

Together,  
We're making  
our families  
stronger.



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

# TANF eNews

August 2014

An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

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### ATTOP Puzzle 3

The Word Search puzzle in this issue of our newsletter is created from the articles that provide transition information. You will find clues within the articles for the puzzle solution.

The solution will be published in the next newsletter, coming your way in September, 2014.

## Embracing Change: Mission ~~Impossible~~

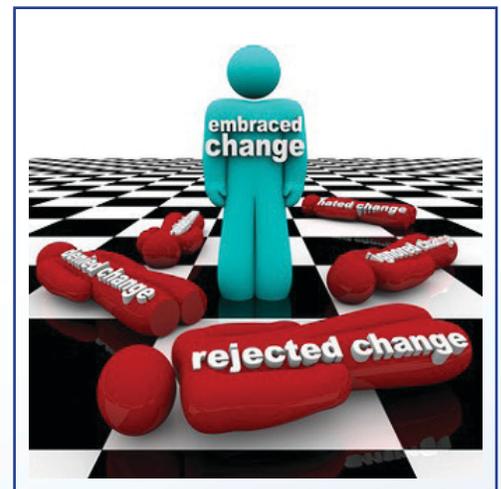
By Phil Harris, Assistant Director, DWS-TANF

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude and respect to each of you for your contributions in making the TANF mission a reality by transforming our program participants into economic successes all across our great State. We regularly challenge ourselves to do more by serving our customers efficiently and effectively within our own spaces and places. As I think about our current mission of transitioning Eligibility Determination and modernizing our TANF IT system, I started thinking about change and one of my favorite TV and movie programs, "Mission Impossible." Some of you might recall those famous lines:

**"Good morning, Mr. Phelps. Your mission, Jim, should you choose to accept it . . . As always should you or any member of your IMF force be caught or killed, the secretary will disavow all knowledge of your actions. This tape will self-destruct in five seconds. Good luck Jim."**

Well ladies and gentlemen, we are not on some secret mission to be caught or killed, but we are taking some giant steps toward moving our TANF program into new and improved territory, along with the risks and difficulty associated with the journey. And yes, the mission is POSSIBLE!! Winston Churchill once said: "A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty." There is always something valuable that can be derived out of difficulty, adversity, or change; we just have to look for it with open minds. I am reading the book by Ken Blanchard, Mission Possible, which talks about surviving today and recreating your organization for tomorrow. Mr. Blanchard uses the analogy of a sand castle which faces the incoming tide. Does one leave it alone to face certain destruction and hope that it doesn't happen for a while; or does one take immediate action to build barriers along the beach for protection, which may or may not help; or does one plan for the future by redesigning the structure as well as relocating the castle? People are the key to an organization's success and the way a leader can best encourage them towards this goal is to allow them to become involved in improving the present and inventing the organization's tomorrow. It's all about the journey and understanding what is possible. We need everyone to get involved!!

I want our TANF staff facing the customer each day to be empowered to solve problems on the spot. Our program is evaluated by how quickly it can respond to customer needs and assist in solving their problems. The person our customers care about is/are the ones they talk to, and they want top service from these people. I want everyone to realize they are important to our mission and success. Administrative support staff, case managers, supervisors, coordinators, and managers are all important to this mission. **And, the mission is POSSIBLE!!!**



## ATTOP Update: Meet You at the TOP!

The ATTOP Program Transition team continues with progress in transition activities. The project schedule is aggressive, but it has been socialized and agreed to by all the parties involved in project activities. It currently involves transition planning for most TANF functions to move to DWS in October 2014, with roll-out of a functional web-based IT system in the first quarter of 2015. One of the goals for the IT team is to retire applications currently residing on Mainframe, like WISE and other benefits issuance programs, and integrate this functionality into the new web-based IT System that is being rolled out.



