

July 21 Possibilities for Coordination Between SNAP Employment and Training Programs and TANF Programs Webinar

Stephen Broyles: We'd like to welcome you to this webinar where we're looking at the possibilities of the coordination with SNAP Employment and Training programs and TANF programs. This webinar is being recorded, so we would please ask, for the duration of this call, that you place your phones on mute. If you're having any trouble with your audio, please make sure your speakers are connected to your computers and that your power source is on, and they're turned on at an adequate volume level. Make sure your computer sound is not on mute as well. If this has not fixed the problem, please dial in using the following information: our 1-800 number, 1-855-282-6330, with access code 664725814.

The other thing we'd like to make sure that you do is at the end of our webinar there will be evaluation questions. Please do not leave the webinar before you complete the evaluation questions. And again, just a reminder, this webinar is being recorded and we will need you to place your phones on mute for the duration of the webinar. And with that, I will turn this over to our moderator, Caitlin Lowell.

Caitlin Lowell: Good afternoon everyone and thank you for joining today's webinar, "Possibilities for Coordination with SNAP Employment and Training Programs and TANF Programs." Can folks put themselves on mute, please? So, I'm Caitlin Lowell with the Office of Family Assistance. We're very happy to have a wonderful panel of expert presenters to discuss this important topic with you today. So my name is Caitlin and I'll be facilitating today's webinar. This webinar explores promising practices and programs from across the country that are increasing coordination between TANF and SNAP employment and training programs to best support program participants. Webinar participants will be provided with an overview of TANF program areas that can be enhanced and/or expanded through exploring program alignment with SNAP E&T.

Our learning objectives today include: understanding the untapped potential in coordinating SNAP E&T benefits with TANF, learning how programs have used SNAP E&T benefits to support workforce development, and learning what SNAP E&T benefits are available to current and former TANF recipients. We are pleased to have three additional dynamic presenters who will be leading our conversation today. Throughout the presentation you will have an opportunity to ask questions through the Q&A box in the bottom left corner of your screen. We encourage you to ask questions. And, if your question is for a specific presenter or program, please be sure to specify that. If we do not get to everyone's questions, we will provide a Q&A that will appear on the PeerTA website, along with a transcript and audio recording of today's webinar. During the webinar there will also be a series of polling questions that will appear on your screen. Please answer each by clicking on the radio button next to your selected response. Doing so will not only help us guide the discussion, but will also help us share additional information that may inform your practice.

Today, we will first hear from Kaila Wilson. Kaila is a program analyst in the recently formed SNAP Office of Employment and Training under the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. She served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia working as an agriculture extension agent, collaborating with village leaders to develop solutions for challenges within the food system. She led a capacity-building initiative to build a vocational skills center and library, and taught workshops on income-generating activities, entrepreneurship, and marketing. Prior to her Peace Corps service, Kaila worked as a program assistant at a nonprofit leadership development program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she established a skills training program for youth and families from underserved neighborhoods. Kaila also worked as a legislative intern for state representative Phil Garthwaite. She has a B.A. in political science and international studies from the University of Wisconsin.

Next, I will present. I am an Emerson National Hunger Fellow through the Congressional Hunger Center. I currently work in the Office of the Director in the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance (OFA). In this role, I research possibilities for state TANF and SNAP employment and training coordination. And, I've written about the role of career pathways approaches for accessing jobs with family-sustaining wages, including the role of TANF-funded work study and supporting postsecondary completion for TANF-eligible student parents.

We will then hear from Rick Krauss. Rick currently serves as a senior consultant for the Seattle Jobs Initiative and is a lead SNAP E&T consultant for the SNAP to Skills project. Rick has a distinguished career working for Washington's Employment Security Department; followed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), which administers SNAP; and, finally, with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, which oversees Washington's community colleges and the state's SNAP E&T program at the colleges. Rick was one of the original architects of Washington's SNAP E&T program and is an experienced provider of an intensive SNAP E&T technical assistance to states and providers.

Finally, we will hear from Babs Roberts. Babs Roberts currently serves as the director for the Community Service Division (CSD), within the Economic Services Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services. Babs has been the director since 2009. CSD has primary responsibility for policy development and implementation of policy assistance programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Refugee Cash Assistance; Aged, Blind, Disabled; and Pregnant Woman's Assistance; as well as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, commonly referred to in Washington as Basic Food; and food assistance for legal immigrants. In addition, CSD provides eligibility determination services for a multitude of medical assistance programs and child care subsidy programs.

