWorks (San Diego’s TANF Program), contractors, and the city of San Diego subsidized housing authorities. These stakeholders map the service offerings of each and collaborate to identify and fill gaps. To help them learn about each other, the group developed a matrix of support services that participants needed along with the organizations that were able to supply the services. All the community organizations had rules that governed what participants they served and how. By agreeing to share information and resources, the common customer group was able to make the most effective decisions for the most customers

Dr. Koutstaal closed by providing resources for meeting attendees, including the [HPOG forecast](#)⁵ located on the ACF website and encouraged participants to apply for next year’s HPOG grant competition.

• ⁵ HPOG Forecast can be found here:
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/hhsgrantsforecast/index.cfm?switch=grant.view&gff_grants_forecastInfoID=70680

The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)

- **Corey Bullock**, Region 5, Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA)
- **Rose Zibert**, Region 5, Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA)

During this session, Mr. Corey Bullock and Ms. Rose Zibert of the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA) provided participants with an overview of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Mr. Bullock began by providing the origins of WIOA, which was signed into law on July 22, 2014 by President Barak Obama. WIOA replaces the Workforce Invest Act (WIA) of 1998, and retains and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It was important, as Ms. Zibert emphasized, that participants understand that WIOA would continue WIA's broad vision of workforce programs and build on proven practice such as sector strategies, career pathways, and work-based training to name a few. Additionally, WIOA plans to enhance four core programs, among them:

- DOL-ETA: Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth formula programs and Wagner-Peyser employment services; and
- Department of Education (DoED): Adult education and literacy programs and Vocational Rehabilitation state grant programs that assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment.

With the enhancement of these programs, WIOA would require states to strategically align their workforce development programs, developing a four-year strategy plan that adheres to their state goals, with the option of developing a single state plan or a combined state plan.

Continuing, Mr. Bullock and Ms. Zibert touched upon the improvements to be made to the American Job Center System, otherwise known as the One-Stops. With the new WIOA system, the One-Stops will continue to serve as the access points for employment-related training services, introducing new key partners, such as TANF, to better bolster the services offered. Integral to this transformation of the One-Stop will be the promotion of an integrated intake system, updated case management, and a reporting system to include fiscal and management accountability system updates. Furthermore, states will be required to establish criteria to

certify One-Stops at least every three years to ensure continuous improvement and access to services including virtual services, and integrated service delivery. WIOA will require states to identify economic regions within their state, and local areas to coordinate planning and service delivery on a regional basis, ultimately contributing to the development and fostering of regional collaboration. Mr. Bullock and Ms. Zibert offered that while the updated program will reinforce connections with registered apprenticeship programs – recognizing completion certificates as part of post-secondary credentials and as a career pathway for Job Corps students – its key tenements will be the investment in serving vulnerable populations, among them:

- Indian and Native Americans;
- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers;
- Job Corps; and
- YouthBuild.

Mr. Bullock and Ms. Zibert provided information specifically regarding the approach WIOA would implement to interact with these vulnerable populations, beginning with a key investment in disconnect youth. The focus here was to increase the use of proven service models, such as requirements of using 75 percent of youth formula funds to serve out-of-school youth, compared to the 30 percent as formerly mandated by WIA, while also increasing the out-of-school youth group age to 24. Finally, the investments to be made with disconnected youth includes the stipulations that local areas must spend at least 20 percent of their youth formula funds on work experience activities such as summer jobs, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and internships so that youth are prepared for employment – ultimately aimed at preparing this group for successful employment opportunities. Mr. Bullock and Ms. Zibert went on to discuss further improvements to populations such as low-skilled adult workers and dislocated workers; individual with disabilities; services to unemployment insurance (UI) claimants; and services for veterans.

Mr. Bullock and Ms. Zibert closed with a discussion of key implementation dates. It was of importance to note that WIOA would become fully effective on July 1, 2015, the first full program year following the enactment, as the Notice for Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) must be published by January 18, 2015. Title IV, amendments to the Rehabilitation Act would take effect immediately and the State Unified Plans and Common Performance Accountability provisions taking effect July 1, 2016, followed by Final Rules publication by January 22, 2016.

