

Webinar Question & Answer
OFA Region X Webinar:
State TANF Redesign/ Human Services Modernization Efforts
Thursday, November 21, 2013

Speakers: Frank Shields, ACF Region X; Babette Roberts, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services; Lorie Young and Catherine Scardino, State of Hawaii Department of Human Services; Deborah Carroll and Brian Campbell, District of Columbia Department of Human Services; and Lesley Smith, ICF International.

Content: This moderated webinar provided an overview of State TANF redesign/ human services modernization efforts, including the process, lessons learned, and progress made thus far.

Webinar Q & A Session

- **Question:** In regards to your assessment tool, is the tool appropriate for both two-parent families as well as single- parent families, and are you finding success with both?
 - **Answer from Babette Roberts (Washington):** It is for all families, so yes, both single-parent and two-parent families, but the assessment tool is for the entire caseload. We haven't rolled out State-wide, so it's hard for me to say we're finding success with both. But in the user testing, I don't believe that we saw any difference in the comments around one-parent families versus two-parent families.

- **Question:** Does the employer or your State staff provide the mentoring and job coaching for your participants of the SEE Hawaii Program?
 - **Answer from Catherine Scardino (Hawaii):** We have a private contractor that administers the SEE Hawaii Work Program, and they actually provide three aspects. One is the employer relation specialist: they actually go out and market and recruit employers. And second is the job retention coaches: they do the mentoring, they do the follow-up in terms of once a participant is referred, they do the intake, the assessments, and the referral to employers, and follow-up in terms of interviews and coaching them through the placement process. And lastly, our contractor also provides or issues the payment. So, yes, we do -- the contractor provides those services.

- **Question:** What process do you use in D.C. for follow-up for mental health referrals?
 - **Answer from Deborah Carroll (District of Columbia):** We have a partnership with our Department of Behavioral Health that will do a more in-depth assessment for any customer that screens for mental health or substance abuse. We are literally about to award a contract to one or more providers to provide trauma-informed care to them so that any customer that doesn't necessarily have a diagnosis, but

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has experienced trauma, will be able to receive services through that network as well. What this will allow is that they will not have to go through the typical screening process. That person will be able to get a direct referral to the service provider.

- **Question:** Do you suggest contracting with your vendors to increase employment levels with your customers which could also help in the on-the-job training?
 - *Answer from Babette Roberts (Washington):* I think I would. We contract with our providers and in our contract we do have performance expectations, and around those performance expectations some of them are percentages that move to employment and then retain employment. I do suggest that there are metrics around those when you're working with contractors, either at a State level or a local level.

- **Question:** Why did you decide to leave the asset limits in place for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled programs?
 - *Answer from Lorie Young (Hawaii):* It's because our statute directly states that we are to apply the Federal limits to our General Assistance and Aged, Blind, and Disabled population, so of course, that's \$2,000 for a single and \$3,000 for a couple. Those two programs are actually a safety-net program here in Hawaii for the people that do not qualify for Federal assistance, so basically, many of our GA's and our ABD population -- it's an interim assistance and the idea is they will move on to Federal benefits, especially our ABD population. Our General Assistance population, many of them obviously have temporary disabilities but some of them do -- we have them apply for Federal benefits and actually quite a few of them do qualify. So we decided not to mess with the Federal asset limits requirement because many of the GA's and ABD's do move on to that, those programs, so we left it alone.

- **Question:** Could you describe your staff training?
 - *Answer from Brian Campbell (District of Columbia):* We've been rolling people on. As Deborah [Carroll] said, we've started with ten, now we're up to pushing 70. The first trainings we did focused on essentially, the assessment part of it because that's what we were focusing on, was assessments. So we focused on strength-based interviewing and actually we're looking to get more outside help on that as we start pivoting to our workers having case corners and having more of a case -- carrying a caseload. We also have monthly meetings with all of our

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respective vendors, to essentially keep them abreast of policy changes and things of that nature.