We'll now move into our first polling question. And, for folks who have just joined on the line, I would remind everyone to put their phones on mute. We're getting some feedback on the call right now. So, the first poll question is, "Have you already begun work coordinating TANF and SNAP E&T efforts?" The options are yes, no, or we are beginning to examine for this issue.

Alright. Well, thank you for all of your responses. I will now turn the presentation over to Kaila Wilson from FNS.

Kaila Wilson: Thank you, Caitlin. And thank you for – to OFA for all the work in this partnership that you have done around the TANF and E&T coordination project. It's a great way to get the conversation going and started. And thank you for the opportunity to speak on today's webinar. I'm going to provide just a quick overview of the nuts and bolts of the SNAP Employment and Training Program and then talk briefly about the work that we're doing and the special initiatives that we're embarking on to really help states in developing programs that serve low-income, low-skilled people, and making sure that they have the access and tools and resources to do employment and training programs that can help them lead them and their families to economic self-sufficiency.

So, the general purpose of the SNAP Employment Program, written in statute, is to assist the members of SNAP households by gaining skills, training, work, or experience that will increase their ability to reach and obtain regular employment. So, right now the USDA does provide about \$300 million annually to states to operate SNAP Employment and Training Programs. Ninety million of that is 100% funds that are given on a calculated basis and divvied up between all states that – all the states. And \$20 million of that is for particular states who choose to participate to serve all able-bodied adults, without dependents, with qualifying components in their state. And then the rest of that amount is all in 50% funds, which is a funding stream that I'll talk about briefly in a few minutes.

So all states are required to operate an E&T program. All 50 states and 3 territories submit an annual E&T plan every single year, and that E&T plan lays out all the basics of the plan and all the partners and the services that are provided in each state. And then in FY2015, about one million SNAP participants were served. And that number is on the rise, as just in FY14 we saw only about 650,000 participants served.

So, those that are eligible for SNAP E&T must be a SNAP participant, first and foremost, and cannot be receiving TANF cash assistance. But, we're happy to have this conversation today to explore how we can continue serving former TANF cash assistance and creating that continuation of service, and the other opportunities that do lie in wrapping and aligning our funding streams. And then, the key is that they must be able to work upon program completion. So, there are work requirements in the SNAP program. And those that are not exempt can either – so some states operate either a mandatory or a voluntary program. So in about – it's about 30 states offer a voluntary program, and the remainder a mandatory program. So there are then – work requirements are then linked to their SNAP benefits. And then, SNAP and SNAP E&T do not have participation time limits. So, an individual can actually be in a SNAP E&T component for as long as a few weeks until they're employed, or up until nine months or longer, depending on what it is that the individual needs.

So the best thing – one of the greatest things about the program is that it's incredibly, incredibly flexible in design and services. So, states have full flexibility to design their program, who they're going to serve, where they're going to serve, and what services they'll be providing. And that being said, the flexibility of components in services that can be provided – range and really are client-focused, like, that can meet the client where they are. So, case management can be provided or funded, as well as supportive services, including child care, dependent care,

transportation, books, and fees. There's a wide slew of supportive services; anything that is necessary and deemed necessary to participate and be successful in completion of the Employment and Training Program would qualify. And then, as far as services go that can be funded, anything from education or vocational skills training, adult basic education, and ESL GED courses, as well as support with job search and job search training. And then there is a 90-day job retention as well that can be provided, where participant reimbursements or supportive services and case management can continue in that last 90 days after post-employment.

So the funding streams we'll hit on quickly. So there really is – there's three main funding streams, as I mentioned before. And the 100% E&T funds really are used for administrative costs, and though states vary in how much they get, depending on how many work registrants they have in their state. So, there are a few states that get up to around \$10 million and then other states that get down as low as \$60,000. It really, really depends on the size and number of SNAP – or work registrants in the state. So those funds go toward anything for planning purposes and implementation, operating of the state agency, and administration and staffing.

Now I'm going to skip over the pledge funds because those are particular and only a few states actually receive those funds. But, I'm going to really focus on the 50/50 funds because that's where we see the most opportunity to really maximize and grow the program. It's a unique opportunity because any funds – any non-federal funds that are put into the program can be matched at a 50% rate, meaning any state funds, any county funds, any philanthropist funds or outside private funds, or funds that are put up by community colleges or community-based organizations that are serving and providing services can be matched at that rate. So we see an opportunity to really build capacity and support both partners within the state agency, but also outside those organizations that are already doing the job of providing training and supportive services, and helping them better serve our clients.

