



Overcoming Stigma Tied to TANF Program Participation Summary

Date

Thursday, November 3, 2022

Attendees

Members of the LASER TLC Site Implementation Teams from the: (1) Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation; (2) Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians; and (3) Yurok Tribe. Representatives from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA); BLH Technologies (BLH); and Mathematica.

Session Goals

- Identify at least five successful strategies for addressing stigma at the individual customer and program/organizational level.
- Consider implementing targeted innovative approaches to reduce stigma within their program and community.

Presenter: Maria Aguirre-Mendoza, TANF Executive Director, Soboba Tribal TANF Program

Presentation Key Points

- Train staff on respectful communication with TANF customers.
- Create feedback opportunities for TANF customers. Suggestion boxes have been successful.
- Use customer surveys to identify community needs and evaluate program services. Incorporate feedback into improving service delivery.
- Support wraparound services for the customers and TANF staff support customer needs. Serve as mentors for the customers.
- Provide a welcoming open-door policy at TANF offices.
- Families are surveyed to help program personnel identify community needs and evaluate program services.
- Offer career coaching to individuals to make sure their goals are realistic and promote self-sufficiency.
- Ensure customer needs are assessed and a wide range of resources are available to meet those needs.
- Comprehensive assessments are offered to identify potential learning disabilities.
- Mental health assessments are required at intake and counselling is provided based on the assessment results. Confidentiality is protected by offering an offsite service option. Clients can choose to meet at their homes, the contractor's facility, or the TANF facility to put families at ease. The organization employs a private contractor to guarantee a high level of comfort.
- Drug tests are administered at the initial application and randomly at annual recertification. If a client tests positive, they must enroll in a drug and alcohol recovery program with required counseling.

- A program that promotes positive cultural identity and self-esteem through cultural activities, such as beading, gathering, sewing, talking circles, drumming, and culturally based health and wellness activities.
- Workshops on parenting, nutrition, fitness, health, literacy, substance abuse, pregnancy prevention, computer software training, computer literacy, and arts and crafts all help participants develop their sense of self-worth and confidence.
- The TANF program provides incentives for success and celebrates these successes in an award ceremony.
- The tribe has a committee for employee appreciation that promotes workplace well-being.
- The program has progressive repercussions for clients who do not follow the rules. First non-compliance is 10% reduction in cash benefit, followed by 25%, then 50% reduction with the final step being closure and no reapplication within 60 days.
- The current TANF work requirement for single-family households is 20 hours. It is 30 hours for a two-parent household. Families can combine the hours per household. An agency should ensure that policies are not too stringent to prevent families from succeeding.