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Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance
Regions V and VII



Innovation through Integration: 2010 Heartland TANF Conference

October 26-27, 2010

Summary Report

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Introduction

The *Great Recession* has officially ended, however it continues to hammer the most vulnerable populations and has hit those on the lower rungs of society hardest. Although the overall unemployment rate has hovered around 10 percent, those in the lower income brackets have suffered through unemployment rates above 30 percent.¹ Additionally, the report signals a worsening economic future for low-skilled and low-income workers as the economy attempts to recover from the biggest declines since the Great Depression. The recession continues to impact low-income families and is deepening the financial hardships faced by the families and communities hardest hit. The share of individuals that have been unemployed for more than six months have increased to about 46 percent, while the percentage of individuals who have lost their jobs permanently has risen to the highest level in a generation.² Poverty was high at the start of the recession and it has steadily increased,³ effectively straining the social safety net.⁴

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about 42 million people - more than one in eight Americans - applied for and received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits each month and enrollment has increased by more than a third since the beginning of the recession—December 2007.⁵ Additionally, as poverty and unemployment increased, there was rapid growth in Medicaid enrollment and spending.⁶ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on October 22, 2010 updated the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseload data, and the new data shows that the number of individuals receiving TANF increased only 12 percent since the start of the economic recession, rising from 3,896,830 in 2007 to 4,346,153 in 2010.⁷ This 12 percent increase since the beginning of the recession in December 2007, was far less than the increase in the real need e.g., increased SNAP participation, increased unemployment, and increased poverty over the same period. Not only has TANF program participation lagged behind other economic indicators,⁸ but also TANF benefit levels have not kept up with inflation and thus have decreased in value more than 30 percent since the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996.⁹ In fact, a family of three receiving TANF assistance often receives benefits much lower than the federal poverty threshold, and even with supplements from the SNAP program the combined benefit levels still fall well short of the poverty line in most States.

¹ Sum, A. et al. (2010). *Labor underutilization problems of the US workers across household income groups at the end of the great recession: A truly great depression among the nation's low-income workers amidst full employment among the most affluent*. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University-Boston, MA.

² Edelman, P. et al. (2010). *Reducing poverty and economic distress after ARRA: Next steps for short-term recovery and long-term economic security*. The Urban Institute, Washington, DC.

³ Vroman, W. (2010). *The great recession, unemployment insurance and poverty*. The Urban Institute, Washington, DC.

⁴ Kneebone, E. and Garr, E. (2010). *The landscape of recession: Unemployment and safety net services across urban and suburban America*. The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC.

⁵ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/34SNAPmonthly.htm>

⁶ Smith, V. et al. (2010). *Hoping for economic recovery, preparing for health reform: A look at Medicaid spending, coverage and policy trends— results from a 50-state Medicaid budget survey for state fiscal years 2010 and 2011*. Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Washington, DC.

⁷ http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/caseload_current.htm

⁸ Pavetti, L. (2009). *Impact of the recession and Recovery Act on social safety net programs*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, DC.

⁹ Schott, L. and Finch, I. (2010). *TANF benefits are low and have not kept pace with inflation: Benefits are not enough to meet families' basic needs*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, DC.

As the social safety net continues to unravel,¹⁰ States and localities are working together to try and develop responsive programs to improve employment and stabilize families and communities. Despite increased need, States are hampered by rising deficits and dwindling revenues¹¹ and are looking for innovative solutions to improve services for residents, while efficiently leveraging available resources.

Meeting Overview

In response to the technical assistance and program needs of States throughout the American Heartland, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, Regions V and VII hosted a technical assistance meeting in Chicago, Illinois to



allow member States to work alongside their peers to outline specific challenges and posit plausible peer-based solutions to the challenges faced by TANF participants and families. Held October 26-27, 2010 the *Innovation through Integration: 2010 Heartland TANF Conference* brought together 18 State TANF directors and program staff representing 10 States to strategize on ways to move low-income and working families closer to economic self-sufficiency while providing important input on the development of new TANF legislation. Specific

topics included subsidized employment, safety net partnerships, asset building services for domestic violence survivors, and work participation rates.

Designed particularly to encourage State sharing and peer-to-peer dialogue, the format of the meeting was a combination of information sharing and conversation along with panel presentations. The design also supported the dissemination of information between State TANF Administrators, Federal policy representatives, and other key stakeholders. State representatives were asked to focus their information sharing on challenges they have encountered along with strategies and potential solutions they have used to mitigate the impact of the recession.

One of the primary goals of the meeting was to help individual States think strategically about how to continue programs and services with current funding and after the expiration of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act TANF Emergency Contingency Fund.¹² The other main goal was to introduce State TANF Administrators to other Federal programs that are useful to low-income populations and shared clients. The meeting featured interactive panel presentations and discussions that encouraged participants to share comments and pose questions.

¹⁰ Sherman, A. (2010). *Safety net effective at fighting poverty but has weakened for the very poorest*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, DC.

¹¹ McNichol, E. et al. (2010). *Recession continues to batter state budgets: State responses could slow recovery*. The Julia Group. Retrieved from: <http://juliagroup.com/2010/08/17/recession-continues-to-batter-state-budgets-state-responses-could-slow-recovery/>

¹² The \$5 billion TANF Emergency Contingency Fund was created to provide low-income workers with a bridge to jobs, and to help States meet the rising need for services resulting from the Great Recession. The Fund was developed to reimburse States 80 percent for increases in caseloads and/or increased expenditures relating to (1) basic assistance; (2) non-recurrent short-term benefits, and (3) subsidized employment. The Fund is widely hailed as a successful component of the Recovery Act because 37 states have provided subsidized jobs for nearly 250,000 otherwise unemployed parents and youth.

Day One

TANF Reauthorization Forum

Dr. Earl S. Johnson, Director, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services

During this session, attendees had the opportunity to interact with Office of Family Assistance (OFA) leadership about policy priorities and program recommendations for TANF Reauthorization. Dr. Earl Johnson led the dialogue answering attendees' inquiries and posing questions to them.

Dr. Johnson began the session by introducing himself to Region V and VII State TANF Administrators. He shared his opinions on TANF over the past few years, noting that it has been tough but also exciting to be associated with various TANF programs' creative responses to challenges of the current economic crisis. He acknowledged that the past few years likely have been the most trying times for the United States since the Great Depression; yet he urged attendees to recognize the incredible economic growth seen over the last few months. He credited attendees with demonstrating flexibility and creativity in running State TANF programs. Specifically, Dr. Johnson referenced subsidized employment programs funded by the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund where over 250,000 people obtained jobs during 2009 and 2010. He noted that employers in small communities participated in the program, and data is showing that their productivity has increased. He also lauded TANF directors' innovation for implementing summer youth programs through which 120,000 young people were employed. States formed partnerships with the Department of Labor—which made available \$1.2 billion through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth funds to provide employment and training services targeted to disadvantaged youth—and leveraged TANF dollars to increase participation among low-income and disadvantaged youth. Dr. Johnson noted that these programs were really important to him, stating that youth of color and their parents are almost three times as likely to be under- or unemployed.

With the leadership of David Hansell and Mark Greenberg, Dr. Johnson's vision for OFA is that the TANF community is a central part of the populations that OFA wants to reach and the programs that OFA wants to highlight and/or fund. He noted that the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund (TANF ECF) illustrated that OFA programs can reach communities TANF has not reached in the past and he contended that TANF can be more responsive to the needs of more diverse applicants and more diverse families if there is shared commitment to that goal. According to Dr. Johnson, TANF, in many situations, is meant to be a "trampoline to self-sufficiency and to the middle class." It is a useful vehicle for helping individuals and families reach new economic heights. Dr. Johnson identified reaching the "hard to serve" population as the biggest challenge. Providing additional support to those with limited work histories, physical and mental disabilities, substance abuse challenges, and a history of long-term dependency will have tremendous impacts on children and "TANF is and should be viewed as a program of hope and opportunity."

Dr. Johnson concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of evidence-based practices and collaboration across agencies. He commented that this OFA administration—the OFA team, Mark

Greenberg, David Hansell, and Secretary Sebelius— is committed to comprehensive, holistic programs to help communities thrive.

Questions, Comments, and Response Discussion

Immediately following Dr. Johnson's remarks, attendees were invited to ask questions and share TANF program insights. Questions, comments, and responses are listed below.

Question: The TANF ECF has ended. What activities is OFA undertaking to get the ECF reauthorized?

Response: We are hoping that we can get it back, but it is in Congress' hands. We would love to see it come back. We have had discussions and shared information from the States with Congress, but it is also important for States to tell their Congressional delegations the importance of the TANF ECF and show them program results. One way of articulating its significance is to show that it had both supply and demand side impacts. It helped a lot of small businesses and a lot of people who were out of work. In some ways, it is up to the people who implemented TANF ECF to tell that story because OFA leadership relies a lot on the data that OFA receives from the field.

Question: Do you think there is any chance of TANF reauthorization happening prior to 2012 or do you think we will need to go through what we went through with the first authorization?

Response: It is up to Congress.

Question: We have been pretty challenged budget wise. If TANF ECF is extended, do you think there would be any conditions that would require it to be used for subsidized employment? Unless the Federal government specifically requires us to use it for subsidized employment, [our State TANF Program] will not be able to use it for that. We tried to tell our State budget office that the Federal government would prefer us to use it for that purpose. They acknowledged that, but said they needed to use it to fill holes. Michigan received \$162 million in TANF ECF but the subsidized employment only received \$8 million.

Response: That is a really great insight. I will take it back.

Question: Could you describe what role OFA has in the reauthorization process?

Response:

- OFA is the TANF Office. We have the role and responsibility of making sure that Congress is well aware of the States' issues around TANF—everything from the work participation rate (WPR) to caseload reduction to penalties.
- It is our responsibility to make sure that the data is posted in an accurate way so that when people go to OFA's site, they are able to see what we are doing. When appropriate, we need to be able to review the data and point to agreements or

disagreements in what the data is telling us. Regional offices give us the insight into frontline challenges.

- OFA also has a role in reauthorization to eventually make rules.

Participant Question: Is there any hope of movement on education? With one year and 30 percent limits, that has really been a problem for us. Is there any hope that there would be any relief from education restrictions?

OFA Response: The President has said that education is central to improving the employment and long-term independence outcomes for American families. Interoperability is crucial in bringing partners together that could bolster or foster people having better access to education. OFA is trying to develop a partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Administration for Children and Families to try to ensure that child outcomes are better for homeless families. If you can stabilize their lives, kids will stay in school and that is why this innovation is a school-based approach. The real question is how to re-engage parents who have delayed and/or stopped their education. That is important because parents set examples for their children.

Participant Comment: A lot of our hard to serve TANF participants fall into the category of having some kind of disability and thus have work limitations. Our Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth supplies services for the unemployed. We keep getting cut financially and we want to put our money where the work participation counts. It is like we are telling people they can do something; but I believe that if we look more at disabled participants and put them in the general population, we could trampoline those folks into employment.

OFA Response: The problem here is that no promises can be made. The conversation is happening and the problem is noted. What I think I hear is that you asking not to be penalized for this.

OFA Related question: Are there other States who have partial participation rates?

Participant Response: Minnesota.