And, when we talk about third-party partnerships, it's also considered – we also use a third-party match to describe it because it's simply, as I said before, the partner would put up \$100, or say, and \$50 would be – they would put in the \$100 and then receive \$50 back in reimbursements. So, those 50% reimbursements can be used both for administrative costs or participant reimbursements. So, there's quite flexibility in those expenses. As I listed before, those participant reimbursements can include dependent care, transportation, books and supplies, those things deemed necessary.

So, E&T services are provided by the third-party, such as community colleges. The state does have a contract or a direct agreement with the community college or the community-based organization or training provider. And they then, in turn, put – provide the services and build the state agency. And, partners who pay for those services will then get the reimbursement.

So, right now, we're working – there's a really strong emphasis and attention to expand and enhance this program. We see an incredible opportunity to really reach low-skilled, low-income people, and provide them with the supportive services and those tools and skills to be successful in obtaining employment. And, from the White House down to the Secretary, we have support in this program, and push. So that being said, in the last year we've created – in the last two years, I guess by now, created the new Office of Employment and Training and

have staffed up to really get out into states and do this work, and work with states to help them build these programs.

So, that being said, there's a couple specific projects that we have going on – or programs going on. First of all is our 2014 Farm Build pilots. In the 2014 Farm Build pilots, there was \$200 million that was to be put towards pilot programs to test what – to really test the methods of E&T services that serve low-skilled, low-income people and really to see what is successful. So, there's 10 pilots in the states listed there, and they really range from a wide range of geographic area, both in rural and urban areas. And the skills that are – or the services – excuse me – provided range from unsubsidized work into case management, wraparound services, mental health. A lot of things – a lot of qualities of the program that are not currently allowable they're testing to see what – how that could be effective in potentially looking further in it in the future to see how we can adapt this program.

We also have what we call – or we have a program called the SNAP to Skills that we're really excited about because it's giving us an opportunity to work with our contractor/partner, the Seattle Jobs Initiative, who you'll hear from in a couple presenters after, who have extreme – incredible knowledge of the program at the very ground level and getting the contracts up and going, and really assessing partners and looking for funding, and making sure that the program is really built to be sustainable and strong. So they're focusing on our job-driven programs, which we see as the only way forward in making sure that these programs are of high quality and robust.

So we're currently – the Seattle Jobs Initiative is working in 10 states listed there. And they're providing not only technical assistance to those 10 states, but they're also providing us with other support in the means of a newsletter, workbook, which we're excited about, to really help expand that support beyond the 10 states and making sure that there's tools available for states who are interested and need the assistance in building these programs. And then 10 policy briefs, which are – we have 3 up already posted on our website. So definitely check those out. And then helping us kind of create a platform of success stories and ways to continue to talk about the program.

And today we're excited to have this conversation and continue on. And I'm looking forward to the other presenters, as they'll talk more about how they're doing some of this in their states. So, we see the way of coordination with TANF as an ability to align funding streams, to provide more comprehensive services with child care and other funding streams that are already being utilized and being able to serve short-term TANF benefits, those who are recurrent – or non-recurrent, and making sure that they can then use the E&T services, as well as certain maintenance of efforts funds being used across the states on child care and others that we can really mix, and making sure that participant reimbursements are provided.

And also a continuation of services for participants no longer receiving TANF to promote long-term economic security and making sure that those who time off the program are then able to continue on receiving employment and training services and continue their pathway towards economic security. Supporting the development of supportive career pathway programs or approaches, and then also supporting non-custodial parents and guardians in child-only TANF

families. And then increasing accessibility and availability of job-driven training programs that lead participants to economic self-sufficiency. So, really raising up and helping to create – build capacity around quality programs and making sure that our SNAP clients are then linked in and accessing those services.

So we do have – our website has some guidance. There on our website, as well, you can find our SNAP E&T tool kit, which is a great resource for states and partners to really see how the nuts and bolts of the program and how to get started and know the policy around the program. We also have the policy briefs, as I mentioned before. And then you can also sign up for newsletter, which goes out on a monthly basis. If you are interested, these are the individuals in our region. We are fortunate enough to have specific staff in each region that is working only on SNAP Employment and Training. And so, those are the listed individuals that you could contact for more information, as well as here's my contact information as well. So, after that, I'll hand it over to you. Thank you.

