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Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

# TANF eNews

March 2015

An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

**Inside this issue:**



## From the Assistant Director

By Phil Harris, Assistant Director, DWS-TANF

As we close out the third month of what is shaping up to be an eventful 2015, I would like to give you some specific updates on the eligibility transition as well as how it is helping the TANF Division be a strong partner and catalyst for successful program integration.

The TANF Division Senior Management has agreed on a transition framework, and is currently developing a detailed implementation plan to bring eligibility functions over to DWS this year. The three major phases to accomplishing this transition are:

- Back-office eligibility functions that are driven by Central Office (and have less impact on our field staff) will be the first phase. We are targeting the beginning of the new state fiscal year to get them operational at DWS-TANF. Division Chiefs are being assigned to take ownership of specific functions, and unit level organizational logistics are being worked out. Some of these back-office functions include Fraud, Appeals, Fair Hearings, Special Investigations, Overpayments, Collections, IRS Safeguards, and more.
- Soft launch of our Service Delivery Model—the best validation of our planned Service Delivery Model is to see and experience it in action by line-staff (and their supervisors) who will operate on a day-to-day basis once we go live. We are, therefore, planning a soft-launch phase, where carefully selected local offices and program partners simulate how DWS staff can deliver TANF services effectively and efficiently. This is expected to be a 2 – 3 month exercise, beginning in the early part of July 2015. That gives us all an opportunity to identify and fix gaps and provide comprehensive training (hands-on training on the new IT system, integrated with policy and procedures) to all the statewide staff. Lessons learned from this exercise can ensure that we continuously improvise and are better prepared to go live.
- The go-live phase is targeted for the final quarter of this calendar year, when we, DWS and the TANF Division, become accountable for end-to-end operations of the TANF program.

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As we move from planning to implementation, we are challenged with various aspects of transition—people, processes, physical plant, timelines, and of course, budget!! But we are encouraged by how we have made adjustments and adapted, triaging and solving some of the most difficult problems that initially appeared to have no solution. As we get ready to roll up our sleeves and begin working with everyone in the local offices to prepare for the transition, I have no doubt in my mind that we will face many more complex operational challenges. I assure you that our transition team will listen and give due consideration to each of your issues.

It is also gratifying to have the years of experience, strong backing, solid support, and resilient leadership of Director Daryl Bassett and Deputy Director Snead, to help the newest program (TANF) integrate end-to-end with the DWS family. It goes without saying that Field Operations is the key by utilizing the Area Operations Chiefs and Local Office Managers constructively. This is imperative to realize continued success. In the coming weeks, I will meet with DHS, other external partners, and our oversight bodies to discuss our transition plans and get their inputs and buy-in. I am confident that we will get all alignments necessary to bring the program in. I look forward to sharing more details and progress in our next newsletter.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication.  Keep embracing the change!

## ATTOP Update—IT Development: Help Content Meet You at the TOP!


As of the first week of February, the ATTOP team initiated review of the content of the Help information for the new IT system. The first review occurred at Central Office over February 3 and 4, in a meeting with reviewers Laura Foster (QA and System Support), Christy Fuerst (PAC), Wanquita Nettles (TANF Trainer), and Derwin Taylor (TANF Policy). The primary goal of this first review was to align the Help information with policy. Policy has been revised to include Eligibility Determination functions and related changes to other sections due to the transition.

In addition, the review team noted forms and notifications in the process of being adopted from DCO and adjusted to meet DWS conventions and standards. The official designation assigned to all TEA forms going forward has been selected. For example, the TEA – 1, *Notice of Action*, will be known as DWS-ARK-TEA – 1, *Notice of Action*.

During the second week of February, the ATTOP IT Development team started a formal review of the updated Help content. The content was updated following the first review to align with policy, and it was updated again, following the IT review. The purpose of the IT review is to align the Help content (now aligned with policy) with the new system and adjust as necessary.

Let us know if you would be interested in reviewing some part of the Help document to provide your input. Especially if you have some experience with or ideas about how best to do intake and / or eligibility determination, you can read a section of the document and provide specific comments related to proposed procedures. Or, depending on your area of interest, you could provide your comments on ways to improve procedures for case management or other functions. You can focus on a particular section of the document, without having to review all of it. This is a wonderful way to participate in preparation for the transition and learn about planned changes! For this particular task, please let us know of your interest as soon as possible.