- *Question:* What is the specific motivational interviewing program that you're using?
 - *Answer from Babette Roberts (Washington):* Oh, that's a great question. We are contracting with Washington State University specifically with Casey -- I believe his last name is Jackson -- Casey Jackson and the motivational interviewing curriculum that he's developed.
- *Question:* You mentioned a trauma-specific training. Could you identify that a little bit more specifically?
 - *Answer from Deborah Carroll (District of Columbia):* Yes. The trauma-informed care is a method of assisting customers that experience -- whether it be sexual abuse or domestic violence -- or witness a crime, it is based on a program that I believe comes out of the Midwest somewhere and I'll have to get the specific information. Not only does our Department of Behavioral Health, but our Child and Family Services agency, trained all of their social workers in utilizing the method of assisting families and individuals that have experienced trauma. So the goal is to bring that to the TANF population, particularly those that have been on TANF for long periods, that may have experienced trauma and have not had those issues addressed over the last several years that they've been receiving the benefits. That's typically our approach. Hopefully, we'll have someone in place within the next month or so, so we can see how it's going to be implemented. This particular program is going to be coupled with AIDS and HIV testing and assistance for individuals or families that are also at risk of obtaining that disease as well as substance abuse. And that's oftentimes because these families self-medicate and might need some added assistance in those areas. We'll hopefully be able to report on the outcome of that in the next few months.

Additional Questions and Answers submitted but not covered during Webinar; speakers provided written responses afterward.

Babette Roberts, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services:

- *Question:* I think that I heard you say that you had a higher hour's requirement than what the feds require, but you relaxed it. We were contemplating increasing our hour's requirements because we are finding that simply hitting 20 or 30 hours of participation a

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week does not mean someone has reached a level of self-sufficiency. Can you please speak to your thinking on that? Thanks.

- *Answer:* The department requires most WorkFirst participants to participate in work or work-related activities full-time, which is defined as getting as close as possible to 40 hours per week, with a minimum of 32 hours per week. However, we did scale back hourly requirements for some parents as part of our overall budget reduction measures.
 - As of October 2010, we allowed only one parent in a two parent family to participate as long as both parents had been participating satisfactorily and one parent agreed to participate 35 hours per week.
 - As of March 2011, we reduced requirements for single parents with a child under six to 20 hours per week.

At this point we are looking at changes that would require both parents in a two parent household to participate, as able, full-time. We may also increase minimum hourly requirements as shown below so that WorkFirst participants would be more likely to meet federal requirements even if they have an occasional unexpected absence during a month.

- Single parents with a child under six: 23 hours per week;
 - Other single parents: 33 hours per week;
 - Each parent in a two-parent family: 38 hours per week.
- *Question:* We all have work participation rates, but for us here in Maryland, we try to place customers in employment that could sustain them, so how do you measure success?
 - *Answer:* There is a strong emphasis on increasing employment, wages, and self-sufficiency for WorkFirst participants in Washington State. State law ([RCW 74.08A.410](#)) sets outcome measures for our WorkFirst program in terms of caseload reduction, recidivism, job retention, earnings, lower grants due to employment and increased job placements. Another section of State law ([RCW 74.08A.411](#)) mandates a quarterly [legislative report](#) to track TANF exits for 36 months and measure increases to their earnings and hourly wages and the percentage of TANF returns. The [WorkFirst Performance Chartbook](#) provides information on key goals and performance measures for current WorkFirst participants, including our progress in increasing employment and meeting the work participation rate.
 - *Question:* Do you suggest contracting with your vendors to increase employment levels with your customers, which could also help in on the job training?