Caitlin Lowell: Thank you so much, Kaila, for that presentation. So going from there, building off of that, I'm going to be presenting about the Office of Family Assistance and the work that we're doing on our side for the ways that TANF can coordinate. So, once I – so, firstly, I'm going to be talking about the interaction between TANF and SNAP E&T. So, some of this is a bit intuitive. So, we know that folks who are on TANF are oftentimes not receiving cash assistance for very long at all, and, oftentimes even when they are no longer on TANF, are not necessarily having jobs that lead to economic security or family-sustaining wages. And so it's the case that oftentimes people who leave TANF are people who are TANF-eligible, but not receiving cash assistance, will still be receiving SNAP. So, it's really important to coordinate these programs to ensure that people are getting the full range of services that will be helpful to them.

This leads into talking about how there are benefits of a career pathways approach to economic security. So, the idea that if someone wants to go to a community college and get training so they can get a job in a high-demand field, oftentimes if someone starts that on TANF, figuring out ways to have warm handoffs to moving into getting that funded through SNAP E&T if they're no longer eligible, or just generally allowing there to be clearer career pathways for folks through both the TANF and SNAP programs in coordination.

And finally, I just want to acknowledge what Kaila had said earlier, that there are some limitations to coordinating TANF and SNAP, most notably that while someone is receiving TANF cash assistance they cannot be receiving SNAP E&T services. However, there are other TANF-funded things that folks can receive, as long as it is not TANF cash assistance. So if it's non-assistance – TANF non-assistance, that person can receive SNAP E&T services. There's going to be some more details about the specifics of that coming out in an issue brief from our office that will be released by the end of this week that will be going out to all of the webinar participants, and also can be found on our website.

So, this is just a graph that's talking about how the percentage of TANF funds that go towards work-related activities are very small right now. And they're also – there are limited resources, we know, in states for spending money on employment and training activities, which is one of the reasons why it's so important to coordinate between TANF and SNAP, and take advantage

of especially the 50% reimbursements that are not capped right now on the SNAP side to really expand these services for low-income individuals.

So I'm going to be talking about three methods of coordination today. First is enhancing program communication and coordination between TANF and SNAP E&T. The second is coordinating funding streams to provide more comprehensive services to low-income individuals, including TANF recipients and SNAP recipients. And the third is supporting non-custodial parents and guardians in child-only TANF families. And for each of these examples, we'll be hearing a little bit more about the details and specifics of this, and state examples, later on.

So for enhancing program communication and coordination, this actually encompasses quite a few things. One example of this is making sure there's integrated case management so that when someone is receiving TANF and might be losing their TANF eligibility is aware of ways that they can start or continue receiving SNAP or receiving services through SNAP, even if they are losing their eligibility for TANF cash assistance. This can also be as simple as ensuring that there is staff training and better staff coordination and communication so that staff on the TANF side knows what can be available through SNAP and SNAP Employment and Training, and vice versa, to ensure that each individual is getting all the resources that they have. And, additionally, use of one-stop career centers or co-location is another way to increase communication and coordination between programs.

The next thing is talking about coordinating funding streams to provide more comprehensive services. This is important and a way that you can expand services, both for folks who are receiving TANF and SNAP. So for states that provide non-recurrent short-term benefits to low-income families through TANF funding, that's not considered TANF cash assistance, which means that they can be using – support services can be funded through SNAP E&T. And, by counting those support services through SNAP E&T and expanding those, you can draw down the 50% reimbursement and expand your funding for these services.

Lastly, you can support non-custodial parents and guardians in child-only TANF families. And, so, this is something that we know quite a few states are working on, and we don't have all of the examples yet, but we would love for states and jurisdictions to share that with us as well. But, the idea would be using SNAP E&T funding to provide education and training to non-custodial parents with the hope that that not only increases the economic security of those non-custodial parents, but also the long-term economic stability of those TANF families.

And in terms of where to go from here, so, as I mentioned, there will be an issue brief that will be going out to everyone that breaks this down into more detail, including some write-ups of state examples I hope you disseminate. Additionally, we know there are quite a few folks, which is really exciting, on this webinar right now, including people who are on the TANF side as well as the SNAP side. And so we really encourage people in their states, their counties, their jurisdictions to communicate and take the ideas from this webinar and figure out how you can apply this on a small level or larger level to draw down funding, expand your services, and expand communication between these two programs in your state to best support low-income families. Additionally, we're always looking to highlight exciting examples and innovation about

this. So please feel free to contact me. I have my contact information, including my email and my phone number, listed.

