Welfare to Work

A Selection of State Practices to Increase Employment and Meet Participation Requirements

Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to share with you an informational document assembled by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA). This paper highlights certain promising practices that are reported to help TANF recipients find employment and also to help States better meet work participation requirements. This paper will be available on our web site, and it will be continually edited and expanded.

The subject matter contained in this paper was produced from various sources including information from State websites, presentations at federally-sponsored conferences and meetings, academic research papers, as well as direct communication with the States. We hope this information will help you to explore a range of approaches to address issues ranging from working with the disabled to partnering with employers.

We are grateful for the cooperation we have received in developing this paper, and we ask that you continue to share your strategies with us so that we can include them in future additions. While OFA does not endorse the specific practices contained in this paper, it is our hope that you will be find this information useful.

Sincerely,

Sidonie Squire

Sidonie Squire
Director
Office of Family Assistance

WELFARE TO WORK:
A SELECTION OF STATE PRACTICES TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT AND MEET PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

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Introduction

Overview

In the beginning of 2008, the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) began gathering information from Regional Offices, States, and other sources on promising practices in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to help recipients become employed and to help States improve their work participation rates.

This paper contains three types of information:

- Summaries of information shared by States at OFA Regional meetings
    - Administration for Children and Families (ACF) TANF Regional Offices hold meetings around the country each year where States present practices they believe are effective. This document presents the information from these sessions along with other practices that States share with us.
- Summaries of research on TANF policies and programs leading to work
    - Within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), research on TANF policies and practices is conducted by the ACF Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation and by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. In addition, many outside organizations also produce research relating to various provisions of the TANF program. This paper summarizes research results and provides links to primary information sources for further reading.
- Summaries and links to other promising practice resources and projects
    - Other organizations also produce documents and online materials that review various TANF practices. This paper summarizes the information from these sources, provides the names of the projects, and includes links to online resources where available.

Disclaimer

We do not endorse any practice contained in this document, as the purpose of this paper is to summarize how States and others have sought to improve the operations of the TANF program. We provide indications of success wherever possible and also summarize relevant research and results where available.

Universal Engagement

Overview

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and fundamentally transformed welfare from a cash benefits program to one focused on work and temporary assistance. It stipulated that 50 percent of families receiving TANF assistance must participate in productive work activities, but reduced the 50 percent requirement by the percentage a State's caseload declined since FY 1995. With welfare reform's great success in cutting caseloads by more than half, many States ended up having a zero or near zero participation requirement. As a result, nearly 60 percent of TANF adults did not participate in any countable work activity in an average month in FY 2005. The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 reauthorized TANF and made work a priority again by maintaining the 50 percent work participation rate and changing the base year of the caseload reduction credit from FY 1995 to FY 2005. That means that States will no longer receive credit for the caseload reductions they achieved before FY 2005.

A report by researchers at Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., (MPR) examines State approaches to engage all or nearly all recipients in activities that promote work and self-sufficiency. The report describes TANF programs as they operated in some States in the early part of the 2000s. Because the caseload reduction credit reduced the required work participation targets, most States did not operate high engagement programs. However, the researchers identified three States and five local programs that met their criteria for high engagement. The findings from these programs are relevant in the aftermath of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, as most States will need to engage a significantly larger proportion of their caseloads.

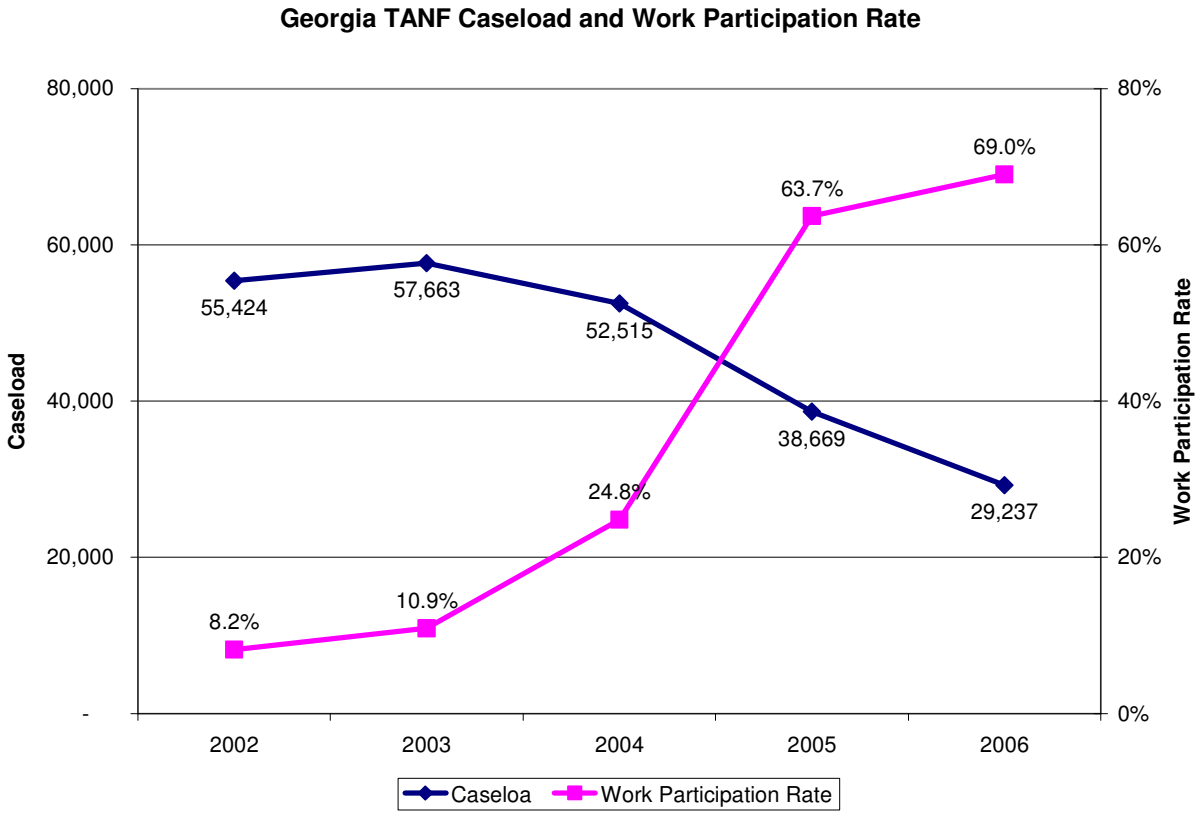
The sites included in the report include a wide range of programs. Most sites defined their work activities broadly, including activities that go beyond what would be countable for Federal work participation rate purposes, although most participants did participate in Federally-countable activities for at least some of their hours. Some of the non-countable activities were designed to prepare individuals for subsequent participation in countable activities or employment. The report identified three key administrative practices that were used to increase participation: (1) communicating a strong work message and tracking participation, (2) sanctioning for noncompliance, and (3) using performance standards to hold staff accountable. The report elaborates on these approaches and provides concrete examples of full engagement strategies.

State Practices and Results

Georgia

A social marketing campaign. In 2004, Georgia developed a statewide social marketing campaign, "The Right Work the Right Way," to change the culture of the welfare agency by focusing on work. It was premised on the belief that "welfare is not good enough for any family." A key element of this campaign was strengthening the up-front job search process. For example, one site had previously required all applicants to participate in independent job search, making a certain number of employer contacts each week. This new approach requires 40 hours

per week of participation in a structured job search activity operated by a for-profit contractor, involving job readiness skills and structured job search. The outcomes associated with this campaign have been dramatic. Between FY 2004 and April 2006, the work participation rate increased from 10.9 percent to 69.0 percent.



Maryland

In September of 2003, Maryland implemented a universal engagement program for all work-eligible TANF recipients. The State requested that each jurisdiction develop an action plan that included strategies for increasing both the work participation rates and job placements. Prior to universal engagement, local departments of social services, including Baltimore City, were focused on a narrow interpretation of TANF requirements which did not require engagement in an activity until 24 months. Under the new program, every applicant is required to engage in work activities from the first day they apply for assistance, or within 24 hours of contact with the agency. Those individuals that are not deemed work ready or who have significant barriers to employment are still required to participate in activities that would remove barriers, improve their employability, or assist them in obtaining other forms of assistance such as Federal SSI/SSDI benefits. The use of universal engagement in Maryland has resulted in a steady increase of the work participation rate, job placements, job retention, and earnings gain. Baltimore City now consistently achieves a universal engagement rate of 98 percent or better and a work participation rate of close to 40 percent. The overall TANF caseload in Maryland has been reduced by one third, job placements have increased by 20 percent, earnings have increased by over 40 percent, the job retention rate has been over 70 percent, and the work participation rate has increased from six percent to 47 percent.