Understanding the Importance of Executive Functioning and Soft Skills to Economic Success

- **LaDonna Pavetti**, Vice President, Family Income Support at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Ms. LaDonna Pavetti, Vice President, Family Income Support at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities provided attendees an overview of the importance of Executive Functioning, beginning by asking meeting participants what they believed to be the largest barrier for low-income individuals with regards to work programs and economic success. Building upon the conversation, Ms. Pavetti commented that she typically heard from programs that the common barrier for low-income individuals and TANF participants to be the individuals' inability to be physically present and participate in programs aimed at serving these skills.

Ms. Pavetti provide an understanding of Executive Functioning – which can be defined as mental functions or skills that support goal-directed behavior. These skills are integral in setting expectations regarding short and long-term goals and are occasionally viewed as “soft skills,” such as planning time management, and self-control among other skills. With labor market shifts, the demand for hard skills, coupled with basic soft-skills and Executive Functioning, have risen dramatically. In fact, as explained by Ms. Pavetti, Executive Functioning skills are critical for job success – as poor Executive Functioning skills lead to poor productivity among other issues – and cognitive, social, and psychological development. In addition to Executive Functioning being the act of self-regulation to achieve goals, it is also involves activating, orchestrating, monitoring, evaluating and adapting different strategies to accomplish different tasks; understanding of how people tap their knowledge and skills and how they stay motivated to accomplish their goals; and possessing the ability to analyze situations, plan and take action, focus and maintain attention and adjust actions as needed to get the job done.

This idea of planning, self-control, and regulation, or monitoring, are the tenements on which the Executive Functioning framework is built. Silvia Bunge, a neuroscientist at Berkley, identified the three aforementioned elements of her Executive Functioning model:

- Planning: What do I need to do to achieve my goals?
- Self-Control: How can I control my behavior to stay on track?
- Monitoring: How did I do and what changes do I need to make?

Ms. Pavetti provided insight into how Executive Functioning skills in disadvantaged adults may have arisen, and what is currently known in this area. Living in poverty greatly affects Executive

Functioning, both in childhood and adulthood. During childhood, living in improvised conditions can critically impact brain development. These impacts are seen on brain scans, and while this disparate impact on the brain does not go away, it is important to note that the brain is malleable – meaning Executive Functioning skills can be built or taught, despite not being naturally acquired due to living conditions.

Living in poverty also has an impact on brain development, being taxing on brain function which leaves fewer cognitive resources to succeed at parenting, education, or in the professional environment. Thus, brains are malleable, what is occurring in the life of an individual matters and affects what an individual is expected to achieve and what resources are available to achieve these task. Understanding what impairs Executive Functioning can help service providers reach clients and develop these skills.

Ms. Pavetti provided participants information on how Executive Functioning skills can be improved, noting that Executive Functioning skills are not about teaching, but rather practicing and challenging an individual to move in gradual steps beyond his or her level of comfort. To help an individual learn skills, the skill needs to be broken into steps and repeated until the act becomes easier and inherent to the individual. For example, instead of providing a workshop on time management, service providers should help individuals develop a schedule for the day, and to have the individual practice and perform the task on the developed schedule until it becomes routine and regular, which is how Executive Functioning is developed.

Additionally, understanding what motivates an individual is a critical building block for understanding and addressing weaknesses within adults with Executive Functioning issues. Understanding that adults can be motivated by praise for their efforts, valuing their opinions, or providing incentives are crucial ways to improving skills.

Overall, Ms. Pavetti provided insight into the key elements of an informed approach to Executive Functioning and programs that were effectively using the principles established from these approaches. Ms. Pavetti provided the following skills to consider when implementing Executive Functioning skills:

- *Goal-setting* – This is the starting point for building Executive Functioning skills. Goals provide a concrete representation of what individuals are aiming to achieve.
- *Coaching* – This is a process of working with individuals on an ongoing basis to help them develop goals and then establish a link between long-term goals and the daily behavior they need to perform to achieve those long-term goals. Coaching is a collaborative, solution-focused, results-oriented and systematic process.

