

Northeast HUB Data Collection and Reporting Workshop

On June 18-21, 2001, the ACF Northeast HUB, in collaboration with AFYA, Inc., held a TANF Data Collection and Reporting Workshop in Atlantic City, New Jersey. We had participants from the Boston, New York and Philadelphia RO's as well as fifteen of the sixteen States/jurisdictions which comprise the Northeast HUB as well as one State (Ohio) from our Chicago Regional Office. The Dallas Regional Offices also sent representatives, as did the New York DHHS Office of the Inspector General. From our Washington Central Office several key staff members served as speakers and presenters. Our keynote speaker was Barry Van Lare, Executive Director of the Welfare Information Network. The overall theme of the workshops was the importance of TANF data in managing the program and determining possible future changes.

Following the introductions and opening remarks by our Regional HUB Director, Mary Ann Higgins and the OFA Senior Policy Advisor Mack Storrs, we undertook an ambitious agenda to cover all of the reporting requirements in Part 265 and the Appendices of the Final TANF Regulations. Over the course of the two and one half day conference, Patrick Brannen of OPRE discussed in much detail the various reporting sections of the Final TANF Report. In addition to the many sections of the TANF report we had special sessions on High Performance Bonus conducted by Sean Hurley of OPRE and Caseload Reduction Credit presented by Julie Siegel of OFA. We also discussed the Work Participation Rate Documentation prepared by Patrick Brannen to demonstrate how data extracted from the database produces work participation rates. We had Paul Hasz from our Office of Administration provide a real time, web-based presentation on TANF Data Reporting systems transmission issues. We also held a session on sampling methodology and stratification for those States/jurisdictions using a sampling/stratification technique for data collection. In addition, as an extra add-on to the agenda, we also discussed briefly the findings and issues concerning the FY 2000 Annual Reports that States/jurisdictions had submitted to ACF in accordance with federal regulations at 265.9.

By design, these were very interactive workshops. Representatives from Regions I, II, and III coordinated the discussions, which were very lively. There were approximately 70 participants, including CO and RO staff members. Staff from approximately 50 States attended most from data, program and or systems backgrounds. We targeted specific skills from the States, in addition to sending invitation letters to Umbrella Agency Heads, by informally notifying staff members directly involved in data collection and reporting. We specifically targeted the statisticians, programmers and analysts collecting and using TANF data.

Feedback provided on evaluation forms completed by over 50% of the conference participants indicated that these workshops were extremely successful and well received. All presenter received "high marks" in the "high good to excellent" range as did the overall conference subject matter and organization/flow. The most significant outcome was the "excellent" rating given to the workshop Resource Manual that each conference participant received. By "putting all in one spot" hard copy of the myriad of regulations, program instructions, file layouts, edit conditions or web-site references for TANF Data Reporting and related topics, it was indicated in the

evaluations that this product would help significantly in improving the timeliness and quality of TANF data.

The success of these workshops were directly related to the quality of the Central Office presenters, the outstanding logistical support provided by AFYA, Inc., the active participation of State/jurisdiction staff and the collaboration and sharing of staff resources in the three Regional Offices to make this a “HUB event.”