



Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network

Engaging TANF and Immigrant Populations into Work Activities that Create Pathways to Self-Sufficiency



Expert Panelist One-Pager Template

Contact Information:

JO ANNE SCHNEIDER
ASSOCIATE RESEARCH PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK
410-747-2644
JSCHNEIDER@ANTH.UMD.EDU

Briefly Describe your Background and Expertise Area(s): Dr. Schneider is an urban anthropologist focusing on the role of government, nonprofits, and communities in inter-group relations, opportunity structures for marginalized populations (immigrants, refugees, people of color, people with disabilities, low income families), and social welfare and health policy creation and implementation. Her work consistently involves working with government, local institutions, community members, and policy makers to develop applied research projects and translate research into policy and programs. Her work combines 25 years of research and evaluation with 8 years of program administration/consulting and 3 years in Federal policy roles.

Relevant Research, Presentations, and Publications: Outlines of most recent research is available at home.gwu.edu/~jschneid and [Faith & Organizations Project](#). *Social Capital and Welfare Reform: Organizations, Congregations and Communities* (Columbia University Press, January 2006), forthcoming AECF report *Social Capital and Social Geography*, the *Kenosha Social Capital Study* and *Kenosha Conversation Project*; *The Role of Social Capital in Building Healthy Communities: Policy Paper Produced for the Annie E. Casey Foundation* (www.aecf.org, November, 2004); Getting Beyond the Training vs. Work Experience Debate: The Role of Labor Markets, Social Capital, Cultural Capital, and Community Resources in Long Term Poverty (*Women, Politics, and Policy*, summer 2005); editor, American Anthropologist special issue on welfare reform (2001).

1. What do you think are the most relevant challenges that hinder immigrant TANF recipients from engaging in work activities that both meet the TANF work participation activity requirement and improve their chance of becoming self-sufficient?

1. A tendency to focus on limited English as a primary barrier to employment without simultaneously developing work skills and experience
2. Programs that focus on individual employable recipients without understanding the obligations of their family system
3. Failure to develop connections to émigré support systems such as churches, nonprofits, and social clubs where immigrants share information and resources. Failure to provide accurate information to key leaders in these settings to combat misinformation about State benefits and programs for immigrants
4. Depending on the community, employers may need to be educated about the skills and benefits of working with TANF eligible immigrants and potential state benefits (tax credits, etc.) available to them.

2. Based on your knowledge and expertise, what do you think are the best feasible solutions to the above challenges?

1. The most effective solution for immigrants with limited skills is to develop programs that combine targeted job training with workplace English, mentoring, and OJT. For people with professional skills from their home country (health care, engineers, etc.), a combination of entry-level positions in their field (nurse/PA for doctors, technical drafting for engineers).
2. Case management that includes the entire family system and addresses its needs.
3. Fostering networks with local support systems and using these systems to provide information, find mentors, employers, etc.
4. Developing employers that will provide both job opportunities and mentoring for advancement.