

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND PARTICIPATION IN LARGE URBAN CENTERS

Final Report of Peer TA Activity

**Los Angeles, CA
July 28-29, 2005**

Developed by the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network

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This report describes the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network event entitled *Improving Performance and Participation in Large Urban Centers* that took place in Los Angeles, CA on July 28-29, 2005. The Agenda from the event is provided in Appendix A. Appendix B lists the event participants, and an Evaluation Summary is provided in Appendix C.

The report is available for download at:
<http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/taevents/chron.htm>

I. EVENT OVERVIEW

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The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Network (Peer TA) is a Federally-funded initiative sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of Peer TA is to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance to public agencies and private organizations operating the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Peer TA facilitates the sharing of information between and among States and localities to establish linkages between organizations serving the needs of welfare recipients.

In response to a request for technical assistance from the California Department of Social Services, Peer TA sponsored an Urban Roundtable event in Los Angeles, CA on July 28-29, 2005. Peer TA Roundtables are designed to bring together a group of professionals working in similar or complimentary disciplines in a workshop setting to foster peer-to-peer learning through interactive sessions. This Roundtable brought together Federal, State, and local staff to discuss the enhancement of performance and work participation in urban areas. The event was designed to help improve systems in the five largest cities in the United States—Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia—and to develop collaborative partnerships related to the employment participation.

The Roundtable event in Los Angeles was attended by Federal agency staff, representatives from each State's Department of Social Services, and local representatives from the five cities. The Roundtable included presentations from the Office of Family Assistance regarding the Federal vision on the next phase of welfare reform and working with urban partners. The Peer TA brought in two program initiatives from Atlanta and Minneapolis to present innovative programs to the "Big Five" cities in the United States. Minneapolis has initiated a Diversionary Work Program to move clients into employment, and Atlanta began a performance measurement system for their staff to better engage clients from the initial appointment. Additionally, participants learned about innovative programs from their fellow urban partners on diversion strategies, performance management and contracting, saturation engagement, and work experience and subsidized employment. Partners were also given the opportunity to network and collaborate together via breakout sessions. Each city designed an action plan identifying challenges and goals for local implementation to improve employment and self-sufficiency outcomes to enhance the wellbeing of children and families in urban areas.

II. ROUNDTABLE BACKGROUND

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In 1996, welfare reform placed a time limit upon recipients receiving cash assistance, as well as giving states more flexibility to use their welfare funds in a variety of ways. In recent years, a large numbers of TANF clients have entered the workforce and moved off welfare. However, securing employment does not always equate to moving out of poverty. Many former TANF recipients earn annualized wages that still render them below the poverty line.

Urban centers have had difficulty implementing welfare reform due to the size of their caseloads. Cities face a variety of challenges for welfare reform that are different than suburban and rural areas, as the importance of place is an important factor in poverty policy. Welfare caseloads have become increasingly more concentrated in the cities. A study by the Brookings Institution showed that while the national welfare caseload decreased 51.5 percent from 1994 to 1999, the urban county caseload only decreased 40.6 percent. In 1999, 89 urban counties across the country shared 58.1 percent of the national TANF caseload. Additionally, 10 states held 70 percent of the national TANF caseload in 1999; these included the states of California, Pennsylvania, Texas, Illinois, and New York. Ten urban counties held one third of the nation's caseload, including those containing the cities of Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago. This heavily concentrated welfare caseload in cities produces further challenges for urban centers to meet federal work participation rates. While jobs are often concentrated in suburbs, city residents have a more difficult time finding jobs and securing adequate transportation to maintain employment. While the caseloads have been declining, the hard-to-serve population continues to remain on welfare.¹

Los Angeles County is over 4,000 square miles in area, with 10 million citizens. Realizing the increased challenges for highly populated urban centers, MDRC conducted a study to examine welfare reform in four urban counties, including Los Angeles. In 2000, 36 percent of the population was foreign born, and 40 percent of the TANF caseload in Los Angeles did not speak English as a first language. It was found that Los Angeles faces additional challenges to implementing welfare due to the diverse, high-density population. The Los Angeles caseload is larger than 48 out of the 50 states.² To implement welfare reform, California initiated the CalWORKs program (California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids) in 1997 to include time limits and mandatory work participation rates for its non-exempt caseload. Los Angeles struggled with engaging the TANF population to enter work-related activities because of the size and diversity of its caseload. When a major challenge issue arose in 2001 on the food stamp error rate for California, the welfare reform initiative was put on hold by top staff to deal

¹ Allen, K. & Kirby, M. (2000). "Unfinished Business: Why Cities Matter to Welfare Reform." Brookings Institution. <http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/welfarecaseloads/wfrstdy.pdf>. 23 September 2005.

² Polit, D., Nelson, L., Richburg-Hayes, L., & Seith, D. "Welfare Reform in Los Angeles: Implementation, Effects, and Experience sin Poor Families and Neighborhoods." MDRC.

with the potential budget crisis on food stamps. Additionally, welfare staff was not trained on the earned income disregard and had difficulty relaying the information to clients.³

Recognizing these realities, especially those facing large urban centers, the California Department of Social Services made a TA request on behalf of their largest urban center (Los Angeles) and on behalf of four very similar urban centers (Chicago, Houston, New York City and Philadelphia). Specifically, California requested both outside TA and opportunities for facilitated discussions aimed at examining innovative and proven strategies for full engagement and increasing work participation rates. The goal of the request was to facilitate discussion among the five urban centers in areas such as performance management and contracting, saturation engagement, diversion and immediate employment, and re-engagement and sanctions.

The Peer TA staff, working closely with expert facilitators, Jason Turner, Mark Hoover and Paul Seaman, convened a roundtable on July 28-29, 2005 in California. The fifty (50) attendees included key executive personnel from each of the target cities plus their State partners counterparts along with the two facilitator cities (Atlanta and Minneapolis).

The Roundtable included presentations from the Office of Family Assistance articulating the Federal vision for the next phase of welfare reform and working with urban partners. The two facilitator cities presented their innovative approach to case management and performance measurement (Atlanta) and a Diversionary Work Program (Minneapolis).

The five target cities were led through a series of facilitated discussions involving the core subject areas of performance management and contracting, saturation engagement, diversion and immediate employment, and re-engagement and sanctions. In each session, different cities were invited to describe what they have done in the subject area and made themselves available to their colleagues for questioning and comments. Each city had an opportunity to network with each other regarding strategies, approaches, challenges, and solutions.

At the close of the program, each city designed an action plan identifying challenges and goals for local implementation to improve employment and self-sufficiency outcomes and to enhance the well being of children and families in large urban centers.

³ Ibid

III. ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

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The Peer TA Roundtable event entitled “Improving Performance and Participation in Large Urban Centers” took place in Los Angeles, California and was comprised of one and a half days of workshop sessions, interactive discussions, breakout groups, and presentations. The following sections of this report summarize the content of the various event sessions.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

During this brief introductory session, three speakers each welcomed the Roundtable participants and offered their initial thoughts on the purpose, goals, and anticipated outcomes of the event. Lois Bell, Director of the Division of State and Territory TANF Management from the Office of Family Assistance, Administration of Children and Families, offered greetings to participants. Ms. Bell has been involved with social services for 31 years. After thanking the participants and the Peer TA, she discussed the importance for partnerships among urban stakeholders. The five states included—California, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas—carry 42 percent of the national TANF caseload. Additionally, the five cities of Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia bear 17.9 percent of the nation’s TANF caseload.

Dennis Boyle, Director of the California Department of Social Services, offered welcome for participants to the state of California. Recently appointed, Mr. Boyle has had past experience with Riverside County, CA on self-sufficiency initiatives.

Bryce Yokomizo, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, also gave his welcome. He has been involved with DSS management for the last 32 years, and has been the Director of the Los Angeles Department of Public Services for the past four years.

Jason Turner, President of Turner Government Operations and former Commissioner of the Department of Social Services under Mayor Giuliani in New York, assisted the OFA in organizing the conference. He was excited to be a part of the discussion and introduced his team.

As the meeting facilitator, Lisa Washington-Thomas welcomed teams from Atlanta and Minneapolis to offer best practice advice for stakeholders from the “Big Five.” Stakeholders were then given the opportunity to introduce themselves to the other participants around the Roundtable.

2. FEDERAL/STATE VISION ON THE NEXT PHASE OF WELFARE REFORM— PART I

As large urban centers move forward in addressing key issues such as full engagement, cities will need to focus on a new vision for addressing participation rates, performance management, immediate employment, saturation engagement, and creating new collaborations with partners to effectively meet the many challenges associated with welfare reform. Here, the Federal partners and two States shared their respective visions about moving towards the next phase.

Ms. Lois Bell began by giving the history of the Urban Partnerships Initiative, which started in 2001 following a Brookings report on caseload reductions in urban centers. A disproportionate share of the TANF caseload is located in America's cities. The success of the welfare reform relies on the cities, and an urban initiative in collaboration can greatly help alleviate the issues surrounding welfare. Ten cities were chosen to participate in the original urban initiative, and Atlanta and Minneapolis have been participants since the beginning.

The question surrounding welfare reform is how to move people into self-sufficiency. In many cases, families that move from welfare to employment are still the working poor. By initiating new methods, families can be better served to not only move from welfare into employment, but to build assets to move out of poverty. The goal is to connect families who leave welfare with supports, such as the EITC and child support, to move beyond the poverty and reach self-sufficiency.

