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Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

TANF eNews

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An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

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From the Assistant Director

Assistant Director Phil Harris, DWS-TANF

Career Pathways Initiative

Under the Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), Arkansas invests public funds to support career pathway programs in our two-year colleges and technical institutions. A TANF grant supports the initiative and allows development and implementation of such programs for low-income families.



Career pathway programs provide training in local high-demand occupations and career fields. This facilitates and increases access of low-income parents to educational credentials that lead to higher paying jobs.

CPI offers our clients a great opportunity for additional training and education that may not otherwise be available to them. I encourage all TANF staff to communicate and collaborate with CPI partners at your local colleges and technical institutes to achieve improved outcomes for our TEA and Work Pays clients. Many of our clients cannot realize their career goals without some additional training or education through a two-year college or technical institute.

TEA clients participating in CPI are required to meet mandatory work requirements along with their educational activities.

The best way to determine whether clients need additional training or education to meet their career goals is through a comprehensive assessment. Explore their personal and professional goals during the initial TEA assessment. Keep in mind that these are their goals. When you have established where clients are today and where they see themselves in five years, you can develop employment plans with short- and long-term goals that include additional training and education when appropriate.

When additional education appears to be necessary to achieve these goals, ask your supervisor to review and help determine whether to make a referral to CPI.

To count training or education as work activity hours, discuss with your supervisor whether this meets TEA criteria and policy.

Supervisors, I encourage you to meet with the staff in your local office to discuss how our clients can participate in CPI aligned with policy requirements.



ARWINS Project Update—Testing, Firefox, New Features

Meet You at the Top!

The ARWINS Development Team has been very busy over the last few months and much has occurred over this time. We moved Release 1 of the system into QA testing early in June, and since that time, we have moved Releases 2 and 2.2 into QA, and Releases 1 and 2 through to User Acceptance Testing (UAT).

Testing

QA testing requires hours of focus on all of the details related to performing everyday work tasks, such as registering new clients into the system, determining their eligibility for a specific TANF program, establishing the program unit, and initiating case management through assessment. Testing tasks include, for example:

- Testing every option in drop-down menus for each field on every page
- Testing all case types and their common circumstances
- Learning how best to navigate, depending on what you need to do
- Using the system to perform work tasks accurately and appropriately
- Identifying and reporting anything that does not work and errors found
- Making recommendations of simpler ways to work, changes and new features that would be useful in helping workers do their work, and system enhancements

Our team of testers has become familiar with navigation through the system, adding cases to the database, and intended procedures designed into the system. This knowledge and understanding of how to use the system will be useful to them going forward as well as being valuable to the project. Testers report that, overall, they are pleased with the way the system works, and they consider it to be intuitive and fairly easy to use.

QA testing is a critical factor in ensuring that the system we have built performs as promised and as needed—that it meets DWS-TANF expectations. The people who are actually doing the testing have a wealth of experience with the TANF Program and with DWS activities. They know what is needed and how best to apply the system to meet DWS-TANF goals.

UAT is an exciting time, a time when normal users get to experiment and play in the system to discover how it works, what it looks like, and how they want to apply it. The Little Rock Workforce Center (LRWFC) was selected to take responsibility for the first UAT instance, which started mid-September, under the leadership of LOM Earnest Merritt and AOC Jo Keegan, who have succeeded in getting access to the system for most of the TANF users at LRWFC. We extend our thanks to Joe Milligan's team, of the DWS IT Security Office, for assistance in helping users establish user credentials through the Single Sign-on system.

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Some of these users have done some great testing by registering clients, processing applications, and determining eligibility. They work with make-believe clients—that is, they are not adding real clients to this system yet. But the simulations they do allow them to see how the system works and learn how to navigate through it. They have identified a variety of errors that we need to fix and made suggestions for additional enhancements that may be useful to workers going forward.

Mozilla Firefox

One of the problems we encountered is getting the Mozilla Firefox browser installed on all users' computers quickly. ARWINS is compatible with both Google Chrome and Firefox browsers, but not yet with Microsoft's Internet Explorer (except for version 9). DWS IT selected Firefox as the browser of choice, and everyone needs to have that installed on their computers to use in testing ARWINS. We plan to roll out UAT to additional local offices, and as soon as possible, to all local DWS offices. Expect it to come your way in the next month or two. If you have an opportunity to get Firefox installed, go ahead and do it. That will allow you to be prepared to access ARWINS as soon as we can make it available to you.