Participant Response: Kansas sees the same situation. There were some issues when the quarterly report was submitted to obtain reimbursement for TANF ECF. A specific criterion further down in the list had not been emphasized. If the rules were made clearer and easier, we would appreciate it. As Kansas begins to implement its Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) program, changing the education component rule becomes more important. We do not do waivers; we will be totally out of compliance on that component. We are willing to take that risk but should not be in that situation since we are receiving the grant through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Hours of individuals involved in the program should be countable hours.

OFA Related question: Can you elaborate more on that?

Participant Response: Since we are allowed to engage participants in training which lasts over a year, there will be participants interested in professions that require two to three

years of school. With the \$3 million grant per year for the next five years, the program will hopefully serve approximately 500 people. It is a big partnership involving the Kansas Department of Commerce, Board of Regents, medical organizations, and more. The opportunity is exciting but we might have to exclude these participants when calculating our WPR.

Participant Comment: Referencing innovation in TANF over the last year, this State representative commented that there is a serious danger of losing all the progress if the ECF does not return and TANF reauthorization lingers. States will need to roll back the increases they have seen. If there is something OFA leadership can do, even if it means messing with the regulations, it would be much appreciated.

OFA Response: Honestly, the first step is listening to you. Describe the conundrum you are in to your Congressional representatives.

OFA Question: Is anyone thinking very much or in-depth about what happens to the folks who run out of unemployment? Is anybody thinking about the possibility that we are looking at structural unemployment of 10 percent for the next five to 10 years? This could very much be like Japan's lost decade?

Participant Response:

- The answer is yes. But the response, as the administration has put it, is that we are making slow progress. We did not get in this situation overnight and we are not going to resolve it over night.
- The stimulus work is part of the foundation of responsiveness to the issues raised here today. We have extended unemployment insurance (UI), and it is always a battle to do that. TANF ECF is an example of OFA being conscious that we need to go deeper and make sure that there is a "slide to the trampoline."
- TANF needs to have a new face and many portals into the program for people who are typically HUD clients and do not know TANF. We need to think about examples from the Swedes and Germans. This is an opportunity to retool and enhance our skills. We still need the Innovation Fund and to stimulate small businesses. The beauty of the Innovation Fund is that it was closer to Main Street.
- The TANF caseload probably will still be going up. It will not be your fault. In some ways it says that we do have challenges. One of the challenges is understanding the type of people who are applying for TANF. Were they the same population or were they different? The flexibility of TANF is that you have to be responsive. A program that was once responsible for serving low-income women is not going to be responsive to the macro issues facing unemployed persons from across the spectrum.

Participant Question: The excess Maintenance of Effort (MOE) is strictly regulatory. Under the prior administration, there was effort to limit it. Is OFA willing and able to revisit how States apply their excess MOE?

OFA Response: You are not the first to raise the issue. People are discussing that.

Participant Question: While TANF caseloads have not increased dramatically, there are still people out there who are receiving food stamps and other benefits but are not interested in welfare. Is ACF interested in studying the “ghost population?” Do you have strategies about studying/evaluating the population that inquires about TANF benefits but does not sign up for the program?

OFA Response: That is an interesting observation. We are also trying to figure out the child-only cases. It is something we should consider.

OFA Comment: We are hearing that people are astounded at the level of documentation that is required compared to UI. People are asking why there is no trust in the system.

Participant Response: What do you mean by trust?

OFA Comment: It feels like we are saying “you are liars—we do not trust you” when we require all the documentation.

Participant Response: So, it is UI documentation versus TANF documentation?

Participant Comment: Yes and UI benefits are higher than TANF benefits.

Participant Response: Documentation for SNAP is not anything like the documentation required for TANF.

Participant Comment: People will go for SNAP since it does not require as much public involvement in their lives.

OFA Response: Do you guys all feel that?

Participant Comment: I agree.

Participant Comment: We are not asking the pendulum to swing back to no accountability, but we want it to swing to the middle so we can do job development, case management, and work with TANF participants on work. See if all the detail is really necessary. Would the public even notice if we did not have to do all the details?

Facilitator Question: What are one or two things you [State representatives] want included in TANF reauthorization?

Participant Responses:

- Increase the block grants.
- Increase the funding along with restrictions on where it is spent, in a positive way, so it is not just swallowed up by budget holes.
- Change the work participation rate.
- Take restrictions off of vocational education and job readiness.
- Change WPR requirements to allow partial credit.
- Loosen up the work verification plan, and be more lenient regarding core and non-core activities.
- Eliminate the separate two-parent work rate.
- Reevaluate the list of allowable work activities, and put more allowable work activities on it.
- Eliminate the WPR requirement from the month the TANF participant's case is approved and the month it closes.
- Increased funding to implement more comprehensive programs and services and assistance with meeting work rates.
- Less documentation.
- Eliminate the separate two-parent work rate.

Dr. Johnson thanked meeting attendees for their honesty and forthrightness. He asked them how fragile the economic environment is for them, and how deep the cuts are in their staff. State representatives' responses are listed below:

- Michigan representatives commented that the biggest issue is that staff members feel like they are pushing paper and not managing cases. Their case managers have caseloads of 300 to 400, but would prefer to keep it to 150.
- Kansas representatives said they were in the same place. They also noted that they need a raise in the grant level because the TANF budget will be operating on a deficit within two years.
- Iowa's representatives agreed, commenting that they have caseloads of 200 people and regard case managers as "case monitors."

Interoperability and Meeting the of Low-Income Immigrant /Refugee Residents

Kenneth Tota, Deputy Director, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services

This session provided States with an opportunity to hear from Mr. Kenneth Tota and learn about ORR services. Mr. Tota discussed ORR programs and opportunities for collaboration with State TANF programs.

Mr. Tota began the session by providing background information on ORR and outlining activities being planned for the 30th anniversary of the office. The program started in 1980 and over the past 30 years, over three million refugees have been brought to the USA. When the

program began, Vietnamese refugees made up a large portion of all refugees. Over the years, the refugee population has become more diverse and currently represents over 70 countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) projects that 16 million refugees exist throughout the world and the United States receives the largest number of refugees. Above is a table illustrating arrival projections for fiscal year 2011. Each year, the President of the United States determines the maximum number of

	Projected Arrivals
Refugees	80,000
Asylees	24,000
Cuban/Haitian entrants	20,000
Victims of Human Trafficking	300
URMS	300
Special Immigrant Visas	3,000

Region	Presidential Determination for Refugees (FY 2011)
Africa	15,000 (Burundians and Somalis)
East Asia	19,000 (Burmese, Hmong, Vietnamese, Tibetans, Bhutanese)
Europe/ Central Asia	2,000 (Meskhetian Turks, Lautenberg cases, religious minorities from the former Soviet Union)
Latin America	5,500 (Cubans and Colombians)
Near East/South Asia	35,500 (Iraqis, Afghani, Iranian religious minorities)
Unallocated Reserve	3,000 (for emergency situations)

refugees allowed to enter the United States from each region of the world. Mr. Tota noted that this year was unique because the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was involved in these conversations and the table to the left depicts the

Presidential Determination for Refugees by Region.

In fiscal year 2010, 74,000 refugees entered the United States and Mr. Tota commented that it may have been the closest ORR ever came to meeting the ceiling of allowed refugees, and provided information on the breakdown on countries of origin for refugees that arrived in 2010. The greatest number of refugees—almost one-fourth of the total number of refugees—came from Iraq. Mr. Tota specifically discussed how many refugees settled in the States in Regions V and VII. The table below lists how many refugees resettled in the States in Regions V and VII.

Mr. Tota discussed how refugees enter the United States and become enrolled in ORR programs in more detail. The State Department's Reception and Placement program meets clients at the port of entry, coordinates their initial living arrangements, and refers them to ORR or mainstream programs. Given their status, refugees are eligible for the same benefits available to American citizens. If refugees are not eligible for mainstream benefits, ORR provides Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA). ORR State-administered services also include but are not limited to language training, employment, and adjustment assistance, and are available to refugees for their first five years in the United States. Mr. Tota highlighted the State-Administered Targeted Assistance program which is available to counties and contiguous areas with unusually large refugee and entrant populations. The program provides employment related services to assist refugee families who have been in the country longer, who are under-employed, and who need a second wage earner in the family.

State	Number of Resettled Refugees
Michigan	4,000
Illinois	3,000
Ohio	2,000
Missouri	1,000
Minnesota	1,000
Iowa	1,000
Nebraska	1,000
Wisconsin	500
Kansas	500

Mr. Tota estimated that approximately 40 percent of refugees will receive RCA or assistance through one of ORR's alternative programs. The remaining 60 percent of refugees will be referred to TANF based on their eligibility. PRWORA laid out the differences between qualified and not qualified immigrants, provided specific regulations as they relate to individuals who came to America prior to and after its enactment, re-emphasized work among qualified immigrants, and outlined specific options for States to provide (or deny) public benefits to immigrant families. Under PRWORA, qualified immigrants were defined as refugees, asylees, and persons granted a withholding of deportation or removal and who were—depending on or before 8/22/96—Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs), INS parolees, conditional entrants, and certain victims of domestic violence. PRWORA generally barred new legal immigrants and those without verified documentation or on specific visas from federally funded assistance programs for a specific time period, but it made exceptions for certain groups, including political asylees and refugees.¹³

This drastic growth of immigrant populations and influx of refugees throughout the nation coupled with the passage of PRWORA caused a fundamental shift in how welfare agencies administered TANF benefits. PRWORA provided funds to States to administer work-focused public assistance benefits to low-income families and allowed the use of funds to assist various categories of qualified legal immigrants. Although caseloads for all families and for immigrant families specifically have declined, immigrants remain a significant proportion of TANF participants. A majority of States and Washington, D.C. are providing TANF services to immigrants/refugees and most rely on their Maintenance of Effort (MOE) expenditures to cover eligible, qualified immigrant families.¹⁴

¹³ See: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/wm015.txt>

¹⁴ Panel Discussion: Immigrants in New York City and Los Angeles: Language Barriers, Legal Status, and Hardship. The Urban Institute, Washington, DC. (2002); Tumlin, K. C. & Zimmerman W. (2003). *Immigrants and TANF: A look at immigrant welfare recipients in three cities*. The Urban Institute, Washington, DC.; Congressional Research Service (2004). *State policies on immigrant eligibility for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.; Levinson, A. (2002). *Immigrants and welfare use*. Migration Policy Institute- US in Focus Brief.

National Voluntary Resettlement Agencies, also known as “Volags,” are community service providers who typically refer refugee cases to TANF based on their initial screening. The Volags who work with States in Regions V and VII are: Church World Service (CWS), World Relief Corporation (WR), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and Kurdish Human Rights Watch.

Mr. Tota shared ORR’s performance data for refugees receiving ORR RCA assistance for their first eight months in the United States. The State National Average is that 40 percent of the refugee population is employed with an average wage of \$9.02 at 180 days.

Demographics and challenges for the ORR program this year were discussed. Compared to years past, there are a higher percentage of refugees with severe and long-term medical needs. Additionally, the percentage of families with females as the head of the household has increased. The refugee populations participating in ORR programs have varying skill levels. For instance, a greater share of the refugee population is highly skilled and expect a high level of service, but a portion of the refugee population has a low level of skills due to years in a refugee camp setting.