Going from here, we're going to go on to our second polling question. Our second polling question asks participants, "Has your state considered expanding your SNAP E&T program using 50/50 funds?" The options are yes, no, or we're beginning to examine for this issue. And we'll give folks a minute to answer.

Alright. So, from here we're going to – you can see that 26% of people who responded said yes, which is really exciting. Moving on from here, we're going to have our third presenter, Rick Krauss from the Seattle Jobs Initiative. So I'll pass it off to him. Take it away.

Rick Krauss: Yeah, hi everybody. Please bear with me. I'm fighting a cold. Let's get started with the slides. So, I'm going to talk about the potential for serving low-income families with SNAP E&T. And I'm going to talk about it at a fairly high level and then Babs Roberts is going to get into more detail of the Washington example. So, there's a huge need for a partnership for these two programs. As you know, every state's experienced a huge drop in the numbers of TANF recipients. This is a result of both the time limits, as well as the improving economy. Many of the adults in these households, while they may be employed, they're working part-time or working in entry-level, low-wage employment. They and their families are part of the working poor. This population has a significant need for further employment and training services to help them move to mid-skilled, mid-wage employment. The current workforce development system, like through WIA and WIOA, has consistently underserved this disadvantaged population. In many communities, there's a skills gap in the workforce for meeting local employer needs. And, many of these low-income families are currently on SNAP or potentially could receive SNAP because of their income level.

So, untapped potential. Once a robust E&T program is in place in a state, it can be utilized as an alternative to TANF. It can be used at the front end of TANF application process for diversion or, another way of framing it, positive prevention for people going on TANF, having a positive alternative for them. This gives the parent the option of banking TANF months, because, as we know, every state's got a time limit. And so, if they don't need to use up those months and they can get services through E&T, they can save those months. The E&T program can provide continued access to Employment and Training services for those who time out of TANF. In Washington, we have multiple examples of colleges with students who time off of TANF while still enrolled in their education training. But, through E&T, they were able to continue to complete the programs and get the support they need.

E&T can provide access to wage and skill progression and help participants on a career pathway that leads to employment that pays enough for self-sufficiency. So, the program really focuses on decreased dependency. This program can really help support the working poor, which is the status of many of these families. The program can increase collections from those non-custodial parents who are participating in E&T and obtain mid-wage employment. In Washington, Maryland, and other states, Tennessee is another one, there's a lot of focus on this population and coordination with the trial support agencies. There's efforts to establish payment plans and defer prosecutions, in some cases, for those participating in E&T. In one city we were

working with—Baltimore—they did a cross-match of one segment of the SNAP population—able-bodied adults without dependents—and found multiple cases and millions of dollars in arrears. So, that kind of energized the partnership to focus on getting those non-custodial parents engaged. E&T can provide generous support services in addition to child care, but child care is really a key support for this population.

So there's some foundational components. A lot of states are really focused right now on the loss of the waiver for portions of their state, or all their state, for the able-bodied adults. So it's important that leadership understands that E&T can impact that population, as well as the broader population, including low-income families. So it's important to get local leadership on board with that.

For this population, support services are key, with access to child care being the most critical for many families. And states have the potential option of using the TANF block grant, funds, like Washington does, and other states are starting to do – to support this. And that takes coordination between the SNAP agency and the child care division or agency leadership. You can train up TANF case managers so they can share E&T marketing materials and possibly train them so they're fully understanding the opportunity offered by E&T. And then consider running a cross-match, like Baltimore did, with the NCPs and SNAP populations to see the potential of a partnership there.

For some reason it's not advancing. There it goes. That's some additional partnership benefits. This can really lead to access to a new funding stream to support critical employment and training services in a time of decreased TANF and departmental labor funding. There's the potential to repurpose the current IT system that's supporting TANF to support E&T. That's what Washington did, so the two systems can actually interface that much more smoothly. And it decreases the cost of creating a whole new system for E&T.