Also, the following activities have been in progress this month. The team:

- Identified unit heads to take ownership of each separate transition function and set up functional units with appropriate staffing to accept and implement the functions moving to DWS from DHS-DCO
- Received materials and information from DCO Collections as the last discovery session of the transition planning activities that occurred during June and July
- Developed the Client Maintenance module of the new IT system so that it will be ready to undergo System Integration Testing when the necessary IT infrastructure is established
- Conducting discussions with DIS regarding hosting the new IT system—still in progress
- Developing a new TANF service delivery model—still in progress



Next steps include working with DWS leadership to establish the new units within DWS-TANF.

There is still much work to do to prepare for this major transition, and we hope that each of you will contribute. The TANF leadership will also reach out to employees in local offices to help with this effort. We need your ideas, questions, suggestions, and assistance.

Many of you have used the ATTOP email box to communicate with DWS leadership—please

continue to do that by emailing us at [ADWSattopinfo@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWSattopinfo@arkansas.gov). Thanks!

## Good to Great

*“2 Cents” from Beverly and Peggy*

### The Vision

Our vision for TEA is a program focused on self-sufficiency. We want participants to move from simple compliance with rules and regulations to active engagement in taking ownership and responsibility for making their lives better.

The words we use can help reinforce this vision for you and participants.

COMPLIANCE	ENGAGEMENT
Program Activities	Opportunities to work on your goals
Participation Hours	Time spent working on your goals
We can assist you	We will work with you
Sanctions	Consequences for not working on your goals
Eligible for Supportive Services	Partner to plan for the support you need

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.” —Joel Baker

Keeping the focus on engagement vs. compliance:

- Use Engagement-focused language: opportunities, goals, partner, and so on.
- Compliance language keeps the focus on maintaining the client’s current benefits.
- Engagement language turns the focus to the client’s goals and self-sufficiency.
- Compliance language creates a case manager-directed process.
- Engagement language fosters a participant-directed process.

We’d love to hear your ideas for where DWS language can move from Compliance to Engagement. Please send us your ideas to either [bevasm@aol.com](mailto:bevasm@aol.com) or [klygln51@gmail.com](mailto:klygln51@gmail.com).



Dr. Beverly O. Ford is President of ASM Associates, a training and consulting firm that specializes in staff training for human service professionals. Since 1989 she has conducted training in case management, employment preparation, welfare reform, and client empowerment for over 100,000 people in 42 states. She has extensive hands-on experience in employment and training. She has a B.A. from Talladega College, a Master's from the University of North Carolina and a PhD in Counseling Psychology from Union Graduate School. Beverly is the author of two staff training handbooks - **Making Case Management Work: Empowering People for Change** and the newly released, **Group Power: Expanding the Circle of Hope**.



Peggy Kelly has been involved in welfare to work, employment programs, community collaboration, and strategic planning since 1985. She led the Employment Preparation Services division in Wyandotte County, Kansas for the Kansas State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS). She developed an empowerment based self-sufficiency program, using client assessment data to re-design the strategies and processes. Peggy holds a B.A. in Social Services from Northern Michigan University.

## **TANF Caseloads Decline: Reconnecting with our Service Population**

By Christy Fuerst and Elroy Willoughby

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program is designed to provide basic assistance to families with little or no income and assist these families in obtaining and retaining employment. TANF is part of the overall safety net of programs in this country that is expected to assist needy families. While there are no definitive lists identifying the programs included in the safety net, TANF and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) are generally viewed as two of the main components.

While SNAP caseloads rose dramatically during the most recent recession and well into the recovery, TANF caseloads across the country experienced a modest increase during the same period. In fact, here in Arkansas, we actually experienced one of the lowest caseload increases in the country. Since the recovery began in 2009, Arkansas' TEA and Work Pays caseloads have continued to decline.

According to the Congressional Research Service, Arkansas had the fourth highest poverty rate in the country at an estimated 20.1% in 2013. These families are most often disconnected from both TANF and the labor market. The questions that we must pose are: How are they coping economically? What is the impact of this disconnection on family and child well-being? How can DWS reconnect these families to needed services and assist them toward self-sufficiency?