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- *Answer:* We highly support this approach. The Department currently contracts with [three other state agencies](#), as follows, and measures their success in the [WorkFirst Performance Chartbook](#) in increasing employment and exits to employment:
 - The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges provides work study, internships, practicums and educational activities needed to access employment.
 - The Employment Security Department provides job preparation and job search activities, as well as on-the-job training opportunities.
 - The Commerce Department provides work experience and subsidized employment.
- *Question:* With the reduction to 20 hours of weekly participation have you noticed any reductions in expenditures such as transportation, child care...etc.?
 - *Answer:* Washington State reduced this participation requirement as one of many budget reduction measures between October 2010 and February 2012. Other significant changes during this 18-month period included changes to child care eligibility, tightening eligibility for time limit extensions and reducing the TANF grant amount. In addition, effective July 1, 2011, the Washington State Legislature suspended participation for parents of young children (i.e., one child under the age of two years or two or more children under the age of six years) for up to two years. Because of all of these simultaneous changes, we can't isolate the fiscal impacts specifically related to the 20-hour requirement for single parents with a child under the age of six.
- *Question:* During the webinar, Washington State indicated that a revised assessment tool will roll-out July 2014. Is this the Federal OWRA tool? If so, did Washington State modify the tool for use? If not, please describe the method used to determine the type of information the assessment would gather.
 - *Answer:* No, this is not the Federal OWRA tool. This is a tool that we developed in conjunction with experts in social service, child welfare, domestic violence, chemical dependency, mental health, and other areas commonly deemed barriers to employment. Washington did look at tools from many other States, including the Federal tool, but ultimately developed their own. In a nut shell (and we can provide more detailed information if participants would like) Washington convened a group of experts (program policy staff, researchers, employment/commerce specialists, community/technical college partners, early learning etc.) to look at our current tool, tools from other States and program

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areas in order to see what was working in those areas and glean some best practices. Experts in barrier areas (CD, DV, Child Welfare, corrections, etc.) were brought in as needed. Using these best practices and the data from own program, questions were developed and their order on the tool was determined.

For additional information regarding the process, please contact Carla Reyes @ 360-725-4894 or Carla.reyes@dshs.wa.gov.

Deborah Carroll and Brian Campbell, District of Columbia Department of Human Services:

- *Question:* Please describe your staff training.
 - *Answer:* Our training currently entails significant training on our application tools: CATCH, (our case management tool), TCA (our adaptation of the OWRA assessment tool), and ACEDS, (our eligibility application). We also have extensive shadowing of seasoned staff and one-on-one supervision. Finally, we focus on positive customer service and promote on strength based interviewing, as in Solution Focused Therapy. In the first nine months of the rolling out the new model, we dedicated at least half a day each week to staff training and capacity building.
- *Question:* Would you please provide the contact info for the trauma informed care training?
 - *Answer:* Trauma informed care is administered through our Department of Behavioral Health (DBH). We do not have specific training on it, but we have entered into an MOU with DBH, which will provide for mental health professionals to be on site at our TANF assessment locations and provide more in-depth mental health assessments, guidance to our assessment workers on trauma informed care (among other things), and also facilitate direct referrals to community providers. Barbara Bazron (Barbara.Bazron@dc.gov) would be the best person to contact at DBH to identify nuances of trauma informed care.
- *Question:* Please describe the benchmarks payments for the customers and the vendor.
 - *Answer:* Contact the District of Columbia Department of Human Services directly (deborah.carroll@dc.gov) for the Department of Human Services Regulations, which contains this information.

All speakers:

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- *Question:* Do you have online application process?
 - *Answer from Babette Roberts (Washington):* Washington State does have an online application tool called the [Washington Connection](#) that citizens can use to find out what benefits are available from local, state and federal programs. The Washington Connection also allows citizens to find out whether they might qualify for these benefits and to apply for department-administered benefits, such as TANF, SNAP and subsidized child care.
 - *Answer from Deborah Carroll and Brian Campbell (District of Columbia):* The District is developing an online application process/vehicle.

- *Question:* May we have copies of your case management trainings?
 - *Answer from Babette Roberts (Washington):* Contact the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (ROBERBA@dshs.wa.gov) directly to see lesson plans for the WorkFirst Program Specialist Core Training.
 - *Answer from Deborah Carroll and Brian Campbell (District of Columbia):* Although not fully compiled, we would be happy to share with you what we have used.

- *Question:* Are any of the States using the OWRA system to prepare assessments?
 - *Answer from Deborah Carroll and Brian Campbell (District of Columbia):* The District has modified the OWRA tool to conduct all of our TANF assessments. We would be happy to share our experiences with anyone. Please contact Brian Campbell at brian.campbell@dc.gov.