New Hampshire

Before 2006, New Hampshire had a 30 percent work participation rate, as opposed to the required 50 percent. To improve their work rate, the State investigated ways to add participants to countable activities, first by increasing the number of people required to participate in work activities. For example, families with an expectant mother over four months pregnant and single mothers with a child between the ages of one and two were no longer exempted from work requirements. In addition, applicant families had to attend a work-related appointment or orientation as a condition of eligibility before receiving benefits. Clients are scheduled for this orientation within 10 days of their application date. As a result, 75 percent of applicants attend this orientation appointment, compared to 30 percent before.

New Hampshire also changed its job readiness education program. Instead of requiring the individual to wait up to six weeks before they can attend the program, thereby losing participation credit, New Hampshire integrates job readiness activities almost right away. At the orientation appointment, the agency gives clients a job readiness workbook entitled the Planning for Success Portfolio. Clients have assigned sections of the Portfolio to work on before their next work program appointment. The curriculum also changed from an all-classroom experience to a practicum where clients get experience in real job situations and then discuss their experiences back in the classroom. This curriculum exposes the clients to the world of work as soon as possible, through field trips to visit local employers or by bringing employers to visit the classroom to discuss the workplace and their expectations for new employees.

In addition, field managers, the direct supervisors of employment counselors, must now be in the field every day, a change for many managers who were spending time at the State office performing primarily administrative functions. Today these managers spend most of their time in the field with employees supervising their work, which has resulted in increased accountability among the employment counselors. Field managers have cell phones where they can be reached so that participation rates for the day will not be affected adversely by unanswered questions. For example, a caseworker may need to know whether a particular client's travel time going from one site to another will count as participation. If the caseworker cannot reach a manager, this travel time may be omitted, resulting in the client not meeting participation requirements.

New Hampshire is also making more use of volunteer worksites so that clients can work in a countable activity. The volunteer work sites, or Alternative Work Experience Placements, are employers or host sites statewide who have agreed to accept TANF clients on a volunteer basis. The client has to fill out an application and be interviewed by the employer. If accepted, the State, client, and supervisor sign a three-way agreement which outlines the duties and responsibilities of the work to be performed by the client, the skills to be attained by the participant, the scheduled days and hours and anticipated duration of the work experience placement, and the host site reporting requirements of daily supervision and verification.

Sources and Links

A Tale of Ten Cities – Creating Welfare Reform Programs That Make a Difference. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2008.

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Jacqueline Kauff, Michelle K. Derr, and LaDonna Pavetti, *A Study of Work Participation and Full Engagement Strategies* (Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., October 2004), available http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/full-engagement04/index.htm.

Jacqueline Kauff, Michelle K. Derr, LaDonna Pavetti, and Emily Sama Martin, *Using Work-Oriented Sanctions to Increase TANF Program Participation* (Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., September 2007), available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/sanction_pol/reports/sanction_pol/sanction_pol.pdf.

For more information on the New Hampshire Alternative Work Experience Program, see New Hampshire Family Assistance Manual: http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/FAM_HTM/NEWFAM.HTM

Using Work-Oriented Sanctions to Increase TANF Participation

In enacting the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), Congress specified a "pro rata" sanction for noncompliance with work requirements. Rules promulgated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services allow a State "to make a pro rata reduction based on any reasonable method." As a result, there is great variation in State sanction policies with respect to the amount and duration of the sanction, as well as what the recipient must do for the sanction to be lifted and what constitutes good cause. As of July 2006, thirty-two States continued to provide partial sanctions even in instances when a recipient did not comply at all, where the size of the benefit reduction was generally a set percentage of the grant, a fixed dollar amount, or the non-complying adult's portion of the benefit.[1] Most of these States had sanctions, however, that progressed to full-family sanctions, but in nine States, even the most severe sanction was a partial reduction in benefits. (The States that did not have full-family sanctions tended to be the ones with higher benefits, including several with large TANF caseloads, such as California and New York.)

Overview

A report by researchers at Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR), examines the role that sanctions can play in increasing TANF work participation. While some observers have argued that the DRA will lead an increasing number of States to adopt full-family sanctions, this report highlights a broad range of sanction-related approaches States can take to increase participation in work-related activities. These include providing work supports, identifying and addressing barriers to participation, and modifying the sanction process to encourage compliance. These approaches recognize that for nearly all families, work is the primary way to improve family well-being.

The MPR report describes State sanction policies generally and more specifically examines how eight jurisdictions within seven States have implemented their sanction policies and procedures, and the implications these approaches may have on the operation of TANF programs and the calculation of work participation rates. The sites selected for the review represent a diverse range of State TANF programs and approaches to sanction policies. This summary highlights the key innovations implemented in the study sites and their implications for meeting work participation rates. It does not focus on other aspects of sanction policies, such as family well-being, though these are also discussed in the MPR report and are important considerations.

State sanction policies can be categorized in several ways: the size of the grant reduction (i.e., whether it is the whole grant or part of the grant), the duration of the grant reduction (i.e., whether compliance leads to immediate reinstatement or whether there is a minimum sanction period), and the consequences for multiple instances of noncompliance (i.e., the progression from a partial to a larger or full-family sanction).

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[1] Gretchen Rowe and Mary Murphy, *The Welfare Rules Databook: State Policies as of July 2006*, September 2007, pp. 114-115.

Full-Family Sanctions

Most States have adopted gradual or immediate full-family sanctions in which noncompliance without good cause results in the termination of the TANF grant. A full-family sanction can have a direct effect on the participation rate, either by inducing noncompliant families to participate (and thus potentially count in the numerator of the work participation rate calculation) or removing them from the rolls (and thus the denominator of the work rate).

Clearly communicating information about work requirements and sanctions is important both to maximize participation rates and to minimize the need for sanctioning. Past research suggests that many TANF recipients do not understand what is expected of them or the consequences for noncompliance. All of the study sites developed innovative approaches to ensure that recipients understand program requirements.

Effect of Sanctions on Federal Work Participation Rate

Sanctions can affect the calculation of work participation rates in several ways. If sanctions (or the threat of a sanction) encourage recipients who might not otherwise participate in program activities to do so, a State's work participation rate could potentially increase. In addition, most States have adopted gradual or immediate full-family sanctions, i.e., sanctions that result in the termination of the grant. When a family is terminated from assistance, a State's work participation rate increases because the nonparticipating families are removed from the denominator of the work rate calculation. (Such terminations may also affect the size of the caseload reduction credit, depending on the timing of the policy change and the impact on the caseload.) Sanction policies can also have indirect effects on work participation rates. For example, a strict sanction policy could deter some families from applying for assistance altogether. If such families otherwise would not have complied with work requirements, this deterrence effect would raise the work participation rate.

Monitoring Participation and Identifying Noncompliance

Timely information on client participation is essential so that case managers can identify those clients who are not meeting the work participation requirements and take steps to reengage them. In some sites, attendance information is collected monthly, in others it is weekly. The longer the period, the longer a client can remain inactive or under-engaged, delaying the noncompliance sanction process. Several study sites modified their monitoring procedures to identify noncompliance more quickly. "Their goal was to decrease the amount of time clients remained noncompliant and in the denominator of the participation rate without being in the numerator."

Some sites have created special units to collect information on program participation to allow other staff to focus on employment plan development and case management. One site uses special liaisons between case managers and contracted service providers to monitor daily participation and collect information about clients with various personal and family challenges.

Re-engaging Noncompliant Clients

Some sites have established formal procedures to provide noncompliant clients with an opportunity to address participation issues and conciliate impending sanctions. Some examples of formal procedures include:

- Establishing problem-solving sessions with highly skilled staff who can provide new perspectives on how to resolve participation problems as well as ensure additional case review before the imposition of a sanction.
- Using mediators to work with TANF agency staff and noncompliant clients to minimize confrontation and make on-the-spot decisions so that those clients who are not sanctioned can return to their work activity immediately.
- Encouraging compliance through home visits to determine whether good cause exists and, if not, to develop a written plan to establish compliance with work requirements. In Los Angeles, the notification of the possibility of a home visit was often found to "shock" the client enough to induce compliance. In the first year of the home visiting project, 41,233 noncompliant clients were potentially subject to a home visit: 77 percent came into compliance or were excused from participation and only one in 10 of those clients required a home visit. An additional 11 percent were sanctioned and 12 percent were pending. As a result, the number of recipients subject to a sanction has declined sharply.

