



# TANF NEWS



An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Together, we're making our families stronger.

FALL 2010



## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

I am excited to announce the debut of our DWS TANF Program Newsletter! We trust that this will prove to be an invaluable resource of program-related information for our diligent TANF staff across the State. Since accepting the challenge of becoming the State Administrator for the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) Program and providing case management services that meet the needs of our fellow Arkansans, we have faced and met a number of challenges. For this we can all feel good! However, now is not the time to rest on our laurels as additional challenges await. As our State and Country struggles with unprecedented economic woes, Governor Beebe has charged us with being Arkansas' preferred provider of workforce services and solutions.

Our program's services are needed more than ever and we must find it within ourselves to reach higher and do more for our fellow Arkansans. I ask each of you to join me in making a renewed commitment to providing the highest level of services possible to not only your program's participants and clients, but to each visitor to our Local Offices.

## TANF Purchases State Vehicles

In 2009, DWS was able to increase its authorized state vehicle fleet and purchased additional state vehicles for use by Local Office staff. These vehicles, purchased with TANF funds, were purchased primarily to provide sorely needed resources for Local Office TANF staff to complete legislatively mandated Home Visits to participants under Non-Compliance Sanction.



In accordance with DWS Administrative Memorandum 11-10, dated April 26, 2010, TANF staff members are expected to utilize available state vehicles when performing these home visits as it is more economical to the state and agency than reimbursing individual mileage driven in privately owned vehicles. Additionally, DWS TANF staff members are more visible and should experience enhanced safety when conducting home visits in "official" state vehicles rather than their personal vehicles.

## REMINDER

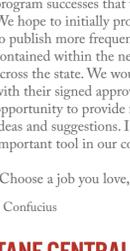
Have you reviewed your TEA or Work Pays clients' Work Participation Status (WPS) Code lately? If not, why not do it today?



## WORDS FROM OUR DEPUTY DIRECTOR

I too, am excited to present the initial edition of the DWS TANF Program Newsletter! I believe that this will serve as an excellent communicational conduit to DWS Local Office Staff. Since the transfer of the TANF Program to DWS from DHS, we have worked aggressively towards a smooth integration of the TANF Program into our statewide network of Local Offices. This included the identification of space and equipment for TANF Program staff as well as accommodating a new client population into these offices. Thanks to the diligent hard work of our Area Operations Chiefs and Local Office Managers, this process has worked!

However, I agree with Director Williams in that now is not the time to become complacent. As an agency at the forefront of our state's employment and training efforts, DWS must continue its efforts in constructing a seamless and efficient service delivery model.



## WORDS FROM OUR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

### Keeping You Informed

I want to begin by thanking Director Artee Williams for the confidence shown by selecting me as the Assistant Director of the TANF program. I remain humbled and appreciative of the acceptance shown by management and staff since taking over in June of last year. But let me be clear - it is not about me! It is actually about the ones who really deserve all the credit and those are the TANF local staff - TEA and Work Pays supervisors, case managers, document examiners, and local office managers. Thank you for your commitment to the program and to our program participants. Thank you for your commitment to deliver the best quality service possible.

Thank you for helping the participants change their current status and provide for their families. Please remember that we must never lose sight of the real reason that we all are here. We are making a difference! And we must continue to provide quality service, stay within the policy guidelines, and administer our services equitably and fairly to each and every program participant.



One of the issues shared in meetings with TANF staff throughout the state has been the need for better communication between central office and the field offices.

This E-newsletter is designed to assist in addressing this problem. The intent is to share pertinent information in the form of strategic tips, program changes, best practices, and areas of improvement. We also want to share those program successes that we often hear about but never get to actually read and/or see the client.

We hope to initially produce this newsletter on a quarterly basis - and as the interest and information grows, we intend to publish more frequently, such as bi-monthly. We encourage everyone to submit their feedback on the information contained within the newsletter. This can also provide you with a forum to share and explore ideas and best practices across the state. We would like to provide information on client success stories as well as photos of those participants, with their signed approval. This newsletter is for you and about you, so we hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to provide feedback. Please contact Linsey Sanders at [linseysanders@arkansas.gov](mailto:linseysanders@arkansas.gov) for submission of your ideas and suggestions. I trust that you will enjoy this first edition of the TANF E-News and come to recognize it as a very important tool in our collective program improvement efforts!

"Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life."

- Confucius

## TANF CENTRAL OFFICE ACQUIRES NEW DIVISION CHIEFS

Boylee Hamilton and Daryl Bassett joined the TANF Central Office management team on June 1, 2010. Hamilton serves as TANF Field Operations Chief and provides assistance in the research, planning, coordination, and the successful transfer of TANF Eligibility Determination to DWS from DHS. He also assists in managing TANF field operations within the state by overseeing the provision of technical assistance to TANF field personnel by disseminating and interpreting regulations, policies, and procedures, and coordinating personnel and activities related to program and service delivery. He will also have oversight of the soon to be implemented, TANF Customer Support Line.

Daryl Bassett serves as Division Chief for Program & Administrative Services. He is responsible for overseeing the administration of TANF contracts, human resources, program reporting, as well as budget and financial management. These two staff members join the existing TANF Division Chief, Elroy Willoughby, who has been assigned to a new role as Division Chief of Program Performance and Evaluation. His role consists of monitoring and analyzing program performance, as well as providing performance-related technical assistance to the TANF Field personnel, evaluating existing program components for effectiveness, and providing supervision to the TANF Quality Assurance Unit staff. We welcome Boylee and Daryl to the TANF team!

## TANF PROGRAM TO IMPLEMENT 1-800 # TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER SUPPORT

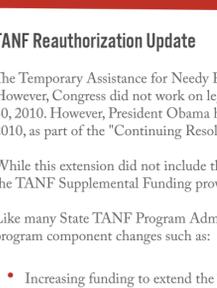
Upon assuming the case management duties in 2005, DWS did not inherit an established or clear-cut procedure for both the receipt and resolution of participant or service provider issues and concerns. While some participants and service providers will find a published DWS TANF Program contact number, more often than not, these individuals will immediately contact their Legislator or the Governor's Office. With the establishment of a TANF Program Toll-Free Customer Service Hotline, this will enhance DWS' ability to respond and resolve TANF program participant and service provider issues in a more efficient manner. This 1-800 number would provide an avenue by which the public could register complaints and concerns, as well as, acquire general program information about additional resources for low-income Arkansans.

### How Would It Work?

DWS would operate the toll-free customer service hotline during normal office hours. Utilizing an existing DWS Central Office TANF Administrative Assistant III, a Customer Service Information Specialist position would be established. The Information Specialist would provide general information, receive and refer complaints, monitor and record outcomes of complaints, and provide monthly reports related to program complaints, as well as program success stories. Messages from incoming calls received outside of normal office hours would be retrieved daily by the Information Specialist.

## TANF CASE NARRATION TIPS

By Derrick Black • Manager of the DWS TANF Quality Assurance & Performance Unit



Have you ever heard, "If it's not written down, it didn't happen?" As we travel around the state, perhaps one of the most common case management deficiencies we observe is the lack of documentation; or, more specifically, well documented case files. In contrast, we have also seen superbly documented case files. It makes a difference! Here are a few tips for effective case documentation and management:

- By definition, a narrative should tell a story. Be sure your narratives include the basics of who, what, when, where, how, and why.
- Narratives should be factual. There's no need for opinion here!
- Some people may say that you can't have too much information. However, keep in mind that some information may not be necessary or appropriate. Remember that some information is protected by law, and shouldn't be included.
- Narratives should follow the ABCs...Accurate, Brief, and Clear.

- Get in the habit of documenting your cases often. Don't let the story fade away...
- The case file should stand on its own merits, without relying on the testimony of the persons responsible for its content. To stand on its own, it must be strong!
- The case file and ANSWER should reflect each other, including documentation of work activity hours.
- Remember that participants have a right to review their case information. Can your documentation be used against you or to protect you?
- Keep this Chinese proverb in mind: "The palest ink is better than the best memory".

## Director's Office Memorandums - TANF Program Performance and Non-Compliance Sanctions

While economic and social factors influence parents' ability to find employment, meet their family's needs and support obligations, and achieve self-sufficiency; the mission of the DWS TANF Program staff remains the same. Our mission is to assist low-income parents to obtain and maintain employment within the context of the TANF Program's work requirements and time-limited assistance.