E&T can be part of a continuum of wage skill progression services for those who exit TANF. E&T is really less administratively burdensome than TANF because you don't have to track and report and verify actual hours. It can be based on scheduled hours, with a decreased verification requirement. That's a huge administrative burden, as we know, with TANF. For strategies that target NCPs, there's the potential for increased collections, which have a significant positive impact on TANF and former TANF families. And the intent as these programs develop is to have both E&T and TANF integrated into the existing workforce system. And that's all I have. Thanks for bearing with me with my voice.

Caitlin Lowell: Thank you so much, Rick. From here, we'll go on to the presentation from Babs Roberts from Washington State to talk a little bit more about what this looks like with specific examples.

Babs Roberts: Thank you, Caitlin. And all of you presented such really great information. I've got just two slides, very simple slides, and my task here is to just tell you what are we doing in Washington that is specific to how we're coordinating between TANF and what we call Basic Food Employment and Training, or, as I'll refer to it as, BFET. So the first thing I would say is I could reiterate everything that Rick has just said about why is it important that we align these

two programs. But, frankly, I would say that for Washington, in particular for our community services division that has policy and service delivery oversight for both TANF and SNAP, what we know and have recognized for years is that the TANF grant standard, even in really, you know, states that have really robust grant standards, it is not a living – it's not a living wage type of income. It's not something that people can sustain on. And we know from all of the science that has come out in the last couple of years that the longer we have people in poverty, and particularly the longer we have youth in poverty and children in poverty, the worse the outcomes will be for those families later in life.

And so we need to spend as much time and energy in our TANF program moving our families through barrier removal exercises and into that first job so that their wage level can come up and they can begin that journey that will take them along what we hope to be career pathways. And aligning these two programs and creating what we hope to, in the future, create a seamless system for TANF families to move from TANF into BFET as they're able to progress through a career pathway, and then aligning that with what's coming out of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, is a big deal for us.

But first, we have to lay the foundation to make that a reality, and that's what we've been focused on the last couple of years. So, our current collaboration efforts included in developing our strategic plan for statewide implementation of our very robust – and I'm going to brag just a bit – our very robust Basic Food Employment and Training program, part of the strategic planning process was an intentional desire to align with TANF and make this the next step. And that's a leadership conversation. It has to start with the leadership understanding why they need alignment and how to make that alignment happen.

In doing that, in moving that forward, how do you do that? We've talked about this at length, and what we've done is done a lot of cross-training. Right now, we have WorkFirst case managers, and WorkFirst is our TANF welfare to work program. And BFET is our SNAP E&T program. What we've done is a lot of cross-training between those staff. Really starting to have them understand what TANF families might be dealing with as they first come out of TANF so our BFET staff understand how to stay connected with those and to include our TANF staff in what is the opportunities for BFET staff so that as they're helping TANF families transition off of TANF, they can help them to remember that this isn't the end for them, that we have more help available and they're ready to come back and learn new skills or more skills.

We have quarterly meetings between those staff, between our food policy and our TANF policy staff, so that we're staying connected with what's happening in each of those areas, at a headquarters and a policy level, but also then at a regional level with our coordinators. Our BFET staff, both at our headquarters office and our regional office, do many, many presentations at unit meetings for both our local community services offices and our customer service contact center staff, both to let them know what's happening and to say, "Hey, don't forget about us when somebody calls and they're looking for help. Don't forget about BFET. This is an opportunity." But also to keep them abreast of what's happening with our BFET program as it evolves through both our statewide now implementation of that program, as well as the resources to initiate successful employment, which is the Farm Build grant that we've received.

And that's sort of the communication side of that—how do we keep communication going, how do we make sure people are talking to each other. But, then we want to talk about actual procedures. So, our procedures are available to our WorkFirst staff so that they can streamline a referral pathway for a client. They know exactly where to send somebody. They can sort of handhold that client from one person to the other. Having our eJAS system, which is our management information system, has both our Basic Food Employment and Training case management as well as our WorkFirst case management, has been very helpful because everybody's using the same system. They're talking the same language and they have the same ability to manage within that system. We're not teaching everybody a new system every time they change programs.

We also include our BFET program in the overview. So, every TANF client applying for TANF goes through a WorkFirst orientation. This is a 30- to 45-minute presentation that's done every day in our community service offices for TANF clients. And it gives them a really good sense of – gives them a really good sense of what can the TANF WorkFirst program do for them, as well as what they're going to be expected to do in order to maintain their TANF grant. And then, adding in this piece about BFET as either the next step after TANF or an alternative to TANF has been very helpful for clients to make an informed decision about what's the right pathway for them.