Similar efforts were also adopted by some States to reengage clients who had been sanctioned. In particular, in States with partial sanctions, noncompliant families negatively affect the work participation rate because a State can only disregard such cases for 3 months in a 12-month period. As a result, some States continue to work with sanctioned families to encourage them to participate and to discover the reason behind the nonparticipation. Some of the strategies used by the study sites include:

- Conducting outreach and information sessions whereby sanctioned clients are contacted periodically to discuss barriers to participation and possible options for overcoming those barriers, including information about available resources.
- Referring sanctioned clients to temporary employment agencies for job placement or providing various job search and job preparation services.

Revising Processes to Impose Sanctions More Efficiently

Imposing sanctions can be complicated and time consuming, especially for case managers or eligibility workers who have many other responsibilities. Some States haves taken steps to reduce the time it takes both to impose sanctions and to help the client re-engage in the program. Some of the approaches taken by study sites include:

- Creating a separate unit that is solely responsible for imposing sanctions. The purpose of the new units is to speed up the sanction process and minimize the time clients spend awaiting the sanctioning process.
- Using specialized staff dedicated to one or more sanction-related functions, such as home visits, other outreach efforts to noncompliant families, and formal or informal conciliation with noncompliant clients.

State Practices and Results

Texas

In September 2003, Texas adopted a full-family sanction, replacing a smaller sanction that removed the adult's needs from the grant. In addition, while the earlier sanction policy gradually increased the minimum sanction periods for repeated acts of noncompliance, the new policy brings about change more rapidly. It terminates the TANF grant for one month, though cases remain on the rolls under sanction status, and then drops them permanently if they still fail to comply after a month. In addition, the family must participate for one month to restore its eligibility. Texas' new policy was associated with several outcomes that make it more likely that the State will meet its work participation rate targets. In particular, between FY 2003 and FY 2004, the work participation rate increased from 28.1 percent to 34.2 percent. In addition, between October 2003 and September 2006, the caseload declined by nearly 50 percent, from 118,927 to 61,333.

A key finding of the report is that the rate of sanctioning did not change, but "substantially more cases subject to the full-family policy left the caseload over the course of a year than those subject to the original partial sanction policy. Either they were sanctioned off the caseload or they left voluntarily, perhaps after taking the work requirements and stricter consequences for noncompliance into account. After the policy change was implemented, many families left the caseload for employment . . . however, they did not affect the work participation rate because they are no longer part of the caseload."

California

Shorter sanction periods. Not all changes to raise work participation necessarily involve more stringent sanction policies. For example, California eliminated the minimum sanction periods, allowing individuals who comply to restore their eligibility for full benefits. Prior to that, a first sanction could be cured immediately, but a second or subsequent sanction resulted in a grant reduction for at least six months. This meant that even if a sanctioned client responded to the sanction by complying, the family would not be able to receive its full benefits until the minimum sanction period had run its course, creating a disincentive for participation. Under the new policy, the goal is to reengage clients sooner so that they can count in the numerator of the participation rate; otherwise they remain in the denominator but cannot count.

Georgia

Strengthening up-front job search. A key element of Georgia's campaign to change the culture of the welfare agency was strengthening the up-front job search process. For example, one site had previously required all applicants to participate in independent job search, making a certain number of employer contacts each week. Under the new approach, it requires 40 hours per week of participation in a structured job search activity operated by a for-profit contractor, involving job readiness skills and structured job search. Applicants who miss two days are denied assistance. The outcomes associated with this campaign have been dramatic. Between FY 2004 and April 2006, the work participation rate increased from 10.9 percent to 69.0 percent. In addition, application approval rates have declined sharply because many applicants fail to cooperate with the new up-front job search requirements.

Progressive, full-family sanction. Before 2004, Georgia's sanction policy was a 25 percent reduction in the grant for noncompliance with work activities. In that year, it revised its policies to implement a progressive full-family sanction. The first instance of noncompliance would involve a warning, the second a 25 percent grant reduction, and the third would result in termination of the grant for at least three months. The purpose of the new sanction policy was to get recipients "to do what they need to do." In DeKalb County, community resource specialists serve as a link between service providers and case managers and they try to resolve issues of noncompliance as quickly as possible.

Utah

Web-based management information system. Utah created a system called YODA (Your On-line Data Access) to allow case managers instant access to information regarding the work participation of each client. The report in YODA is meant to identify whether the customer participated at a sufficient level to meet Federal participation requirements in the previous month. By identifying those clients that are not complying with their work requirements, case managers can contact clients immediately to address the reasons for noncompliance or begin the sanction process. This data is provided monthly, and additional reports are available to staff to monitor participation more frequently.

Utah also includes a formal process prior to the imposition of a sanction to help ensure that barriers to participation are resolved. The client, case manager, and a social worker first meet to identify issues. This is followed by a second meeting with other service providers or professionals, such as child welfare agency staff, employment service providers, and mental health professionals to provide multiple viewpoints on the barriers to participation and the best way to address them. This also ensures that a number of different people review the case prior to it being sanctioned off the rolls.

Sources and Links

Jacqueline Kauff, Michelle K. Derr, LaDonna Pavetti, and Emily Sama Martin, Using Work-Oriented Sanctions to Increase TANF Program Participation (Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., September 2007), available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/sanction_pol/reports/sanction_pol/sanction_pol.pdf.

Tracking processes/Data

Overview

States have implemented various tracking processes and data reporting methods to ensure participation information is captured accurately. The National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) is used by many States to ensure program integrity and to improve participation reporting for individuals. States have also implemented other tracking processes to improve their knowledge of participant activities.

The National Directory of New Hires

The NDNH is operated by the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. This database was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), and its primary purpose is to assist State child support agencies in locating parents and enforcing child support orders. However, Congress has authorized specific State and Federal agencies to request information from the NDNH for specified purposes. State TANF agencies have been permitted to use NDNH information to discover and document earnings, identify overpayments, and improve work participation. Information received from an NDNH match must be independently verified before any eligibility actions are taken. States can contact the employer directly to verify matches and receive information about employment and wages, or they can work with an employment verification company to collect the necessary detail. Once the State has received the wage information, the State is able to review benefit levels to ensure benefit payments are accurate and valid.

The NDNH is a national repository of wage and employment data. The NDNH contains three types of records: New Hire (W-4) records, Quarterly Wage (QW) records, and Unemployment Insurance (UI) records. The W-4 file contains information on all newly hired employees as reported by employers to each State Directory of New Hires (SDNH). Federal agencies report directly to the NDNH. The QW file contains quarterly wage information on individual employees from the records of State Workforce Agencies (SWA) and Federal agencies. When an individual is working more than one job during the reporting period, separate QW records are established for each job. The UI file contains unemployment insurance information on individuals who have received or applied for unemployment benefits, as reported by SWAs. The States only submit claimant information that is already contained in the records of the State agency administering the UI program.

In addition to the NDNH and SDNH databases, States use employment verification companies (such as TALX Corporation, also known as The Work Number), which provides an automated employment and income verification system.

State Practices and Results

Arizona

Arizona reported an increase in work participation rates as a result of using the NDNH. Arizona found that 27 percent of individuals had at least one W-4 match from November 2005 to April 2006 by using the NDNH information in March 2006. The additional out of State and Federal agency employment matches provided a 52 percent increase over the available in-State match results. This additional information proved to be a great asset in meeting the work participation rate requirements.

Montana

After receiving match results, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services identifies cases that have at least $1,500 in earnings per quarter. The Department requests further employment verification using The Work Number or by mailing a request for information to the employer requesting verification of the employment. A form is attached to the request which asks for specific information, such as paycheck verification, start and end dates for employment (if applicable), and other pertinent items. When the information is received, the Department reviews the case and information to see if further action is necessary.

In January, February, and March, 2006, Montana submitted approximately 3,300 TANF adults per month for matching. About 30 percent of the matches found for these adults represented out-of-State and Federal agency employment. From these matches, the State recovered $28,000 on behalf of the TANF program.

