



Washington State LASER TLC Site Journey

The Office of Family Assistance initiative, “Leveraging America’s Social and Economic Resilience TANF Learning Community” (LASER TLC), joins 10 TANF programs across the country as they worked to address the challenges of human service delivery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and focused on improved and responsive services to their TANF families.

Goals & Objectives

Washington State sought to learn how to move beyond a narrow focus on parents immediately meeting workforce participation rates (WPR). Instead, Washington is focusing on more effectively integrating client choice and two-generation service strategies. These strategies recognize and integrate the interdependent needs between adults and children. This allows the program to be more responsive to family priorities, choices, and desired outcomes.

Change Strategies

With this goal in mind, Washington worked towards envisioning:

Organizational and Program Improvements:

- Acknowledge where we are as an organization.
- Integrate work more effectively.
- Shift the WorkFirst Culture – emphasizing client choice over engaging in activities that “count.”
- Communicate consistently to support program changes.

Service Improvements:

- Implement a “coaching culture” to improve client interactions and outcomes.
- Add client-centered tools.
- Identify new projects that can strengthen and expand two-generation services and support.

Staff Development:

- Provide better training to staff on client coaching and communications.

Washington Journey

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Community Services Division administers the state TANF program. They wanted to address the impacts and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on their service delivery approaches and methods. Their LASER TLC focus is improving service systems for families and being more supportive of individual family’s priorities and goals.



Challenges & Supports

Challenges:

- Competing agency and state level priorities.
- Ongoing impacts of the pandemic on staffing levels and workload.

Supports:

- TANF leadership and staff desire for change.
- Lessons learned from TANF program redesign outside of Washington.
- Support from federal partners.



Lessons Learned from Our Journey

- Staff must be engaged in planning and implementing change strategies.
- Coordination between initiatives that address similar problems is vital.
- High-quality two-generation services are key to success.

Journey Insights from Washington Team Members

“The experience gave our team hope for a new mindset and approach to working with TANF families more holistically in Washington. We are excited by the possibilities moving forward.”

“I really appreciated hearing how other states are focusing their changes and programs on customer-focused needs. It was a great reminder that we need to focus on where the customer is today, what they can do today, and how they need to be ready for tomorrow’s successes.”

“... To achieve this fully, we need to achieve an organizational culture that shifts focus away from what is countable for WPR – instead focusing on client choice for service/activity engagement.”

he experience gave our team hope for a new mindset

What’s Next

- Finalize and implement performance measures.
- Fully integrate coaching practice into staff training and activities – including availability of staff tools.
- Support program changes and outcome measures with consistent communications with staff and clients.



Leveraging
America's Social &
Economic Resilience

Focus on Results

For the Washington team, long-term success was defined as:

- Develop and implement alternative performance measures – “measures that matter” – for TANF families.
- Implement a broader and supportive coaching practice as part of case management and service delivery.
- Provide support to clients which is driven by client choice.

Alternative performance measures matching their change goals and strategies include:

Process Measures:

- Client engagement into WorkFirst within 30 days after TANF approval.
- Client progressing from barriers and on to employment or training activities.
- Reducing the number of mandatory participants with no verified hours, and clients with no documented activities.
- Financial housing assistance issued.
- Referrals for parent support for families with young children.

Outcome Measures:

- Client exits to promising and stable employment.
- All program exits that indicate the family is on a path to financial stability.
- Transitions to stable housing.
- Improvements to connecting families to services to mitigate child welfare interactions.

