



Larimer County, Colorado LASER TLC Site Journey

The Office of Family Assistance initiative, “Leveraging America’s Social and Economic Resilience TANF Learning Community” (LASER TLC), joined 10 TANF programs across the country to address the challenges of human service delivery the COVID-19 pandemic. The collaboration focused on improving responsive services for TANF families.

Goals & Objectives

Larimer County Department of Human Services (LCDHS) sought to improve and expand its TANF internship program managed in partnership with the Larimer County Economic Workforce and Development Department (LCEWD). The internship program had demonstrated mixed results, with limited participation by TANF participants. LCDHS’s focus for change centered on increasing participation in the internship program creating a new human-centered design for the program; enhancing collaboration with LCEWD; improving the coaching skillset of case workers; and expanding communication and program marketing.

Change Strategies

Fundamental to launching its change strategies, LCDHS dedicated time to better understanding the problem to solve. This learning was core to all LCDHS change efforts.

Creating a human-centered designed program

- Conducted multiple surveys of former interns, internship coordinators, LCDHS staff, and LCEWD staff.
- Instituted a Fast Track Program revamping the referral process to the LCEWD/internship coordinators.
- Created specific and detailed Internship Action Steps within the *My Journey to Success* platform for use by participants and case managers.

Enhancing collaboration between LCDHS and LCEWD

- Spent time on several team-building sessions across agencies.
- Created joint quarterly meetings for LCDHS and LCEWD team members.
- Involved representatives from each agency in one another’s internal meetings. This supported information sharing and coordination.

Improving coaching skillset of case workers

- Conducted a joint Goal4 It! —Training LCDHS case workers and LCEWD internship coordinators to ensure consistency across coaching approaches and strategies.

Expanding communication and marketing

- Compiled real life success stories on permanent job placements. Used intern video testimonials to market to TANF participants.
- Regularly shared candidate successes and impact updates.

Larimer County Journey

Larimer County is in north central Colorado. It is the sixth largest county in the state based on population. The County Department of Human Services has had an internship program over the last five years. The program was part of an employment placement strategy for TANF participants. Their LASER TLC focus was to improve program participation through enhanced collaboration with their workforce partner.



Challenges & Supports

Challenges:

- Achieving active participation from participants.
- Complexity and lack of clarity regarding low program engagement
- Caseload and work demand on case workers impacting the time they could meet with participants.

Supports:

- Leadership commitment to strengthen collaboration between LCDHS and LCEWD.
- An existing coaching model centered on motivation and accountability.
- Sharing language and goals between teams.



Journey Lessons Learned

- Change takes time and intentional commitment.
- Meet regularly as a cross-agency team for continued success.
- Maintaining focused attention on program numbers, participant voices, and team connections.
- Use the LASER TLC tools as a template for regular check-ins, overall marketing objectives, and human-centered program design.

Journey Insights from Our Team

“The FastTrack outreach has really energized our customers!”

“The unexpected benefit of connecting LCEWD & LCDHS staff in a meaningful way...has really benefited the team feeling like they have each other’s back and are in it together.”

Focus on Results

Success Metrics:

- Achieving the agreed-upon placement numbers (55 placements) in the memorandum of understanding between LCDHS and LCEWD.
- Greater consistency in referring candidates prepared for internships from LCDHS to LCEWD.
- Having interns receive job offers from placement sites.

Outcomes Sought:

- Ensuring LCEWD and LCDHS staff have a more thorough understanding of the specific supports available through each program or agency.
- Having increased referrals of “internship ready” participants.
- Making sure participants are in internship placements they are interested in and enjoy. This builds valuable work experience. It also helps to build learning in-demand skills and strengthen their resumes.

Preliminary Results:

Pre-Fast Track Numbers (7/1/21-6/30/22)	Post-Fast Track Numbers: (10/1/22-2/28/23)
• Average of 4.33 referrals per month	• Average of 12 referrals per month
• Average of 1.41 placements per month	• Average of 5.4 placements per month

What’s Next ...

- Continue cross-agency collaboration and cross-team communication.
- Schedule extensive communications strategy in 2023.
- Monitor Fast Track placements.
- Track interns’ satisfaction with the program and successful post-internship employment placements.



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