Mr. Tota concluded his presentation by discussing ORR initiatives under development. ORR is implementing an in depth orientation for refugees to take overseas and once they enter the United States. Refugee Works, a technical assistance provider, has been influential in developing the steps of orientation for refugees, ORR is also working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to screen refugees overseas, and additional case management funds are in the President’s FY 2011 budget.

At the close of the presentation, one participant asked Mr. Tota to explain the logic behind placing refugees with relatives. He commented that the State Department’s policy is to only place refugees with relatives if the relative is an immediate relative; however, the State Department is re-examining that policy. Another attendee commented that it would save Child Support staff a lot of time if female heads of household received death certificates for their husbands if their husbands were deceased when they entered the US.

State Roundtables: What’s Going On and What’s Next?

Moderated by Damon Waters, Senior Associate, ICF International

In response to evaluation feedback from prior meetings and requests from Regions V and VII, the *Innovation through Integration: 2010 Heartland TANF Conference* aimed to promote State sharing through interactive discussion sessions during which States shared the status of TANF in their State as well as challenges and innovative strategies. Mr. Damon Waters facilitated the session during which each State contributed to the dialogue. In order to encourage State representatives to reflect on their respective programs in preparation for the meeting, discussion questions and topics were shared with meeting

attendees in advance of the meeting. The list of questions and topics sent in advance of the meeting is below.

- According to figures recently released by HHS, TANF caseloads have increased nationally by about 10%. Has your State's TANF caseload increased as a result of the economic downturn? If so, by how much? Also, has the nature of your caseload changed (more 2-parent families, etc.)?
- What are some of your State's most significant challenges in meeting Federal work participation requirements?
- What specific strategies have been most successful as you move participants into work activities?
- Has your State developed any innovative strategies for meeting the needs of hard to serve populations i.e., emancipated youth, non-custodial parents, ESL clientele, etc?
- If your State applied for TANF Emergency Contingency Funds, what specific programs did you fund?
- If ARRA is not extended, does your State have a plan in place to sustain programs that were funded by TANF Emergency Contingency Funds?
- Do you have any partnerships with other agencies/programs that are working especially well? Do you have any particular issues in this area?
- Providing quality service to domestic violence victims is a priority. How does your State handle TANF applicants/participants with domestic violence issues, and do you have any successful practices that you could share?

State representatives shared answers to and reflections on the above questions, and also responded to questions from peers, federal and regional staff, and Mr. Waters. A summary of information shared by the States is provided below.

Illinois

Illinois representatives provided an overview of trends in the TANF caseload, challenges to service delivery, successful strategies, and partnerships. Since the passage of PRWORA, there was a 90 percent reduction in the caseload in Illinois, however the TANF caseload increased by 32 percent during the most recent recession. Illinois representatives attribute this increase in caseload to the economy, attitude changes, a legislation modification which provides benefits to participants from the date of application rather than thirty days after application, a Facebook post publicizing receipt of TANF benefits the day after application, and a change in earned income disregards which allows TANF participants to stay on the rolls until their earnings actually raise them above the poverty rate.

Challenges to service delivery and the program as a whole include budget cuts, which lead to potential client vulnerability, and an increase in caseloads. The average number of TANF cases per case manager is 300. State representatives also cited the floods in late July during which 40,000 applications for disaster food stamps were accepted in six offices over the course of five days. In order to assist with this effort, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) granted Illinois a waiver for the deadline for submitting paperwork.

Successful strategies include utilizing effective and efficient assessments, such as the Online Work Readiness Assessment, to accurately capture TANF participants' status at the time of program enrollment. Illinois is also focusing on streamlining case management, and case managers are encouraged to interact with participants on a regular basis to ensure engagement in and documentation of work activities. Illinois provides an additional financial incentive to TANF participants who complete their required hours.

Illinois representatives discussed a Federal initiative through which the TANF program has teamed up with city colleges and the community college board to promote adult education. The collaboration publicizes the availability of adult education programs which do not require participants to take out loans, and encourages TANF participants to attend community college to receive certificates and training.

Illinois' TANF program has evolving domestic violence efforts that start with TANF caseworkers screening participants and conducting family assessments to identify individuals with domestic violence barriers. The program also contains a sexual violence screening. The TANF clock is "stopped" for six months for TANF participants who are identified as domestic violence survivors. Training will be provided to educate staff members on domestic violence signs.

A meeting attendee asked for clarification around Illinois' work participation requirements. An Illinois representative responded that participants are not required to participate in work activities for the first thirty days following the date of program application. Despite this policy, Illinois' WPR has not suffered because of tremendous caseload decreases, but Illinois will need to reevaluate the policy if TANF is not reauthorized. Another meeting attendee inquired about recent changes in Illinois' TANF program and wondered if they were driven by legislature. An Illinois representative responded that the changes were initiated by Sargent Shriver Center helping Illinois to modify the laws.

Indiana

Indiana representatives discussed the decreasing TANF caseload size, which they anticipate will continue to diminish as eligibility requirements become stricter. Mr. Waters asked Indiana representatives to explain how they decreased the TANF caseload and focused on work activities. An Indiana representative attributed this to eligibility requirements, noting that a family of two must make less than \$229 per month to be eligible for TANF and a family may not possess assets valued in excess of \$1,000 at the time application for assistance is made. Emphasizing this point, he stated that the caseload is decreasing because applicants who have any assets at all are not likely to be on the caseload. Although the TANF caseload is decreasing, Indiana representatives expressed concerns that TANF caseloads may increase if a large number of UI recipients apply for TANF when their benefits run out.

Program funding sources and current initiatives were also discussed. Indiana was the last State to request TANF ECF money, and had to locate outside agencies as well as third parties who had increased expenditures. The dollars did not go through Indiana's TANF program. If Indiana is allowed to use excess

MOE funds in 2012, the representative believes that there will be more opportunities to secure funds for the TANF program. In response to a question on full-family sanctions, an Indiana representative noted that full-family sanctions have been instituted since 2003 and Indiana is considering instituting minimum sanctions. A subsidized employment program is in development, and so is an onsite intensive work program in Allentown County.

State representatives from Indiana also shared lessons learned from outsourcing their eligibility system. IBM had been hired to run eligibility determination, but ultimately the partnership proved ineffective, and Indiana is in the process of reorganizing its TANF program and eligibility system. Currently, Indiana employs three different eligibility processes throughout the State and program standards across the State are not universal. Specific challenges which resulted from privatization include a poorly designed contract with IBM and communication nightmares. As a result, Indiana set up an eligibility process designed to improve processes which link participants with jobs. In addition, a case management system for job searching and support is in development. Contractors assign participants to specific case managers. This has proven successful because participants now know who they can approach with questions.

Iowa

State representatives from Iowa began their presentation with a detailed account of Iowa's TANF program, the Family Investment Program (FIP), its caseload, and how it has changed as a result of the recession. Before the recession hit, there was a steady decrease in the FIP caseload for two years, but by November of 2009, Iowa's TANF caseload increased by about 18 percent to 17,000. Currently the caseload is about 15 percent higher than what it was in July 2008. The number of two-parent cases has also increased; in July 2008 there were 942 two parent cases whereas there were 1,100 two parent cases in September 2010. Caretaker cases accounted for approximately 18 percent of the FIP caseload in December 2008. In contrast, in May 2010 caretaker cases were 16 percent of the caseload. Because of this increase in the number of participants and the level of poverty among the participants, the average cash grant, or the cost per case, also increased. Specifically, the cost per two-parent family increased.

State representatives discussed the TANF ECF funds they received. When Iowa applied for TANF ECF funds, the FIP program was found eligible under all three categories—basic assistance, non-recurrent short-term benefits, and subsidized employment. Out of a possible \$65 million, Iowa's TANF program received about 50 percent, or \$35 million. Iowa has allocated these funds for the EITC and a subsidized employment summer program which had 1,000 youth participants. About two-thirds of the ARRA funds received were reimbursement for the EITC.

Challenges to service delivery and program sustainability include a lack of future funding and high caseloads. Iowa anticipates that it will need to request a significant increase in the amount of State dollars it receives to replace ARRA funds and maintain its programs. As the economic recession continues to impact communities across America, Iowa State representatives acknowledge their high caseload as their biggest challenge because it prevents case workers from providing quality case management to FIP participants. The FIP program lacks sufficient information about the activities of TANF participants and to address this

challenge, FIP has focused on cleaning up data over the past few years to facilitate data driven decision-making. FIP also added quality assurance staff members, who obtain and analyze data from the field. Quality assurance staff members are specifically interested in learning if and how many individuals on FIP are participating in activities that are not countable.

The FIP program has developed procedures for working with participants with barriers. A mandatory screening during the application process identifies domestic violence survivors. State representatives emphasized that the screening involves self-reporting and may not bring all domestic violence survivors to the attention of case workers. In addition, because disability specialists realized they were providing services to people who were not ready to participate in vocational rehabilitation, FIP case workers have started to assist participants with disabilities in applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

In order to address challenges to service delivery and better serve FIP participants, Iowa established various partnerships with agencies throughout the State. FIP and Bureau of Refugee Services in Iowa established a memorandum of agreement to service refugees who do not have citizenship and/or comprehension of English. Iowa's Workforce Development agency also partners with FIP to provide education and workforce development services.

Kansas

State representatives from Kansas began their presentation with statistics on their caseload over the past two years. In fiscal year 2009, there was a two percent decrease in the caseload. In contrast, in fiscal year 2010, there was a 14.5 percent increase in caseload and a 10 percent increase in expenditures.

For its subsidized employment initiative, the Kansas TANF program entered into an interagency agreement with the Kansas Department of Commerce. Initially, Commerce was unable to obtain a waiver to monitor TANF participants, but by the end of May, Commerce received and implemented the waiver. Other features of the program included a one-time EITC payment, and one-time payments for utilities and going back to school. Although Kansas hoped to spend approximately \$2.5 million on its subsidized employment program, less than \$75,000 was spent. In the absence of the continuation of ARRA and additional funds, Kansas will not continue the program due to a lack of funds. Additional challenges included meeting WPR requirements, but Kansas representatives identified community service and work experience sites as a successful strategy in engaging participants in work activities.

The TANF Agency is currently working to improve coordination with the domestic violence coalition. How to ensure that confidentiality standards are met while effectively responding to client needs is a continuing challenge.

Kansas representatives are excited about opportunities to partner with other agencies. State representatives explained that regions are autonomous and have their own partners, but in general are

skilled at establishing and implementing partnerships with local workforce boards. Partner agencies vary by region depending on what organization has the capacity to provide certain services. Two examples of partner agencies are legal services and Catholic Charities. Answering Mr. Waters' inquiry about partnerships related to sectoral employment, the Kansas representatives noted that partnerships between community colleges and local regions are in development. One hindrance to the partnership is community colleges' request for a guaranteed number of referrals from the TANF program.

Michigan

Representatives from Michigan discussed changes in the TANF caseload, funding, and the JET PLUS program. Michigan representatives shared that they recently saw increases in the TANF caseload; however, these increases are less than 10 percent which is the national average of increases in caseloads. The number of new cases recently has significantly fluctuated, varying from 100 to 1,000 from month to month.

