

Together,  
we're making  
our families  
stronger.



Temporary Assistance For Needy Families  
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

# TANF eNews

October 2022

An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

## Inside this issue:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Back to TANF .....  | 2 |
| Broadband For Every Household .....                                 | 3 |
| TANF Partnership Profile- AR Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) ..... | 4 |
| CPI Impact .....  | 5 |
| Searcy Local Office Spotlight .....                                 | 6 |
| Searcy Local Office - The Power of Partnerships .....               | 7 |
| Engaging Clients in the Employment Plan .....                       | 8 |

## Around the Watercooler

Well, maybe not necessarily the watercooler. But we would love to hear a TANF success story or an innovative approach that helped your participant. We will continue to highlight success stories and best practices in future newsletters.

We also want to know if there are suggested topics that you want us to cover in a newsletter or special technical assistance or training session that you want covered. Please drop us a line @ [ADWS.TANF.Ideas@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWS.TANF.Ideas@arkansas.gov) and we will make every effort to listen and address it.



## Back to TANF Edition

Assistant Director Phil Harris, DWS-TANF

We hope everyone is enjoying the cooler weather! I want to encourage you to engage with our participants and offer them any supportive services that can help them now and in the coming season!

I wanted to share with you some of the events that we have organized since June. We are back to having regular technical assistance, and training sessions with all our supervisors. These monthly sessions have become very productive forums, with comprehensive Q&A sessions covering a wide range of TANF topics. Topics ranging from technical and systems issues to more



generic topics were discussed and answered by the TANF Policy and Systems Support Unit. The sessions are open to all TANF program supervisors, who have also been encouraged to share information learned from these sessions. The recording from this session should also be available for offline learning and review. Make sure you do not miss out on it – a lot of very valuable information directly relevant to your daily work routine is encapsulated in the recording.

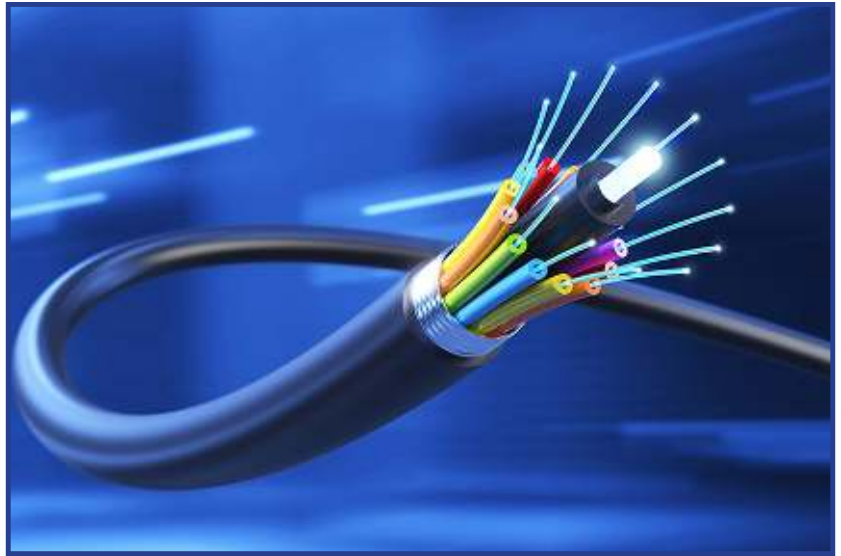
I also have another very exciting update to share with you all. We had a project kick-off and began having one-on-one email conversations with (y)our Local Office Managers. These conversations aim to identify opportunities to offer supportive services that are relevant to low-income TANF-eligible families in your areas that are not being offered consistently through the TEA program..

I am extremely gratified to see the enthusiastic responses from the managers and the staff on potential solutions and services that could be offered in your areas. As a next step, I plan to have in-person meetings in the coming month(s) and explore the feasibility of launching these new initiatives. Our goal is to ensure that these new initiatives would complement our traditional TEA and Work Pays programs and strengthen our commitment to helping low income and needy Arkansans. I will continue to keep you abreast as we make progress. In the meantime, keep serving and giving our customers the opportunities needed to become self-sufficient! Thanks for all you do!