- *Practice* – Within this approach, Executive Functioning skills are built by doing -- by practicing them over and over again -- not by teaching them in a classroom or even individually.
- *Reflection on progress* – This is a key component of achieving goals and of building executive function skills is reflecting on the outcomes of one’s actions and making adjustments when things are not producing the intended results.
- *Scaffolding* – This is a key strategy for building Executive Functioning skills is breaking tasks or skills into manageable chunks and providing a “scaffold” for each chunk. The goal is to develop a series of steps that allows success to beget success.
- *Incentives* – In the context of building Executive Functioning skills, incentives are used to reward the behaviors or interim accomplishments that will help individuals to achieve their long-term goals. Incentives help to keep participants motivated long enough to achieve their long-term goals.
- *Accommodations/environmental modifications* – When Executive Functioning skills are very weak and time is limited, the best strategy for achieving success may be to acknowledge and accommodate the limitations.
- *Peer support* – Peers can provide support, modeling and a sense of belonging for individuals building their own Executive Functioning skills.

With this context, Ms. Pavetti provided information of several organizations and their programmatic implementation of Executive Functioning, showing meeting participants the practical applications of Executive Functioning at the programmatic level. Among these programs, the New Haven Mom’s Partnership engaged these principals within their program interviewing mothers of their needed skills, from which it was discovered stress management was the chief response. In order to address this stressor, the partnership provided 16 lessons centered on cognitive behavioral therapy. These innovative lessons included items such a Zumba for stress relief, and provided incentives for program participation with the ultimate goal of assisting in building partnerships among mothers in the community.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Gary Allen, TANF Region VII Program Manager, and Mr. Thomas Schindler, TANF Region V Program Manager recapped the day’s sessions and thanked participants.

Day Two – September 5, 2014

Homelessness Discussion

- **Beverley Ebersold**, Regional Coordinator, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
- **Catherine Peterson**, Senior Management Analyst, HUD
- **Deborah Schlick**, Project Manager, Office of Innovation, Economic Assistance and Employment Supports, Minnesota Department of Human Services

To begin the second day, the regions were introduced to Ms. Beverley Ebersold, Regional Coordinator for the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. Ms. Ebersold began the day's conversation surrounding homelessness by introducing the mission of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and how this mission is aligned with that of TANF managers. The role of the Council is three-fold:

1. To coordinate the federal response to homelessness;
2. To maximize the effectiveness of their 19 federal agency partners; and
3. To drive collaborative solutions.

Understanding that communication is key when interacting with various federal agencies, collaboration needs to occur across state and community lines to provide better access to mainstream federal programs. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness is not only focused on providing economic security through good jobs to those at-risk and experiencing homelessness, but also providing emergency shelter. USICH has set forth four bold and ambitious goals:

1. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015;
2. Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by 2015;
3. Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and
4. Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

The overall theme when thinking of “opening doors” to accomplish these goals include an increase in some major priority areas, such as leadership, collaboration, civic engagement, economic security, and re-tooling the homeless crisis response system among others. Ms. Ebersold discussed that the USICH is on a path to accomplish these goals and shared that Phoenix, Arizona is an example of an area where the four aforementioned goals are likely to be accomplished.

To understand homelessness among families and children, it was noted that in 2013, 222,197 people in families were experiencing homelessness on a single night, which amounts to about 70,960 households. Moreover, 130,515 children under the age of 18 are living in families experiencing homelessness on any given night over the course of a year and 80% of families are headed by a single mother. In working with partners at the state, local, and federal level to strengthen the local crisis response system, the USICH has targeted four key action areas to ensure that no family is living unsheltered:

1. To shorten episodes of family homelessness by providing resources that enable families;
2. To assist families in safely re-entering permanent housing as quickly as possible;
3. To link families to benefits, supports and community-based services; and
4. To identify and implement effective prevention methods to help families avoid homelessness.