You can use the ATTOP email box at ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov to communicate your concerns, suggestions, and ideas with DWS TANF leadership.

## Questions & Answers – Dr. Beverly Ford

## The Integral Element of Case Management

Beverly O. Ford, Ph.D., is president of ASM Associates, a training and consulting firm that specializes in training professionals in case management, welfare reform, and client empowerment. Dr. Ford's workshops are informal, interactive sessions focusing on practical concepts and strategies staff can easily transfer into their everyday work. The author of *Making Case Management Work* (www.asm-associates.com), Dr. Ford was a special presenter at the 2011 TANF Staff Training Conference for Arkansas. Here, she provides an overview of case management in TANF programs.

**Q** How do you define self-sufficiency?

**A** Our definition of self-sufficiency should identify the behaviors we want participants to exhibit—what we want them to be able to do as a result of our work with them.

We should distinguish between how we want participants to be and what we want them to do. For example, if you say you want participants to be responsible, what do you want them to do to demonstrate responsibility? Identifying self-sufficient behaviors helps to better plan case management strategies and measure successful outcomes.

Here are what I think are some measurable ways to define self-sufficiency. Self-sufficient participants are able to:

- ✔ Obtain and retain employment
- ✔ Develop and implement plans that will help them set and achieve their goals
- ✔ Take primary responsibility for solving their own problems
- ✔ Identify and use the resources in their network
- ✔ Identify and access resources in their community
- ✔ Make informed decisions by weighing the options and consequences
- ✔ Manage their resources—time, money, and relationships—in ways that help them meet their goals

**Q** What is the purpose and function of case management?

**A** Case management is a change process. Its primary purpose is to help participants get ready for and manage the changes needed to engage in the journey toward self-sufficiency. Case management functions as a partnership between case managers and participants to combine the strengths and resources of both to overcome the barriers to change.

**Q** What are the most important qualities of an effective case manager?

**A** I believe there are five essential qualities of an effective case manager:

**1. Empathy** – seeing and understanding the world from participants' view point without judging; understanding how it feels to be them

**2. Genuineness** – ability to convey you are a human being just like them; communicate as a person to a person; combining your care and compassion with effectiveness

**3. Respect** – valuing the participant as a complex human being with strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures

**4. Flexibility** – constantly adapting your techniques and strategies as you gain new insights; keeping what works and letting go of what does not

**5. Willingness to learn and grow** – learning from your participants, coworkers, supervisors, and others; to constantly step out of your comfort zones and try something new

**Q** Why is it critical to engage participants in the case management process?

**A** Although you are held responsible for outcomes, you do not control them. Your participants decide whether to participate in program activities, seek employment, or keep a job. Without their active engagement your work becomes much more difficult. An actively engaged participant is more likely to hold themselves accountable; to work with you to find resources and solve problems; and to see themselves as competent, capable people who can achieve their goals.

**Q** How can case mangers empower their participants?

**A** Case managers empower participants by building partnerships with them that use participants' strengths and resources in combination with theirs. The participant is the lead partner. You are the back-up partner. To empower them you should:

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## Questions & Answers – Dr. Beverly Ford
## The Integral Element of Case Mangagement

- Ask questions that engage participants in thinking rather than telling them what to do
- Get their ideas and suggestions first before offering yours
- Ask for their resources first. Add your resources as supports to theirs
- Engage them in finding solutions to problems before offering your ideas
- Work with them to develop and practice the skills they need to lead more self-sufficient lives

**Q** How can Case managers avoid enabling their participants?

**A** As Case managers we often enable people because we care about them and want them to succeed. Enabling, however, can lessen participants' competence and self-worth and frustrate you over the long term. You can avoid enabling by not doing for people what they can and should do for themselves. When you are tempted to do tasks for participants, think instead about how you can partner with them to become more effective in planning, problem solving, finding, and accessing resources than you found them.

**Q** How can a case manager conduct an effective assessment interview?

**A** Effective assessment can influence change. It can engage participants to begin moving out of their comfort zones to try something new. The initial assessment can serve two purposes. It can give both of you a picture of where the participant is now – motivators, strengths, barriers, and resources. It can also engage each participant to see the need to change, believe they can change, and prepare to make a plan to make change happen.