Robert Doar, Commissioner, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, began by emphasizing the importance of state-to-state communication. The state of New York has realized that there is a lot to be learned by using the peer-to-peer model. These sessions reenergize agencies to do a better job. New York has included strong requirements toward employment and supports for working people. New York receives the second most EITC money out of the states with \$3 billion in EITC returns. Additionally, New York puts more money towards EITC initiatives than any other state and has initiated a strong child support enforcement initiative. These initiatives have vastly improved the public confidence in social services, and New York is improving in helping families. New York has been aggressive in gathering and using data for performance measurement. The purpose of welfare reform is not to save money; it is to help people. The core principle guiding welfare reform is for states to determine what is best for them. Every locality in the state knows how each other is doing in comparison. Mr. Doar reiterated that welfare reform is about providing temporary assistance to families and giving families education toward healthy marriages and parenting. Marriage should be a major emphasis for welfare reform, because two-parent households can succeed out of

poverty much faster than single-family households. The New York Governor has proposed new programs focused on fathers and giving more EITC to parents who are up-to-date with their child support.

Larry Temple, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission, has learned through experience that welfare-related programs need to be tailored to each locality. He has learned that the concerns in Austin are different than Houston, and vice versa. Texas has 28 workforce boards with different challenges facing each one. Therefore, each locality runs the policy that works best and is measured in a monthly report for the state. In Texas, participants must find work in four weeks, if not, they are required to carry out community service, and undergo an evaluation to identify barriers to work. People were taking advantage of the system; previously, 25,000 adults a month were being sanctioned. By changing their sanctioning policy, only 1900 were sanctioned last month. An increase of 62 percent occurred for people in a component activity. Seventy-eight percent of those employed stayed at their jobs a year or more, earning on average \$7.00/hour and a \$3600 tax-free package for fulltime clients to receive in EITC, child support, food stamps, and other public assistance supports. The state has initiated a four month income disregard to support employed clients. Everyone needs to work together to support families. Mr. Temple encouraged the Federal, State, and local partners to collaborate to reduce poverty.

3. IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT DURING APPLICATION PROCESS AND THEREAFTER

Diversion strategies are intended to assist families to avoid welfare by helping them overcome short-term barriers to self-sufficiency. Cities discussed and outlined the benefits of diversion strategies and immediate employment. Cities shared innovative approaches, service impacts, and the efficiency of up front resources to TANF customers during application processing and thereafter.

3.1 Minneapolis

Bill Brumfield, Director of Hennepin County Training and Employment Assistance, gave a presentation on the Hennepin County Diversionary Work Program (DWP). Hennepin is the largest county in Minnesota and carries one-third of the state TANF caseload. Hennepin County administers income maintenance and contracts out most employment services. They initiated a work-focused diversion program to help meet client employment goals faster with a universal engagement plan to engage clients from the start with an income maintenance worker, a childcare worker, an employment worker, and a benefit worker. Families are eligible to

participate in the DWP for four consecutive months in a 12 month time period. (These months do not count toward the 60 month lifetime limit).

By focusing on work first, jobseekers are able to develop a highly-focused work plan. Before receiving any benefits, a job seeker is required to develop a plan with a job counselor to identify skills, strengths, and potential barriers to employment. A family is disqualified immediately if they do not comply with employment services, but can return if they comply with all program requirements. Cash benefits are distributed to clients based on need, the number of family members, housing costs, and utility costs. Additionally, families are eligible for other supports such as healthcare, childcare, and food stamps. Once the client is employed, the cash assistance continues during the four-month time limit for DWP. Mr. Brumfield reviewed families that are exempted from the program:

- Families with a parent who received MFIP in the past 12 months
- Families with a parent who received DWP in the past 12 months
- Child-only cases
- Caregivers age 60 or older
- A minor parent without a high school diploma or GED
- An 18 or 19-year-old teen parent without a high school diploma or GED who chooses the education plan option
- A single parent family with a child under 12 weeks of age.

Mr. Brumfield also identified families who would not likely benefit from the DWP:

- A qualified professional has determined that they are unable to obtain or retain employment due to an illness, injury, or incapacity that is expected to last at least 60 days.
- Clients who are required in the home to care for an ill, injured, or incapacitated family member, relative in the home or foster child for more than 60 days.
- A qualified professional has determined that they must be in the home to care for a child meeting special medical criteria.
- They are pregnant and have been determined by a qualified professional as being unable to obtain or retain employment due to the pregnancy.
- They have applied for Supplemental Security Income or Retirement Social Security Disability Income. SSI eligibility is determined by a state medical team.

The timeline for the program includes a strict, intensive program to move clients into work. The application must be processed in a five-day period. The program is locally designed with specialized work units, increased service integration, and enhanced technological support. From July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005, 3,152 participants were served. The employment rate was 42.6 percent (26 percent full-time and 15 percent part-time). Clients realized the high expectations that every day must be spent in job search, which led to the success of the program. The average wage for participants was \$9.90 per hour. After four months of the program, 43 percent of DWP participants were ineligible to receive cash assistance because their income was over the limit, reaching an average wage of \$10.38 per hour. Fifty-seven percent of DWP recipients did not go onto MFIP in the month following the end of the program. In conclusion, Mr. Brumfield asserted that in order for a program to work, everyone must believe in its core values.

3.2 Chicago

Marva Arnold, Director of the Division of Human Capital Development, Illinois Department of Human Services, discussed the diversion program in Illinois. The program started in 1998, but Illinois has always been outcome driven. By partnering with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, DHS has always had access to data and data systems. Due to the fact that people were able to go on welfare very easily in Illinois, DHS realized they needed to “fix the front door.”

By initiating a pre-eligibility test, clients receive a family assessment to determine TANF eligibility. Once deemed eligible, the program lasts 30 days. All services are provided by State employees. Illinois localities have developed their own programs, which drives competition, leading to higher success rates. Staff were placed into jobs based on their individual strengths and weaknesses.

As a condition of the program, participants must conduct a job search by contacting 10 to 20 employers as well as reporting their progress with documentation every week. During this time, an ongoing assessment/observation is conducted to help implement other programs that may assist the client with maintaining stable employment. For example, if the client has substance abuse issues, a substance abuse program is added to the client’s individual plan. Additionally, childcare assistance arrangements are made during the 30 days because, for the most part, clients do become employed.

Within six months of initiating the program, TANF enrollment decreased 18 percent. A key to the success of the program is that clients and workers must believe that every person can go to work. Applicants must demonstrate that they are willing to help themselves.

The federal work participation rate for Illinois in June 2004 was 51.6 percent with 6,319 participants. Around thirty percent were working, 24.66 percent in vocational education, and 17.23 percent in the Work First program. By June 2005, 7,925 participants were in the program with 26.78 percent working, 29.73 in vocational education, and 19.8 in Work First. The work participation rate was 57.5 percent, a 6 percent increase. A best practice and key to the success of the program was changing the expectation for the client; every client is expected to work as much as they can. People with SSI want to work, and in many cases, they can work a few hours a week.

4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CONTRACTING

Big cities can get their best performance boost through the use of contract incentives with private vendors. This topic considered the use of internal staff incentives, and the merits of decentralization of program operations (regionalization).

4.1 Atlanta

Wayne Casey, Deputy Administrator of the Fulton County Department of Families and Children's Services, discussed the economic support services put in place in Fulton County. Fulton County, the largest county in Georgia, has a population of 816,000, including the city of Atlanta. The poverty rate in Atlanta is 24 percent, and 15 percent in Fulton County. Twenty-one percent of children live in poverty in Fulton County. In 2004, the food stamp error rate was four percent. The TANF participation rate in July 2003 was five percent, and increased to 52 percent work participation in December 2004.