We have – in our TANF WorkFirst program, we have local planning areas that meet consistently. And those local planning areas include local community college partners, our workforce partners in the area. Some of them will include schools or community action councils. They're local areas that come together, and our BFET staff are part of that partnership as well. And then we are also ensuring that when we bring on providers for our Basic Food Employment and Training, that they're also – and usually this happens naturally, we don't have to force it – but, there are also partners that are working with us on TANF. So they're able, at a very local level, to make that transition happen fairly seamlessly for the client.

And then, as Rick has pointed out, but isn't on this slide, the most – or the newest initiative that we've done over the last couple of years has been to really focus on a partnership with our child support partners. And I'm lucky enough to have, in this data, a division director in the child support area that is very interested not in just collecting child support owed, but ensuring that they're doing it in a way that helps that non-custodial parent as well. And he is very interested in being able to provide employment and training services, and has created, within his child support area, an alternative solutions unit. So, for those non-custodial parents that have, you know, frankly the same barriers likely as the TANF families that they used to be a part of, there's an alternative. They'll go into this area and they can do barrier removal activities, they can have their support order changed so that they're not accruing arrears at rates that they'll never be able to pay back, and then can slip into an employment and training program as well. And that's really been helpful to partner with somebody who wants to work with this population in this way.

So, that's kind of what started. And I'll tell you where we're moving next, if I can actually hit the right button. There we go. So the next piece of this is to really start to see this happen more seamlessly, more transparently. And so what we need to do is really – what we started to do

first is to really strengthen that positive prevention connection. So, in our state, we do have a short-term, non-reoccurring benefits program. We call it Diversion Cash Assistance. It is essentially a positive prevention. If we have a family who is income eligible for TANF but really probably could be positively diverted from TANF by giving them potentially some employment and training supports and some short-term non-reoccurring payments, and could still move through this sort of short-term bump in the road, we want to tighten that connection. We want to start making those procedures happen. We have work groups that are starting to identify what that looks like and how that can happen in a more seamless way.

We're also strengthening the idea of BFET as a TANF exit strategy. So, really focusing with our WorkFirst case managers to ensure that TANF clients understand the next step could be Basic Food Employment and Training. And, as you can see here, we're, as a pilot, sending postcards with information about our BFET program to recent TANF "exiters," just to keep them thinking about what the next career pathway step might be for them. What we really want to build in this state, and understand that it's going to take some time, is a career pathway. If TANF is the first step to the first job, then BFET and potentially the other workforce need to be that second, third, and fourth step that really leads them to that point in time where clients and families have sufficient barrier removal, sufficient social capital development, sufficient employment and training that they can actually launch past that point in time where they're more likely to keep moving forward rather than revert back to assistance programs. And this is a really important step for us to take in doing that.

To do that, we are incorporating more detail about the Basic Food Employment and Training programs in our WorkFirst handbook, as well as in our Pathway to Employment programs. We are developing a point of contact, a local subject matter expert, or we call SMEs, in each of our offices and our contact center that can act as a reference point for somebody who has questions, whether it's a staff person or a client, about how they can get connected to BFET and to ensure that there's somebody who's always thinking about a way to interact with the clients in that way. And then we're starting to identify opportunities to really start to strengthen that partnership better, and moving forward with including BFET program managers, for instance at our WorkFirst training events, and developing some resources for staff to promote BFET throughout their experience with us, regardless of where they're at, whether they're working with a social worker on barrier removal or they're working with a case manager on transitioning off a TANF, or they're just coming in to see about SNAP. We want to make sure that everybody's aware that this is an option and opportunity for clients. And that is really where Washington is at, sort of at the beginning of this integration.

Caitlin Lowell: Thank you so much for that, Babs, and that overview. So now we're going to move on to the third and final polling question, which asks participants, "Have you developed partnerships with organizations within your state or community to expand SNAP E&T efforts?" The options are yes, no, or we are beginning to examine for this issue. And I would like to just say that if the answer for this is no, I think this webinar could be a great jumping off point. We have quite a few people on this call, participants from all over the country. So, moving forward, it could be an exciting jumping off to really expand that coordination and develop more partnerships.