Michigan ultimately did not meet WPR requirements because of the economic climate and associated job losses. However, in an attempt to satisfy WPR requirements, Michigan designed and implemented JET PLUS, an innovative subsidized employment program with a focus on education. Sixty million dollars was initially allocated for the program, but funding ultimately dwindled to \$7 million. Michigan's JET PLUS funds are turned over to Michigan work agencies which contract with outside organizations. From 2008 to 2009, JET PLUS had six sites and contracts with separate organizations. Michigan representatives cited one contract which served 150 participants, and had a 93 percent completion rate and a 60 percent placement rate. The smaller contract enabled caseworkers to work intensively, mentoring and monitoring each person's grades, attendance, and progress as necessary.

Michigan representatives expect that the program will be reinstated at two Detroit sites in 2011 with \$8.5 million in funding. With the renewal of JET PLUS, participants will be required to fulfill subsidized employment activities in order to receive education services. Michigan representatives noted that JET PLUS likely will be terminated in the next program year if funding does not continue.

State representatives also reported that a new integrated eligibility system, BRIDGES, was rolled out last year. Although the system has proven effective thus far, training staff and implementing the system was difficult.

Minnesota

State representatives from Minnesota began their dialogue with a brief review of their caseload, programs, and funding streams. Since 2007, the TANF program has experienced a 12 percent increase in the caseload which includes diversionary and State-funded programs. Representatives noted that outcomes for the refugee population have been good, with some individuals matching and exceeding the success of Minnesota-born participants. Representatives described the work benefit program which was established in

2009 a successful program component for helping the State meet WPR requirements by providing a small monetary benefit to families who leave TANF.

Through the TANF ECF, Minnesota received funds to implement a summer food and subsidized employment program. Minnesota's subsidized employment program will continue for the next two fiscal years because of a stipulation in the legislation that requires earnings to be utilized for the subsidized employment program this year and next year. The subsidized employment program specifically targeted African American and Native American participants to help them build their resumes. The Department of Employment and Economic Development matched the TANF ECF funds and provided assistance in implementing a summer youth program. Another subsidized employment partner is the Department of Transportation, who has benefited from the partnership because TANF participants help them meet affirmative action requirements.

Significant challenges include the economic climate which makes it difficult to find work activities for all TANF participants. Encouraging TANF participants to improve their skills through education also has hindered Minnesota from meeting WPR requirements. Minnesota's English as a Second Language (ESL) counselors often want to encourage participants to further their education, but are dissuaded to do so because it impedes the State's ability to meet WPR requirements. State representatives also noted that individuals with obvious disabilities are enrolled in the State non-MOE program, but it is difficult to provide the appropriate services to those participants with hidden disabilities.

Missouri

State representatives from Missouri began their presentation by noting an overall increase in caseload size. Although a specific statistic was not cited, Missouri State representatives noted that the percentage of two-parent families has increased.

Meeting the WPR requirements has been a big challenge for Missouri. The WPR in Missouri increased slightly in the past few months because of an increase in the percentage of work-ready participants on the TANF caseload and modification in the case management system. These changes include contracting with 10 agencies statewide to serve TANF participants in 19 regions in Missouri. Previously, the case management system was integrated with workforce development but not with the TANF program and did not provide effective case management for the TANF population. Missouri representatives also shared that subsidized employment programs have been the most successful strategy for moving people forward in their work activities.

Missouri representatives cited developing strong partnerships as one of their strengths. For the Summer Youth Employment Program, Missouri partnered with the Division of Workforce Development. Collaborations with food banks helped the TANF program involve participants in summer feeding programs. Another key partner is the child support agency, which works with the TANF program to increase paternity establishment. When asked about procedures and key strategies for starting and sustaining partnerships,

Missouri representatives explained that the TANF program partnered with an agency to examine agency structure and identify potential partners in Missouri. The TANF program approached agencies with which partnerships could be developed for MOE purposes.

Nebraska

State representatives from Nebraska provided program updates as well as challenges and promising practices. Although the TANF caseload has decreased, the number of two-parent family cases has increased. The caseload is also comprised of a high number of refugees. Challenges posed to effective and appropriate service delivery include ESL training being a non-core activity and transportation barriers. Employment and training services are contracted out, and each contract varies by region. State representatives noted that community service as a work activity has been a great tool for participants and there is a large community service site in Lincoln which is particularly useful for the refugee population. Services provided to domestic violence survivors include referrals to local domestic violence organizations to address barriers to work and exemption from the 60 month limit.

In response to a question about support services for individuals exempt from the 60 month participation limit, Nebraska representatives noted that those participants meet with contractors even though they are exempt and are allowed to participate in work experience and community service activities. Another meeting attendee asked Nebraska representatives to elaborate on consequences for exempt participants who do not adequately fulfill requirements. State representatives answered that exempt participants who fail to meet with case managers are enrolled in a mandatory program.

Ohio

Ohio reported an increase in its TANF caseload with the highest increase in its two-parent family cases. From fiscal year 2009 to 2010, there was a 42.52 percent increase overall, with the number of single parent cases increasing 12.3 percent and two-parent cases with an incarcerated parent increasing 16 percent. Along with a larger caseload, Ohio identified three challenges to service delivery. First, because of the economic climate, there are fewer work sites at which TANF participants can be placed. Second, there are not enough county staff members to develop new sites. The third and biggest issue is that clients are not fulfilling assignments, and nothing to date has been successful in getting them to fulfill work assignments.

Ohio applied for and received TANF ECF reimbursements, which were primarily used for subsidized employment program. In order to implement its subsidized employment program, the Ohio TANF program partnered with one-stops and food banks. Regarding sustainability of the program, Ohio will not be continuing its subsidized employment programs if TANF ECF is not continued. Additionally, a total of 14,953 youth and 2,000 employers participated in Ohio's summer youth employment program.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin representatives opened their dialogue with a brief discussion of caseload statistics. They credit the 45 percent increase in the Wisconsin Works (W2), or the Wisconsin TANF program, caseload to the economy and a change in philosophy in the State. The caseload demographics have also changed. The percentage of work ready individuals and two-parent families has increased; historically, two-parent families comprised a smaller percentage of the caseload. Along with this major caseload increase, program funding has also increased. As one of the last States to apply for TANF ECF, Wisconsin has not yet appropriated the funds.

In order to effectively serve W2 participants, Wisconsin contracts out its eligibility, case management, and employment services typically to the same agency. Agencies are in the process of retooling their services and structure in response to a study conducted two years ago of food stamp recipients without income who are not enrolled in W2. Wisconsin representatives noted that Milwaukee contracts are structured differently, with one agency providing eligibility services, a series of agencies working with work-ready individuals, and two agencies working solely with TANF participants. In response to a question on metrics for contractors, Wisconsin noted that performance standards for agencies are based on their structure. If agencies meet or exceed the program standards, they are rewarded with an incentive payment of \$1 million that must be reinvested in the program within the year. An example of a performance standard aimed at increasing the take-up requires all agencies to offer participants a barrier screening tool. Because W2 funds its contracts with agencies through monthly expenditure reimbursements, W2 is able to ensure that incentive payments are appropriately reinvested in the program. Agencies may also apply points earned during the performance standard review to the next contract year. State audits are conducted by bureau staff that is responsible for quality assurance monitoring.

Wisconsin representatives cited communication with agencies as a challenge, and described initiatives addressing this issue. The focus of their efforts is to increase efficiency and make time for agencies to conduct quality assessments. W2 is revising long, detailed memoranda into shorter documents with bullet points so that the documents are more reader-friendly and easier for agency staff to quickly digest and implement. They are also updating the policy manual. In order to address redundancies in information, W2 has developed a Web interface which integrates the case management and eligibility systems.

In addition to the agencies with which it contracts to provide eligibility, case management, and employment services, the W2 program partners with a variety of agencies to provide services to participants. W2 and child support workers are collaborating and co-training to ensure that W2 workers explain child support procedures and requirements to participants. W2 workers also coordinate with State agencies to provide housing and related services. Assistance for domestic violence survivors is provided through W2's partnership with domestic violence agencies. Domestic violence survivors are incorporated into the program and are not automatically exempted from work. Case managers take domestic violence issues into consideration, and place participants into appropriate activities based on their individual situation. This

initiative includes improved universal notification and a more manageable coaches' corner, because disclosure of domestic violence relies on participants' trust in and comfort level with their case manager.

Working Lunch: Interoperability—Opportunities for Collaboration

Moderated by William Brumfield, TANF Expert, ICF International

During the working lunch, meeting attendees heard presentations which focused on interoperability and collaborating across agencies to achieve program goals. An interagency collaboration in Hennepin County, Minnesota provided a specific example of interoperability and its benefits at the county level. The presenters also discussed opportunities for TANF programs to collaborate with the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). Below are summaries of the presentations.

Doryan C. Clifton, Supervisor, Human Services, Hennepin County, Minnesota Human Services and Public Health Department

Ms. Doryan Clifton, supervisor for the Diversionary Work Program (DWP) in the Hennepin County division of the Minnesota Human Services and Public Health Department, discussed the program and partnering agencies, as well as a system which facilitates the sharing of information across agencies. The Minnesota Human Services and Public Health Department created the program and designed it to allow county flexibility in program design. In 2004, Hennepin County developed and implemented the program which collaborates with child support, child care, employment services, and income maintenance agencies.

Ms. Clifton discussed the program regulations. Families are allowed to participate in the program for a maximum of four months in a 12 month period. These months do not count toward the 60 month lifetime limit. Job seekers who do not comply with employment services and/or child support enforcement are disqualified from the program and may return only after complying with all program requirements. Families who are not eligible to participate in the program include: recipients of MFIP or DWP in the past 12 months; child only cases; parents aged 19 or under without a high school diploma or GED; and single-parent families with a child under 12 months of age.

On the one hand, after four months of DWP, approximately 27 percent of participants are ineligible for continued cash assistance due to income and 43 percent of DWP clients do not receive MFIP benefits in the month following the end of DWP. On the other hand, the main challenges to DWP are meeting employment services timelines and case workers in different DHS agencies maintaining separate case files. The Enterprise Communications Framework (ECF) helps address this challenge by supporting client service activities within and across departments as a single source of information for storage and delivery of information. ECF combines case file materials with a "dashboard view" of client services. Compiling information in one place, ECF automatically creates efficiencies and helps caseworkers meet the required deadlines.

Byron Zuidema, Regional Administrator, Employment and Training Administration—Region V, US Department of Labor

Corey Bulluck, Supervisor - Target Populations, Employment and Training Administration—Region V, US Department of Labor

Mr. Byron Zuidema gave opening remarks and introduced Mr. Corey Bulluck, who presented on ETA and TANF partnership opportunities. Mr. Bulluck provided a brief summary of the Recovery Act Funding and noted that Workforce Investment Act (WIA) formula and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services funds are available through Program Year 2010 or until June 30, 2011. Mr. Bulluck discussed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and its four key policy drivers: spend funds quickly; transparency and accountability; leverage for long-term system change; and an emphasis on services for hard-to-serve populations.

Mr. Bulluck discussed discretionary funding programs including YouthBuild, Energy Training Partnership, Green Capacity, Healthcare Sector, Pathways Out of Poverty, and State energy sector partnership and training grants. He outlined the main focus of each grant, and identified the ACF Regions V and VII States which received funding for each grant. Mr. Bulluck concluded his presentation by noting that ETA Region V is exploring apprenticeship opportunities in weatherization, green jobs, transportation, homeland security, and the wind and renewable energy markets. He also mentioned two new Job Corps Centers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (construction completed) and Ottumwa, Iowa (nearing completion).