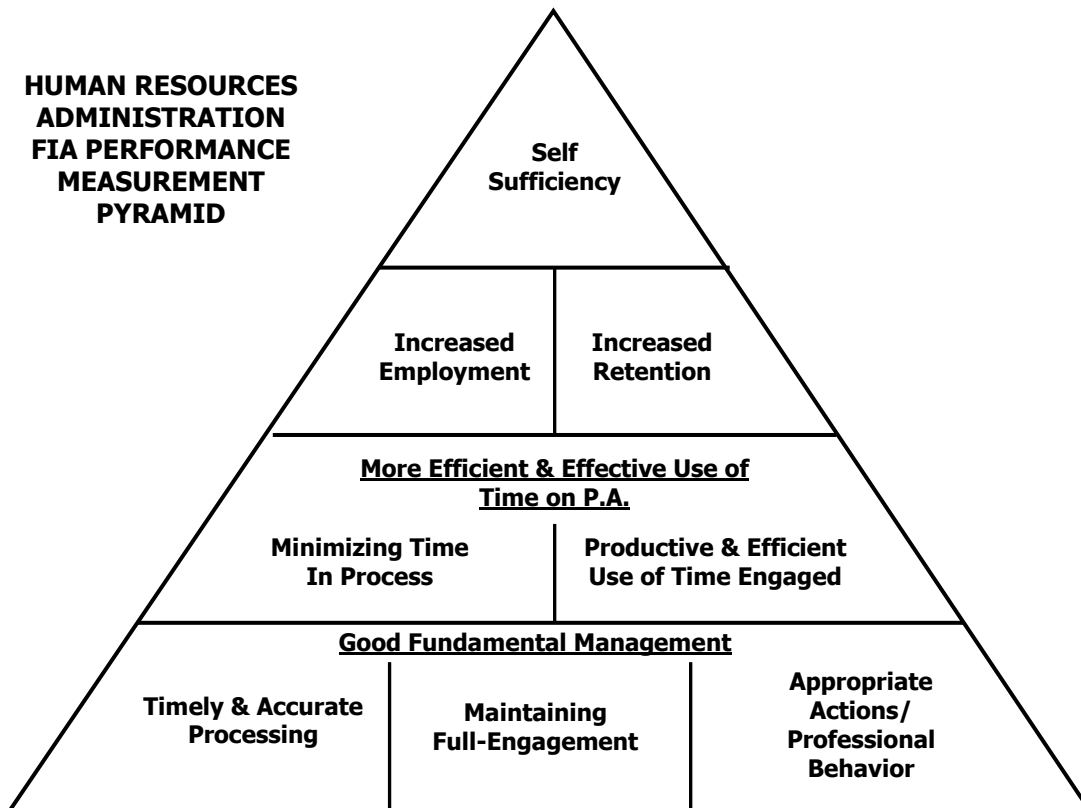
Fulton County utilized specialized staff to aid clients with employment services such as intake applicant services, refugees, Spanish speaking clients, clients who had met or exceeded lifetime limits, and community resource specialists. There are 53 employment service staff located in nine units. By engaging clients from the start, work participation rates increased. Upon intake, the client was required to undergo an eligibility interview, orientation, mandatory job search, and placement into an activity prior to the approval of the case by three workers, an intake case manager, an applicant service manger, and an applicant placement manager. Ongoing procedure included monthly production logs and in-house job readiness training. By initiating a three-tiered review process with case managers, supervisors, and community resource specialists, the needs of clients were better served. Employment service supervisors monitor production logs and electronic attendance reports from vendors and tracking sheets for sanctioned cases. Supervisors also conduct weekly orientations for new applications, specialize in work plan development and specialized caseloads. They must track sheets for sanctioned cases and manually track adverse action for closures.

Fulton County developed a data system to monitor the work participation rates by workers, which can be seen by every worker. The program, called “Success,” provides a report card each month by comparing workers in Fulton County and holds workers responsible for the outcomes of their caseloads. Currently, a worker “exceeds expectations” if they achieve 50 percent or greater work participation rates, with the goal to reach 75 percent of their caseload, which totals 150 cases on average. The system is marketed as healthy competition between workers. Additionally, they created a program to monitor the work participation rates for the vendors; if vendors fall below expectation, they are dropped from the program. It is left up to the vendors to promote employment. By measuring performance, work participation rates increased from five percent to 50 percent.

4.2 New York

Dr. Swati Desai, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Program Reporting Analysis and Accountability in NYC Human Resources Administration, reviewed New York’s performance management program called Job Stat. New York City is home to over eight million people, with 416,164 on public assistance. As of June 2005, the TANF caseload was 186,967 people, with a federal participation rate of 39.8 percent. Fifty-six percent of the TANF participants are classified as partially or fully “unengageable.” With no performance measurement system, it is difficult to strive for universal engagement. The benefits of performance measurement include:

- Promotes accountability
- Promotes healthy competition amongst peers
- Promotes necessary discussion
- Highlights operational workflow issues, data reporting inefficiencies and gaps in supportive services that need to be addressed
- Allows for objective criteria to consider when creating new policy.



A citywide engagement report is completed and reported to New York county directors every week. Additionally, weekly meetings are held with the managers of the job centers to review the Job Stat reports, which include information on employment, administrative, and efficiency outcomes. For each indicator, goals are set for each center. The indicators are weighted to provide a Job Stat index for comparison among centers. The Job Stat program is effective because it gives the opportunity for regular forum and discussion, flexibility for change, ongoing assessment, ownership and staff buy-in, and data integrity. First developed in 2000, Job Stat is constantly undergoing assessment and internal attention. Despite the success, New York experienced challenges in automation, tracking back to centers, and providing case lists.

Accountability is a major part of the system for workers and center directors. Dr. Desai thinks that success has been based upon the dynamic system, where all levels are accountable for their actions. Vendors receive financial demotions for failing to meet expectations. Additionally, the performance rates are available online for workers to see at http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/html/center_job_stat.html. By working with clients on an individual level, clients can achieve the maximum amount of self-sufficiency when they leave cash assistance. Currently, New York is moving toward customizing the indicators toward each office. Because of the success of the Job Stat program, New York is working on implementing a Food Stamp Stat, Medicaid Stat,

CASA Stat, and Home Care Stat system. Additionally, the Job Stat program receives constant refinements.

4.3 Los Angeles

Bryce Yokomizo, Director of the Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), discussed the performance management program in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles County has an area of 4,084 square miles with a population of 9.9 million. Each month DPSS serves 2.1 million people, which is more than the populations of Boston, Seattle, Miami, and Baltimore combined. The TANF program is called CalWORKS. The TANF caseload in May 2005 was 165,381, and the work participation rate was 30 percent. Because of its diversity, Los Angeles County faces the challenges of language barriers as 62 different native languages were present in the DPSS caseload. The caseload is 60 percent Hispanic, 24 percent African American, 10 percent Caucasian, and five percent Asian. Over the past ten years, the TANF caseload has declined by 52 percent. Additionally, over 357,000 jobs have been found for Welfare-to-Work participants. Clients receiving support services for domestic violence, mental health, and/or substance abuse has increased to 5,500 people. The advocate community was pressing DPSS to increase the supports. They have since partnered with the Department of Health to work collaboratively.

The program in Los Angeles faced multiple challenges because of a diverse TANF population. For example, the participants range from a wide variety of languages, cultures, and ethnicities, and many need specialized supportive services. Los Angeles is also the leading city in the United States for homelessness, which affects 90,000 people.

In 2001, California overpaid \$172 million in food stamps to ineligible clients. From 2000 to 2002, the cumulative sanction cost was \$143.1 million in Los Angeles County, with a state cost of \$185.4 million. Recognizing the problem, Los Angeles conducted a site visit to New York City to learn about the Job Stat program. Los Angeles began to measure and publish the performance rate for each district. In 2001, Los Angeles County's error rate was 23.25 percent, with a goal of reaching 7.4 percent. By December 2003, the districts were able to achieve a rate of 6.95 percent. The published statistics made a huge difference on the engagement of the workers to clients. It is estimated that the food stamp error rate will have decreased to 6.1 percent in 2005.

The management tool, called DPSSTATS, which stands for the Department of Public Services, Total Accountability, Total Success, has been praised for helping managers make better decisions, establishing a collaborative decision-making process, and uniting workers together to address common issues. The DPSSTATS process includes data collection, analyzing

data, monitoring performance trends, and comparing results. Additionally, by focusing on customer service, the participant satisfaction rate was around 90 percent in April 2005.

Los Angeles was able to apply the knowledge from the food stamp program to Medicaid, which was struggling more than food stamps. By implementing a Medi-Cal Redetermination Taskforce, a more efficient method was created to process the increase in redeterminations.

Twenty-five percent of the WtW caseload are contracted out to vendors. However, the County maintains two GAIN case management contracts to operate two of the County's seven GAIN offices, and nine Refugee and Immigrant Training and Education (RITE) contracts. The contract standards include improving the lives of participants through employment and ensuring that the contractor abides by program requirements. The 395 contracts were amended to include performance measures and outcomes. A board of supervisors manages the contract with heavy union involvement. If contractors exceed the County average rates by three percent or more, they earn a bonus of up to five percent; additionally, if performance rates are three percent below the County average, the contractors are subject to a contract deduction. Contractors are monitored on a monthly basis through data, reviews of cases, and participant interviews. The challenges with contractors include:

- Fraud
- Failing performance
- Availability of comparable data
- Department response.

After the new performance measurement program, 55 percent of participants remained employed after six months, and 52 percent of participants remained employed after 12 months and an increased number of recipients were receiving post-employment services. In the past decade, Los Angeles has moved to serving only 24 percent in cash programs, and 76 percent in non-cash assistance programs from serving 53 percent in cash and 47 percent in non-cash assistance in 1993.

4.4 Houston

Ginger Rogers, Senior Workforce Planner of the Houston-Galveston Area Council, discussed challenges facing the Houston region. Thirteen counties and 4.5 million residents make up the Gulf Coast Region. The TANF caseload is approximately 8,000, and the federal TANF work participation rate is 43 percent. There are 28 Boards in the state of Texas. Houston, with a population of 1.9 million people, has the largest workforce board with 63 members. The

Workforce Board in Houston went through a system wide change by reevaluating core values, business practices, and resources to affect all customers. By implementing a business model, each client is now viewed as a potential employee for a business. The office was redesigned under this business model; changes included using business language and moving from programs to customer-lead services. Staffing was reorganized by function, not program, and accountability on all levels was introduced. They operate under three levels of service: basic, expanded, and financial aid.

The Workforce Board recruited 100 percent of all TANF applicants and recipients. It operated orientations, lasting 30 minutes, from eight to five, Monday through Friday, with no appointments. The Orientation process allowed the office to be more effective and cut down on paperwork. A brochure outlined all the information required of TANF applicants at the time of application. Job readiness is assessed at this first visit and support services can be immediately put into place such as childcare and transportation. By providing support benefits immediately, applicants can begin the job search process. The functions of counseling and tracking for clients are kept separate with two different workers. The Board implemented a Transition Team to help their staff. They gave presentations to 32 One-Stop Centers, incorporated feedback from staff, and conducted follow-up reviews of their progress.

