



Coaching & Case Management in TANF Programs

Leveraging America's Social and Economic Resilience TANF Learning Community (LASER TLC)

This brief was adapted from the "Getting Started Guide to Coaching" written by Rachel Brooks and Susan Fitter Harris of The Prosperity Agenda; and developed based on the work presented by Fran Moore, The Prosperity Agenda and Mary Nelson, American Public Human Services Association at LASER TLC collective technical assistance sessions.

Understanding Coaching

As TANF Programs examine their organizational culture and refine and revisit their case management and human service delivery systems, they look to enhance the capacity of their front-line staff that results in improved outcomes for their TANF families. Coaching is an impactful tool for staff to use with clients to support both their personal and professional development.

In the context of human services, coaching is a form of personal or professional development in which an experienced and knowledgeable coach provides guidance to help an individual develop new knowledge and skills to reach a specific goal. The International Coaching Federation defines coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential."ⁱ

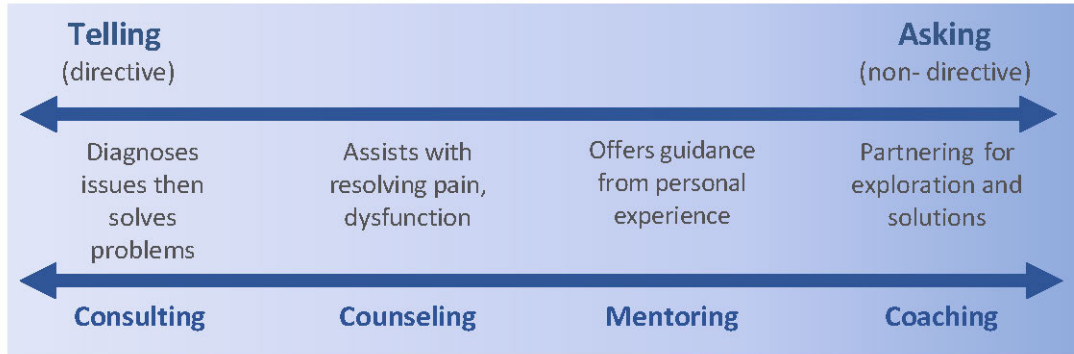
How Coaching Differs from Other Human Services Approaches

Many types of coaching serve different needs, such as life coaching, business coaching, or parenting coaching.ⁱⁱ Business executives have long used coaching to improve their performance with their staffs, colleagues, and clients. Some of the fundamental characteristics of these coaching models can be brought into the human services world to support TANF families develop personally and professionally.



The intent of coaching in the human services context can help families set and achieve goals. Research shows that coaching supports the development of professional, financial, and life skills and prepares people as self-advocates.ⁱⁱⁱ Yet, coaching in human services is distinct from similar approaches, such as counseling and mentorship, thus, necessitating different modes of interaction with people.

Figure 1. Comparison of Coaching, Mentoring, Counseling, and Consulting



While people often benefit from elements of each of these approaches, they are not the same. A coach facilitates sessions and asks thoughtful questions to help participants gain awareness of themselves, build new perspectives around what's possible, and discover and own their skills and strengths. Coaching sees people as having the answers they need already within themselves. Only they truly know themselves, their dreams, and where they are in life. The coach's job is to help draw those answers out. By contrast, a mentor plays a more informal, advisory role and a counselor guides clients in a retrospective look for answers about behavior patterns and healing from past trauma.^{iv}

CORE BELIEFS OF HUMAN SERVICES COACHING

Everyone is creative, capable, and resourceful. Though people may struggle with significant roadblocks, they are creative and resourceful enough to have their own answers and know what's right for them.

To give people the power to gain long-term stability, coaching focuses on strengths instead of weaknesses and barriers. Traditional case management usually focuses on barrier removal. Coaching focuses on strengths: what is working, what is the goal, and what are resources to draw on. Participants identify and address barriers in the process of coaching, but they are not the primary focus.