Trish Solis, Acting Regional Director, Food and Nutrition Service—Special Supplemental Nutrition Programs, US Department of Agriculture

Ms. Patricia Solis began her presentation with a brief discussion of recent trends in poverty and use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Poverty and the number of uninsured Americans rose in 2009 and although ARRA prevented wider-spread job loss, SNAP participants have increased over the past two years. For example, there were 26 million SNAP participants per month two years ago and since then that number rose to 42 million participants per month.

Ms. Solis shared information on the FNS Summer Food Service Program which provides meals for children during the summer. During the year, FNS provided meals to children through the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Less than 20 percent of those served during the year receive food assistance during the summer, and the Summer Food Service Program fills that gap. Ms. Solis noted that it is a program which can make a difference for struggling families yet it is significantly underutilized because parents and/or caregivers are not aware of it.

Concluding her presentation with challenges facing SNAP and FNS, Ms. Solis commented that there are not enough sponsors, or feeding sites, in the communities with the highest need for food assistance. To illustrate the demand for food assistance, Ms. Solis cited a statistic that indicates that approximately 50

percent of people in America have received SNAP benefits at one time or another. She encouraged interoperability, noting that increased collaboration leads to greater chances of achieving program goals.

At the close of the presentation, Mr. Steven Krasner, Region V TANF Program Manager, asked how many States in Regions V and VII were able to encourage support of the Summer Food Program with additional services. Ms. Solis and State representatives answered that Illinois and Missouri were able to collaborate with the Summer Food Program.

Strategies to Improve Work Participation

Moderated by Damon Waters, Senior Associate, ICF International

During this facilitated discussion, attendees heard about programs designed to improve services and more accurately serve TANF participants. State and national trends in satisfying WPR requirements were shared. Attendees also had an opportunity to pose questions to the presenters. Summaries of the presentations and questions are provided below.

Dr. Mary Beth Vogel-Ferguson, Professor, College of Social Work, University of Utah

Dr. Vogel-Ferguson began her presentation with a dialogue introducing herself and the Family Employment Program (FEP) study in Utah. An evaluator of Utah's TANF population for the past 11 years, Dr. Vogel-Ferguson's research led to the question "What more do we need to know about the people we serve?" The FEP study aims to answer that question by analyzing a cohort of people when they walk in the door applying for TANF. Dr. Vogel-Ferguson stressed that the study does not look at point in time data. The primary goals of the study were to identify the characteristics of people receiving FEP services; track client changes; and identify patterns of FEP usage over time. Dr. Vogel-Ferguson sought suggestions from frontline workers regarding the information that would be useful for her to collect.

For this five year longitudinal study, Dr. Vogel-Ferguson conducted interviews with participants from 2006 to 2008 and collected administrative data from 2009 to 2010. The study contained four waves, and Dr. Vogel-Ferguson summarized lessons learned from the individual waves as well as the study as whole. One unexpected finding she shared was that 70 percent of participants analyzed in Wave 1 entered FEP with a high school diploma/GED, and 64 percent had worked the majority of their adult lives. Based on Wave 1 data, Dr. Vogel-Ferguson concluded that only 16 percent of study respondents matched the traditional profile of welfare participants, which is designed for young, single, never-married individuals with limited work and education experience.

Dr. Vogel-Ferguson also reported FEP study findings on the attitudes of participants analyzed. Twenty-five percent of those interviewed in the FEP study indicated they felt desperate, scared, confused, and/or hopeless when they applied for FEP services. Dr. Vogel-Ferguson noted that this was the question which made people emotional during the interview if they did break down and cry during the interview. Another FEP study finding is that study respondents indicated a strong sense of not wanting to take on the identity

of a “welfare mom” and recognized stigmas associated with welfare receipt. Other lessons learned from the study as a whole include: appropriate customer assessment is crucial; most FEP participants never come near to reaching cash assistance benefit time limits; and those with the most barriers to employment were the most likely to be sanctioned. Findings from the study were taken into consideration for the FEP program redesign, which will be evaluated by Dr. Vogel-Ferguson. The goal of the FEP redesign is long term employment success and includes a “work success” job club which mirrors full-time employment requiring participants to work 40 hours per week and provide necessary documentation. Other components of the FEP redesign are expanded worker performance measures and an activity review designed to encourage early intervention and mutual accountability.

Dr. Vogel-Ferguson also discussed the “Inve\$t in You” program which was an education pilot program. Designed to explore the question “work first or education first?,” the program was piloted in the spring of 2008 and sought to move participants into HSD/GED programs, assist with adult education as needed, and encourage participants to pursue the next level of education. A financial incentive was provided to participants who received their HSD/GED.

Dr. Vogel-Ferguson employed FEP study data to profile participants and conducted exit surveys to analyze the “Inve\$t in You” program. Forty-eight percent of participants received a degree and the average time in a HSD/GRE program was approximately two months. Dr. Vogel-Ferguson noted that the participants identified their employment counselor as the number one factor contributing to their success. She also discussed the effective elements of the program which include strong case management features; mandatory participation in orientation; standards for attendance and progress; celebrations; incentives to enroll in the program; partnerships with the adult education system; and intensive trainings of Department of Workforce Services (DWS) workers. The program led to improved DWS worker morale with workers gaining a sense of an ability to “do right by the customer” and change families and lives forever. Customer self-worth also increased, as customers developed a view of themselves as successful and a sense of the importance of self-worth.

Dr. Heather Hahn, Senior Research Associate, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, The Urban Institute

Dr. Heather Hahn presented findings from a research report she conducted while employed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Entitled “TANF: Implications of Recent Legislative and Economic Changes for State Programs and Work Participation Rates (GAO-10-525),” the report explores the effect of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), the economic recession, and ARRA on State TANF programs. Conducted from August 2009 to May 2010, the research findings are based on surveys with State TANF administrators from all 50 States and the District of Columbia; site visits with State and local officials in Florida, Ohio, and Oregon; interviews with Department of Health and Human Services officials; and analysis of federal TANF data, laws, regulations and guidance.

Dr. Hahn reviewed the DRA and which policies in State TANF programs have changed as a result of it, citing that work rules were tightened and HHS defined work activities and reporting. The DRA also modified the calculation for WPR by including separate State programs in the caseload and changing the base year from 1995 to 2005. Finally, MOE expenditures were broadened.

Dr. Hahn discussed how States met the work participation rate in fiscal year 2007. Nine States had work rates over 50 percent, eight States had a decline in caseload, and 22 States utilized excess MOE funds. Dr. Hahn noted that excess MOE was allowed prior to the DRA, but only Delaware had utilized it to meet WPR requirements.

State policy changes also influenced the work rates. Dr. Hahn commented that States basically modified policies to continue to include working families while excluding non-working families in the work participation rate calculations. State policies that kept working families included in the rate calculations included work supplement programs and earned income disregard policies. State policies that facilitated the exclusion of nonworking families from the rate calculations were sanctions and solely-state funded programs.

Dr. Hahn discussed the various challenges States have encountered as a result of the DRA and the economy. DRA implementation issues include changing processes for reporting and verifying hours of work participation. 41 States reported moderate to great changes in the work participation verification processes. Implementing limits on time in certain work activities and changing computer systems also were challenges for States. Dr. Hahn also noted that States are trying to do more with fewer resources. The economic climate led to increasing caseloads and decreasing resources, which has affected States' caseloads and service delivery.

Dr. Hahn shared general observations gleaned from the report with attendees. Since the DRA, States have taken advantage of various policy and funding options to adjust their WPR requirements. States faced increased difficulties in meeting WPR requirements during the economic recession. Finally, although Congress maintains a political consensus on the work focus of TANF, the WPR has diminished in usefulness as the national performance measure for TANF.

Concluding her presentation, Dr. Hahn posed the following open questions for TANF reauthorization: How can work focus be maintained credibly during an economic recession/in recent memory of recession? Can work participation be measured more accurately without unintended consequences? Should States be held accountable for measures other than work participation? How can States and localities best leverage scarce resources to support families in need?

Questions and Response Session

Attendees were provided the opportunity to ask presenters questions. Questions and responses are listed below.

Questions for Dr. Vogel-Ferguson:

Question: The sample size from the first wave to the third wave of the study diminished. How did that affect the numbers?

Response: Those were the people we were able to contact. Some we just could not contact. Few people were not interested in participating.

Question: Are you re-examining these results after the recession?

Response: We will be evaluating the FEP redesign. But the administrative data for the FEP evaluation kept us up through July 2010. We expected a huge bump in people who were on TANF longer, but we did not find that. This suggests more that the program did not have what they needed, so they did not come back to the program.

Question: Utah does not have any deferrals. You have universal participation. Are people with disabilities expected to complete 20 hours of work activities per week?

Response: Universal participation means everyone has a plan. This is negotiated based on what people are able to do. Some might need a doctor or therapist's note that indicates they are not able to work.

Related Question: In Michigan, advocacy groups criticize that. How do you handle that?

Response: If they have a doctor's note, they do not go to work.

Question: Who received incentives for getting a GED or high school diploma?

Response: Participants were required to engage in high school for 30 hours a week. If the participant did that and received a GED, he/she received \$1,500.

Question: Does the GED program offer the full 30 hours or did you have to design that?

Response: We partnered with a GED program and designed it. They set up classrooms just for TANF participants. It was a pilot program, and is not going statewide because of concerns about that will affect meeting the WPR requirements.

Question: Did you have a control group?

Response: Yes, those within the high school diploma/GED program who did not choose to participate.

Question: Your program included 1,100 people who were new recipients. How many people were on assistance at the same time that were not included in the study?

Response: A random sample of participants was taken each month. We kept a list of non-respondents and people who were not part of the sample. With agency data, we were able to compare survey respondents and non-respondents and did not find any significant areas of bias.

Question: Did you ask people what they needed?

Response: Yes. The number one response was help getting a job. Participants did not perceive the services of the agency as help getting a job.

Questions for Dr. Hahn:

Question: What about child poverty rates? Did we lose the focus and why is that not considered as a good measure?

Response: The purposes of TANF do not include poverty reduction. The focus shifted a little before TANF. The rules are not specifically designed for reducing child poverty—they are focused on personal responsibility and work.

General Questions:

Question: What is the thinking behind WPR? I thought the focus was on outcomes.

Dr. Hahn's Response: My understanding is that there is a shift towards being more open to personal contracts.

Dr. Vogel-Ferguson's Response: There are strong stereotypes associated with the WPR. We need to change these stereotypes to change the system.

Mr. Mark Greenberg's Response: Many people would say that it is important to measure outcomes but in the context of TANF that is really hard. If you say you want to be accountable for outcomes, which ones? How would you measure them? How would you adjust for the recession?

Dr. Hahn's Comment: It would be useful to know what data you [State representatives] can collect to measure performance.

Question: Does anyone want to talk about changes in TANF demographics?

Response: We have had to implement two different types of job clubs. The traditional job club is geared towards helping participants' job search and develops resumes and the professional job club reviews and trains participants on interview skills.

Mr. Krasner concluded the session and thanked speakers and meeting attendees.