Although the board experienced challenges, such as resistance to change from “programs” to “services” language, limited data systems, and staff competences, Houston has seen many successes in their program. By implementing better customer service, service delivery, and improving staff, the caseloads have reduced from 14,000 in 2002 to 8,000 in June 2005. Houston has increased eligible customers served from 80 percent in 2004 to 94 percent in 2005. Participation rates have increased from 30 percent to 47 percent.

If given a chance to reinvent the program, Houston would do the following differently:

- Listen better
- Internally communicate more often
- Be more direct
- Repeat messages more often
- Monitor progress more frequently.

Next, Houston is planning on working with the National Workforce Institute to increase staff development and professional certification and improve service and communication. The Web site includes all information on the program: <http://www.theworksource.org>.

4.5 San Diego

Joan Zinser from San Diego gave a short presentation on the caseload in San Diego. San Diego is the seventh largest city in the United States. Before welfare reform, 70,000 families were on AFDC. Welfare reform gave them an opportunity to create a large labor force. Incentives are paid to contractors who exceed expectations. Since, San Diego has seen a 70 percent decrease in their caseload. By initiating a performance measurement system, healthy competition between workers has driven the success of the program. The system can monitor EITC eligibility and track whether those clients have applied.

5. PRESENTATION BY CENTERS FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES

H. Stephen Deering, Deputy Regional Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, gave a presentation on the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit plan, which will go into effect January 2006. In order to qualify for this optional benefit, Medicare clients must enroll in a prescription drug plan between November 15, 2005 and May 15, 2006. If clients do not join by May 15, 2006, the next enrollment period will not take place until November 15, 2006 and will not take effect until January 1, 2007. It is important to communicate correct information to clients for understanding the cost and coverage of the Medicare prescription drug plan. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services provides information for partners on implementing the program at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/news/mma/default.asp>.

Additional information can be found at www.medicare.gov, which includes a prescription drug plan cost estimator, Medicare prescription drug coverage options, frequently asked questions, and other useful resources to understand the Medicare Reform.

Just released in September, this resource offers guidance for organizations that will provide enrollment assistance for Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/news/mma/eag.pdf>.

6. SATURATION ENGAGEMENT

Cities discussed saturation engagement, engaging exempt individuals, minimizing periods of inactivity, blending activities, the use of information technology, and data to support engagement.

6.1 Atlanta

Atlanta implemented its own program for saturation engagement called “Impacting Your World” to make work an expectation. The program was an employment services initiative designed to engage hard to place TANF recipients in a job readiness program. The program goals

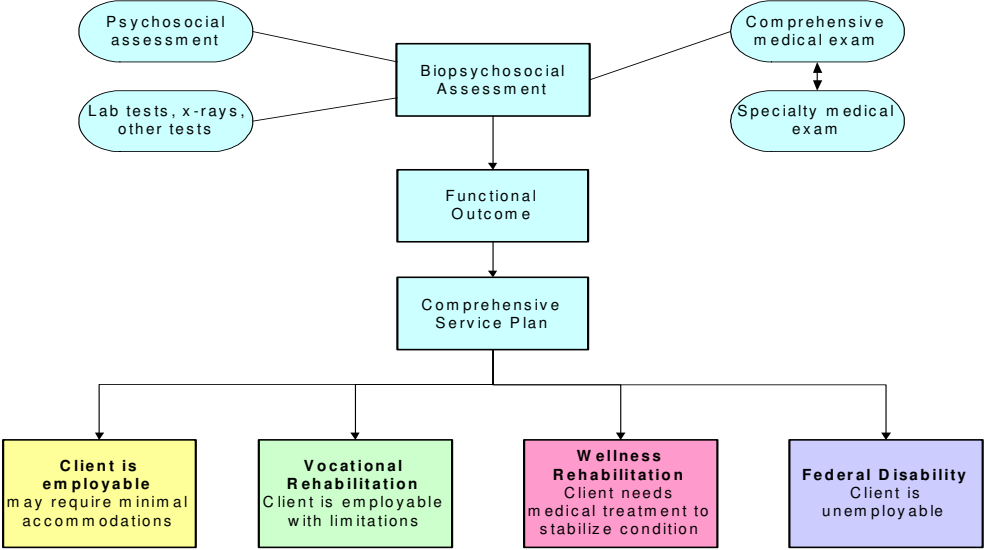
were to engage 400 people and keep costs below \$2000. Two members of Fulton County's Program Information and Evaluation Team developed the training materials, and trainers were recruited from the agency. For a thirty-day time period, recipients are required to conduct a job search and attend training. The training included how to dress for job interviews, how to maintain employment, childcare options, and affirmation of a person's value and the importance of a positive attitude. Clients who completed the program received a certificate and a Wal-Mart gift card. Atlanta found that allowing clients to talk with their peers was helpful for vocational rehabilitation and mental health programs. If weekly quotas for job search were not met, participants were referred back to their caseworkers for noncompliance. Participants were able to form relationships to aid in the job search process. Fifty percent of participants met the requirements for the month, and 15 percent of participants found employment by the end of the program. This initiative engaged over 1,000 people and was able to remain within a budget of \$2000 from June through December 2004.

6.2 New York

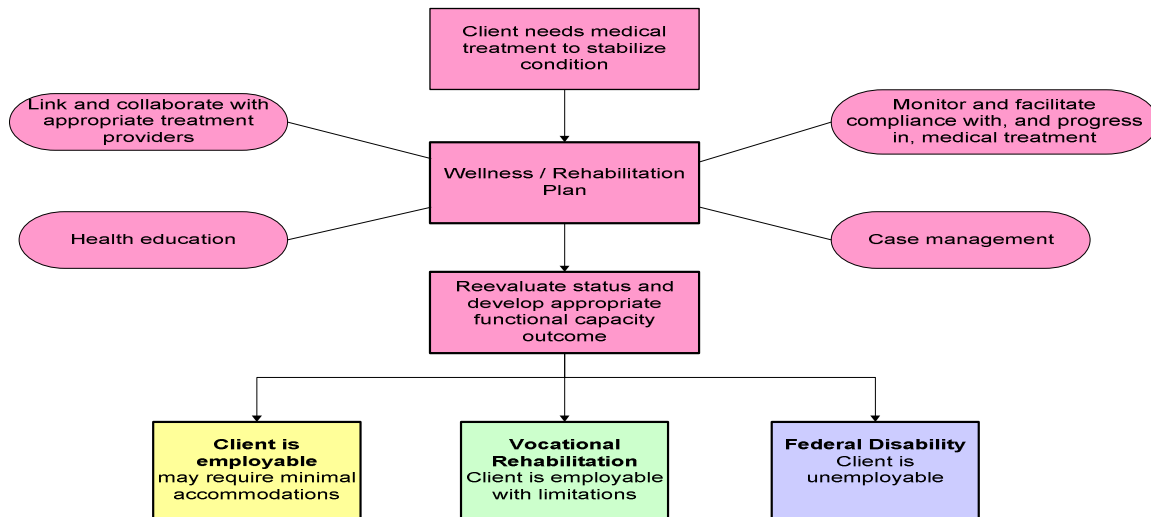
Since 1995, the TANF caseload in New York City has declined by 63 percent. However, the clients remaining on the caseload have significant barriers to employment including mental health, medical, and substance abuse problems. In 2002, 45,000 people indicated health or mental health barriers to becoming self-sufficient. Therefore, New York City created a health-related saturation engagement program called Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation, and Employment (WeCARE) in February of 2005. The program was designed to assess applications and recipients with health barriers to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

Clients are assessed on employability. WeCARE includes vocation rehabilitation services to aid clients in attaining self-sufficiency:

HRA Customized Assistance Services - WeCARE Assessment Outcomes



HRA Customized Assistance Services - WeCARE Wellness Rehabilitation



New York implemented the program by researching past programs and first identifying funds for the program (\$210 million). Contractors were negotiated with a two-thirds performance based payment. HRA collaborated across internal divisions, and guidelines were created for contractors. All HRA staff was trained. HRA developed electronic data systems and FIA WeCARE Job Centers. The Job Center staff and WeCARE vendors are required to attend monthly meetings.

Although the program is successful, almost 50 percent more public assistance clients now require WeCARE services than expected. It has been difficult to educate doctors to apply the vocational rehabilitation perspective in medical assessments. As a result of the program, more clients are being determined to be fully employable, and others are being placed into HRA’s existing network of employment programs. In the future, New York anticipates a high demand for WeCARE services, and staff will need to develop sensitivity to clients with medical limitations. HRA would have liked to hire staff with a broader range of professional experience, and would have liked to provide sufficient case management to all WeCARE participants. Next steps for the program include a process evaluation by NYU, a quality assurance contract, additional resources to help with the increased demand, an electronic interface with WeCARE vendors and HRA, and integrate all WeCARE service components.

6.3 Philadelphia

Kathy Yorkievitz, Deputy Secretary for Income Maintenance, PA Department of Public Welfare, reviewed Philadelphia’s employment and training redesign. The TANF caseload has

dropped from 76,162 in January of 1997 to 43,023 in June 2005. The state of Pennsylvania contracts with the WIA system, responsible for the majority of training and employment services. In Philadelphia, the estimated federal participation rate is eight percent; there has recently been a decrease in the federal participation rate because of a caseload increase. Sixty-one percent are participating in a work activity.