New Features

New features added to the system over the summer include:

- Single Sign-on—allows users to sign in to all ARWINS applications with one sign-on; this requires using a passphrase, rather than a password, which increases security and simplifies the sign-on process for users.
- Maslow—allows users to request a need—that is, to ask for an enhancement to the system that would make working in it easier or more efficient; or to report and track problems and issues.
- Comments—a feature on each page of the system that allows users to report page-level issues or suggestions for improvement using a link at the bottom of the page.



You may have heard that TANF is required to begin drug screening and testing early next year. The ARWINS Development Team has begun to identify requirements and design features that can help to perform, track, and document this required activity. In addition, the SNAP Education & Training program has been expanded and is now requiring many SNAP participants to work, or to prepare for work through education and training. DWS-TANF and DHS are exploring ways to collaborate to meet these new requirements as well as to make TANF services available to those SNAP customers who need them. ARWINS has the capability of assessing SNAP customers to determine their needs and barriers to work, and this may be a good way to work together to include SNAP participants in our programs with TANF customers. Stay tuned for more information on this as we go forward and identify how we can work together to improve service for these customers.

As you think about your work and how the system could help you perform it well, send your comments and suggestions to DWS management using the project email box, ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov.

Engaging Clients in the Employment Plan

By Dr. Beverly Ford, ASM Associates

Employment planning should be a partnership between you and clients. They are the lead partner. You are the supporting partner. You want to build a plan that is client-directed to enhance their planning skills and help clients feel ownership and commitment to implementing the plans they make.

Engage Clients in Developing a Plan

- Discuss the client's motivators and strengths before beginning the plan. You want to remind the client why she is making a plan and the strengths she has for making her plan work.
- Have the participant write the plan. Writing the plans helps to promote active engagement, ownership, and commitment.
- Use open questions throughout the process to engage the client in thinking and developing ideas. Ask. Don't tell.
- Ask the client for his ideas before offering your suggestions.
Example: *What do you think you can do to get enrolled in the job search class?*
- Offer your ideas as suggestions rather than telling them what they need to do.
Example: *What do you think about starting with work experience?*
- Ask the client to set priorities for the tasks she will do.
Example: *What do you think you need to do first?*
- Ask the client to set his own timetables—to decide when he thinks a task should be done.
Example: *When do you think you should ask your mother to help with childcare?*
- Ask the client what help she needs from you before offering your assistance. You can then negotiate how the two of you can partner resources.
Example: *What help do you need from me with transportation?*
- Have the participant repeat aloud her list of things to do. Saying what she will do aloud can strengthen commitment.
- Use the signing of the plan as a symbol of commitment by you and the participant. Before she signs the plan, ask her to look it over and make sure she is comfortable with it.



Build a Client-directed Plan and Ensure Clients Are Meeting Participation Requirements

This is a delicate balancing act that requires the best of your client engagement skills. You want clients to see participation as a benefit to them—as a way to make their lives better.

- Use the motivators clients gave you during assessment to connect their miseries and wants to participation activities. You want them to feel they are participating to achieve *their* goals, not yours:
- Present participation in program activities as ways clients can work on their goals, build on their strengths, and overcome their barriers. Avoid focusing on participation as a way to keep their benefits.
- Where possible ask clients what activity they would like to start with rather than simply assigning them an activity. You want them to feel they have some control over their decisions.
- Describe participation hours as time they are committing to their goals. Try asking how many hours they are willing to commit to their goals rather than telling them the hours they have to do to be “in compliance.”
- If you get objections to participation use your “motivation ammunition” to remind the client of what she said she did not like about her life and what she wants in her life.
- If the client seems overwhelmed by barriers, use your “strengths ammunition” to remind him of his strengths and how he has handled tough situations before.
- Use life sanctions—consequences of not working on their goals rather than simply welfare sanctions—consequences to their benefits.

Policy Corner

TANF Policy Unit, Central Office

Questions and answers for November

Question:

When should the transportation pre-authorization be completed?

Answer:

The DWS-ARK-TEA – IntraAgency-7, Transportation Provider Authorization to Exceed \$200, should be completed at the beginning of the month and prior to authorizing transportation.

Question:

Could a teen parent (adult but under 20) who is assigned to high school be sanctioned?

Answer:

Yes, if not participating. Review TEA Policy 3470, Attendance at Secondary School.

Question:

Can the forms, especially the reimbursement forms, be emailed to a participant or provider?