Day Two

Program Sustainability, Employer Engagement, and Career Development

Moderated by Louisa Fuller Jones, Senior Project Manager, ICF International

This facilitated discussion focused on innovative TANF programs that have been able to sustain successful practices and projects. Panelists provided insights on strategies and solutions to maintain partnerships, strengthen subsidized employment programs, and expand education/training and skills-development for clients. Below are summaries of each of the presentations.

Les Johnson, Jr., Vice President, Grant Management Services, St. Louis ARCHS Program

ARCHS, a strategic funding management organization based in St. Louis and comprised of over 400 human and social services providers, conducted a case study for the Missouri Department of Social



Services to better understand TANF participants, work behaviors, program formats, and client service delivery methods. Mr. Les Johnson, Jr. discussed the three year case study ARCHS designed to reduce the number of sanctioned TANF participants, and the overall mission and goals of the initiative. ARCHS is a vital piece of the local economy that fosters improved public-private partnerships and as a result has contributed approximately \$66 million in the form of social services to the St. Louis community.

ARCHS uses a nationally recognized Transitional Job (TJ) model to place TANF participants and low-income clients into allowable work activities and job placements. Most recently, ARCHS completed a three-year demonstration project for the Missouri Department of Social Services that showed promising impacts on individuals and families. The ARCHS program provided time-limited, subsidized wage-based employment strategies which combined work experience, skill development, and support services to persons with barriers to employment. Participants were placed in allowable work activities and as a result the likelihood that they would be sanctioned was reduced, and pending or ongoing sanctions were removed in a timely manner. Eligible participants for the demonstration project were St. Louis City and County TANF participants with multiple barriers, limited work experience, and in sanctioned status, conciliation status, or residing in transitional housing. In order to engage participants in the program, the demonstration project rapidly assigned them to work-sites and was adaptive to the needs of individuals as crises occurred. Mr. Johnson emphasized that a crucial component of the model was case management, which was especially important for TANF participants with more severe barriers such as mental health issues, substance abuse, and domestic violence. In this program, case managers served as life coaches.

In order to turn subsidized employment jobs into unsubsidized positions, ARCHS worked with employers to strengthen the career laddering for clients and during the five month placement, employers were required to complete a structured employee appraisal process. Mr. Johnson noted that 15 to 20 partners were involved in the demonstration project, all working as a seamless social service system and these

community partners included small government agencies and mental health, domestic violence, transitional housing, short-term skills training, and substance abuse intervention providers. Approximately 80 percent of employers were for-profit, and 20 percent were nonprofit. Out of all the employers, approximately 15 percent were small businesses. The local marketplace dictated the kinds and types of businesses that ARCHS engaged for transitional job client placements. In most cases, placements were in retail, hospitality, light manufacturing, food processing (international as well as small start-ups), child care, and health care companies. Mr. Johnson noted that, in many instances, participants placed in small businesses learned the front and back end of business operations and some participants who started in clerical positions may now be working in marketing positions. Placements served as career ladders and not just minimum wage positions with little or no upward mobility for participants.

According to a recent analysis, 20 percent of placed participants transitioned from subsidized to unsubsidized jobs and throughout the course of the demonstration project, approximately 760 TANF participants in St. Louis City/County became re-engaged and participated in a countable work activity. Approximately 500 participants received work experience for a five month period through this transitional jobs model. As a result of the work experience, approximately 100 participants were placed in permanent full-time jobs.

Mr. Johnson concluded his presentation by noting various sustainability issues, including working with a hard to reach population; the current economy; connecting various stakeholders; addressing long-term, complex issues; demonstrating long-term success; and publicizing the program.

Jennifer Hrycyna, Associate Director, Human Capital Development -Put Illinois to Work! Program, Illinois Department of Human Services

Ms. Jennifer Hrycyna presented the development of and outcomes from the *Put Illinois to Work!* program, Illinois' subsidized employment program. The Illinois Department of Human Services identified Heartland Human Cares, a division of the Heartland Alliance, as the most appropriate lead contractor because of its size and willingness to collaborate. Heartland Human Cares served as the payroll agent and employer of record and an additional 26 subcontractors played a key role in providing services throughout the State.

With a focus on maximizing the flexibility of the law, a broad-based eligibility level was established and eligible participants included adults living with children, noncustodial parents, and individuals living at 200 percent of the poverty level. However, Ms. Hrycyna emphasized that the program specifically targeted the ready-to-work population.

In order to get employers involved in the program as quickly as possible, the *Put Illinois to Work!* program provided a 100 percent subsidy. The program targeted private sector employers and recruiting employers did not pose significant challenges. Recruiting participants also did not pose significant challenges. By late May 2010, approximately one month after the program began, 5,000 participants had applied and by mid-June, the program had received 62,000 applicants. Although there was significant interest, there were

some challenges with regard to the contractors because people were signing up but it was taking a while for subcontractors to follow up with them. Despite some initial growing pains, the program had 20,000 participants by mid-July. The *Put Illinois to Work!* program decided that the program had reached capacity as a system and that additional participants could not be accepted into the program.

Ms. Hrycyna shared preliminary results with attendees, noting that State funds extended the program beyond the scheduled September end date. The program ultimately served over 27,000 participants, and made 35,700 job placements. Out of a total of 4,280 employers, 57 percent reported improvements in their business as a result. For two-thirds of the employers, participation in the *Put Illinois to Work!* program was their first experience with the subsidized employment model. In addition, 42 percent of the employers were for-profit entities. Of the for-profit employers, 58 percent served as placements for fewer than five workers.

Although participant eligibility for the program was not limited to the TANF and SNAP populations, the *Put Illinois to Work!* program ended up largely serving the Illinois Department of Human Services population. Over 15,000 participants were TANF and/or SNAP participants. Thirty-nine percent of all program participants were long-term unemployed individuals; they had not worked in the two years prior to their involvement in the *Put Illinois to Work!* program. Ms. Hrycyna noted that she had received positive feedback about workforce results from noncustodial parent participants, who comprised 11 percent of all program participants.

Judy Kennedy, TANF Program Manager, State of Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services

Ms. Judy Kennedy shared the experience of implementing Health Professionals Opportunity Grant (HPOG) programs in Kansas. When the State of Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services initially found out about the grant opportunity at the end of July, the agency approached the Kansas Department of Commerce to see if they were interested in partnering together to compete for and administer the grants. Kansas was awarded \$15 million over five years. Of that amount, they were given \$2.8 million for the first year.

Kansas' program is focused on preparing participants for high paying, in-demand health care jobs by targeting skills and competencies demanded by the healthcare industry; supporting career pathways; providing training toward industry recognized certificates and/or degrees; and combining supportive services with easily accessible education and training. The goal of the program is to connect two-thirds of the trained participants to health care occupations. Target populations include individuals at or below the poverty level, TANF participants, SNAP recipients, high school dropouts, youth aging out of foster care, and recently separated and/or disabled veterans.

Ms. Kennedy emphasized the collaborative nature of the project. Kansas Social and Rehabilitative Services and the Department of Commerce are working with multiple partners, including local Workforce Investment Boards, the State Workforce Investment Board, the State Apprenticeship Agency, and Kansas agencies including the Board of Regents, Adult Basic Education, Department of Education, Department of Health

and Environment, Department of Labor, Association for the Medically Underserved, Hospital Association, Health Care Association, and the Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

Ms. Kennedy described some of the innovative features of the grant including assigning career coaches that will provide support services to program participants, including uniforms and housing if necessary. Since there will be many participants who have not completed secondary school, Kansas will incentivize GED completion with monetary awards. The program will also provide incentives to employers to participate in the program. Employers offering registered apprenticeships to program participants will receive partial reimbursements for training costs. Ms. Kennedy concluded her presentation by noting that the grant will be evaluated. The Kansas Department of Commerce is leading the evaluation of the program's progress and performance outcomes.

Rhandi Berth, Vice President, Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/Big Step

Ms. Rhandi Berth presented on the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership's (WRTP)/ Building Industry Group Skilled Trades Employment Program (BIG STEP) Center for Excellence. WRTP is a sector-based organization with a board of directors comprised of private employers and labor unions. The organization focuses on serving employers. The WRTP/BIG STEP Center for Excellence was designed to address employer concerns that current workers and high school graduates do not have the skills to transition into the labor market and are not prepared to learn new technology. In order to illustrate this concern, Ms. Berth



noted that only half of the 5,000 workers building a power plant in Wisconsin were residents of the State. Thus the WRTP/BIG STEP Center of Excellence's mission is to improve the ability of employers and unions to recruit, retain, and develop qualified community residents for skilled trades and industries.

Ms. Berth discussed the WRTP/BIG STEP Center of Excellence's "clearinghouse" approach. Assessing, preparing, and placing-job ready candidates, the WRTP/BIG STEP Center of Excellence serves as a central resource for employers and unions and operates based on a workforce development model. She commented that the model was first utilized in the manufacturing industry, where it was identified that the single most important barrier to industry growth was the lack of qualified workers. In order to facilitate the process of locating qualified workers for job openings, WRTP/BIG STEP staff have experience working in the industries for which they are seeking candidates and jobs.

WRTP/BIG STEP provides employer services such as recruitment strategies, instruction on structured techniques, workplace mentoring networks, training on positive attendance practices, and community partner development, and also provides training for job seekers. Under the umbrella of its Entry-Level Industry Skills program, WRTP/BIG STEP is able to help participants at all points on their career pathways to advance. The program is comprised of four training modules which can be tailored by industry, and have flexibility in delivery, location, levels taught, and training providers.

Ms. Berth discussed measures of program success for the WRTP/BIG STEP Center for Excellence. The number one referral base to WRTP/BIG STEP is family and friends, suggesting that individuals have positive experiences when they interact with WRTP/BIG STEP. The organization maintains 200 to 600 placements a year with an average starting salary of \$16/hour, and contributes to public service projects like the renovation of a town's city hall.

Questions and Response Session

After the presentations, attendees were invited to ask questions. Questions and responses are listed below.

Question: In the ARCHS program, what is the cost per worker for transitional jobs?

Response: Fifty percent of the \$1 million budget is for case management and services, and the remaining 50 percent is for wages.

Question: How do people get referred to ARCHS?

Response: On a monthly basis, the State provided ARCHS with a list of individuals in sanction status, and we created a brochure and marketing materials to the particular population—distributing materials to potential clients in areas where the sanctioned population frequented.

Question: How were the services ARCHS provided different from what someone would get from the Missouri TANF agency?

Response: ARCHS utilized a psychosocial bio assessment which identified up front a person's ability to work. ARCHS also conducted eligibility screenings. Designated eligibility specialists worked with ARCHS program participants throughout the process. ARCHS also provided a level of customer service, and regarded participants as potential customers.

Question: You mentioned that the Kansas HPOG program would assist participants with legal issues. What types of legal issues do you anticipate the program will assist participants with?

Response: We have not totally formulated the plan. The assumption is that the program will assist participants by doing anything necessary to get him/her employable. This will likely include paying fines and assisting in expunging convictions.

Question: Does ARCHS have a State program which helps with utilities?

Response: Instead of sending customers to case workers, ARCHS assisted with that.

Question: How does WRTP/BIG STEP approach sustainability and finding new funds? What is the public funding source for WRTP/BIG STEP?

Response: Primarily WIA, but also some State general training funds.

Question: How did you handle the worker's compensation issues and liability for the *Put Illinois to Work!* program?

Response: The Heartland Alliance took care of that.

