



### ***Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Summary***

<b>Requesting Agency:</b>	California Department of Social Services on behalf of Los Angeles; Chicago via Illinois Department of Human Services, Houston via Houston Galveston Area Council and Texas Workforce Commission, Philadelphia via the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare; and New York City Human Resources Administration and the New York State Office of Temporary Disability.
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<b>TA Event:</b>	The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) filed a request on behalf of five large urban centers (Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City and Philadelphia seeking to convene a peer roundtable addressing large TANF agency issues such as performance management, saturation engagement, diversion strategies, re-engagement and subsidized employment.
<b>TA Requested:</b>	The agencies requested the convening of a facilitated roundtable using experts familiar with large urban center issues and city peers familiar with the issues reflected in the request.
<b>TA Goal:</b>	The goal was to develop outcomes flowing from the TA which would form the basis for policy and administrative changes in the agency participants. The TA sought to understand in an interactive forum whether certain "promising practices" worked or are working within the context of cities and agencies with very large caseloads.
<b>TA Format:</b>	Roundtable
<b>Sample Evaluations:</b>	<p><i>"This roundtable allowed each city to evaluate themselves compared to other cities."</i></p> <p><i>"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 ... with a renewed eagerness to serve."</i></p> <p><i>"This was an excellent program and provided much food for thought and action."</i></p>

## **Analysis:**

The ability of States and counties to meet TANF participation goals through the use of subsidized employment, work experience and community service strategies has been a central part of TANF since its inception in 1996. In the first wave of welfare reform, States and counties utilized innovative strategies that resulted in significant reductions in the TANF caseload. The remaining caseload, however, includes people with more difficult issues to overcome (substance abuse, domestic violence and the like) and whose work and life skills are often less advanced than their predecessors. Additionally, the five states included to participate carry 42% of the national TANF caseload, and the five cities carry 17.9% of the national TANF caseload.

Recognizing these realities, especially those facing large urban centers, the California Department of Social Services made a Technical Assistance (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.

Network staff, working closely with expert facilitators including a former TANF Commissioner and his staff plus two smaller urban centers involved in best practices, 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 novel 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.

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