



Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network

Sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families

Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Short Summary

Requesting Agency:	Mississippi Department of Human Services
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TA Event Tracking #:	143
TA Requested:	At the request of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, this event was created to explore the issue of work attachment for rural families. The event sought to address factors that ameliorate, not exacerbate, worker turnover among TANF recipients who have relocated to new areas of the State.
TA Goal:	The goal of this Roundtable was to provide Mississippi with innovative ideas and promising practices that forge new partnerships and collaborative efforts to facilitate job attachment for TANF clients in rural areas.
TA Format:	Roundtable
Sample Evaluations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The possible implementation of a diversion program to help in eliminating some of the rural county issues.• Gained some useful info from other states represented that can be “tweaked” and implemented in MS to develop relationships with employers to get our customers hired.• State to State dialogue was a great time of sharing and learning. Was a means to network and ID contact people for future reference.

Analysis:

At the request of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, this event was created to assist participants in improving job retention among TANF recipients who have relocated to new areas. Mississippi has both unfilled, well paying positions in many areas of the state, and, areas in which jobs cannot be located. To strike a balance, Mississippi relocates TANF recipients to areas of the state with an abundance of employment opportunities with the hope that these opportunities will provide a gateway to self-sufficient behavior. The Roundtable’s intent was to address systems and resources for providing services to TANF participants residing in rural areas. Key barriers identified included:

- **Capacity building** - how do other States build capacity in rural areas to offer customers a range of program options for services.
- **Transportation** - how are other states providing transportation services to their rural customers.
- **Supervision** - how can rural areas track work participation activities, due to the large service delivery area.

This Roundtable included participants from the Mississippi Department of Human Services Regional Offices, and representatives from partner programs in Mississippi, North Dakota, Nevada, and Ohio. Features of the roundtable included interactive dialogue among participants to facilitate action planning for Mississippi to strategize about next steps for necessary programmatic and policy changes, and opportunities for participants to learn from one another and share ideas.

Partner states presented innovative strategies that increased their retention outcomes and provided additional supportive services for TANF recipients. North Dakota's Transitional Jobs Task Force uses time-limited, wage-paying jobs that combine real work, skill development, and supportive services to transition participants rapidly and successfully into the labor market. Nevada's Job Connect System connects businesses with employees and provides skills training tailored to employer demands. Cuyahoga County Ohio's Prevention, Retention and Contingency Program provides broad based, systematic services to include job preparation, training and retention services ranging from occupational training to uniforms for training, emergency assistance, outreach and community education, child welfare services, kinship care, developmental services and relocation assistance.

Building on this base, networking sessions afforded participants the opportunity to leverage the Roundtable as a catalyst for action planning efforts. Mississippi identified four activities to assist them in addressing the needs of its rural population: 1. Increased communication between partnering providers, 2. Assessments and Training, 3. Track activities for evaluation purposes, and 4. Provide feedback from lessons learned.

Overall, participants, speakers, and facilitators agreed that the Roundtable was a successful event that will help build the statewide and local capacity for Mississippi to support families in rural areas.

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