In April, May, and June, 2007, Montana received 434 matches where the individual was making over $1,500 per quarter. Out of these, 223 inquiries were made and 189 returned. These resulted in 22 overpayments; 20 referrals for intentional program violations (IPV) and overpayments in the amount of $20,763 in TANF and $22,395 in food stamps. In July, August, and September, 2007, Montana received 452 matches where the individual was making over $1,500 per quarter. Out of these, 206 inquiries were made and 167 returned. These resulted in 22 overpayments; 20 referrals for IPV and overpayments in the amount of $12,561 for TANF and $26,687 in food stamps. The matching fee paid to the Office of Child Support Enforcement for the entire year was $2,764.

The State also found cases of identity theft that they were able to report to their TANF clients and one case of employee fraud.

New York

New York State uses a combination of the NDNH and The Work Number to receive information on the employment of TANF recipients, and the State uses a combination of these sources to improve program integrity and increase work participation rates. For the period from October 2007 through March 2008, New York averaged an increase of 3.2 percent per month in their work participation rate. Through this analysis, the State found that individuals had countable hours of participation that had not been previously known by the agency. The State paid $130,785 to match the W-4, QW, and UI databases for the full year, and the State reported

avoiding costs equal to $275,692 for October 2007 through March 2008 as a result of using the NDNH.

Utah

In July of 2004, Utah created the Payment Error Prevention Unit (PEP) in response to method deficiencies in processing overpayments. Procedures and policies were improved and there is now greater consistency between offices. The focus is on prevention, investigating fraud, and updating client eligibility to make certain information in the system is correct. They have streamlined the investigation process to make it internal instead of outsourcing, which is more efficient. Eligibility workers were already verifying State W-4 matches through an existing automated process, so NDNH match results were integrated into regular job duties and no additional staff training was needed. Utah decided not to verify W-4 matches for closed cases, but would instead follow up on this information if the customer reapplies for TANF.

In 2007, Utah submitted an average of 3,200 records per month and received an average of 460 matches from NDNH. These matches represented an average of one to two additional matches per month per worker (above the number of in-State W-4 matches they verified before), and follow up takes between five and 30 minutes depending of if the employment information was already known. Through this process, Utah has determined that they were previously unaware of approximately 15 percent of the NDNH matches received. Half of these matches have been found to be overpayments.

Sources and Links

For more information, visit the Federal Parent Locator Service NDNH page at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/ndnh/ndnh.htm

Other Tracking Processes

States have created tracking systems and processes to better follow the activities of the TANF clients they serve. These include the development of systems to identify participation rates at the caseworker level, as well as the generation of reports that are reviewed regularly to determine client progress.

State Practices and Results

Georgia

To promote a "Data Driven Approach," Georgia implemented effective strategies for learning, analyzing, and reporting data. The State developed the Participation Report, which allows staff to see a summary of the counties' work activities placements over a three-month time period. Staff members can see items like numbers of how many participants met or did not meet the work participation rate by activity. The Report gives staff an overview of the movement achieved by clients – by the number of clients who are not participating at all, the number of clients in non-countable activities, the number of clients who are meeting the work participation rate, etc. Georgia has also implemented Mandatory Adults Reports which provide the number of new, returning, and exited TANF mandatory adult cases for a six-month period. "The Pipeline"

project enables staff to categorize whether their clients are not job ready, near job ready, or job ready. The Pipeline Report creates a monthly visual that lets case managers see progress across the spectrum and determine where their attention should be focused to move their clients toward employment. In the Mandatory Adults Summary Report, staff can view items such as: the percentage of caseload reduction for each region, the number of counties that have 100 percent participation, the number of counties that have obtained zero TANF, the number of mandatory adults, and how the region is doing overall with work participation. A Plot Chart was also created, which is a visual aid that plots each region's work participation rate and their Percentage of Caseload Reduction.

In Atlanta's Fulton County, Georgia developed a data system to monitor the work participation rates by workers, which can be seen by every worker. Their Quality Control unit developed a report card each month by worker that holds workers responsible for the outcomes of their caseloads. Currently, workers "exceed expectations" if they achieve 50 percent or greater work participation rates, with the goal of reaching a 75 percent rate for their caseload, which totaled 150 cases on average in 2005. This report card is marketed as healthy competition between workers. Additionally, Fulton County created a program to monitor the work participation rates for the vendors; if vendors fall below expectations, they are dropped from the program. It is left up to the vendors to promote employment. The State has reported substantial increases in participation rates, which they feel are associated with tracking performance more closely.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire's pre-2006 TANF program had a less stringent verification process for clients' participation hours than what the State now implements. In addition to field staff verifying hours, New Hampshire has created a centralized call center with Call Verification Specialists who perform the following functions: assist field staff to obtain verifications by contacting clients or third parties, monitor client engagement timeframes, conduct appointment reminder calls to clients, provide assistance to clients in completing the Planning for Success Portfolio, and conduct telephone surveys to gather data for recidivism and leaver studies. These specialists also perform oversight of verified hours. Data for New Hampshire's work participation rate is now more accurate. The State has also made automation changes that provide workers and clients with an increased awareness regarding how clients are progressing toward meeting requirements. A worker has a computerized "dashboard" where s/he can see a client's participation rates measured against the State average. Workers can also see summaries showing the client's progress in activities, current sanctions, and overdue activities. Additional helps include a pop-up notice if a client is lacking in scheduled core or secondary activities. The following is an example of the dashboard, showing a client's current participation rate and a summary of the caseload. If the caseworker wishes to see additional information, they can check the boxes beside the items depicted and go forward to a new screen containing that information.

The New Hampshire Worker Dashboard Screen

New HEIGHTS

File Edit Data Go Window Help

Work Programs Inquiry 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

Work Programs Dashboard

Worker Dashboard Counts | Worker Dashboard Details

Category: NHEP

Worker Details: Name: Judith Epstein Date: 06/18/2008 Participation Rate: 58.8% 05/2008

Caseload: Enrolled: 38 Enrolled Not Assigned: 0 Not Enrolled: 8 Total: 46 Target Participation Goal: 23

Work Program Details

Referral/Schedule/Enrollment

Referred Not Scheduled:	0
Referred > 20 Days, Not Scheduled:	0
Open Not Enrolled:	0
Two No-Shows for Orientation:	0

Assessment

No SDA Appointment Scheduled:	1
No Assessment Done:	0

Non-Compliance / Sanction

Non-Compliance Without Good Cause:	0
Sanctioned at Level 1:	2
Sanctioned at Level 2:	3
Sanctioned at Level 3:	3

Participation Not Met

Inactive Participants:	3
Not Enough Core:	4
Not Enough Secondary:	0

Activity Details

Overdue Activity Verification:	7
Employment with No Activity Linked:	0
Activity with No Employment Linked:	1
Overdue Activities:	2

Alerts

Home Care Works:	0
ETS Ending Overdue:	0
ETS Category Mismatch:	0

More | Launch | Go To ... | Continue | Close

New Hampshire furthermore developed an activity project entitled "Portfolio," which consists of self-directed career guidance activities that are introduced at an orientation, and then tracked through employment counselor meetings and phone calls. The client is enrolled in Portfolio as soon as s/he is determined eligible. Sections of Portfolio are expected to count as work activities in the fall of 2008. The five sections of the Portfolio include: NATP program, self-assessments, exploring occupations, child care, and transportation.

Utah

Utah created a web-based management information system called YODA (Your On-line Data Access) to allow case managers instant access to information regarding the work participation of each client. The report in YODA is meant to identify whether the customer participated at a sufficient level to meet Federal participation requirements in the previous month. By identifying those clients that are not complying with their work requirements, case managers can contact clients immediately to address the reasons for noncompliance or begin the sanction process. This data is provided monthly, and additional reports are available to staff so they can monitor participation more frequently.

Sources and Links

Georgia State presentation given by Jon Anderson, Operations Director of the Office of Family Independence, titled "Achieving High Work Participation Rates: State Perspectives on the Opportunities and Challenges."

New Hampshire State presentation at ACF Region I/II/III conference titled "New Hampshire's Quest for 50%" held September 19-21, 2007 in Philadelphia, PA.

Jacqueline Kauff, Michelle K. Derr, LaDonna Pavetti, and Emily Sama Martin, Using Work-Oriented Sanctions to Increase TANF Program Participation (Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., September 2007), available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/sanction_pol/reports/sanction_pol/sanction_pol.pdf.

Application processes

Overview

States have implemented various TANF application and screening processes. These range from those that require a hand written application in person to those that accept applications over the phone, online, or even by using touch-screen kiosks in various locations throughout the community. The purpose in implementing new application procedures is often to streamline the process, automate information management, or to allow applicants to simultaneously apply for multiple benefits. By improving the application process, States are able to redirect staff time and resources toward helping families participate in work activities and enter employment.