Philadelphia redesigned their employment and training approach because many clients remaining on TANF failed to get or keep a job even though they have been through a training program. Additionally, the economy has shifted, and there are fewer entry-level jobs available for TANF clients. The old system, called Work First, did not address the reasons why TANF clients were failing to get jobs, such as health issues, domestic violence, and children with special needs. The system was uncoordinated so that there was no ownership of client outcomes and progress for workers. The unemployment rate for those without a high school degree is 11.2 percent with an average annual salary of \$12,819. In Pennsylvania, a worker with a high school degree is four times more likely to be unemployed than a worker with an associate degree. With average outcomes, low job retention rates, and an over-reliance on direct marketing to clients, the federal participation rates were low. Philadelphia realized a need to better serve their clients.

They implemented a network of neighborhood-based EARN Centers. These Centers, which are going to be located in each of the 18 district offices, create a supportive environment for employment success. The client is case managed for a variety of employment and training activities. In the EARN Centers, DSS collaborated to collocate community action staff in the Centers. One worker manages the TANF case, which was previously shared between three different workers. To help clients achieve long-term success, a front-end assessment is completed to identify interests, skills, barriers, and to develop a plan. They have found that early outreach, team-building, and a positive environment builds attachment to the program. Clients who fail to report are aggressively managed for compliance. Additionally, community-based programs conduct home visits to help participation rates. So far, retention rates exceed 85 percent.

The EARN Centers offer a wide range of education, training, and work activities for TANF clients. Other support centers, such as housing assistance, childcare support, financial planning, and after-school programs, can be accessed through the Centers. If the job search is unsuccessful, education is emphasized for the TANF client. Partnering with the Philadelphia Adult Literacy network, DSS was able to provide support for additional work-focused literacy, GED, and ESL programs.

Contractors must meet a performance standard of 80 percent of participants achieving 30 hours of attendance to receive payment. Clients who have multiple barriers that cannot be

addressed are referred to the Maximum Participation Project (MPP) for additional services. The next steps for the EARN program is to open six more centers over the next 15 months, to move toward city-wide coverage with a coherent system in Philadelphia.

The MPP began in July 2001 to address issues facing TANF clients with multiple barriers including mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, and family issues. MPP is a multi-disciplinary program where clients are intensively case managed with a family-oriented team approach to address barriers to employment. The Team includes professionals from a variety of fields, County Mental Health Agencies, County Drug and Alcohol Agencies, Housing Agencies, Department of Labor and Industry, to provide the specialized and individualized expertise needed for each client. The most important aspect of the team is that the client has an active voice in the decisions being made. The primary goals for MPP are:

- Assess and identify barriers
- Connect participants with services or activities that will remove or alleviate barriers
- Help participants move to self-sufficiency by facilitating participation in activities and education and training
- If appropriate, documentation to support SSI application
- Assist TANF clients in improving the quality of their life
- Improve their family situation
- Coordinate access to local services for the TANF client
- Help them reach their maximum potential.

Clients who are eligible for MPP must be exempt from the work requirement because of a physical or mental disability, have a “good cause” reason, have multiple barriers, or have been unable to remain connected to the workforce. Mandatory participants include clients who are receiving extended TANF benefits and those who have failed to find lasting employment after participating in three employment and training programs. The team helps the participant resolve barriers and facilitates the provision of needed services, which can include assessments or evaluations, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, domestic violence, and housing services. The MPP is different because it takes a holistic approach to providing individualized services to participants and includes the participant in the process. Since 2001, 2,084 MPP participants are now claiming SSI; 436 are employed; and 322 continued into another employment and training program. Currently 3,478 participants are currently enrolled in the program, even though it is still in its creation stage.

7. WORK EXPERIENCE AND SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT

Many cities are concerned as to how to create a large-scale program which engages the hard-to-serve including those with little or no attachment to the workforce. This session discussed the use of subsidized private employment as a supplement to work experience.

7.1 Philadelphia

Robert Carr, Vice President of the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation, presented information on Philadelphia's Transitional Work Corporation (TWC). It started in 1998 as a collaborative between organizations and to build expertise in one organization to serve as a referral point. The target audience included clients with little or no education, little or no work experience, attitudinal/behavioral challenges, and/or post-24 month clients. The "signature" service included paid work experience (PWE), called Philly @ Work, for 20 hours a week at \$5.15 per hour. Career interest and aptitude assessments were conducted to place clients into personalized PWE. TWC specializes in worksite development, worksite matching, worksite supervision, and client tracking and evaluation. Clients are given a six-month time limit for participation to further move clients into permanent employment and a 50 percent disregard on earnings with EITC eligibility for clients and other benefits such as childcare and transportation assistance. This program allows for increased work participation rates by mandating ten additional hours of activity beyond the twenty hours in a PWE. These include GED preparation, ESL literacy instruction, occupational training with computer skills, childcare, hospitality, and intensive job placement activities. "Soft skills" training is at the core of what they offer, giving people life skills and job readiness training.

Since September 1998, 14,000 people have been served. Ninety-nine percent of the clients were women. 92.8 percent of clients were single. 88.19 percent were African-American, 2.45 percent were Caucasian, and 8.6 percent were Latino. One hundred percent are custodial parents, with an average of three children. Forty-five to 50 percent of participants were entering employment. Ninety-four percent successfully completed transitional employment. The unsubsidized median wage is \$7.25 working 35 hours a week. Philly @ Work engendered replication across the city and was used in a variety of transitional work models. In May 2005, 959 TANF customers were on PWE, and 857 were placed in community service.

Philadelphia would like to improve in the following areas:

- Accelerate transition from PWE to unsubsidized employment prior to six months
- Adapt model so that approaches to case management and training are not loaded on front end; by accelerating transitions from PWE, retention services and post placement training become the focus

- Finalize formalized standards for worksite development, worksite matching, Worksite supervision and client tracking/evaluation.

7.2 Chicago

Chicago is a diverse city with concentrated areas of poverty and unemployment. Over the past 12 months, the caseloads have increased due to a variety of factors including a decrease in the number of caseworkers, increase in the employment rate for Illinois, and decreasing resources in local offices. The TANF program was experiencing shrinking resources and growing expectations. Therefore, a program was necessary to efficiently move clients into employment.

The program implemented a “Work Pays” earned income disregard, which allows employed TANF customers to remain on TANF until their earnings equal three-times their TANF grant, and it allows families to accumulate wealth with the help of their caseworker. The caseworkers are responsible for the employment outcomes of their caseloads. Only 15 percent of clients are served by contractors so that workers maintain ownership of the program. Competitive spirits and local innovation among agencies and workers fueled success of the system. Additionally, at the time of application, all TANF applicants are assigned to a local job club. The job clubs begin skill preparation for job searches, including resume writing, interviewing skills, childcare information, etc. Clients are required to attend monthly meetings with caseworkers to review and assess their progress. Additionally, a learning tool was implemented to help caseworkers improve their assessment skills and knowledge of resources available. A formula is used to determine the number of hours a customer must be engaged in work experience. The program has gained success because of the key partners in implementation including:

- Illinois Governor
- Secretary of DHS
- Director Division of Community Operations
- Director Division of Transitional Services
- CEOs of Major Companies
- Social Service Providers
- Region Administrators
- Local Office Administrators
- Case Workers and Social Services Career Trainees
- Customers
- Childcare Providers
- Bureau of Staff Development
- Bureau of Performance Management.

The program was implemented by reorganization of Illinois’s social agencies to create one Department of Human Services. Two divisions, Community Operations and Transitional Services, worked together to implement welfare reform. New leadership was hired to implement

the cultural changes. The minimum education for caseworkers was increased to having a bachelor's degree from just a high school diploma. Constant staff training gave staff better skills to work with TANF clients. Human Services partnered with the Bureau of Performance Management to develop reports on key outcomes to continually "retool" their approach.

The challenges with implementation included shifting the paradigm to focus on employment. Local office leadership faced additional struggles with the program; within the first two years, there was a 70 percent turnover for these leadership jobs. The staff experienced difficulties with the new program with independent thought, as the old program discouraged deviation from the policy. Substance abuse and mental health providers had a difficult time expanding their activities to include employment and training. Also, community college classes became a safe haven for TANF clients, and attendance was low. It was also difficult for caseworkers to report customer non-compliance and be responsible for stopping benefits because of sanctions.

Despite the challenges, the Illinois TANF caseload has decreased by more than 85 percent. TANF leavers are better off in terms of job retention, receipt of benefits, physical and mental health, wage progression, quality and stability of housing, and overall feeling of wellbeing. Employment and training became a priority, and workers, supervisors, and clients became better engaged.

In hindsight, Illinois would have given the local offices less responsibility for employment and training outcomes because subsequent budget cuts, staff reductions, and the changing priorities of administrations is hindering success rates. Additionally, Illinois felt that an increased investment in employment and training services would have aided those clients who faced multiple barriers to employment. By investing training for all staff, regardless of seniority, all caseworkers would be equally trained; and therefore, skilled in helping clients find employment.

Illinois is continuing to change the paradigm of welfare to self-sufficiency, expand resources, increase employment opportunities by working with contractors, and institutionalize lessons and skills learned from the beginning of welfare reform such as training of staff and changing performance outcomes.

Sandie Hoback from Oregon joined the Roundtable to give insight on how Oregon has cashed out the food stamp funds to fund their program, which gave TANF clients work experience where they received a paycheck.