To conduct an effective assessment interview you should:

- Review participants' self-assessment to plan the areas you want to explore and questions that will engage them in self-assessment
- Begin by defining the purpose of the interview so that participants have a clear idea of the goal – see where s/he is now
- Wait to discuss program services and resources until you have a more complete picture of where the participant is
- Ask open rather than closed questions to keep participants talking and thinking
- Avoid asking questions already answered on the assessment form
- Ask thinking questions that encourage participants to go beyond what they already know and think more deeply about where they are now
- Summarize what the two of you have learned in preparation for discussing how the program can help support the participant in making changes

## Policy Corner

Clarence Childs, TANF Family Support Unit, Central Office with
TANF Policy Unit, Central Office


The goals of the TANF eNews are to continuously educate, inform and inspire the entire TANF Division. Keeping in line with those goals, we would like to introduce a new section entitled "Policy Corner." We're optimistic that this section will educate and inform those individuals who come into contact with various policy issues as a part of their job duties. Policy Corner will feature two or three questions and answers each month, provided by the Policy Unit, aimed at giving accurate and helpful information to assist you in the application of TANF policy. We want this section to help bolster everyone's knowledge of TANF policy and ensure that we are inspired to properly provide TANF services to the people of Arkansas.

Questions and answers for February:

**Question**: What supportive services require submission of justification forms?

**Answer:** Intra-agency justification forms are available on the S: Drive. The forms must be emailed or faxed to the TANF Policy Unit before reimbursements for the following supportive services are keyed into the WISE system:

1. Participant transportation reimbursements that exceed the monthly limit of $200
2. Reimbursements for activity related expenses that exceed the $200 cumulative limit. (This includes tires.)
3. Extended Support Service (ESS) Job Retention for former TEA participants whose cases closed due to employment.

Justification forms are not required for any other supportive service (for example, vehicle repair, education expenses, relocation assistance, and so on.)

The TANF Policy Unit will file the forms for documentation purposes. The TANF Policy Unit does not give approval to key the reimbursements, as the supportive service should already be pre-approved by the local office.

**Question:** Can a participant receive a TEA cash assistance payment and Work Pays payment for the same month?

**Answer:** No. If a former TEA participant is approved for Work Pays but has already received a TEA payment for that same month, the system will cancel the Work Pays payment if keyed. The month will still count against the participant even though the participant was not eligible for the Work Pays payment. Participants should be advised accordingly.

**Question:** Is there a time limit on how long a former TEA participant has to access their ESS child care?

**Answer:** No. As long as the most recent TEA case closed due to employment and there are unused months available, the former TEA participant can access the ESS Child Care.


## Good to Great

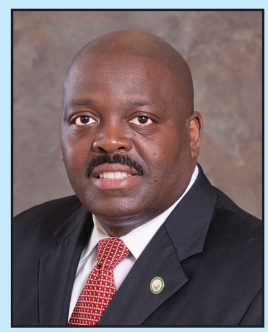
By Don Childers, Program Operations Manager, Central Office

We are pleased to announce that, based upon the cumulative results from the on-site Quality Assurance reviews and Work Participation rates during the rating period December 2013 through May 2014, the ASK (Assessments-Sanctions-Keying) Award has been awarded to the Arkadelphia local office. The award recognizes local offices with exemplary performance in Assessments-Sanctions-Keying.

Pictured from left to right Lacole Gilkie, Cindy White-Hamilton, Phil Harris, and Tabitha Wallace.

*Please join me for the*

## 2015 TANF STAFF TRAINING CONFERENCE



### Champions of Change, August 19-20

**Embassy Suites Hotel • Little Rock, AR**

Director Daryl Bassett and Assistant Director Phil Harris are pleased to announce the 2015 TANF Training conference to be held at Embassy Suites in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The conference is scheduled for August 19-20 and will bring Arkansas TANF staff and other stakeholders into the capital city to discuss current information about the TANF program nationally as well as within the state of Arkansas. Participants will have the opportunity to network and receive training in a variety of topics critical to the ongoing success of the TANF program in Arkansas.

**Confirmed presenters include:**

- Dr. Beverly Ford of ASM Associates
- Paulette Bushers, TANF Program Manager
  Oklahoma Department of Human Services