State Practices and Results

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's online application system is called "COMPASS"-- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Access to Social Services. This web site allows individuals and community-based organizations access to screen for, apply for, and renew a broad range of social programs. The COMPASS Screening tool provides a determination of potential eligibility to the user, as well as an estimated amount of the food stamp and/or cash benefit. To complete the Screening process, the user selects which benefit(s) he or she is interested in. The user then completes a short questionnaire relating to the benefits selected. Upon completion of the questionnaire, their potential eligibility status is provided.

The COMPASS application is a single application encompassing multiple benefits. The questions within the application are dynamically displayed based upon which benefits are selected. The user has the option to e-Sign their application. At the end of the application, the user is given the routing information for their application. For example, if the application is for health care, the user will be told whether the application was routed to the Department of Public Welfare (for Medical Assistance) or to the Pennsylvania Insurance Department (for CHIP or adult basic).

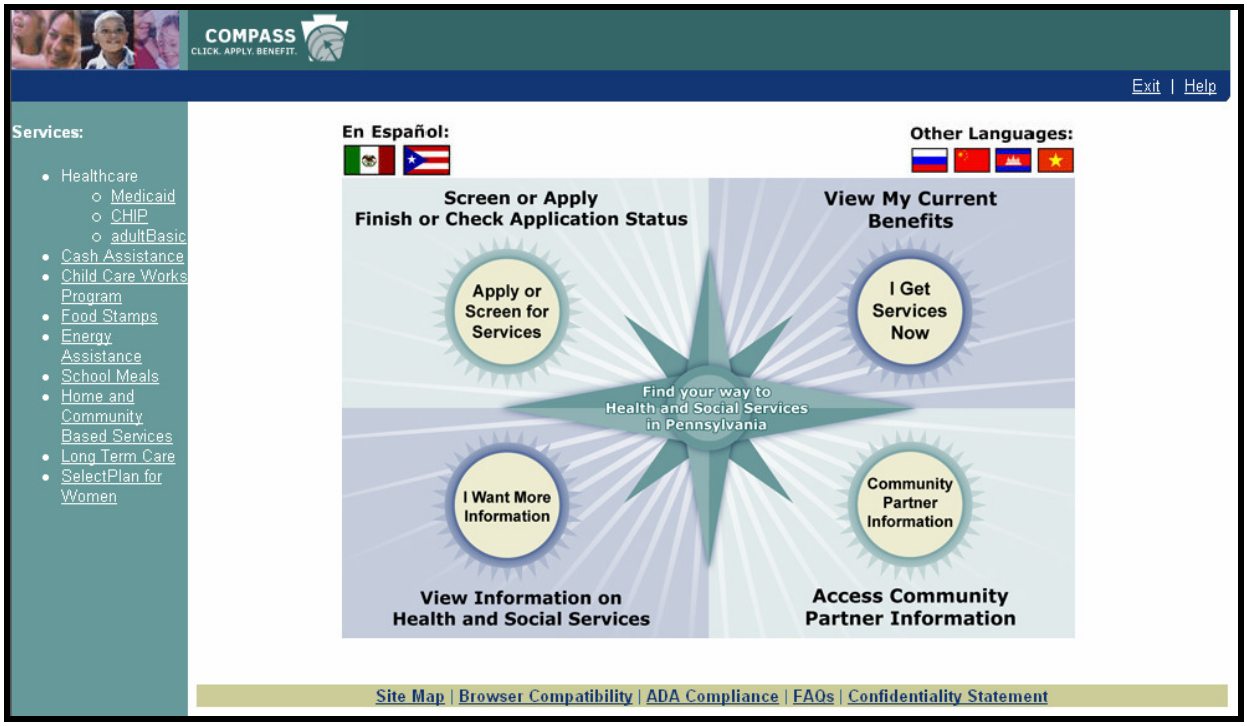
When a COMPASS application is received at the County Assistance Office (CAO), the household demographic information no longer has to be entered by clerical staff. Instead, they click the "import" button and the information is automatically imported into the Client Information System. This allows resources to be directed away from program administration and into other activities that help recipients participate in work requirements.

COMPASS routes a health care application to either the CAO or the Pennsylvania Insurance Department for CHIP based upon the information that is entered in the application. Before COMPASS, health care applications that were determined not eligible for Medical Assistance were manually sent for CHIP eligibility determination.

The COMPASS system allows applications to be sent electronically between other counties instead of having to mail the files, which also saves staff time and resources that can now be

better used in other program areas. Applicants can check the status of the COMPASS applications they submit, thereby eliminating status calls to their caseworker. Recipients can also access a summary of their benefits, which also lessens calls to caseworkers for this information.

The Pennsylvania COMPASS Home Screen



The Pennsylvania COMPASS Application Screen

COMPASS
CLICK. APPLY. BENEFIT.

Learn About COMPASS | Exit | Help

Services:

- Healthcare
  - Medicaid
  - CHIP
  - adultBasic
- Cash Assistance
- Child Care Works Program
- Food Stamps
- Energy Assistance
- School Meals
- Home and Community Based Services
- Long Term Care
- SelectPlan for Women

Welcome to COMPASS - Screen, Apply, Finish, or Check Application Status

Screen for Services You can screen online to see if you and your family qualify for Health and Social Services. Screening takes about 10 - 15 minutes. The information you provide is private and confidential	Continue to Screen for Services
Apply for Services You can apply for Pennsylvania Health and Social Services online in about 20 - 45 minutes, depending on the services you select and the number of individuals in your household.	Continue to Apply for Services
Complete an Unfinished Application You can log in to complete an unfinished application or renewal e-Form that was stopped and saved in the last 120 days.	Continue to Finish Application
Check Application Status You can view an application or the status of an application that you submitted on COMPASS. (Only available for new applications as well as CHIP and adultBasic renewals).	Continue to Check Application Status

Click here to learn more about Pennsylvania's related Health and Social Services or Federal benefits.

Go Back

Site Map | Browser Compatibility | ADA Compliance | FAQs | Confidentiality Statement

Sources and Links

For more information, visit the Pennsylvania COMPASS Online Application and Screening Tool at: http://www.compass.state.pa.us

For a summary of the Pennsylvania COMPASS program, visit: https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass/PGM/ASP/SC031.asp?hdn_SessionId=68798875892520311081209 07&hdn_ApplicationNum=

Partnering with Employers and Connecting to Employment

Overview

Many States have established partnerships with local employers to help TANF clients transition into the workforce. This may include direct contact with employers to determine staff needs so that TANF recipients can be trained for these positions, and may also involve training or wage subsidies to encourage the employer to hire TANF recipients.

State Practices and Results

Hawaii

In February 2005, the Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS) launched a new employment service program to help businesses meet their growing labor demands and provide additional work opportunities for individuals on government assistance. The Supporting Employment Empowerment (SEE) Hawaii Work program refers pre-screened candidates to companies for employment who, without the SEE placement, have difficulty finding jobs on their own. Employers have the opportunity to train individuals to meet their business needs with candidates who either have had previous job experience or possess basic employment skills. The State contracts with Goodwill Industries of Hawaii to administer SEE, promote the program, recruit companies to participate, and provide job candidates for employers.

Employers set and pay the employee's hourly wage. The State reimburses the employer 100 percent of the State minimum wage ($7.25 per hour) plus $0.50 for each additional full $1 per hour paid over the minimum wage for up to 40 hours per week. Employers are also reimbursed an additional 14 percent of the subsidized wages to cover training and employment-related expenses, such as Unemployment Insurance, Workers Compensation, and FICA. The State covers health insurance and childcare. Employers who assist an employee with transportation to and from work can be reimbursed at a negotiated amount up to $200 per month. To participate in the program, employers agree to hire employees for 24 to 40 hours of work per week, and can receive subsidized wage reimbursements for up to 12 months.

Active support from Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle has been helpful in attracting employers to the program. As of July 2008, 323 SEE employers have listed more than 950 open positions with SEE. Since its inception, SEE has placed almost 1,100 welfare recipients in job training positions, DHS reports. A number of clients who completed their SEE assignments are now working in unsubsidized employment, either with their SEE or another employer. SEE reports that 404 graduates are employed in unsubsidized jobs and are no longer on welfare.

