

Together,
We're making
our families
stronger.



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

TANF eNews

November 2014

An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

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ATTOP Update–Program: Answering One of Your Major Questions

Meet You at the TOP!

November brings cooler weather—at least, some days! —and the start of the holiday season. The ATTOP team continues with planned activities and has accomplished quite a lot since our last update.

The ATTOP email box helps us understand what concerns you. One of the questions we often get is related to how we expect to handle eligibility determination. As a new function for DWS-TANF, it is of particular interest. So, in keeping with Mr. Harris' promise to provide information about some of the messages we've received and our responses, we are using this one basic question to describe in this article a high-level version of the proposed process. We ask for your feedback, please.

The eligibility determination process under consideration is one that should serve DWS-TANF well. The new IT system collects and manages participant information from application intake, through eligibility determination, and to on-going case management with all that can involve. It also continues through a successful transition to Work Pays and the exit from TANF. Although each case is unique, the goal of all related activities is for participants to exit the program successfully as self-sufficient workers.

The new IT system is pretty smart. It can determine whether new applicants are potentially eligible for TEA participation. The DWS Central Processing Unit (CPU) receives applications from external sources (non-DWS), processes them, and transfers them to a local office worker for application approval and case management. When walk-ins or paper applications arrive at local offices, local intake workers register new applicants into the system. Local office workers take care of intake, eligibility determination, and case management for TEA (single-, two-parent-, and minor parent) cases, Work Pays, and TEA Diversion. They also handle initial eligibility for walk-in TEA Child-Only cases. Intake workers transfer single-, two-parent-, and minor parent cases that appear to be eligible to a local office worker for application approval and to begin case management activities.

Local intake workers transfer potential candidates for TEA Diversion to case workers to process the TEA Diversion cases or return the applicants to TEA. The process ends at denial for all applicants who are denied TEA eligibility. For those that require additional documentation to confirm eligibility, workers notify applicants of what is required and guide them through it.

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The IT system directs child-only cases to the CPU, except those that originate as walk-ins at a local office. The local office provides intake and eligibility determination services for these cases, and then transfers them to the CPU for on-going case management. These cases generally do not require intensive case management as do other TEA cases. CPU workers ensure that child-only cases get their revaluations when and as required by policy, and they maintain these cases as needed until or unless circumstances require more in-person client engagement. At this point, the CPU can transfer a case back to its local office, when needed. This frees up local office case managers to focus on those cases that most require their attention.

Thus, ATTOP transition is moving along quickly. There is still time for you to tell us what you need and want in procedures and IT capabilities. With still much work to do to prepare for our transition, we hope that each of you will contribute. We need your ideas, questions, suggestions, and assistance.

Many of you have already used the ATTOP email box to communicate your questions and thoughts about ATTOP and transition—please continue to do that by emailing to ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov. Thanks!

From the TANF Assistant Director

By Phil Harris, Assistant Director, DWS-TANF

Let me begin by saying “Thank You” to all local offices for their ongoing commitment to the Arkansas TANF Transition and Optimization Project (ATTOP). Your continued support and participation in this important initiative remains essential for program and agency success. The local office road trips that I have used to get your feedback on how best to conduct the TANF transition and integration into DWS have been very productive thus far. It is amazing to listen to you all and understand how we at Central Office can partner with our local offices to meet unique needs and together as a team help our customers be successful!!

The ATTOP project is the first of its kind in the country in many ways. Arkansas is one of the few states where TANF is not just being offered as a program under a workforce agency, but is actually being integrated and transformed into a workforce development program. The ATTOP digital services platform is focused on enabling our staff and optimizing our service delivery procedures—be it centralizing certain processes or standardizing our participant assessment and work readiness planning functions.

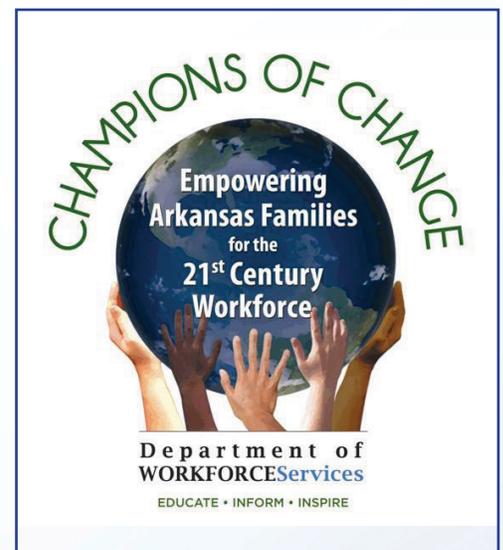
Despite the state’s changing socio-economic structure and the TANF legislation’s changes, the core purposes of TANF seem to be as relevant today as ever. I wanted to use this forum to remind us of these purposes, but more importantly, to reflect on the amazing opportunity that each of us has to make a difference in our neighborhoods and communities.