It is critical that we remember that all TANF Program laws, regulations, and policies must be observed in the provision of TANF-funded services. Recently, Director Artee Williams distributed two (2) memorandums to DWS Local Office staff related to the TANF Program. These were:

- TANF Program Performance, May 1, 2010
- TANF Program Non-Compliance Sanctions, May 1, 2010

These memorandums are applicable to all DWS Local Office TANF Program staff. If you did not receive a copy of these memorandums, please immediately contact your supervisor and request copies.

## Purpose of Quality Assurance (QA) On-Site Visits

The DWS TANF Quality Assurance (QA) Unit conducts on-site and desk reviews that are designed to appraise service provision within the Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) and Arkansas Work Pays programs for the State of Arkansas. Throughout the review of individual case records and program performance outcomes, an evaluation of each Local Office's compliance with state and federal requirements is completed.

These reviews focus on assessing compliance with procedural requirements, while also gathering and measuring data pertaining to quality. The information obtained through the quality review process is used to develop and implement needed improvements on an ongoing basis, otherwise known as continuous quality improvement.

## REMINDER

### Did You Know?

The Monthly Work Participation Status Reports can have a tremendous impact on our State's Work Participation Rates. Please make every effort to ensure that all cases contained on this report are reviewed and changes are made timely in order that we may benefit from the potential increases in participants' work activity hours of participation.

The applicable code definitions are: Code 14 = Required to participate, but not participating; and not subject to sanction for the reporting month. Code 18 = Required to participate and participating, but not meeting minimum participation requirements.

## TANF Reauthorization Update

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant was scheduled for reauthorization in 2010. However, Congress did not work on legislation to reauthorize the program prior to the scheduled expiration on September 30, 2010. Hence, President Obama has signed into law a bill that extends the TANF block grant through December 3, 2010, as part of the "Continuing Resolution" that funds government programs.

While this extension did not include the TANF Emergency Fund, created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the TANF Supplemental Funding provision was extended.

Like many State TANF Program Administrators, DWS is hopeful that TANF Reauthorization will include some specific program component changes such as:

- Increasing funding to extend the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund;
- Replenishing the TANF Contingency Fund;
- Implementing a 50% work participation rate for both two-parent and single-parent cases;
- Implementing a 30-hour work activity requirement for both two-parent and single-parent cases;
- Allowing pro-rata credit for partial work activity participation;
- Allowing up to 12 weeks annually for job search and job readiness activities;
- Allowing twenty-four months for vocational education for a higher percentage of the entire caseload;
- Allowing GED education to count as a "stand-alone" work activity that is counted towards work participation; and
- Allowing a parent providing child care in two-parent families to count towards their work activity requirement.

### Did You Know?

At our current Work Participation Rates of 35% TEA and 85% Work Pays, if Arkansas migrated approximately 360 TEA Participants into the Work Pays Program and ensured that these new Work Pays participants completed at least 30 hours in their work activity, the State would meet its 50% All Families Work Participation Rate!

It is vitally important that DWS TANF Staff ensure that all existing TEA clients who are eligible to transition into Work Pays are encouraged to do so! Please distribute Work Pays applications and explain this great program to your TEA clients!

## HELPING WORKERS APPLY WHAT THEY LEARN IN TRAINING

When it comes to personnel matters, supervisors and administrators in workforce development agencies want one simple thing: workers who can do the job. To enhance the performance of their employees, they often send workers to training; designed to cultivate the skills and knowledge workers need. So far, so good.



But no matter how good the training, no matter how engaged and talented the trainees, if the employee doesn't apply what he/she learned during the training when they return to the agency, then the agency has effectively lost any benefits it might have derived from the training.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way. According to experts on transfer of learning, there are specific things supervisors and administrators can do to capitalize on their investment in training.

The following are suggestions for helping workers apply what they learn in the classroom to their work with participants and their families.

### Tips for Administrators

See training as a partnership. Training alone cannot help workers integrate learning well enough to apply it competently on the job. Nor can supervisors do it all—they depend on classroom trainers and training events to organize and formalize learning opportunities and sequences. The personal development of workers should be seen as a partnership between supervisors and the child welfare training system.