The first of these action areas is the development of a centralized and coordinated entry system, meaning that all organizations working with the homeless population would not only institute similar assessments that would quicken entry and referrals, but also provide safety planning to help domestic violence victims who become homeless and tailor interventions to the family of individuals. Ms. Ebersold explained that the tailored intervention, the second of the four action areas, can be improved through building evidence based practices which can lead to improved outcomes for parents and children. These practices can and should revolve around trauma informed care, early childhood education and school partnerships, and increasing access to affordable housing among other assistance. Furthermore, there needs to be an increased connection to mainstream resources. Federal programs while integral in helping the identify population, cannot support all the vital needs of individuals themselves. The USICH understands that mainstream programs can affect a targeted larger audience and can further assist in the education and engagement to create direct access for people experiencing homelessness. For example, Ms. Ebersold explained that a change in language when discussing housing and the homeless population to be a starting point; a simple switch to “housing stability” from “homelessness” could be the perception and cultural change that could further reduce the impact on individuals. Finally, state programs should understand they have the ability to use federal dollars in innovative manners. For example, federal rules allows states to use TANF dollars in a manner that will assist the homeless – increasing the number of states accessing this provided options that will be key in combating the housing stability issue.

Ms. Ebersold continued the discussion by providing several examples of state initiatives. For example, in New Jersey after the success of an initial rapid re-housing demonstration project

launched in January 2010, New Jersey's Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS) implemented a second rapid re-housing pilot program, called The Family Housing Initiative. MCBOSS was inspired by what they saw as a more responsive and less expensive way to rapidly house families and have them exit TANF through employment. The hallmark of the program is the creation of the "Rapid Exit Team," comprised of nine in-house staff people. This team works with all homeless families who are TANF-eligible, providing intensive case management services designed to help families stabilize in their new housing and ensuring that families have the resources they need to stay stably housed. In these scenarios, assistance in finding affordable housing is the primary goal. Employment services are another goal of The Family Housing Initiative's case management, with families being offered parenting support, budgeting assistance and child care services. Families assisted with the Family Housing Initiative would receive an average of five months rental assistance and case management support, at an average cost of \$7,050 per household. Families in the Family Housing Initiative received more focused and specialized employment support than families assisted in the initial pilot. The program observed that as families moved more quickly into employment, they required shorter amounts of rental assistance than families assisted in the first rapid re-housing pilot.

The objective of the Rapid Exit Team is to move homeless cases from shelters/motels to permanent housing within 30 days, utilizing both agency and external provider resources. All non-homeless, at-risk households are serviced by the remaining MCBOSS social workers and all caseloads are smaller for both teams. The MCBOSS reports that the use of existing staff helps to keep costs low and makes it easier to coordinate housing and employment interventions.

Since implementing the new approach, Mercer County has seen the average daily utilization of family emergency shelter and transitional housing decline by 20 percent and use of motel vouchers to accommodate families without shelter decline by 66 percent. Families are reconnecting to housing faster and spending less time in homeless assistance programs. With regard to employment outcomes, Mercer County reports that rapidly re-housed families appear to fare better than families with similar employment barriers served through long-term transitional housing programs. A higher percentage of families exiting homelessness with rapid re-housing have greater income from work than those families exiting transitional housing. In addition, their overall household incomes are higher: families exiting rapid re-housing have an average monthly household income of \$835.00, while families exiting transitional housing show an average monthly income of \$558.00. Ms. Ebersold also provided examples from Massachusetts, Utah, and Washington and concluded by offering the following advice to the state leadership individuals and TANF managers present:

- Encourage and utilize coordinating bodies like State Interagency Councils;
- Evaluate how state governments can better support local units of government;
- Provide examples of success and successful practices;
- Ensure the adoption and implementation of best practices; and
- Involve citizens and the private sector.