North Carolina

North Carolina has developed Connectinc, a program to help former welfare clients find, keep, and move up in employment. The Connectinc case management model uses telecommunications technology, including telephone counseling and referral, e-mail, and internet technology. Connectinc's programs are administered to achieve four goals: re-employment, job retention, career advancement, and asset accumulation.

The Work Central Career Advancement Center provides supportive services and skills training to Work First eligible families so they can be ready for and enter into employment settings, become economically independent and self-sufficient, and provide for their children's well-being.

Connectinc started in 2000 as the Work Central Advancement Center, a unique, six-county, collaborative effort. Work Central was funded by the State and participating county Departments of Social Services to help the working poor achieve economic self-sufficiency. Work Central provides technology-supported case management and resource information through software packages designed by Connectinc to assist former welfare customers as they find and retain employment and advance in the workforce. At the core of this service is a highly technological communication center where a customer service representative has electronic access to real-time information about the locations, policies, eligibility requirements, and benefit information of community resources and can complete eligibility determination and enrollment applications online on behalf of the customer. They provide clients personnel letters, referrals, resume assistance, job search, job opportunities, and community resources. Work Central customers have an 86 percent six-month job retention rate.

The Teach Central mentoring program, mentoring first- and second-year teachers, enrolled over 300 new teachers in less than a year and will serve 2,500 by the summer of 2008. In addition, Connectinc serves over 3,000 families each year during tax season by directing them to Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites for free tax preparation and educating them about the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Connectinc's Work Central representatives access online information about both the customers and the resources available to support them through the technology created by Connectinc. Communication with customers is mainly through outgoing phone calls, but also includes mail service for customers without phones, for following up failed attempts by phone, and for punctuating the customer's engagement in the employment process. E-mail is also an option for customers. There are significant numbers of incoming calls initiated by customers seeking support, referral, and coaching to help manage problems related to family and employment issues.

Tennessee

In 1997, the Shelby County Department of Human Services in Tennessee established a partnership with FedEx. Through this partnership, Shelby County and FedEx agreed to work together to meet FedEx staffing needs by assisting the State Families First program participants in gaining employment. The Tennessee Department of Human Services implemented a five-step process in Shelby County (containing Memphis) to select, train, and place TANF recipients in jobs with the company.

As part of this partnership, the county human services agency agreed to assess applicants and provide job-specific training for individuals in the Families First program, as well as to provide continued support for participants through county employment career specialists. The positions with FedEx were a minimum of 17.5 hours, and began at a salary of $11.80 per hour. After 90 days of employment, medical benefits were offered to employees for a less than $20-a-month premium, and these benefits included optical, dental, and prescription coverage. At the time,

most FedEx workers in Memphis averaged 19-20 hours per week. FedEx also offered tuition reimbursement to their employees. The retention and promotion rates of program participants hired by FedEx was high, and in some cases former TANF recipients were promoted several times and achieved supervisory roles.

Texas

In 2003, FedEx Ground began construction of a 330,000-square-foot distribution hub in Hutchins, Texas (Dallas County). As soon as the Texas Workforce Commission learned of the project, they contacted the company to offer their services and to help provide employees for the new facility. FedEx Ground needed to hire 380 people to begin operations, and within two months of requesting help from WorkSource (the local workforce center) they had filled their employment needs. Eighty percent of the candidates hired were referred from WorkSource.

The FedEx hub opened in April of 2006, and by June they had hired 560 people. They then continued to expand and hire additional workers. The company encouraged female and minority applicants, and also frequently hired disabled applicants as well as TANF and food stamp recipients. Most of the positions offered through WorkSource were for package handlers, and employees in these positions earned an average of $9.00 to $9.50 an hour. Part-time employees received full benefits including health care and tuition reimbursement beginning the day they are hired.

Sources and Links

A Tale of Ten Cities – Creating Welfare Reform Programs That Make a Difference. U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2008.

Urban Partnerships for Welfare Reform. Employer Engagement Forum. Employer Profile: FedEx Corporation.

Texas Workforce Solutions Newsletter, August 2006. WorkSource delivers new hires for FedEx. Volume 3, Number 5.

For more information, see the following sites:
Hawaii Engages New Employers in Welfare-to-Work (National Governors Association):
http://hawaii.gov/dhs/self-sufficiency/benefit/Front%20and%20Center%20SEE.pdf

Hawaii Department of Human Services Supporting Employment Empowerment:
http://hawaii.gov/dhs/self-sufficiency/benefit/SEEpgm/document_view

The Hawaii Supporting Employment Empowerment (SEE) program
http://www.seehawaiiwork.org/benefits.php

Connectinc
http://www.connectinc.org/
http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/upitoolkit/workr/accesswork/connectinc/description.cfm

Education and Training

Overview

Some State approaches to moving TANF clients from welfare to work focus on short-term education to improve employment opportunities. Obtaining a GED, attending college courses, or improving literacy can help TANF participants increase the likelihood of finding permanent employment. Other States have set up education partnerships with community colleges and employers to provide recipients with specific skills needed to enter a specific occupation.

State Practices and Results

Arkansas

Arkansas Department of Workforce Education created the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) program. The program partners with businesses and local industries so adult education centers can help prepare clients to enter specific careers such as business, education, EMT/paramedics, manufacturing, nursing and other health fields, and welding. TANF funding was used to support the program in 11 community colleges in 2006. WAGE teaches basic skills that have been determined to be essential by both employers nationally and also the Arkansas Secretary's Commission on Achieving Needed Skills (SCANS). The program admits students who score at less than a 12 grade nine month equivalency on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and who have a goal of obtaining and/or retaining a job, improving their skill levels to gain improved employment, or entering next-level workplace training. Employers must participate in the local WAGE alliance advisory committee for the program to be certified as a WAGE program, and the alliance also includes involvement with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Employment Security Division, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and boards, and other educational service providers. To customize the type of training and skills provided by the WAGE program, adult educators analyze the positions within participating companies to determine the literacy needs for that position. These results help guide the training offered by the program. Employers then agree to give hiring preference to WAGE students when reviewing equally-qualified applicants.

Kentucky

Kentucky legislation gave community colleges and adult education providers a joint mission to support workforce development. Statewide groups were assembled to enhance collaboration and they initiated Kentucky's Ready-to-Work program in 1999, and each college received a grant to design a career pathway in partnership with employers. The program is designed to provide degree training, case management, career counseling, aid in accessing college services, and transportation and childcare assistance to TANF recipients. Community colleges are encouraged to offer curricula in modules, at alternative times (such as evening and weekends), and at alternative sites, such as at the workplace. Ready-To-Work Coordinators are based at each community college, and these coordinators assist with a wide range of issues including mentoring, tutoring, career counseling, financial aid, job placement, and post-placement services. Participants also have access to TANF support services such as child care and transportation.

In addition to these services, the Ready-To-Work program also provides participants with opportunities for field placements related to the participant's field of study. Earnings of students (up to $2,500) do not reduce TANF benefits. Reportedly, these work study placements have increased the State's TANF work participation rates. The State has also reported that students have higher grade point averages and completion rates than other Kentucky community college students, and that individuals in the program have larger wage increases and more steady work than individuals in other TANF work activities. In 2004, the Ready-To-Work program was extended to also include TANF recipients who do not have a high school diploma or GED or did not possess the basic skills necessary to be eligible for post-secondary education.

Louisiana

The Louisiana Opening Doors program is designed to help low-income parents attending community college cover more of their expenses and to provide financial incentives to encourage progress. The colleges offered students a $1,000 scholarship for each of two semesters, or $2,000 total, if they maintained at least half-time enrollment and a 2.0 (C) grade point average. The scholarships were in addition to Pell Grants and any other financial aid for which students qualified and were paid in installments so that college counselors could verify that students stayed enrolled and passed their courses. MDRC conducted a random assignment research evaluation of the program, and those that participated in the Opening Doors program were more likely to enroll in college full time, passed more courses and earned more credits, and had higher college registration rates two and three semesters after they began the program.

Missouri

In FY 2005, TANF recipients and other low-income individuals began participating in a new pilot initiative called the Career Pathway Life Sciences program. Designed by Better Family Life, Inc., (BFL) and the Metropolitan Education and Training Center, in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the program offers an innovative approach to creating educational "stepping stones" for the advancement of workers and job seekers, including those with basic skills deficiencies, to provide a qualified workforce to local employers. Participants in the program receive training for entry-level careers in the life sciences, including biotechnology, biomedical devices, pharmaceuticals, health care, and food and beverage industries.