1. **Providing assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives;**
2. **Ending the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and, marriage.**
3. **Preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies and to establish annual goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and**
4. **Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.**

As you can see we are much more than a “participate in work activities for a monthly grant” program. How well does our program translate these purposes into operational objectives and practice? ATTOP is our opportunity to change our attitudes and approach and implement solutions that best engage our customers—not just our participants but also employers, providers, and our colleagues.

I will continue to meet with every one of our TANF staff when I visit the local offices, and get your inputs, constructive criticisms, and good-to-great ideas—from staff development to program operations to local office strategies!! Please use this opportunity, and speak up when I am there or email us at ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov.

I strongly believe that we are on the right path. As we move past this holiday season, and closer towards the New Year, you will start seeing even more positive changes on all fronts. I hope some of them will be ideas that came from you!!





Elizabeth Hardy
DWS Local Office: Rogers
Benton County
TEA, /WEX, Work Pays



Elizabeth Hardy moved to Arkansas from Minneapolis with her toddler daughter in 2012. She stayed with family members and faced the challenges of finding employment with no childcare and no transportation of her own. When she was approved for TEA, both childcare and transportation assistance supportive services were provided to eliminate these barriers.

After exploring different career options and working with WIA, Elizabeth enrolled at the University of Phoenix and began working toward a degree in Health Care Administration.

Her WEX site was changed to the Rogers Workforce Center to assist with the CRC program. While at the Workforce Center, the LOM selected her to assist with a hiring event. At the event one of the local companies participating in the job fair offered her employment.

Elizabeth began her career at Marshalls in February 2013 as an Operations Manager and head of the Cash Office. She worked 35 hours a week at \$11.00 an hour. Within a year, she was promoted to Front End Coordinator and Head of the Shoe Department. With the promotion she received a raise to \$11.43 an hour. During this time her tires became dangerously worn, and the TEA program paid for new tires as a job retention reimbursement.

She recently accepted a job with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette newspaper group as a District Manager of Circulation. She works 40 hours a week and receives a salary of \$40,000 a year including bonuses. Elizabeth said that her WEX experience at the local DWS office gave her an advantage in being selected for the job. Her current position involves managing newspaper carriers, resolving delivery issues, and preparing reports. She is already on the career track for a promotion to Senior District Manager.

Elizabeth enrolled in the Work Pays program in April 2013 and has exceeded the required hours every month. She will leave the Work Pays program this month with a bonus for exceeding 150% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Other positive things on the horizon for Elizabeth are the purchase of a new car and a new home as well as marriage next summer.



Audree Artis
DWS Local Office: West Memphis
Crittenden County
TEA

Audree Artis, mother of one three-month old child, was approved for TEA in July, 2014. At the time, she had a high school diploma but no job and no job skills. Her TEA case manager said that “she carried the weight of hopelessness in her eyes. “

Her case manager had an in-depth conversation with her regarding her personal and career goals, reminding her of her young son and his dependency on her. Audree responded that she just wanted a job; that she didn't care what kind of job, but she needed money. Her case manager pushed her to think through what she wanted in her life and detail that out. She decided that she would like to become a teacher, due to her passion for children. They discussed the education she would need to achieve for this goal and decided to plan for that in the long-term but to focus now on the short-term.

Audree's first assignment was a job search activity. This activity required her to search for a job for at least 20 hours per week and document her submittals and findings. For the first two weeks, she just made up job search information and gave it to her case manager. Her case manager scheduled a counseling and guidance session, where he encouraged her to showcase integrity in all that she does, and he assured her that the rewards would follow.

After noting improvement in her attitude and performance, her case manager informed her of several job openings in the area. He set up an Arkansas Job Link account and a Career Readiness Certificate account for her, and she was set up with a TORQ account to help with her personal job search. Audree scheduled an interview with Kids Childcare, a local successful company. The TEA case manager helped her prepare for the interview and follow-up. Audree received an offer of a full-time position as childcare teacher.

Audree has successfully completed her probation stage with her employer, and now she is considering applying for the Arkansas Work Pays program. She is very grateful for the TEA program and DWS for assistance she received in becoming employed and the confidence that a bright future is something she can achieve for herself and her family.

Good to Great – Jim Collins

By Tarzetta Parks-Thrower, TANF Training Instructor

“First Who...Then What” is the title for Chapter 3. Great companies concentrate on the idea of getting the right people on the team and then deciding where to go with those willing and open for change. Mr. Collins states many confuse this with having the first step as setting a new direction or vision for the company and then getting the people who are committed and aligned behind the new direction. The challenge with this model is that if the vision changes, those committed to that vision alone will walk away when it does not work. When the company decides to put its concentration on the right people from the start, those individuals are committed to the company despite the changes that may come and will remain a part of the team through the ride from Good to Great.



The Benefits of Exercise

By Brad Richison, TANF Program Supervisor,
Little Rock Workforce Center

Feeling bogged down with work? Are you exhausted by the end of the day? We all know exercise is good for us. But, did you know exercise can give you the energy you need to get through the day? By exercising at least 20-30 minutes a day, four times a week, your stress levels can dramatically decrease, while your energy level increases regardless of your age, sex, or physical ability.