8. FEDERAL/STATE VISION ON THE NEXT PHASE OF WELFARE REFORM— PART II

Lois Bell closed the session by discussing the paradigm shift in our society for welfare reform. Clients must undergo behavior modification to receive welfare. Partnerships are key to help people move from welfare to work. The human service agencies are changing.

Marva Arnold, Chicago, discussed the importance of thinking beyond welfare reform. Staff perceptions need to change. Providers must think beyond the minimum wage to move people out of poverty. It is up to the contractors and the caseworkers to plant the seeds so that TANF customers know that they have upward mobility. Caseworkers need to be trained on poverty reduction and self-sufficiency initiatives. Programs need additional funds to assure that people can move from welfare to self-sufficiency.

Kathy Yorkievtz, Philadelphia, realizes that there are many challenges ahead to move 75 percent of people into programs that lead to employment. It is important to take time to reduce recidivism. Every part of the system must be held accountable with measurable objectives to utilize all resources to move clients further to self-sufficiency. Programs should be coordinated to help stabilize families for self-sufficiency.

In closing of Day One, David Boyle from Los Angeles, offered insight to next steps for the future. Since welfare reform, clients have been entering the workforce; poverty has decreased for children. Self-confidence can go a long way for TANF clients. Mr. Boyle thinks that the quote, “Life works if you work!” can be applied in the future. Research and program evaluations are a great resource to help programs run effectively. Accountability drives results. We, as a society, have a broader responsibility to help families better themselves, which can be carried out by government partnerships. We have come so far since welfare reform and made great progress to bettering the lives of families.

9. RE-ENGAGEMENT AND SANCTIONS

The law allows states to define noncompliance and determine the severity of the penalty. Exemption procedures help clients avoid sanctions and become reacquainted to benefits. Cities took a closer look at re-engaging customers and realigning them with the appropriate resources. Cities outlined case management techniques, sanction policies, how to minimize time between activities, best practices to removing sanctions and re-engaging quickly, and new management strategies for groups that have been exempt.

9.1 New York

Pat Smith, the First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration, discussed reengagements and sanctions in New York City. With the declining caseload in New York, cases with substantial barriers were increasing. Over 8,000 TANF cases were in sanction status, with clients remaining on assistance with reduced benefits. New York began the Intensive Services Center, housing over 10,000 sanctioned cases. The importance of participation and obtaining employment are stressed at every contact. Assessment and referral services are provided to address barriers to employment. These services include onsite assessment for childcare, domestic violence, employment, substance abuse counselors, and referrals for medical evaluations. New York would still like to develop a better system and procedures for the specialized workflow. They have found that 20 percent of those being recertified, agree to comply, and 258 jobs have been reported. The 80 percent who do not comply stay sanctioned. The Center has only been open for two months and has realized the complex cases need more time for assessment and care. In the future, HRA's goals include tracking participation for those who demonstrate compliance, following-up on fraud cases, developing information on why people were originally sanctioned, and evaluating other populations to transfer.

9.2 Houston

Houston experienced problems with inconsistent staff actions, untimely consequences for non-cooperation, and a tendency to maintain the status quo in their offices. Thirty-seven percent of 2500 adults per month were being sanctioned. Money and resources were being drained because of non-compliance. Therefore, Houston implemented a better sanctioning process to combat these issues. If there is no response after recruitment, a letter is sent, and a person has seven days to comply. Within eight days, a penalty is initiated automatically. A customer must maintain three weeks of job search, and if at the end of the period there is no employment, a letter is sent outlining the next step of the process, which includes further assessment and other activities such as community service. By expediting the sanction process, customers became more accountable for their actions, and recidivism was reduced.

Challenges included inconsistent appeals, a delay in sanctions on the database, and performance measures. However, despite the challenges, the program led a reduction in Houston's caseloads from 14,000 in 2002 to 8,000 in June 2005. Participation rates increased from 30 percent in 2003 to 47 percent in 2005. Benefits increased from 80 percent in 2004 to 94 percent in 2005 for eligible clients. In hindsight, Houston would have tracked the process factors earlier, met with local HHSC earlier, and met with HHSC appeals.

For the future, Houston hopes to move customers from work experience or community service to jobs more quickly, develop meaningful internships for customers linked to jobs, engage more exempt customers, and further create more creative solutions for customers. The website is www.theworksource.org.

9.3 Los Angeles

From April 2002 to February 2004, a study of sanctions among TANF participants was conducted in Los Angeles County. Approximately 25 percent of the GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence) clients were sanctioned between April 2002 and September 2003. Almost two-thirds of those sanctioned had failed to attend orientation sessions.

Major issues were how to increase participants in the GAIN Program and how to increase the number of participants who appear for orientation. Two working groups were created to develop a plan, including a Partners' Workgroup with community members and an Internal workgroup of DPSS staff. The plan created consisted of 42 actions. The data provided information on what changes needed to be made. Changes were implemented in the intake process, childcare and transportation availability, communication, automation, and flexibility for students and the employed. Changes were envisioned in these areas:

- During the application process, discussing benefits of cooperating in the WtW Program and processes for obtaining childcare and transportation
- Sending outreach letters to non-compliant/ sanctioned participants advising them of home calls
- Providing pre-arranged short-term childcare slots for participants attending orientation
- Providing designated staff to assist in scheduling/rescheduling orientation appointments by identifying barriers to participation
- Personal phone reminders for appointments
- Review of all documents provided to participants for readability
- Provision of flexible appointments
- Team development for CalWORKs and GAIN staff.

Los Angeles hopes to implement the changes by categorizing goals by short-term of one to four months, mid-term of five to eight months, and long-term of nine or more months. Additionally, they are conducting a study on the effects of sanctions on their participants.

10. CITY GROUPS

Cities were divided into groups and entered into in-depth discussions around designing a comprehensive approach to full engagement. Groups will use the ideas and approaches presented during the meeting to develop their model.

10.1 New York, California

Mark Hoover, Facilitator

New York gave a summary of their concerns and challenges with welfare reform in the urban area. The NY legislature has not felt a sense of urgency that the Department has sensed. Data collection is important and has focused workers to gain high performance measures and infuses teamwork among workers. New York believes that the federal, state, and local levels must work together to multi task and move people out of TANF. In order to make a successful program, an infrastructure needs to be created to move saturation and re-engagement programs forward.

California has been interested in moving to the next level of welfare reform. They have launched an effort to strengthen emphasis on the federal side of work participation rates. California is concerned with the high sanction rate of 17 percent across the state; California only implements partial sanctions. Two legislative sessions ago, they tried to increase sanctioning but were unsuccessful. Researchers have reviewed their sanctioning policy for effectiveness, which is currently in the writing stage. Some findings include that many sanctioned families are sanctioned without ever hearing a word about resources available. Thirty percent of families stay in sanction forever. The state is anxious to make changes to the program.

California wants to get more involved with performance measurement. They have currently passed a paper performance proposal to reward counties with bonuses with meet performance goals by work participation rates. Reports were made on each staff member to show the participation rate for the caseload, which put accountability back into the process. The state is putting together a video for staff training on the GAIN program to better prepare clients. A successful pilot program was implemented to contact employed clients to discuss employment related issues. Seventy-five percent did meet with caseworkers.

New York has found that if the same caseworker does the eligibility and initial assessment, the client becomes more engaged. When people get referred away, they tend to “fall off the radar.” Vendors only get paid when people find employment. The first step is moving the employment office into the same location as the eligibility office. This way, the agency is aligned with the same goals to make people eligible and able to get a job.

Los Angeles has separated the GAIN staff from the eligibility staff because the staff carries different skill sets. An employment worker must have a high understanding of how to motivate people.

New York agreed that separate offices can work for both workers; however, there should most definitely be a connection between the eligibility worker and the employment worker. Experts are needed in both areas to train staff.

Los Angeles reiterated that when caseworkers focus on the participants as individual cases, the participants are more motivated to move ahead. Most often, the participants lack self-confidence when applying for a job. Again, the more services that can be provided at once, the better for the client. California has been able to identify the specific strengths and weaknesses of their workers to place workers in areas where they can best invest in their clients. The caseload is full of cultural diversity; so, it is important for California to train their workers on “leaving culture at the door.”

New York has implemented job centers with the central focus on employment. This way the client’s full attention is focused on employment.

Additionally, New York and California have had issues with sanctioning. In the smaller localities of New York, sanctioned clients are called in to the office to discuss employment and barriers that the client may have.

California has a home interview program to verify eligibility and discuss employment and help resolve barriers such as childcare issues. Seventy percent of clients have agreed to comply because of the convenience of meeting at their home. In the effort to prevent sanctioning, California is thinking about conducting interventions with clients before sanctioning occurs to provide aid to overcoming domestic violence issues, substance abuse issues, etc. By intervening on an individual basis with clients, a practical solution can be formulated before the client is sanctioned. Because homelessness is such a huge problem in Los Angeles, sanctions can easily lead to homelessness. Therefore, it is important to identify barriers before the client is sanctioned.

New York was interested in learning about food stamp sanctioning. Currently, if a client is sanctioned, he/she gets less food stamps.

In terms of best practices, New York has found that employment is more stable when clients are in post-placement activities. However, this can be a challenge when people are receiving other requirements.

