

Colorado Works (TANF) State & County Diversion Programs June 6, 2007

Short-term, non-recurrent benefits are provided to Colorado Works participants in two ways – State Diversion and County Diversion.

Common to Both Programs

- Optional at county level
- May include, but not limited to, cash, supportive services, housing, and transportation
- Benefit amounts are flexible
- Participants eligible to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, low-income child care and child support services
- Require a written plan with participant
- Participant agrees to remain off TANF for a county-defined period of time
- Neither program may exceed 120 days
- Neither impose lifetime limits or participation requirements

State Diversion

State diversion is intended for those participants who qualify for basic cash assistance, but do not need ongoing cash assistance.

- Must be income eligible for TANF
- Must meet specific demonstrable needs
- Participation is voluntary

Currently in Denver:

- Pilot targeted to job ready TANF applicants
- Jointly administered by DHS and DWD

County Diversion

County diversion is intended to provide benefits and services to a broader population than those eligible for basic cash assistance.

- Must be over-income for TANF
- Income ceiling set by county, but less than \$75,000 per year
- Must be used to support purposes of TANF
- Family must include an eligible child

Currently in Denver:

- Section 8 housing deposit assistance
- Administered by DHS (Kathleen Bradson)

State Diversion Pilot

Stays The Same:

- County Diversion
- In lieu of long-term cash assistance when the applicant/recipient and the worker determine that a Diversion grant will remedy an immediate need to restore or establish self sufficiency without further cash assistance.
- The applicant/participant shall agree not to apply for any further Colorado Works assistance from any other Colorado county for the number of months assistance covers (no more than 90 calendar days).
- Exceptions will be made for circumstances beyond their control, defined as:
 1. Family emergency, limited to the following: Serious/terminal illness of immediate family member; natural disaster, i.e., fire, flood, etc.; child protection case involvement with activities that are incompatible with the IRC, such as 20 hours of therapy per week.
 2. Lack of child care as determined by the County as unavailable (not limited to reasons listed in Volume III, 3.621.22).
 3. Job lay-off or lockout. (Striking or leaving a job voluntarily will not meet the definition of "circumstances beyond a client's control.")
 4. Other issues may be addressed on a case-by-case basis such as, but not limited to, domestic violence, homelessness, or severe mental/physical disabilities.
- Limit the number of times an applicant/recipient may choose the State Diversion option to three in a lifetime, no more than two in one year.

Different:

- Still voluntary but strongly encouraged for Job Ready clients.
- No longer limited to clients who are employed or who can provide verification of pending employment that shall begin within 120 calendar days of the application date or have household income to meet their basic monthly expenses.
- Instead it is for all those who have been deemed job ready or they have the household income to meet their basic monthly expenses.
- Job Readiness will be determined as part of the orientation for all applicants.
- One page questionnaire at orientation.

Next Steps:

- Gather statistics on diversion types, amounts, recidivism rates
- Present a revised policy to the Welfare Reform Board in January.

Colorado Works (TANF) Denver County

State Diversion Programs

State Diversion programs are short-term, non-recurrent benefits provided to Colorado Works participants in lieu of TANF basic cash assistance.

Common elements of all Diversion Programs

- Optional at county level
- May include, but not limited to, cash, supportive services, housing, and transportation
- Benefit amounts are flexible
- Participants eligible to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, low-income child care and child support services
- Requires a written plan with participant
- Participant agrees to remain off TANF for a county-defined specific period of time
- May not exceed 120 days
- Do not impose lifetime limits or participation requirements

Current Denver Model (Job Ready Diversion)

Denver County currently uses State Diversion primarily to assist job ready TANF applicants to meet short-term needs in order to obtain, keep, or return to employment.

- Voluntary but strongly encouraged for job ready TANF applicants.
- Verification of current or pending employment is not required.
- Job Readiness will be determined as part of the orientation for all applicants.

Proposed Diversion Expansion (Job Ready Diversion plus Family Stabilization Diversion)

Denver County would continue to use State Diversion to assist job ready TANF applicants. Additionally, State Diversion would be expanded to include family stabilization and assessment activities.

- Voluntary but strongly encouraged for all TANF applicants.
- Provide upfront stabilization services to Colorado Works families.
- Provide families with quicker access to financial assistance, services, and related supports.
- Provide assessment and initial services without subjecting families to TANF lifetime limits or full participation requirements.
- May result in three general outcomes: 1) employment or employment preparation, 2) establishment of alternative sources of income, such as SSI/SSDI, or, 3) basic cash assistance to address ongoing barriers.