When you exercise, oxygen and nutrients are delivered to your tissues, and your cardiovascular system is able to work more efficiently. When your heart and lungs are working efficiently, your energy level increases. Exercise also stimulates various brain chemicals that leave you more relaxed and happier.

These are just a few of the added benefits of regular physical activity.

ATTOP November Puzzle

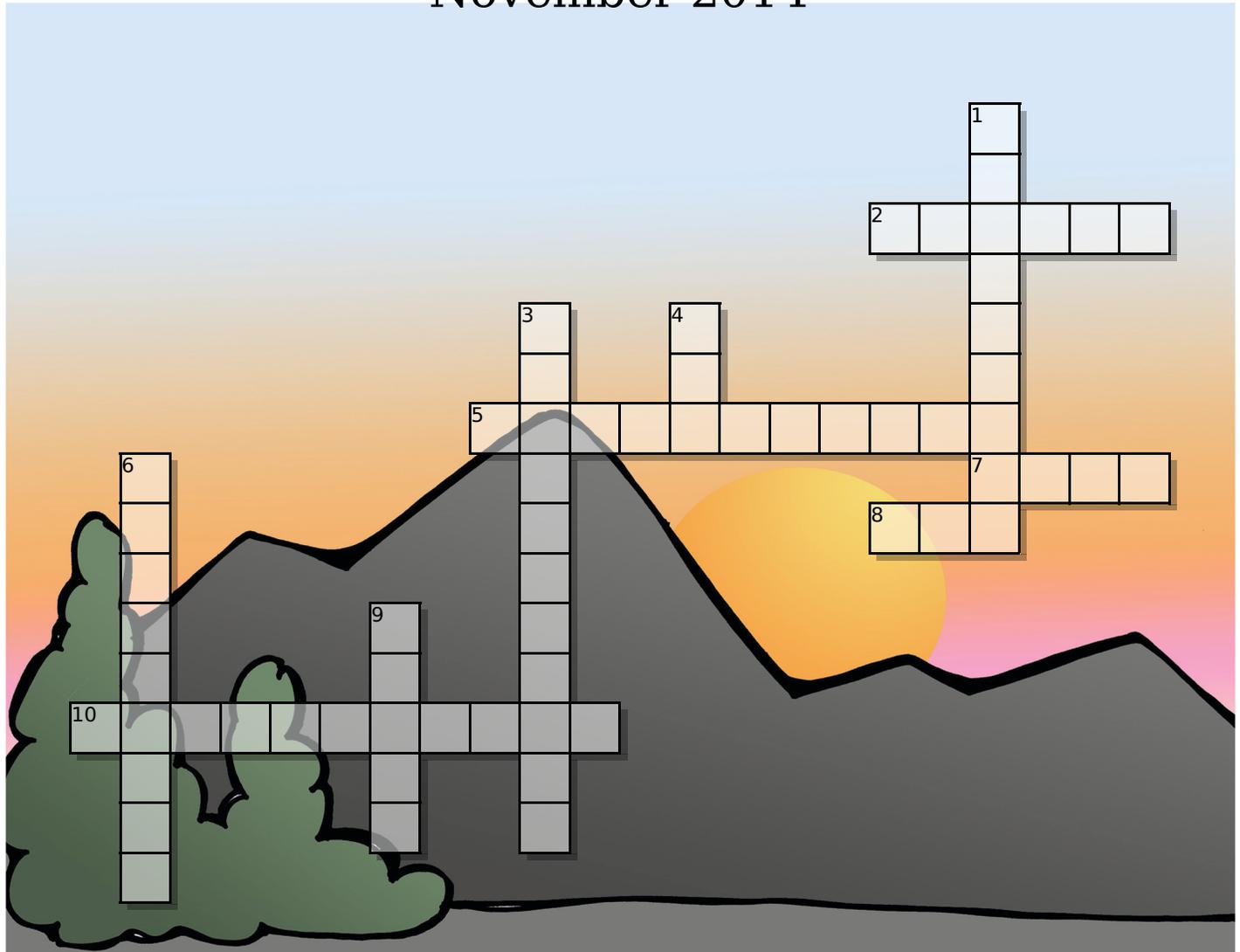
The puzzle in this issue of our newsletter (next page) is created from the articles that provide transition information throughout the newsletter. You can find clues to the puzzle solution within the articles. When you solve the puzzle, follow the instructions below and email to ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov 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 first three people to submit the correct solution, will be published in the next newsletter.

ATTOP: Meet You At The TOP!

November 2014



ACROSS

- 2 a responsibility of local office workers
- 5 Elizabeth Hardy is a District Manager of _
- 7 number of core purposes of TANF
- 8 "First _ ...Then What"
- 10 "she carried the weight of hopelessness in her eyes."

DOWN

- 1 ATTOP email address: ADWS._@Arkansas.gov
- 3 topic of question most often received by ATTOP: _ determination
- 4 receives applications from external sources
- 6 ATTOP is our opportunity to change our _ and approach
- 9 the new IT system is pretty _