10.2 Houston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Minneapolis

Jason Turner, Facilitator

Philadelphia is in the process of creating new EARN centers and evaluating the efficiency of the current EARN centers. Philadelphia is managing a mixed system. The EARN center is the entry point into TANF. At each EARN center the client is assigned a case manager. The initial 24 months is a period of job search, training and education. The EARN centers are contracted and referrals are controlled by the welfare agency. Philadelphia identifies the work exempt from a medical point of view. The Philadelphia group agreed that about 70 percent are not work ready. Philadelphia indicated that the first step is to engage the client any type of activity and the second step is to engage the client in an activity that fits the federal definition of work. They continued to report that 64 percent of clients are engaged in an activity; however, this isn't reflected in the federal job participation rates. In Philadelphia, the welfare caseworker decides allowances and benefits, such as childcare. Right now, the welfare caseworker communicates with the EARN center via computer system. If there is a no show there is an immediate flag for sanctions. There is a performance payment in EARN centers for referral engagement, which hopefully decreases the 40 percent drop off between referral and the first day of work.

In Houston, rather than the form reading "the client is exempt from work", it reads "how many hours can X person work" and the form adds the line "subject to medical review." It has significantly decreased the "doctor shopping" in Houston. This may also be an education issue to address with doctors that a medical work exemption is not helpful. Houston "triaged" the group of not federally participating clients and grouped them into levels based on hours of work (5, 10, 15, 20...etc.). This process allowed Houston to double the number of federally participating people by quickly moving those who only need five to ten hours of work to meet the federal requirement. Further, Houston recognized that there was a significant gap between the number of people getting childcare but not working versus the numbers getting childcare and working. Houston did this prior to full family sanction. The hard to serve are those who are not employed within four weeks (the average time), and at that point, they are required to do 20-30 hours of community service and work experience jobs, which can last four months. The new

system in Houston, called TWIST, gives real time data, and each contractor must input the entire months data no later than the eighth of the following month or the vendor doesn't get credit for any of the prior months of participation, which effectively ties participation rates with performance based contracts. Houston residents have 30 days from notice of non-compliance before they are sanctioned off and have to recertify.

Atlanta does a very strong orientation. It is the "applicant services worker" who follows the client. Each of the vendors has a community resources person.

In the beginning, Chicago, started very aggressively. Being able to maintain and increase participation rates is difficult because of the lack of funding. Job search is cheap, and education is expensive. Minnesota suggested that Chicago find out where the money is being redirected. Chicago knows that only 3 percent of state allocation is actually getting to Chicago. The penalty for failure to meet participation rate is 25 percent of the TANF grant. If Chicago does not make participation rates then the state will have to pay one-quarter of a billion dollars to regain federal grant money. The dilemma is meeting the participation rates. The strategy to meet participation rate is not always the same that moves people into employment.

11. REPORT OUT

Cities summarized the most important aspects gained during the previous session. Cities shared finding and critical strategies to moving towards next steps.

Houston discussed the use of employment to prevent using community service as much as they already do. By engaging clients at the time of application, there is a higher opportunity to move people into "real" jobs faster. California has used temporary agencies to employ clients and has had success. Los Angeles has even gone as far as putting together their own temp agency, which was very well received in the county.

Illinois has had a challenge with bringing resources to clients at a low cost, such as temp agencies as a pipeline to employment. Currently, the state is looking into contractor services to allow clients to gain work experience and develop working communities. Contractors are given incentives for high performance rates. Illinois realizes the importance of aggressively moving clients through the front door. By directing clients to necessary resources, clients can move to employment faster. The hard-to-serve clients are pulled back into the system to address barriers.

Philadelphia has challenges with engaging people and moving toward universal engagement. By "tightening" the front end, people are moved into job search faster. To prevent fraud, the state is going to look at the data entry system by vendors and staff to make sure that all

hours are being entered. Additionally, Philadelphia was to look at food stamp benefits with relation to work participation. (Chicago would be happy to help).

New York is frustrated and concerned with the mandated increasing work participation rates. The state would like a more severe sanctioning policy and would like further support from the legislature. From listening to other states, they are interested in looking at food stamp reductions to increase compliance. With a more intense effort, those exempt clients may be able to go to work. New York is interested at looking at Maryland's front door diversion program to help raise participation rates. Minneapolis is going to send out information on their diversion program.

Los Angeles would like to pursue engaging the exempt population by implementing a "front door" diversion program. Los Angeles would be happy to share information to increase participation rates with the other cities.

12. CLOSING REMARKS

Lisa Washington-Thomas offered closing remarks. The reason this conference took place is through the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network. Dr. Jeanette Hercik, Caliber Associates, explained the Welfare Peer TA website and encouraged the urban partners to use Welfare Peer TA to continue to communicate with each other.

In closing, Ms. Washington Thomas thanked Turner Government Operations, Rivera, Sierra & Company, and Caliber Associates.

Lois Bell offered thanks to her staff of Lisa Washington-Thomas, Al Fleming, and James Butler. She communicated that Sidonie Squire believes that TANF reauthorization will pass, and a healthy marriage initiative will be a top priority. However, if TANF is not reauthorized by September 30, OFA will continue to move forward. A consultation process through APHSA, NGA, and NCSL will go through final regulations. There is bipartisan support for universal engagement. Ms. Bell is going to take the concerns and challenges from the conference back to the senior officials and Congress as the advocates for large urban centers.

(Included in the binder is information from each of the cities, a snapshot of the caseload, and notes from the initial conference calls for each city.)

The Welfare Peer TA Network is pleased to have hosted this successful event and looks forward to future collaboration opportunities with TANF professionals in large urban centers. Others interested in further materials related to the work participation are encouraged to visit the Welfare Peer TA Network Web site, located at <http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/>.

**APPENDIX A:
AGENDA**

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AGENDA

July 28, 2005

7:30 – 8:30 AM **Registration and Networking Session**

8:30 – 9:00 AM **Welcome and Introductions**

*Lois A. Bell
Director
Division of State and Territory TANF Management
Office of Family Assistance
Administration for Children and Families*

*Dennis Boyle
Director
California Department of Social Services*

*Bryce Yokomizo
Director
Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services*

9:00 – 9:30 AM **Vision of the Next Phase of Welfare Reform**

*Lois A. Bell
Director
Division of State and Territory TANF Management
Office of Family Assistance
Administration for Children and Families*

*Marva Arnold
Director
Division of Human Capital Development
IL Department of Human Services*

*Robert Doar
Commissioner
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance*

*Larry Temple
Executive Director
Texas Workforce Commission*

*Kathy Yorkievtz
Deputy Secretary for Income Maintenance
PA Department of Public Welfare*

As big urban areas move towards addressing the key issue of full engagement, this TA event will provide cities with an opportunity to focus on participation rates; performance management; strategies for addressing caseloads with multiple issues; and crafting collaborations with partners to effectively meet the many challenges of TANF agencies. Federal and State leadership will share their visions for welfare reform.

9:30 – 10:30 AM

Performance Management and Contracting

Big cities can get their best performance boost through the use of contract incentives with private vendors. This topic will consider the use of internal staff incentives, and the merits of decentralization of program operations (regionalization).

Speakers: *Houston – How a Workforce Development Board re-organized for TANF*
Los Angeles – Use of Data for Performance Management
New York – JOBSTAT
Atlanta – Report Card

Moderator: *Lisa Washington-Thomas*
Program Specialist
Division of State and Territory TANF Management

10:30 – 10:45AM

Break

10:45 – 12:15 PM

Performance Management and Contracting (cont.)

12:15 – 1:30 PM

Working Luncheon – Presentation by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

This session will discuss the Prescription Drug Benefit and the Medicare Advantage Program and the implication for TANF child only cases.

Speakers: *Steve Deering*
Deputy Regional Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Region IX

Moderator: *James Butler*
Program Specialist
Division of State and Territory TANF Management

1:30 – 2:30 PM

Diversion and Immediate Employment

Diversion strategies are intended to assist families to avoid welfare by helping them overcome short-term barriers to self-sufficiency. Cities will discuss and outline the benefits of diversion strategies and immediate employment. Cities will share innovative approaches, service impacts and the efficiency of upfront resources to TANF customers during application.

Speakers: *Chicago*
New York
Minneapolis

Moderator: *James Butler*
Program Specialist
Division of State and Territory TANF Management

2:30 – 2:45 PM **Break**

2:45 – 4:00 PM **Saturation Engagement**

Cities will discuss saturation engagement; engaging exempt individuals; minimizing periods of inactivity; blended activities; the use of Information Technology and data to support engagement.

Speakers: *New York City*
Philadelphia
Atlanta

Moderator: *Al Fleming*
Program Specialist
Division of State and Territory TANF Management

4:00 – 5:30 PM **Work Experience and Subsidized Employment**

Many cities are concerned as to how to create a large-scale program which will engage the hard-to-serve including those with little or no attachment to the workforce. This session will also discuss the use of subsidized private employment as a supplement to work experience.

Speakers: *Philadelphia – Subsidized Work Experience*
Chicago – FSET Earnfare

Moderator: *Lisa Washington-Thomas*
Program Specialist
Division of State and Territory TANF Management

6:00 PM **Networking Reception**

7:00 PM **Dinner on your own**

July 29, 2005

7:30 – 8:30 AM

Networking Session

8:30 – 9:30 AM

Re-engagement and Sanctions

The law allows states to define noncompliance and determine the severity of the penalty. Exemption procedures help clients avoid sanctions and become reacquainted to benefits. Cities will take a closer look at re-engaging customers and realigning them with the appropriate resources. Cities will outline case management techniques, sanction policies, how to minimize time between activities, best practices to removing sanctions and re-engaging quickly, and new management strategies for groups that have been exempt.