Alright. So, let's see what the results are of this poll. So, 31 people, or 22% of everyone who answered, has said yes to this, which is exciting. And 14% of people have said that they are beginning to examine this issue. So, thank you so much again to all of our wonderful presenters who provided so much information that we can all use as we work with TANF families and SNAP families. We're now going to open up the session for questions in the last few minutes we have remaining. Please submit your questions using the chat box feature. And if you have a question for a specific presenter, please state so in your submission.

Okay, so let me – alright, so let's see what questions we have. So one of the questions we have is about integrated case management, which says, "When clients leave TANF cash assistance and go on SNAP only, do they need a new case manager or can this be handled through the agency's cost allocation plan?" I don't know if anyone who's more local, on the ground, who has experience working with the integrated case management would be interested in answering this.

Babs Roberts: This is Babs, and what I would say is, in my experience, it can be handled through a cost allocation methodology.

Caitlin Lowell: Perfect. Thank you. And then one of the other questions I'll share, just in case people aren't in the chat box right now, David Bernstein [ph] asked, "Can an individual receiving non-cash TANF benefits participate in the SNAP E&T program?" And there's more details about the specifics of this in the upcoming issue brief that's coming out this week from OFA. But, as I mentioned, although there's that restriction, it's only for individuals receiving TANF assistance, so TANF cash assistance, not for TANF non-assistance. So, if your state is spending TANF non-assistance money on someone, they can still be receiving SNAP Employment and Training services, which is one of the key places for coordination. We have another question coming in for Rick that says, "Could you please expand upon the difference in the flexibility of SNAP E&T funds and activities versus TANF?"

Rick Krauss: Well, of course, you know, with TANF, you're looking at pretty much short-term vocational programs. And, of course, you have to hold them accountable for hours. You have to get them up to a certain participation level. You know, get them to full-time participation if you can. The program has the flexibility to kind of meet the participant where they're at. So, if it makes sense for them to go to school part time, work on their GED, you can do that. The only caveat on that is for the adult able bodies without dependent population. To maintain their continued benefits, they have to participate in qualifying activities an average of 80 hours a month. So, there is a requirement there. But, it's a lot more flexible than TANF in terms of what kinds of activities can be allowed and the kinds of hours, and give the participant a lot more options.

Caitlin Lowell: Great. And I think maybe we'll do one more question. And this one maybe Kaila would be good with it. It's a question from Robert asks, "Our county agencies administer the SNAP E&T program, and what can we do from a state level when we have 88 different offices with different services and providers?"

Kaila Wilson: Hello. Can you hear me?

Caitlin Lowell: Yes.

Kaila Wilson: Okay. So, really, the county and the state do have to work strongly together because it is – the funding does come through the state, but it really quite varies across different states. Our counties in California have a lot more say in developing their programs and have found their own third-party providers and partners and have kind of, on the ground, created their program and then reported back working with the state. Whereas in other states the counties have – are more dictated by the state. So, coming from the county, you definitely want to make sure you have that strong relationship with the state, but also creating your own plan to see what is available in your county and working together to develop that.

Caitlin Lowell: Thank you so much, Kaila. So we've – just to be respectful of people's time, I know we've reached 3:00 p.m. So, I'm going to pass it off to Stephen to conclude the webinar with closing remarks.

Stephen Broyles: Alright. Thank you, Caitlin. And for everyone on the line, also we are doing an evaluation in the webinar. So please be sure to complete the evaluation poll questions in the webinar shortly. A couple things. Again, thank you to all of our wonderful presenters who provided a wealth of important information that we can all use as we work with TANF families. We're now going to ask you to go ahead, and keep in mind that we have a transcript and an audio recording of this webinar, which will be available shortly on the Peer TA Network website. We'd also like to hear from you about future webinar topics, so please email any of those ideas to peerta@icfi.com.

Also, please help us expand our network and reach a greater number of people by directing interested colleagues from your local and state networks and agencies to our website. Technical assistance is also available via the PeerTA website if you're interested in assistance and implementing any of the ideas that you heard here today. Again, please take a few moments to complete those questions in the poll. And with that, we also look forward to your future participation in future webinars. And for the folks that have submitted additional questions in the Q&A box, we will make sure that we get responses to you as well.

So again, as you're completing the final evaluation poll, we'd like to give a special thank you to all our presenters—to Caitlin Lowell, to Kaila Wilson, to Rick Krauss, and to Babette Roberts. We thank you very much for your information.

And again, to wrap up our responses, we, again, thank you for your participation. We look forward to you on our next webinar.