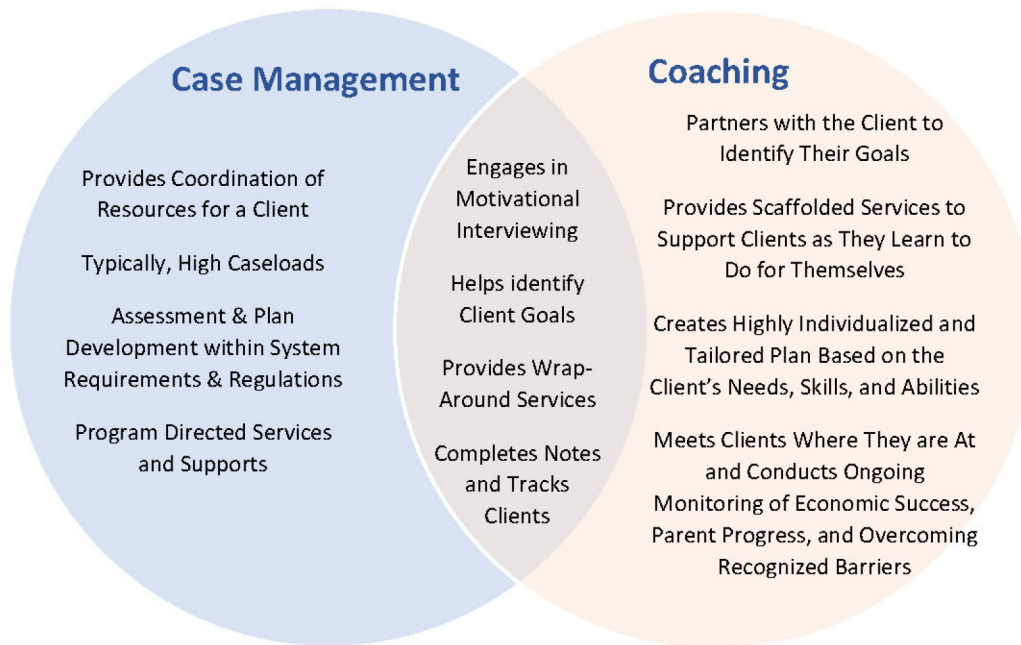
Coaches create environments that make change possible. People need trust and a positive atmosphere to feel safe and take new risks. Coaches foster positivity and trust by delivering services focused on strengths and developing solid relationships with participants.

Greater self-awareness leads to increased performance and fulfillment. With greater awareness, people can access and use their personal power to make choices that are right for them. People can shift from perspectives that have held them back to empowered outlooks, behaviors, and habits.

Change ripples outward. Change in one area of life can lead to changes in other areas as well. Participants are in the best position to know which parts of their life need to change first.

Coaching and case management are different but can sometimes include similar features and overlapping objectives. Case management is "a process that manages client wellness and autonomy through advocacy, communication, education, and the identification and facilitation of services."^v Unlike a case manager, a coach does not manage the plan; but clients and coaches are equal partners in developing and overseeing the plan. Some organizations integrate aspects of a coaching model into their case management practices supporting a more client-driven and goal-centered approach to their TANF families.

Figure 2. Overlap of Case Management and Coaching Approaches



Coaching Models

Consider the focus of various coaching models and what will work best for your TANF program. For the LASER TLC sites, we provided information on the Human Services Coaching Framework developed by the Public Consulting Group. This coaching framework focuses on the importance of creating a mind shift from meeting agency requirements to thinking about what the participant needs from the agency to improve their lives.

This model is person-centered, relationship-based and goal-driven. We also featured presentations on models that focused on the individual participant and establishing their goals, highlighting the Goal4It! and the Goal, Plan, Do, Review/Revise (GPDRR) models. Finally, we highlighted the Family Center Coaching model developed by The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and The Prosperity Agenda. This model centers the participants' needs in the context of their families and works with the adult family member to better understand their motivations, existing skills and gaps, and meets the adult family member where they are at.

Everyone is different; peoples' rates of change vary over time and tasks. Success looks different for each person, as does the amount of support and time they need along the way. Customizing coaching to the time and support each person needs is part of a successful coaching approach.

Next Steps

As organizations discover coaching, they often recognize aspects of the coaching approach in their existing values, relationships, and practices. TANF program directors will likely find that they are already doing some of the things that characterize a coaching approach and bring value to their staff and the

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families that they serve. Identifying and building off those strengths can lead to an organic process accelerating the implementation of a coaching model.

Based on an assessment of how different coaching models align with the TANF agency’s organizational culture and TANF program goals, we can create a starting point for adopting a coaching model that is the best fit for your TANF agency and your families.

ⁱ “What Is Coaching?” International Coaching Federation. 2021. Accessed April 5, 2021. <https://coachingfederation.org/about>

ⁱⁱ Bijan Kholghi. “31 Types of Coaching – A Complete List (2021)” Coaching Online. 2021. Accessed April 5, 2021. <https://www.coaching-online.org/types-of-coaching/>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Case Management Facts.” Commission for Case Management Certification. Accessed September 26, 2022. <https://ccmcertification.org/case-management-facts#>

^{iv} Kelly Miller, BA, CAPP. “How Do Coaching, Mentoring and Counseling Differ?” Positive Psychology.com. Updated May 4, 2021. Accessed April 5, 2021. <https://positivepsychology.com/coaching-mentoring-counseling/>

^v “Aspen Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative: Success in Workforce Programs for Parents.” Ascend at The Aspen Institute. November 2019. Accessed April 5, 2021. <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Aspen-Postsecondary-Success-for-Parents-Initiative-Success-in-Workforce-Programs-for-Parents.pdf>.