Speakers: *Houston*
Los Angeles

Moderator: *Al Fleming*
Program Specialist
Division of State and Territory TANF Management

9:30 – 11:00 AM

City Pairs

Cities will be paired into two groups and enter into in-depth discussions around designing a comprehensive approach to full engagement. Groups will use the ideas and approaches presented during the meeting to develop their model. Pairs may be determined prior to the event or adjusted based upon similarities and interest.

Group 1: *New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta*
Group 2: *Houston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Minneapolis*

11:00 – 11:45 AM

Report-out

Cities will summarize the most important aspects gained during the previous session. Cities will share findings and critical strategies to moving towards next step.

Moderator: *Lisa Washington-Thomas*
Program Specialist
Division of State and Territory TANF Management

11:45 – 12:00 PM

Closing Remarks

Lois A. Bell
Director
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**APPENDIX B:
PARTICIPANT LIST**

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT LIST



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**APPENDIX C:
EVALUATION SUMMARY**

**APPENDIX C:
WELFARE PEER TA NETWORK
EITC STRATEGIES FOR VIRGINIA
EVALUATION SUMMARY**

At the conclusion of the Roundtable, participants were asked to evaluate how well the Welfare Peer TA event met their expectations and needs. The double-sided evaluation form asked participants first to rate the extent to which they agreed with a series of five general statements about the Roundtable on a 5-point scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Each of the five statements and associated average scores are presented in the below chart.

Statement	Average Score
This roundtable was a valuable exercise for my agency.	4.53
The binder and materials presented at the Roundtable were useful and helpful in moving forward.	4.46
The topics chosen for discussion and presentation were important to large urban center agencies.	4.73
The facilitators engaged the audience and enhanced interactive discussions.	4.4
Arrangements for this meeting including meeting space, logistics and on-site support were handled in a professional and supportive manner.	4.8

Additionally, participants were asked four open-ended questions about their reflections on the Roundtable and their future technical assistance needs. These questions and representative responses received are presented below:

What did you find most useful about attending this Roundtable (i.e., any immediate or long-term benefits to you/your staff that you anticipate as a result of attending this Roundtable)?

- “Sharing common problems with other cities and sharing solutions to these problems.”
- “Sanctions & re-engagement discussion.”
- “Information sharing – obtained new (or rethinking) ideas of how to increase engagement.”
- “Best practices from other cities.”

- “Opportunity for dialogue on common issues from very different perspectives.”
- “Sharing best practices and making contacts to further explore what others are doing.”
- “Obtained a number of strategies and ideas that will be considered in my area.”
- “The break out groups were focused on ideas that would assist States in moving toward reauthorization.”
- “This roundtable allowed each city to evaluate themselves compared to other cities.”
- “The networking opportunity – to make connections for on going contact. Ideas for engaging more TANF recipients.”
- “Good samples of data documents used as management tools – good talking to all our folks in other States.”
- “Next steps in lobbying for reauthorization. Language that addresses actual needs and challenges based on lessons learned since PROWRA.”
- “Discussions of strategies to enhance engagement and participation.”
- “Cross match data base to see if families pursued EITC. EITC for dads current with child support. Many, many good ideas to strengthen program.”
- “Strategies and ideals shared that other States with similar case situation have tried. e.g., writing RFP for a contract manager for work exp contractors; working more meaningful with exempt population; how to tighten up front door.”
- “Idea exchange. New perspectives on issues shared and stimulated thinking.”
- “I think it’s a good idea to repeat this event on a regular basis – at least annually. The child welfare half of HHS should do the same.”
- “Diversion at intake. One time exemptions 12 wks as opposed to 12 months. Having everyone at the table assessing customers as opposed to just social services providing services ex: school system, CPS, health dept., sub/mental health...etc.”
- “To hear cities speak of situations we are facing. This information widened our outlook.”
- “Dialogue between cities/States, it is a good vehicle for sharing and learning valuable programmatic issues from others used by others. It is time and money well spent.”
- “This is an excellent opportunity for cities to dialogue around issues of importance to them. The session is unique in that it involves urban cities with similar challenges. It is noteworthy as relates to all that we learn from each other. We go back to Atlanta with a renewed eagerness to serve.”
- “Getting to network with individuals and discuss best practices.”
- “Very nice. Really enjoyed... And the digs were wonderful!”
- “Breaking into smaller workout groups was helpful and would recommend more of them in future conferences.”
- “There is much value in learning of the challenges faced by other states/cities in implementing their programs/services. Much to consider when evaluating how to implement enhancements to our services and best practices will be beneficial.”
- “Several ideas for dealing with sanctioned cases and for increasing WPR.”

What issues would you have liked to have had more discussion about at the Roundtable?

- “Performance based contracting was mentioned by several states but not a lot of detail. I would have gotten a lot out of additional time to switch big city partners in discussion of problems.”
- “Truth about differences in how states: calculate rate (who is not in denominators); how hours are verified; what is the activity. Creative funding strategies.”

“Programs other than TANF, if any to address ‘timed out people.’”

“Universal participation.”

“More discussions on sanctions.”

“Structure of organization such as: process of work flow (flow charts); contract out services – advantages and disadvantages.”

“I would have liked more discussion involving ways to meet the upcoming 70% FPR.”

“Can’t think of anything.”

“ACF should have addressed the ‘white elephant’ in the room --- the fact that different States do actual vs. sampling and that also some States report expected vs. actual hours. ACF should have addressed the ‘apples/oranges’ issues related to divergent calculations approaches/rates of TANF caseload participation.”

“Evidence-based decision making.”

“With expansion of services – full participation – covers the need for resources. We need help in strategizing around how to get ‘States’ to redistribute TANF funds back to TANF.

“More information – healthy marriage initiative.”

“More discussion on contract management – setting pay points. A review of research that documents best practices and interventions. Is there a “best in class” performer – County, City or State? If yes, share their metrics and their model.”

“Including the school systems more involved the avoid generational continuous. [sic]

“Are we looking at the children ... I believe that part of the solution is to address the children... To inform them and educate them to the reality that there’s something better than TANF.”

“The use of technology in sharing information between agencies and the reduction of paper files.”

“Would like to discuss various kinds of assessment tools that are utilized.”

“Childcare and its tie to the TANF performance.”

“A shared reauthorization strategy since that seems to be fait accompli for TANF. Strategies for engaging young fathers.”

What ideas, approaches or strategies are you taking away from this roundtable that might be useful for your agency?

“Front-end diversion/tightening; using FSE TANF diversion to fund paid work.”

“Four week non-assistance program at intake. FS sanction.”

“Sanction information, more good ideas. Meeting the 30 hour requirement.”

“Intake approaches and diversion programs.”

“Change the mindset to ‘everyone can participate even those deemed medically exempt.’”

“Use of temporary agency – use early on – as pipeline to employment. We will have to look at this – with our business service unit.”

“Engagement of currently exempt clients (including idea of having medical provider connected to us certify or renew exemption. Diversion approaches/options (especially the Minnesota model.”

“Review and processing of exemptions.”

“Use of temp agencies to expand ‘countable’ activities. This is a low cost approach to managing/expanding this activity.”

“looking at entire family structure.”

“Finding another route to full family sanctions. Will look at Maryland’s diversion process.”

“Impose 12 wk exemption as opposed to 12 months ‘one time.’”

“Shortening our time exemption to 12 wks.”

“We continue to pick up things that we are very willing to try in our program in Atl. We are very proud and pleased to be a player in this effort and we thank you.”

“Although we engage immediately, we can share up this piece to include diversion and pre-certification programs.”

“Sure, I work at one State level, it give ma an idea of what other States are doing.”

“Front door ideas from Chicago were very helpful.”

“Sanction strategies. FSP issues. Diversion.”

Please share any overall comments regarding the program or the speakers, which you feel might be helpful in planning future programs.

“This was an excellent program and provided much food for thought and action.”

“Disappointed in level and extent of OFA involvement. Facilitators did an excellent job, but would have liked a greater sense that senior OFA management were involved and listening.”

“Excellent group of speakers, good high level discussion of problems. Well worth the time.”

“Very helpful to have knowledgeable people have open discussions and question and answer periods.”

“Larry Temple from Texas was informative and proved suggestions for challenges that States will face with reauthorization of TANF (gaining hours requirements).

“Life works because you work.”

“Excellent format, however, I would suggest a small break-out session in the afternoon of Day One for the sake of variety and to stimulate more intimate exchanges every prior to the networking cocktail party.”

“Jason Turner was an excellent facilitator.”

“Wish we had more time between speakers for dialogue.”

“I found it very important.”

“Philadelphia – TWC. Atlanta – worker level measurements/performance comparison. EITC opportunities related to access to Fed/IRS database. The different ways performance is tracked – measured – communicated/published. Dennis Boyle’s comments about keep reinforcing lessons we’ve learned.”

“Very instructive ... Covered a lot of areas. I enjoyed the different opinion, the sharing, and the networking. Realizing that some of our problems in Atlanta are shared by other areas.”

“The New York State Tracking and Comprehensive program was excellent.”

“This was a unique experience for me as it was my first trip to California. It is amazing to see how far we’ve come since the first Urban Partnership meeting in Dallas. These initiatives however made a definite impact on the national agenda.”

“It was a noticeable problem that Grant Collins & Sidonie Squire did not attend. They could have imparted their wisdom and learned a great deal in return regarding the particular problems confronted by the cities that have almost ½ nation’s caseload.”