Continuing the housing stability discussion, Ms. Catherine Peterson, Senior Management Analyst from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) within Chicago, Illinois provided a brief overview of the HUD Homeless Program, and the options available to individuals dealing with housing stability issues. The HUD Homeless Program starts with the notion of a continuum of care, which would promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address the issue of homelessness. In doing so, HUD would connect with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' (USICH) initiative to coordinate and integrate mainstream resources and programs targeting individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition to improving data collection and performance, each state's size dictates how many continuum of care programs, which can be tailored for the community, are available. Considering the provision of housing options is top priority for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, Ms. Peterson discussed two types of housing support: permanent and transitional housing. Permanent housing is community-based without a designated length of stay, allowing the formerly homeless individual to live as independently as possible, and includes such things as permanent supportive housing for persons with disability and rapid re-housing. In addition to permanent housing, there is transitional housing, which provides the homeless individual and/or families with the interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. Additionally, the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) tracks and measures performance and effectiveness of the housing provided to individuals in need. Ms. Peterson additionally provided information on HUD-Veterans Affairs on Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), which combines the HUD Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans and their families, with case management by the Administration for Veterans Affairs (VA). Finally, after providing additional information on several other housing options, including HOPWA – Housing Opportunities for Person with AIDS, whose funds can be used for activities such as acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of housing units, among others, and Rural Housing Stability Assistance, Ms. Petersons discussed the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). Funding from this grant provides the opportunity to engage homeless individuals, while improving the number and quality of emergency shelters and provide essential services to shelter residents. Ms.

Peterson concluded by taking questions from participants related to the discussed housing options and funding opportunities.

Rounding out the discussion on homelessness, Ms. Deborah Schlick, of the Office of Innovation within the Minnesota Department of Human Services provided participants with insight into how Minnesota addresses homelessness among its TANF population. Ms. Schlick pointed to policy implementation and the buy-in of programs as a crucial piece to the sustainability of Minnesota's attempt to curb homelessness. The State created a 12-point plan and included 11 commissioners to create an interagency council whose duties were to combat the issue of homelessness, including, as stated by the 12-point plan, to better connect individuals to main stream programs. Ms. Schlick discussed several areas of focus including cash assistance, bolstering county administered programs, and ensuring that housing search is an approved activity for identified families.

Ms. Schlick emphasized the need for some parity in the assistance a homeless individual or family receives and the actual market rate for fair housing. According to Ms. Schlick, 1992 was the last year when the reasonable going rate for a two bedroom apartment was equivalent to the aid that Minnesota area Federal programs could provide assistance in order to offer adequate housing. To better serve its low-income and homeless population, Minnesota put into place institutional changes, such as increasing the Earned Income Disregard limit and placed eligibility officers were placed at homeless shelters to provide greater accessibility for families. Additionally, individuals or families who were once a part of the Minnesota's Work Benefit Program, they receive \$25 a month for up to two years once they left the assistance program. This move in particular assisted in boosting Minnesota's work participation rate.

Finally, Ms. Schlick discussed reasons she believed families and individuals were applying for housing and other public assistance within Minnesota, chief among them being job loss. Ms. Schlick closed by encouraging participants to review research current and upcoming research on supportive services for homeless families, such as a recent study conducted by the University of Minnesota, including the Role of Supportive Housing in Homeless Children's Well-Being: An Investigation of Child Welfare Outcomes.⁶

⁶ <http://www.hearthconnection.org/storage/Child%20Study%20-%20Child%20Welfare%20Brief.pdf>

State Dialogue and Topical Discussion

To complete the day's agenda, the participants engaged in a state sharing session, facilitated by Gary Allen, TANF Regional Program Manager for Region VII and Thomas Schindler, TANF Regional Program Manager for Region V of the Administration for Children and Families. During the session, states discussed a range of topics, including the use of illicit drugs, noncustodial fathers, and employment and training issues among other topics.

Illicit Drug Use:

Missouri – Representatives from Missouri were concerned with illicit drug use amongst individuals receiving TANF funds. Representatives discussed the need for a protective payee if a child is present and the need to implement testing to determine eligibility. Further conversation provided information that the aforementioned items were being conducted, but the cash access was being restricted by the card holder. Additional conversation surrounded the need of the caseworker to be in charge of ensuring these requirements were met, and the presence of 5-10 bills in some states, hostile bills, that were being presented to address drug use.

Noncustodial Fathers:

Iowa – Iowa representatives stated they were working with a rather small fatherhood program, receiving about \$80,000 in funding this current year. This funding does not count towards the MOE.