Proclaim your support. Perhaps the single most important thing agency directors and administrators can do is to give their "blessing" to training. They can do this by sending out a letter to staff once a year stating, "Training is very important to your growth and development. I personally support and encourage your participation."

Demonstrate your support by providing the resources (time, money) necessary to send people to training. If your budget is such that you can send only ten people a year, make sure those ten really feel they have the support of the agency behind them.

### Tips for Supervisors

Ask your supervisor for support. Explain why you believe training is important and describe specific ways he or she can support you and your workers in this area.



Clarify your expectations prior to training. In brief, individualized pre-training meetings, discuss the learning outcomes of the training and help workers make the connections between the training they're attending, their own performance, and the goals and mission of the program.

Emphasize the importance of "action plans." Incorporated into much of the training offered by the TANF Division, action plans take many forms, but generally challenge workers to think of strategies for enhancing their practice based on what they learn in the classroom.

Hold a post-training meeting with the trainee. Supervisors can do this as part of regular supervisory meetings or as a special meeting where the two of you might review a service plan and discuss how the worker applied what he learned to the creation of the service plan.

Be purposeful. Be clear about why you're sending workers to a particular training, why it's important, and what you want them to get out of it. Communicate all of this to workers and then follow up with words and actions that encourage them to integrate what they've learned into their practice. Do this, and chances are you'll be getting everything you can out of training.

## Supervisor Interventions to Enhance Transfer of Learning

### Before Training

- 1 Conduct pre-training meeting with trainee
- 2 Discuss workshop expectations with supervisee
- 3 Begin to plan for action plan
- 4 Convey training as a priority

### During

- 1 Insure there are no distractions (cover for trainee, if necessary)
- 2 Convey training is a priority
- 3 Discuss training and application of what she/he has learned with worker between sessions, if multiple-day training
- 4 Attend training

### After

- 1 Meet with supervisee within a week to review key points in training and action plan
- 2 Provide worker opportunity to try out new skills
- 3 Provide reinforcement for use of new skills
- 4 Reduce barriers to application of new skills

Source: Curry, D.H., Caplan, P., & Knuppel, J. (1994). *Transfer of training and adult learning (TOTAL)*. *Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*, 6(1), 8-14.

## WE ARE A TEAM!

By Christy Fuerst • DWS Local Office • Mt. Home

## TOGETHER EVERYONE ACCOMPLISHES MORE

What is a Team? A team is a group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project. Team members (1) operate with a high degree of interdependence, (2) share authority and responsibility for self-management, (3) are accountable for the collective performance, and (4) work toward a common goal and shared rewards.



A team becomes more than just a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating performance greater than the sum of the performance of its individual members.

Here at DWS, the TANF Program staff must function as a team. This includes everyone, from TANF Assistant Director Phil Harris to each TANF Workforce Specialist and TANF Administrative Specialist. The success of the TANF Program in Arkansas depends upon our ability to support each other. Each TANF team member plays a significant role in this success and without each team member's contribution; the TANF team cannot function properly.

As a member of the TANF team, we must rely upon each other for help and support. Ask yourself the following questions:

- When was the last time I discussed a difficult TANF case with another TANF Workforce Specialist?
- When was the last time I asked for or shared case management tips with either a fellow TANF Workforce Specialist or TANF Program Supervisor?

It is imperative that we rely upon each other in order to "work smarter instead of harder"! There is a wealth of knowledge among the DWS TANF staff that is just waiting to be tapped. As a fellow DWS TANF staff member, I challenge each of you to pick up the phone or send an email to another TANF team member during the next week. Communicate, build relationships, build a support system, and increase your TANF knowledge. But remember, maintaining these associations and friendships are as important as developing them.

I will close this by sharing my thoughts on what TANF case management is, offering a case management tip, and a pearl of wisdom.

Case management is the process you use to move your participants from where they are now to increased self-sufficiency. You will need to include in the process a variety of strategies, techniques and resources designed to build your participants' strengths and overcome their barriers

- 1 Self-sufficiency is the goal or outcome for all of our TANF participants.
- 2 Case management is the process our Team uses to assist TANF participants in reaching this goal.
- 3 Fulfillment is what we, as TANF team members, get when we work collectively in reaching this goal.

TIP: Empower your participants by teaching them how to do things for themselves.

PEARL OF WISDOM: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader!"

- John Quincy Adams