Answer:

Yes, the electronic forms can be emailed to participants and providers if it is easier for them to complete. However, please make sure the providers know that Page 2 of the TEA-1430 was designed for the participants. They will not be able to use the page electronically for mileage until changes are made. Adobe Reader is available free at <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html>.

Question:

Why is it necessary to complete the Transportation Provider Authorization to Exceed \$200 form?

Answer:

To be in compliance with the TEA-1432, Performance Deliverable 3 C. Reviewers/auditors will cite a deficiency for failure to comply.

Question:

Can a person who does maintenance work for a landlord in exchange for rent participate in Work Pays?

Answer:

No. In-kind income is excluded. A minimum of 24 hours in paid work activity is required.

Question:

What should the WFS do if it is discovered that the TEA-1 does not explain the actions that the WFS wants to take?

Answer:

A properly completed TEA-1 that allows 10 days should be sent to the participant.

Question:

How is in-kind income treated in Work Pays for eligibility and participation?

Answer:

Per policy 2341, in-kind income is totally disregarded for eligibility. This means this type of income cannot be used to close a case due to exceeding FPL or issue bonuses.

Question:

Can a participant receive unemployment benefits and Work Pays at the same time?

Answer:

Yes. However, UI income cannot be converted to participation hours. For continuing eligibility, the UI income should be reported to CPU. They will determine if the participant exceeds FPL.

Question:

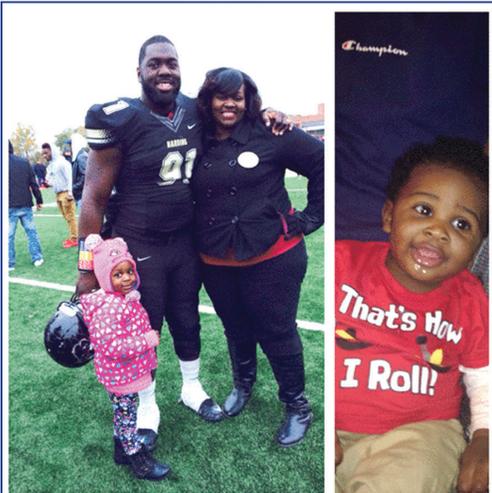
Do we reimburse OJT providers 50% of a participant's gross wages or net wages?

Answer:

Reimbursement is based on gross wages.



Success Stories



Devon & Rayshionna Carter **Searcy Workforce Center** **White County** **TEA (Two-Parent Household)**

Devon & Rayshionna Carter (a two-parent household) lacked family support in providing for their six-month old son and three-year old daughter and had many financial needs. The Carter family experienced financial difficulty meeting day-to-day responsibilities to becoming self-sufficient parents. These barriers included things like vehicle repair, gas to get to/from school, child care, and vehicle insurance.

The TEA program allowed the Carters to receive help with child care, receive some assistance with job placement, and seek higher education. Devon has already earned his degree, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Sports and

Recreation Management from Harding University on December 13, 2014, and Rayshionna plans to complete her BA as soon as possible. "With the help of the TANF program and the Harding coaching and teaching staff, I was able to gain knowledge and wise counsel to stay focused and stay on track to achieve my goals," Devon said. "I would recommend this (TEA) program to those who are truly passionate about having a better future for themselves and their family."

Rayshionna added, "College was not the obvious choice. Several road blocks appeared way before and after I began my journey. I had no knowledge as to where to start and no idea of how it would work, but I had a dream, and I had faith." TEA not only assisted the Carters in finding an opportunity to continue their education but also helped them get quality child care for their children.

"Although a lot of paperwork is required, the services provided from the TEA program have been very beneficial to my family's success," Rayshionna said.

Spotlight

Good to Great - **Mountain Home Workforce Center:** **TANF A.S.K. Award**

By Laura Foster, Program Operations Manager

The Mountain Home Local Office has been awarded the Assessments-Sanctions-Keying (A.S.K.) Award. This award is based upon the cumulative results from the TANF Quality Assurance reviews and the Work Participation Rates during the period of June 2014 – November 2014. The initial A.S.K. awards were announced during the 2012 TANF Conference and recognize the local offices that have exemplary performance in Assessments-Sanctions-Keying.



Left to Right:
Tarzetta Thrower (TANF Training Instructor), Christy Fuerst (TANF Training Manager), Patricia Whitfield (Workforce Specialist), Jenny Patoka (Local Office Manager), Aaron Johnson (Program Supervisor)