Question: What is Illinois' policy for Unemployment Insurance (UI)?

Response: Heartland is the employer of record. The MOU states that Heartland has the authority to hire, fire, and place, but Heartland cannot pay UI.

Question: In terms of getting the message out, has social media been effective in terms of letting people know about your programs?

Response: Social media has helped BIG STEP sell success. Social media has helped with identification and recruitment of employers and employees.

Question: Did ARCHS get paid a set rate for each person who enrolled in the program?

Response: It was a set rate. Subcontractors were performance-based.

Remarks and Interactive Dialogue with Mark Greenberg

Mark Greenberg, JD, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Health and Human Services

Mr. Greenberg provided attendees with an unplanned appearance at the 2010 meeting. Mr. Greenberg began his presentation by commenting that he is proud of what the States have accomplished with the use of ARRA funds and he contrasted these accomplishments with Aid to Families with Dependent Children's general unresponsiveness during the recession in the early 1990s. Mr. Greenberg noted that he is pleased that the \$5 billion was awarded, but also gratified by the extent to which States responded and wanted to help families in the downturn. Mr. Greenberg cited subsidized employment as an innovative program that is particularly exciting to him. He commented that it is historically unprecedented in the history of welfare reform, and has been highlighted as one of the outstanding examples of the successes of ARRA. If TANF ECF is not extended, Mr. Greenberg emphasized that everything which was allowed under ECF is allowed under regular TANF funding. Acknowledging scarce resources and difficulties under State budgets, Mr. Greenberg commented that it is increasingly important to focus on the core purposes and make hard decisions.



Concluding his remarks, Mr. Greenberg anticipated attendees' questions about TANF reauthorization. He noted that he has not given up on Congress and will continue to urge them to continue the ECF funding. He commented that OFA makes recommendations to the ACF administration, which makes recommendations to the White House but whatever happens ultimately depends on Congress. Mr. Greenberg highlighted vehicles through which OFA may act, such as policy interpretations, technical assistance initiatives, the use of research funds, and the possibility of regulatory changes. Mr. Greenberg emphasized that he is enormously appreciative of the role that OFA has played in the process, commenting that the relationship

between States and OFA at times has been more adversary. This administration's goal is to work with States as partners, not adversaries.

Questions, Comments, and Responses

Following Mr. Greenberg's presentation, State representatives had the opportunity to pose questions to him and share TANF program insights with him. Below is a summary of State representatives' questions and comments.

Comment: It is very nice to hear that we are talking about partnerships instead of an adversarial role. I urge you to examine how UI looks at documentation versus how TANF looks at documentation. Look at what is really required in the Federal law and what has been elaborated on. Look at where you can lift some of documentation requirements so we can ease the burden on providers who are struggling with increased case loads. The State TANF program is looking for ways to make our dollars go as far as they can, but we are stretched.

Response: As people appreciate, the DRA has directed HHS to develop the definition of work activities. The specific choices that HHS made at that time were ones where there was a range of choices that could have been made. For us at this point, we are very interested in hearing from you in sessions like this and after the session. We would like to know if there are processes in place that do not make sense and if you find yourself spending time on things which have a significant administrative burden but do not result in a commensurate return in documenting someone's work participation. In some cases we may have room within existing regulations to look at whether we can interpret things differently. It is important to note that there is one practical challenge around developing a new regulation package at a time when the program is awaiting reauthorization. It may create a difficult situation with Congress, because it sends the message that we want the program reauthorized but it needs to be changed.

Question: I understand Congress is concerned about the use of the Block Grant to pay for other things. How do you understand Congress regulating how States use their Block Grant?

Response: One of the big problems right now is the Federal financial data is not very informative about how States use their TANF funds. The real difficulty is, when people look at the financial reporting, they come away saying there are pretty substantial funds but we are not sure where the funds are going. There is a lot of interest in at least getting better information. It is possible that in reauthorization there would then be a discussion about expenditures.

Question: Is there more you can tell us about where the money is going?

Responses: It is in everyone's best interest for you to be able to have a good pie chart to show where the TANF money is going in the State. You have got to be able to make the case if you think it is being used sensibly.

Question: How did TANF get to be the vehicle for the jobs in the Stimulus?

Response: As a bit of informal legislative history, when ARRA was being structured and TANF provisions were being structured there was concern among people in Congress that TANF had not been responsive. There was discussion on whether it should be in the basic and short assistance categories or not. Then there was the idea that if you are allowing basic assistance, a job should be offered. A few States early on saw a strategy for combating unemployment in different ways in times of recession

Question: How many States ultimately did subsidized work?

Response: Approximately 37.

Question: On the third and fourth goals of TANF, where is the Obama Administration on promoting fatherhood initiatives?

Response: The Obama Administration is fully committed to fatherhood work. We look at it as tied to the third and fourth principles. It is similar to the design of the former Healthy Marriage/ Responsible Fatherhood Initiative. We have not been able to make the leap empirically. Employment and economic ability is central to moving it forward in our agenda. In the DRA, there was \$150 million a year for Healthy Marriage and up to \$50 million of those funds could go to Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives. There was limited money spent on evaluation; the Building Strong Families Initiative is the only evaluation we have today.

Comment: The change in attitude in the central office is very much appreciated. The regional office has been very responsive. I am concerned that we will get into the same pattern with reauthorization as we did last time. I do not want things to just sit during continuing resolutions.

Response: You are right to flag the risk of continuing resolutions. It is helpful for us to hear your wish lists. It is helpful to hear both broad themes and specific details.

Question: What is the difference between subsidized employment and on-the-job training?

Response: We probably need to write up a question and answer sheet on this topic. Public and private subsidized employment activities are countable activities under TANF.

Improving Domestic Violence Services for TANF Participants

*Andrea Kovach, Staff Attorney, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Moderated by Louisa Fuller Jones, Senior Project Manager, ICF International*

This session focused on domestic violence and shared an innovative domestic violence initiative which aims to establish and increase the economic independence of domestic violence survivors. Ms. Andrea Kovach discussed the importance of assets and presented the partnership between Lake Forest Bank and A Safe Place. Below is a summary of her presentation.

Ms. Kovach began her presentation with a dialogue on the prevalence of domestic violence. More than 25 percent of women report an episode of domestic violence in their lifetime. For women with an annual income of less than \$15,000, the number of women experiencing domestic violence rises to approximately 35 percent. Abusers often sabotage their partner's ability to maintain employment; prevent access to financial resources and information; damage credit; and accumulate debt in their partner's name. Because of the current economic climate, survivors recently have been enduring a higher level of economic stress.

Leaving abusive relationships is a process, not an event, for survivors. They often return to the abuser several times before the separation is permanent. The strongest predictor of a survivor's decision to leave, remain, or return to an abusive relationship is economic independence. As assets are the building blocks of long-term financial stability, asset building is essential for survivors. Minorities are more than twice as likely to be asset poor, or lacking assets to meet expenses for three months without income, than their white counterparts.

Ms. Kovach discussed a specific example of a collaboration which assists survivors in building assets. The Lake Forest Bank partners with A Safe Place: Lake County Crisis Center (a transitional housing program for survivors) to provide education on the importance of assets and help survivors increase their economic independence. The partnership model is grounded in realistic expectations, flexibility, and an understanding of the individual safety needs of survivors. Lake Forest Bank staff met monthly with survivors to educate them on budgeting, managing bank accounts, and credit scores and during this time, survivors shared successes with each other, specific challenges, and potential next steps in their lives. After participating in the monthly financial education sessions, survivors had the opportunity to open a checking and/or savings account and to establish a credit history. Specific products which Lake Forest Bank provides to survivors through this initiative are a Small Dollar Loan (SDL) and a Build Your Credit product. The SDL is up to \$1,000 and designed for those who are in financial crisis or need, and may be used for car repairs, moving expenses, and child care. The term of the loan is 24 months, the interest rate is prime plus five percent and survivors are not required to have a credit score to be eligible for this loan. The Build Your Credit product is a \$250 loan which enables survivors to increase or establish positive credit by making on-time payments.

Lessons learned from the initiative include survivors' increased confidence levels and comfort with finances; decreased feelings of isolation; and reduced/eliminated reliance on high cost payday lenders. The bank also benefited from the initiative, and received Community Reinvestment Act credit. Ms. Kovach provided guidance to States on developing similar partnerships. Potential partners include domestic violence organizations in communities, domestic violence State coalitions, and national domestic violence networks.

Meeting attendees posed multiple questions to Ms. Kovach. In response to a question about the difference between credit unions and banks, Ms. Kovach noted that using a credit union may require affiliation with a specific group (ie, a union or the military) whereas anyone can become a bank customer. Answering a question on providing services to domestic violence survivors in bank deserts—places that lack significant banking centers or traditional banks—Ms. Kovach stated that she encourages banks to establish a branch

in bank deserts and publicize that banks are accessible to survivors and provide services designed for them. The group discussed ways in which the TANF infrastructure can be more supportive of survivors and their need for financial independence and attendees commented that educating TANF case workers on the needs and experience of victims is critical.

Opportunities for Technical Assistance and Program Support

Louisa Fuller Jones, Senior Project Manager, ICF International

Mr. Allen and Mr. Krasner opened the session with reflections on past regional conferences. Noting that the effects of the meeting typically disappear two to three months after the meeting, Mr. Allen and Mr. Krasner encouraged State representatives to contemplate areas in which they would like technical assistance. They introduced the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (WPTA) project director, Ms. Louisa Fuller Jones, who presented the services and information available on and through the WPTA network. Following her review of WPTA, Ms. Jones facilitated an activity for State representatives to brainstorm potential areas in which they would like technical assistance. Below is a list of topics identified by State representatives:

- Motivational interviewing.
- Employer outreach presentations which highlight successes and incentives.
- Future of Individual Development Account programs.
- Caseload management.
- Looking at 2010 Census data and its implications for TANF.
- UI rules and costs per person based on regional amounts and prevailing wage rates.
- Incentives for TANF participants.
- Interventions for TANF participants.
- Domestic violence training.
- Face-to-face interviewing.
- Submitting federal data.
- Education activities and documentation.
- Providing reasonable outcomes and performance measures.
- Ideas for improving application timeliness.
- Simplified/streamlined eligibility processes.
- What works and what does not work for teen pregnancy prevention.
- Help with finding and financing dynamic conference speakers on the topic of employment.
- Webinar on the Innovation Fund.
- Explanation of MOE reporting.

Questions, Comments, and Responses

Following the activity, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Allen, and Mr. Krasner posed questions to State representatives about the topics they listed for potential technical assistance. Below is a list of questions, comments, and responses.

OFA Question: Did anybody put serving noncustodial parents as a technical assistance need?

Participant Response: When they ran out of funds, Kansas and Michigan cut services for noncustodial parents.

Comment from Dr. Johnson: It is surprising that there is not a technical assistance need and potential request around serving noncustodial parents when it helps you meet TANF principles two, three and four.

Participant Question: In the past, we have submitted requests that have never come to fruition. What is the timeline from when we submit a request to when we start meeting about it and when it starts rolling out?

WPTA Response: The WPTA team tries to respond within the first 24-48 hours by at least getting the Regional office involved. Usually we have the conference call within 1-2 weeks of the request being submitted depending on the schedule of the TA requestor.

Participant Question: Have you thought about including a session on future meeting agendas for States to pose questions to other States?