The program offers four training cycles annually. The class sizes are reasonably small to assure participants receive the individual attention necessary to be successful. Through St. Louis Community College/BFL, the program integrates targeted technical, academic, and experiential training, focused career mapping/planning, retention and advancement support, and life skill development. This ensures that both employer needs and workforce issues are appropriately addressed for the professional development of the students and the growth of the industry.

A pilot of the Career Pathway Life Sciences program was successfully completed over a two-year period. More than three-quarters of the participants in the pilot graduated, and more than half of the graduates found jobs almost immediately. The participants who went on to entry-level positions are expected to make anywhere from $25,000 to $30,000 per year. Of the participants who did not pursue immediate employment, several decided, instead, to continue on to college to pursue degrees in the life sciences.

Another great success for the program has been the ability to leverage dollars and create new partnerships and collaborations. For example, the Missouri Division of Workforce Development contributed over $100,000 to the program, while the East-West Gateway Council of Governments has provided transportation services with a value of more than $300,000. In addition, the Workforce Strategy Center, a national consulting firm, provided technical assistance to develop the career pathway ladder to sustainable employment. Finally, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has acted as a primary sponsor of the program and has provided funding and numerous other supportive programs.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has structured the Keystone Education Yields Success (KEYS) initiative, a program organized by the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) to encourage post-secondary education among TANF recipients in the quest for self-sufficiency, assisting them in attending any of Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges and completing their degrees. The goals of the KEYS program are to: 1) ensure continuing attendance and participation in Pennsylvania's community colleges with the intent of graduating with a career-specific credit bearing certificate or associate's degree; and 2) provide the services and supports necessary to assist students in completing educational activities. The County Assistance Offices (CAOs), where Pennsylvania's caseworkers dispense and track welfare benefits, refer all interested TANF recipients to the program and distribute brochures to recruit prospective students.

All TANF participants must engage in countable work activities for a minimum number of hours during the week to be eligible for KEYS, unless the client meets an exemption or has good cause. KEYS participants use the KEYS Attendance Verification form, located at their colleges, to sign in and out each day and track their attendance for Federal verification. The participation agreement forged between the KEYS student and the college of choice is documented in the KEYS Service Plan, where a participant's countable hours and activities are described, as well as any community service, employment, paid work experience, work study, student teaching, internship, or other items not already included in documented classroom hours. In addition, students provide a KEYS Program Attendance Sheet to their facilitators each week to verify activity hours and program participation. These "KEYS Student Facilitators" hold a range of roles, including aiding the participant in developing a career-specific education plan, assisting in the application of financial aid and college support, ensuring the student's continued participation at the school through encouragement and the alleviation of barriers, monitoring academic progress, reporting to the CAO-designated caseworker regarding student issues, and giving DPW the information necessary to evaluate the program.

Texas

The Business Access Program in Dallas, Texas is an in-home distance-learning project designed for TANF clients. Computers are installed in the homes of clients who have become employed. The program provides education and job training programs through the internet, which includes GED courses and job skills development programs. From their homes, clients can search for jobs, develop job skills, and even locate certain home-based employment. Curricula can include education for employment (ESL, GED, digital literacy, industry specific career training),

vocational education for local jobs in demand or "Certified Career Skills Training" (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant courses), and job search skills. Curricula can be provided solely on-line or through mixed models that combine online education with practical experience. To address concerns about monitoring hours, the Business Access program has technology features that permit monitoring in real time. Login IDs are necessary to join in the program. A family can have up to five login IDs, but only the participant's activities count toward TANF requirements. The system also has an automatic tracking and reporting component in which activities and training module completions are sent to case managers. When a participant is able to meet their goals, they are allowed to keep the computer.

Washington

Washington initiated a statewide goal of increasing the quantity of adult education students finding and succeeding in employment. An integrated job training and adult education model was piloted locally in ten community and technical colleges in 2004 and then integrated throughout Washington in 2006. Out of the 34 two-year colleges in Washington, 20 had approved Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs as of 2006. The I-BEST program focuses on low-income persons with limited English or basic skills and/or needing education. The program operates as a dual enrollment/dual credit integrated program which shortens the amount of time needed to acquire a credential. To do this, the program joins ABE/ESL instructors with professional technical instructors. The instructors co-teach so half of the time the student is learning appropriate basic skills and the other half of the time the student is learning job skills needed for a particular career path. According to the State, the program resulted in individuals receiving more college credits and they were more likely to complete workforce training.

As an example, one campus offers a tailored curriculum for corrections and protections officers. The training includes speaking and listening skills, along with writing, reading, and math education. In 14 weeks the students are prepared to be licensed and work as corrections or protections officers, and these credits can also be used toward a Certificate in Criminal Justice, Certificate in Homeland Security, or an Associates Degree in Criminal Justice. Another program has set up collaboration between the community college and the United Union of Roofers Apprenticeship Program. In this partnership, students begin work at $15 an hour and have four hours on instruction paired with four hours of on-the-roof instruction daily. After completing the two-year program, students are journey union roofers and earn $25.00 per hour.

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Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare presentation by Cheryl S. Davis titled "Employment Advancement Retention Network" on August 8, 2007.

Pennsylvania material packet titled "KEYS – Keystone Education Yields Success."

Pennsylvania presentation titled "Welcome – KEYS Spring Conference" PowerPoint."

Presentation by Kim Bunting titled "Effective Service Delivery for TANF Clients in Rural Areas: Texas Distance Learning," presented at the Utah Peer TA Roundtable held May 23-24, 2007.

Presentation by David Prince from the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges titled "Washington State's Perfect Storm: Drivers for Change," given March 22, 2005. Available at http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0711TANFMENDOZA.PDF.

For more information on the KEYS program and its collaboration with Pennsylvania colleges, please visit: http://www.racc.edu/studentservices/keys_prgm.aspx

For more information on the Arkansas WAGE program: http://dwe.arkansas.gov/AdultEd/WAGE.html

Employment Retention and Advancement

Overview

One of ACF's major initiatives is the *Employment Retention and Advancement Project*, which is experimentally evaluating a number of alternative approaches to help current or former TANF recipients and other low-income individuals sustain attachment to and advancement in the labor market. ACF's contractor, MDRC, has been evaluating 16 intervention strategies implemented in sites in eight States (California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas). The study also includes an implementation evaluation in each site to document the challenges and successes in implementing and operating the strategies designed.

A report summarizing interim findings from 12 of the 16 intervention strategies will be released this year. All of the ERA strategies, including those described in the interim report, are evaluated using a similar evaluation design. Individuals who met the site-specific ERA eligibility criteria were randomly assigned to a program group, usually called the ERA group, or to a control group. Those assigned to the ERA group were eligible to receive the special retention and advancement services (and in some programs, required to participate), while those assigned to the control group were not eligible for the special ERA services but were eligible for other services and supports available from the agency or in the community – including the services provided through the sites' standard welfare-to-work or post-employment program. Each site's control group thus represented the benchmark against which the site's ERA approach was assessed.

The four strategies that were found to have produced positive impacts were operated in Illinois (Chicago), California (Riverside), Texas (Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston), and New York (New York City).

State Practices and Results

Illinois, California, Texas, New York

The Chicago strategy focused on providing career advancement services through an experienced community-based organization. The strategy focused on individuals who remained on TANF even though they worked 30 hours per week and had maintained employment for at least six consecutive months. It provided a combination of services, including targeted job search assistance and help in identifying and accessing career ladders. Riverside implemented two strategies; findings from the Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS) program are included in this report. PASS targeted individuals who left TANF due to earned income and provided retention and advancement services and family-based support services delivered by community-based organizations. Texas implemented the new strategy in Corpus Christi, Fort Worth and Houston and targeted TANF applicants and recipients. This strategy provided individualized team-based case management as well as monthly stipends of $200 to those who maintained full-time employment and completed activities related to their employment plan. The New York City PRIDE program was a mandatory employment program targeting welfare recipients with physical or mental health problems that was operated through four nonprofit, community-based

organizations experienced in working with people with health problems. It included adult basic education, unpaid work experience, and job search/job placement services tailored to account for health problems.

The Chicago, Riverside (PASS) sites and two of the Texas sites, Corpus Christi and Fort Worth, increased two-year average quarterly employment rates by 2.8 to 3.8 percentage points above control group levels, boosted average total (2-year) earnings by $823 to $1,755, produced gains in the percentage of people that were employed four consecutive quarters, ranging from 3.8 to 4.1 percentage points, and increased the percentage earning more than $20,000 during the two-year period by 2.8 to 4.6 percentage points. The New York City PRIDE program produced economic impacts similar in size to those in the other three promising programs in absolute terms. These results were very large in percentage terms due to the control group's very low employment levels. Subgroup analysis found that impacts tend to be concentrated among sample group members with recent work experience.