This suggests that many families are choosing not to receive TANF, do not know that they are eligible, or find it difficult to enroll. Regardless of the answers to the questions posed above, it is clear that DWS needs to expand the reach of the TANF program to meet the needs of more low-income families in Arkansas.

The receipt of monthly cash assistance payments will help; however, the larger scope of the TANF Program is participation of these families in job preparation, education, and employment, with support services assistance that leads to self-sufficiency. DWS cannot assist those families until they have applied and been determined eligible for services.

The importance of meeting the needs of the Agency's intended service population is fundamental. DWS' ability to reach low income families and expand and meet the service needs of more low-income Arkansans relies upon our ability to collaborate, partner, and communicate with other public and private organizations that share our mission. These partners include local and state governmental agencies, service providers, community action agencies, faith-based, and youth organizations. This circumstance provides a wonderful opportunity for DWS to reach out to expand our capability and meet this need.

We have developed the following strategies to increase our visibility among low-income Arkansans:

- **Increased Signage**—the most widely used outreach method; DWS has prepared and produced additional TANF Program signage and is distributing it to Local Offices for in-house display, distribution, and display at various local organizations and partners.
- **TANF Program Sign-up Fairs**—DWS will work with large retailers such as Kroger and Wal-Mart to set up booths and tables to conduct TANF Program Sign-up fairs. These sign-up fairs would provide a mechanism by which DWS Local Office staff could provide program information to the public and encourage the completion of program applications.
- **Mass Mail-outs**—given that DWS is a partner with DHS, it is appropriate to request participant information from other assistance programs and conduct a mass mail campaign.

We want to hear from you regarding any ideas you may have to help us connect and reconnect with the population we serve. Please send your suggestions to the ATTOP email box: [ADWSattopinfo@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWSattopinfo@arkansas.gov). Thank you!

## July 2014 Puzzle Contest Winners

Winners of the puzzle contest in last month's newsletter are:

Angela Hilliard  
Shonia Murphy  
LaShara Swink

Congratulations!! Great job!

We have a new puzzle in this issue of our newsletter. The first three readers to solve the puzzle and send the solution to the ATTOP mailbox, [ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov) will be recognized in the September issue of the newsletter.

## ATTOP Puzzle 2 Solution

The following list identifies the words that make up the solution for the puzzle that appeared in last month's newsletter:

1. Training
2. (Across:) Changing  
(Down:) Champions
3. James Jones
4. Rewarding
5. Success
6. DCO
7. Frontline
8. WEX
9. (Across:) Blytheville  
(Down:) Baxter
10. Four

## ATTOP Puzzle 3

The puzzle in this issue of our newsletter (next page) is created from the articles that provide transition information throughout the newsletter. You can find clues to the puzzle solution within the articles. When you solve the puzzle, follow the instructions below and email to [ADWSattopinfo@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWSattopinfo@arkansas.gov) along with your feedback about the newsletter, ATTOP, and anything else you'd like to discuss.

1. Use a list of numbers 1 – 10 and write your solution for each clue by the appropriate number
2. Add your signature
3. Click Send to email it

The solution to this month's puzzle, along with the names of the contest winners, will be published in the September newsletter.

## ATTOP Puzzle 3

Meet You at the TOP!

V T N E D M G M J K E  
E J R N L B N M M C P  
R N M A Q B N V N R N  
E V G R N K I A J M Q  
C I V A Y S I S E D E  
O S P B G L I T S G D  
N I Y O P E S T A O G  
N O L M T Y M N I R P  
E N O K S T G E E O M  
C C Y T Y I A A N X N  
T B I D S D T W R T B

- 1 Move the remaining TANF functions to DWS
- 2 Way to talk about TEA as self-sufficient
- 3 Name for transition and IT improvement
- 4 A mental image
- 5 Can be done
- 6 Manages our information
- 7 Connect again
- 8 Focus on following the rules
- 9 Above average
- 10 Coordinated public signs