WPTA Response: The possibility of occasional calls with State directors and staff has been discussed. That might be a good venue to ask questions. If there is an interest in doing that, we could do it on an occasional or regular basis.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Krasner and Mr. Allen, Regions V and VII TANF Program Managers, wrapped up the meeting by thanking State representatives, speakers, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Greenberg, and ICF International. They emphasized how much they appreciated State representatives' attendance and sharing of information. Mr. Allen noted that he believed the meeting addressed State representatives past requests for more State sharing, and through State sharing, a lot was accomplished.

During his closing remarks, Dr. Johnson emphasized that he really enjoyed hearing from meeting attendees. He noted that the conference was an education for him, especially because he does not typically hear from TANF representatives from the Heartland. He commented that he really appreciated meeting attendees' honesty and commitment, and encouraged them to keep providing honest feedback to continue moving forward through the regional and central offices. He concluded his remarks stressing that OFA is committed to maintaining great relationships with the States and regions.

Summary

The crisis of unemployment and poverty in America continues to worsen. Despite nominal increases in employment among various segments of the US population, those in the lowest economic classes continue to be battered by poverty, unemployment, and labor underutilization.¹⁵ The table below shows the stratification of unemployment rates by income level as of 2009-2010.¹⁶ In September 2011, Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the TANF block grant, which provides the main source of cash assistance to America's low-income children and working families. According to current studies,¹⁷ unemployment is afflicting low-income workers at a disproportionate rate and this group will require additional supports and assistance to weather the economic storm.

As Congress and the Obama Administration continue their dialogue with States, localities, and Tribes about the future of the TANF program, having the opportunity to hear directly from stakeholders is an important first step in the development of a strong foundation on which to build consensus and a stronger program. Although the number of families receiving TANF has increased just 12 percent since the beginning of the recession - rising from 1,643,102 in December 2007 to 1,835,086 in June 2010¹⁸ - studies conducted by the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services found that average earnings for employed leavers were less than the poverty level for a family of three.¹⁹ This current reauthorization offers the nation the opportunity to take

a new look at the strategies most effective at meeting the needs of low-income and working families.

Increasingly, the pathway to economic self-sufficiency requires a set of programs that are often linked by clients. While TANF provides struggling families with some assistance to achieving higher levels of economic self-sufficiency, there are many partners that are needed to reduce housing instability, food insecurity, asset poverty, educational deficiencies, and other challenges that individuals and families face. Innovation through integration is a plausible strategy for strengthening the social safety net and can reduce the impact of the multiple barriers to self-sufficiency that many families face.

Income Level	Unemployment Rate
\$12,499 or less	30.8%
\$12,500 to \$19,999	19.1%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	19.7%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	12.2%
\$40,000 to \$49,000	9.0%
\$50,000 to \$59,000	7.8%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	6.4%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	5.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	8.0%
\$150,000 or more	3.2%

¹⁵ Sum, A. et al. (2010). *Labor underutilization problems of the US workers across household income groups at the end of the great recession: A truly great depression among the nation's low-income workers amidst full employment among the most affluent*. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University-Boston, MA.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ See: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/caseload/caseload_current.htm#2010

¹⁹ See: *TANF "Work First" policy helps perpetuate single mother poverty and employment in low wage "women's work."* The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2010; Lower-Basch, E. & Greenberg, M. (2008). *Single mothers in the era of welfare reform*. Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC; ICF International (2009). *Promising practices—responding to increasing TANF caseloads*. Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, US Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

The 2010 Administration for Children and Families Regions VI and VIII meeting was held in Chicago, Illinois at the Park Hyatt. The meeting included a variety of vision, strategy, and tactics sessions, as well as several opportunities for State sharing around current challenges and promising practices. Over the two and one-half days, attendees were exposed to a variety of sessions presented by more than 15 distinguished experts and peers from various safety net and research communities.

Appendices



Innovation through Integration 2010 Heartland TANF Conference

AGENDA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2010

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Registration and Networking, *Ballroom B/C Foyer*

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Welcoming Remarks, *Ballroom B/C*

Steven Krasner, TANF Regional Program Manager
Office of Family Assistance
Administration for Children and Families- Region V
US Department of Health and Human Services

Gary Allen, TANF Regional Program Manager
Office of Family Assistance
Administration for Children and Families- Region VII
US Department of Health and Human Services

8:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

TANF Reauthorization Forum, *Ballroom B/C*

The US Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the TANF program. During this session, attendees will have the opportunity to interact with OFA leadership about policy priorities and program recommendations for TANF Reauthorization.

Discussion Leader: Earl S. Johnson, Director
Office of Family Assistance
Administration for Children and Families
US Department of Health and Human Services

10:15 a.m. – 10:45 p.m.

Interoperability and Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Immigrant/Refugee Residents, *Ballroom B/C*

States have increased flexibility under TANF to provide services to immigrant and refugee families to improve employment outcomes and economic self-sufficiency. Attendees will hear from the Office of Refugee Resettlement on highlights of program strategies and allowable activities for meeting the needs of legal immigrants and refugee families.

Discussant: *Kenneth Tota*, Deputy Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)
Administration for Children and Families
US Department of Health and Human Services

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Break





Innovation through Integration 2010 Heartland TANF Conference

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

State Roundtable I – What’s Going On?, Ballroom B/C

During this facilitated, solutions-focused roundtable discussion, Regions V and VII States will explore innovations and strategies they have developed to respond to the needs of TANF families during the economic downturn. Attendees will interact with their peers and Federal representatives and provide a “State of the State” summary of their TANF programs. Potential topics of discussion include:

- Strategies for improving outreach and services to underserved populations
- Addressing hard-to-serve populations
- Strategies for increasing economic self-sufficiency
- Reflections on the TANF Emergency Fund

Moderator: Damon Waters, Senior Associate
ICF International

12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Working Lunch: Interoperability - Opportunities for Collaboration, Ballroom B/C

During this moderated panel discussion attendees will hear from successful safety net partnerships and collaborations that have enhanced service delivery to low-income clients. Also, attendees will hear from Federal representatives on potential partnering opportunities to improve services to TANF families.

Moderator: William Brumfield, TANF Expert
ICF International

Panelists: *Doryan C. Clifton*, Supervisor
Human Services
Hennepin County
Minnesota Human Services and Public Health Department

Corey Bulluck, Supervisor- Target Populations
Employment and Training Administration- Region V
US Department of Labor

Gwen Sampson, Deputy Regional Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
US Department of Health and Human Services

Trish Solis, Acting Regional Director
Food and Nutrition Service - Special Supplemental Nutrition Programs
US Department of Agriculture





Innovation through Integration 2010 Heartland TANF Conference

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

State Roundtable II – What's Next?, Ballroom B/C

In this interactive roundtable session, State attendees will provide updates on specific challenges to be addressed in delivering services to TANF families during the present economic difficulties and discuss ideas on how they may be overcome. Topics of discussion could include:

- Engaging eligible and hard-to-serve families (e.g. Case Management and Assessment)
- Potential partnerships and collaborations
- Improving work supports
- Managing caseload increases

Moderator: Damon Waters, Senior Associate
ICF International

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Break

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Strategies to Increase Work Participation, Ballroom B/C

During this facilitated discussion, attendees will hear about and discuss strategies to increase/improve TANF participation using innovative program strategies and services. Attendees will engage peers to discuss challenges related to participation as well as opportunities.

Moderator: Damon Waters, Senior Associate
ICF International

Panelists: *Mary Beth Vogel-Ferguson, PhD*, Professor
College of Social Work
University of Utah

Heather Hahn, PhD, Senior Research Associate
Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population
The Urban Institute

5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.

Networking Reception , Ballroom B/C Foyer





Innovation through Integration 2010 Heartland TANF Conference

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2010

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Networking

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Program Sustainability, Employer Engagement, and Career Development, Ballroom B/C

This facilitated discussion will focus on innovative TANF programs that have been able to sustain successful practices and projects. Panelists will provide insights on strategies and solutions to maintain partnerships, strengthen subsidized employment programs, and expand education/training and skill opportunities for clients.

Moderator: Louisa Fuller, Senior Project Manager
ICF International

Panelists: *Jennifer Hrycyna*, Associate Director
Human Capital Development -Put Illinois to Work! Program
Illinois Department of Human Services

Les Johnson, Jr., Vice President
Grant Management Services
St. Louis ARCHS Program

Judy Kennedy, TANF Program Manager
State of Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services

Rhandi Berth, Vice President
Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/Big Step

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Break

10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Improving Domestic Violence Services for TANF Participants, Ballroom B/C

During this facilitated session, attendees will learn about an innovative domestic violence initiative. Participants will also be able to share how their States are addressing domestic violence.

Moderator: Louisa Fuller, Senior Project Manager
ICF International

Panelists: *Andrea Kovach*, Staff Attorney
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

Cassandra Slade, Vice President
Community Development Office
Lake Forest Bank and Trust





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11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Opportunities for Technical Assistance and Program Support, *Ballroom B/C*

A forum for States to brainstorm about TA needs and how they could benefit from Office of Family Assistance resources such as the Welfare Peer TA Network as well as other resources.

Moderator: Louisa Fuller, Senior Project Manager
ICF International

12:00 p.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Closing Remarks & Evaluation, *Ballroom B/C*

Steven Krasner, TANF Regional Program Manager
Office of Family Assistance
Administration for Children and Families- Region V
US Department of Health and Human Services

Gary Allen, TANF Regional Program Manager
Office of Family Assistance
Administration for Children and Families- Region VII
US Department of Health and Human Services

12:15 p.m.

Adjourn





Innovation through Integration

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Innovation through Integration

2010 Heartland TANF Conference

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Administration for Children and Families
Regions V and VII Innovation through Integration:
2010 Heartland TANF Conference
Chicago, Illinois
October 26-27, 2010



Evaluation Summary

For many years the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program has been integrating economic, work, and program services with other safety-net programs to improve the available supports for low-income and working families. The impact of the recent recession has provided additional impetus to improve better-coordinated service delivery systems. From the desire to simplify and streamline client processes to improving service effectiveness, integrating TANF with workforce, child support, child welfare, SNAP, medical assistance, and education—to name a few—is key to increasing economic self-sufficiency.

The Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, and Regions V and VII convened for the Innovation through Integration: 2010 Heartland TANF Conference in Chicago, Illinois on Tuesday, October 26 and Wednesday, October 27, 2010 at the Park Hyatt to bring together safety-net partners in an effort to enhance service integration and outcomes for TANF participants. The conference topics included TANF reauthorization, improving interoperability, serving immigrants and refugees, increasing work participation, employer engagement and program sustainability, domestic violence, and career development. The peer-focused conference sought to bridge the gaps between programs and laid the foundation for future technical assistance, program development, and integration.

- The majority of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that individual sessions' objectives were accomplished, the information presented was useful, and there were adequate opportunities for participation.
 - General comments about the meeting were that the information presented was timely and interesting.
 - A common suggestion from participants was to provide additional time for dialogue among States.
 - The session titled "Program Sustainability, Employer Engagement, and Career Development" received the greatest amount of positive feedback with 95 percent to 100 percent of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the positive evaluation criteria.
 - Suggestions for additional topics included: accountability measures; international perspectives on employment services and welfare; and data reporting issues and concerns.
 - Attendees enjoyed the location, the format, and the resources they received.
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