While most ERA programs were able to recruit and initially engage substantial proportions of program group members, sustained engagement was difficult to achieve. The Chicago, New York City PRIDE, and the two Texas sites produced positive impacts on measures of ongoing engagement; these impacts were concentrated among sample members with recent work experience.

The MDRC's *Employment Retention and Advancement Project*'s findings are based on two to three years of data and patterns are beginning to emerge. However, these findings do not represent the final word on these programs, as the evaluation will ultimately track employment and earnings outcomes for at least three years in every program and longer in selected programs. The experience of the 12 intervention strategies included in this report illustrates the challenges faced by agencies attempting to assist TANF applicants and recipients sustain employment and advance in the labor market. The study found high rates of job loss and limited advancement during the follow-up periods. The positive impacts found in the four sites highlighted here suggest that some strategies can produce positive results.

Sources and Links

Employment Retention and Advancement Evaluation
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/employ_retention/index.html

For more information, see the interim impact reports, released in FY 2006:

Texas
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/employ_retention/reports/results_texas/results_tx_title.html

Illinois
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/employ_retention/reports/chicago_era/chicago_era_title.html

New York
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/employ_retention/reports/era_pride/era_pride_title.html

Additional Resources:
Increasing Employment Stability and Earnings for Low-WageWorkers: Promising Programs in the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) Evaluation. Gayle Hamilton, MDRC:
http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/opre/wrconference/presentations/HamiltonGayle.ppt

Strategies for Serving the Hard-to-Employ and the Disabled Population

Overview

State and local TANF officials and other service providers have expressed the need for more information and guidance as they develop employment-focused strategies to work more effectively with TANF recipients who face substantial barriers to employment. These include adults with substance abuse and/or mental health problems, physical or developmental disabilities, learning disabilities or very low basic skills, those who have experienced domestic violence, or those who have a general history of low and intermittent employment. In many instances, agencies will need new methods and strategies to meet the needs of individuals facing one or more of these barriers in order for them to enter and succeed in the labor market.

State Practices and Results

Massachusetts

The Department of Transitional Assistance has implemented a new initiative in 12 of its offices where a vocational specialist has been assigned to help applicants who have a disability or other barriers which preclude them from meeting work requirements. The vocational specialist can work more intensively on evaluating skills and barriers and coordinating services to address those barriers. The vocational specialist evaluates the skills and interests of applicants and clients and develops an Individualized Service Plan for each client. Clients' barriers to employment are identified and services are coordinated to break down those barriers. The vocational specialists have identified community support and employment programs which have experience in serving individuals with disabilities and have helped facilitate access to services. This initiative has introduced new specialized Vocational Rehabilitation providers to the TANF system who have expertise in more individualized and customized employment options.

New York

New York City integrated the WeCARE program in 2005, a Human Resources Administration project. WeCARE's mission is to endow hard-to-employ participants with self-sufficiency and wellness services. If a client is deemed potentially unable to work during initial assessments, s/he is referred to WeCARE. The program provides these clients with a comprehensive assessment encompassing a biopsychosocial and medical exam. The assessment divides individuals into groups that include the following: unemployable - needs treatment for unstable medical condition that affects employability, employable with limitations, and fully employable. It also identifies aspects on a spectrum that could impact client employability, ranging from community and social circumstances to mental health and medical issues. The caseworker then creates a plan and progress track individualized to the client that focuses on suitable activities and services for job placement and retention.

Vermont

The Economic Services Division (ESD) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) partner together in Vermont for customers with disabilities. In State fiscal year 2006, VR served 1,200 TANF

participants, with 830 in the intensive caseload. This number represents 15 percent of the TANF families served. The average amount of time to rehabilitate an individual successfully is about 16 months in the VR/Reach Up program; the average time in the VR general caseload is 22 months. Approximately 450 of these families have closed their TANF case with employment since 2001. ESD contracts with VR to work with participants who have significant barriers to employment. Services include VR counseling, traditional VR services, Reach Up case management vocational assessment and evaluations and case consultation. Services include VR counseling, traditional VR services, and Reach Up case management. Employment & Training Specialists (ETS) work with counselors to provide job readiness assistance and job coaching. Vermont recognizes that a high percentage of TANF recipient have disabilities, but with the appropriate supports in place, these individuals are able to pursue their highest levels of self sufficiency. Clients in VR/Reach Up have a modified work requirement; starting slowly and increasing over time.

VR services are individualized, determining aptitude, abilities, and interests. Multiple options are available including vocational and/or technical training. ESD provides VR with funds to hire full and part-time VR counselors to cover Vermont's 12 districts. Regular and ongoing consultation occurs between agencies including the Department of Labor. An essential element of the VR/RU program is the blended function of the TANF case manager and VR counselor, who also work with employment and training specialists, as well as social security assistants. There is a capped caseload to ensure intensive individualized services. Vermont has found that collaborative relationships with built-in consultation models, a strong focus on self sufficiency, and providing proper supports are key to successfully engaging clients with disabilities.

Sources and Links

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance Vocational Specialist Pilot Program information sheet, June 2008.

"TANF Policies for the Hard to Employ: Understanding State Approaches and Future Directions," The Urban Institute, July 2007.

For more information on Vermont's program, visit:
www.nnetw.org
www.aot.state.vt.us/civilrights/documents/suhc2008BrochureFinal.pdf

WEB-BASED RESOURCES

One Stop Toolkit for Serving People with Disabilities

This resource is done in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, and provides information on helping individuals with disabilities find and retain employment. The resource is primarily for local One-Stop center operators, but it contains information useful to other groups seeking to find employment for those with disabilities. The site also includes an employment section that contains links to the Employer Assistance Referral Network (EARN), a website that seeks to connect employers and individuals with disabilities, as well as other resources for both employers and employees looking for information on employment of those with disabilities.

For more information on the One Stop Toolkit for Serving People with Disabilities, visit: http://www.onestoptoolkit.org/index.cfm

Urban Partnerships Initiative Online Toolkit

The Urban Partnerships Initiative Online Toolkit presents a collection of innovative and promising practices from around the country, and features programs representing each of the Administration for Children and Families' 10 Regional Offices. The organization of the toolkit follows the continuum of TANF services and the content features strategies for engaging hard-to-serve populations.

The Intake section highlights strategies for barrier removal, while the Case Management section covers agency management and partnerships, among other topics. The Work Attachment and Work Retention sections introduce novel approaches for engaging clients in work and retaining gainful employment. The Transitional Services section offers strategies for connecting clients to supports beyond TANF to enable them to reach self-sufficiency.

Organizing Framework: TANF Life Cycle				
Tools for Practitioners and Program Administrators				
Intake	**Case Management**	**Work Attachment**	**Work Retention**	**Transitional Services**
Outreach Eligibility Diversion Child support enforcement	Case management practices Agency management Supportive services	Work activities Work readiness activities Job search and job placement	Job coaching and incentives Access to work supports Strategic job placement for advancement Training for retention and advancement	Government/community engagement supports Financial supports

In addition to descriptions of programs and details about how policies and procedures changed within agencies, the toolkit presents a suite of materials that can be adapted by agencies nationwide to enhance policy, operations, and practice. These tools include memoranda of understanding, resource lists, curricula, funding strategies, regulations, procedures, and assessment instruments. These items can contribute to a solid foundation for the implementation of successful practices, allow for expansion of existing services, and link agencies to other organizations to partner for improved service delivery.

For more information on the Urban Partnerships Initiative Online Toolkit, visit: http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/upitoolkit/introduction/

U.S. Department of Labor – Customized Employment

This resource highlights the Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) Customized Employment initiative to improve employment for all customers, utilizing methods useful to those with employment barriers, such as disabilities, limited education, and lack of transportation or childcare resources. Housed under the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), ODEP seeks to strengthen strategies and workforce systems to better serve these individuals with complex needs when it comes to employment. The initiative emphasizes such items as the importance of exploring a job seeker's background and personal goals in order to better assist them in obtaining employment, devising a portfolio for potential employers on behalf of the client, and developing job site supports.

For more information on the U.S. Department of Labor's Customized Employment Initiative, visit: http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/custom/index.htm