Minnesota – Minnesota is currently funding a co-parent court in Hennepin County where the courts are attempting to create a co-parenting plan and including parenting class to assist the noncustodial parent and help mediate disputes. The program is taking a case management approach based on Wisconsin's approach that proposed disregarding child support payments as a means of increasing payments afterwards.

Wisconsin – Representatives from Wisconsin stated the state was in the planning process of implementing programs for the noncustodial father, specifically placement within TANF programs and providing access to case management services and access subsidized employment. This is being done by using TANF funds, not state funds, as it falls within the category of work preparation. Additional conversation pointed to a potential increase in child support payment if these services were offered to noncustodial fathers. The state is looking at a transitional jobs demonstration to be done under ARRA, which has some funding attached, but small.

Employment and Training (E&T)/SNAP:

General discussion revolved around Washington State and the model currently in place in the state. The state worked with community based organizations on employment and training services and used private dollars as match funding – every dollar into E&T that goes to an individual on SNAP is matched at 50 cents to every dollar.

Kansas – The representatives of Kansas stated they were using labor market projections in planning employment services. By using indicators to identify the major industries in the area counties and providing training, there has been an increase in the long term employment and wages of clients going through employment training. Additional work has been included around case manager relationships with clients, in an attempt to provide better services.

Nebraska – Nebraska representatives stated they were currently looking to increase TANF levels and searching for means to convene a legislative committee to gather more information around the use of labor market information.

Racial Disparities:

Minnesota – The representatives from Minnesota have identified disparities within the American Indian population and African-American population, and are currently developing targeting approaches to these populations in the area of employment outcomes. Data shows that counties that have significant populations of African-Americans and Native Americans display a large disparity, and while the state attempted to construct and RFP to gain dollars in this area, it was discovered very little information and research existed. Additional conversation surround the disparities within the foreigner/non-native populations, specifically between foreigner and native US population, the immigrant population surpasses the native US population with regards to employment performance.

Advocacy Group/Legislative Interactions:

Illinois: The state legislative branch proposed an increase to increase child support pass thru, but unfortunately the bill did not make it though. The Illinois representatives stated they were hopeful the issue would be resurrected this fall legislative session because of the support of local advocacy groups.

Integrating Information Management Systems – CMS Data Services Hub:

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is building a tool called the Data Services Hub to help with verifying applicant information used to determine eligibility for enrollment in qualified health plans. The “hub” is aims to provide one unified connection to common federal data sources needed to verify consumer application information such as income, citizenship,

and immigration status, to name a few. Meeting participants discussed the CMS hub as it related to their states.

Kansas: Kansas is interested in how states are building or integrating to simplify eligibility determination across multiple programs, such as TANF, SNAP, and CMS. Particularly for TANF and child care, Kansas would like to be able to use data for program eligibility.

Minnesota & Illinois: Both Minnesota and Illinois are struggling with CMS requirements in systems integration and determining eligibility for programs with different eligibility criteria.

TANF Churning:

Generally, TANF cycling or churning is the rate of TANF participants who leave for periods of employment and then return to TANF caseloads. Meeting participants were asked how they look at and quantify churning within the TANF system.

Minnesota – Representatives from Minnesota stated they're using a system similar to Washington State. In churning analysis done in 2008, about 39 percent of clients were using assistance for 12 months or less, which is just about stable when compared to a late 1980s churning analysis of about 39.7 percent. Minnesota does not do a churning analysis on an ongoing basis as the pattern seems to be fairly persistent, with the majority of participants on TANF for two years or less.

Closing Remarks

Following the State Dialogue and Topical Discussion section, Mr. Gary Allen, TANF Region VII Program Manager, and Mr. Thomas Schindler, TANF Region V Program Manager, provided closing remarks for the Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency: Tools for ACF Regions V and VII TANF Programs meeting. Mr. Schindler briefly discussed the highlights of the last one and a half days and thanked TANF representatives and other key stakeholders for attending. Mr. Schindler encouraged the participants to reach stay in contact with regional colleagues.