## Broadband for Every Household

Recently we received a letter from the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA), providing information about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) program to help low-income households pay for internet service and devices. OFA is encouraging all state TANF partners to inform our program participants and applicants about this benefit.



The ACP is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program to help low-income households pay for internet service and connected devices.

Eligible households may receive:

- Up to \$30/month discount on internet service.
- Up to \$75/month discount if the household is on qualifying Tribal lands.
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, table, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)

Please tell your families that you serve about ACP so that they may apply directly. Eligible households can enroll in the ACP through an approved provider or by visiting one of two simple and easy-to-use websites: [ACPBenefit.org](http://ACPBenefit.org) or [GetInternet.gov](http://GetInternet.gov).

To help spread the word, the FCC has a toolkit with flyers, social media content, ACP application materials and more. More detailed facts about the overall program can be found on the ACP fact sheet.

Households with income at or below 200 percent of the poverty level are eligible for the subsidy. Some households are automatically eligible for the ACP, without the need to prove their income, if at least one member of the household is receiving benefits from certain federal programs, including Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Only one monthly service discount and one device discount is allowed per household. Not all participating internet service providers offer device discounts.

There is no federal requirement to include ACP benefits when determining or redetermining eligibility for TANF, and OFA encourages grantees to exclude them.

To learn more about the ACP program or to become a partner, visit [www.fcc.gov/acp](http://www.fcc.gov/acp). If you have any questions, you can send an e-mail to [ACPinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:ACPinfo@fcc.gov).

Thanks for promoting the Affordable Connectivity Program so that more families and households struggling to afford internet service might get connected!!

## TANF Partnership Profile – AR Career Pathways Initiative (CPI)

Growing a skilled labor pool is increasingly important in an economy where as many as 80 percent of job openings will require some form of postsecondary education or training. But for many workers – including low-income, working parents – access to training alone is not enough. Low-income adults who are balancing work and family needs often need additional supports to complete training and transition into family-supporting careers.



The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative provides a comprehensive set of academic and support services designed to enable low-income, low-skill individuals to acquire credentials for jobs in selected high-demand, high-wage industries. The program is administered at the state level through the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) Career Pathways Division, which is responsible for allocating CPI funds to the participating colleges, identifying and approving eligible career pathways at each school, supporting professional development of CPI staff, and providing on-site monitoring of programs. ADHE also tracks performance outcomes for program participants through a statewide database that matches ADHE enrollment and completion data with employment and earnings data provided through DWS. T

CPI is open to needy parents beyond those receiving TEA cash assistance. Students are eligible if they are custodial or noncustodial adult caretakers of children under 21 and have incomes below 250 percent of the federal poverty line, are former or current recipients of Arkansas’s TANF program, called Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA), or current recipients of food or medical assistance in the state. CPI uses TANF funds to cover a range of expenses related to the participation of these parents, including the costs of tuition and fees, childcare, transportation, computer and technology assistance and other student support services. Enhancement programs such as work based learning, TANF funded work study, and student retention and completion incentives are also provided.

When entering CPI, participants are assigned a career counselor and tutor mentor for the duration of the program. CPI combines the strengths of different stakeholders to provide participants with training under one career pathways system that offers employability skills, basic skills, remediation, advanced skill training for high-demand jobs, and college coursework. By integrating these services, the program can support low-skilled workers with “bridge” programs that build skills prior to entering degree or certificate programs. When skills gaps are identified, including language barriers and needs for other remedial coursework, participants can be connected with adult education programs and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs as part of their career pathways.

### Program Highlights % in administrative costs for SFY21

#### Outcomes

|                     | SFY2019     | SFY2020     | SFY2021     |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| CPI Enrollment      | 3,958       | 3,543       | 3,187       |
| Credentials Awarded | 3,273 (83%) | 2,772 (78%) | 2,074 (65%) |
| Entered Employment  | 3,597 (91%) | 3,239 (91%) | 2,835 (89%) |

CPI is funded 100% by TANF through the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services which is supported by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Family Assistance.

## CPI Impact

Student stories are the best indicators of CPI impact. Here is a small sample.



### Charletta

Young mother living in public housing. Has purchased her own home and is now a nurse and shift supervisor.



### Mikee

Surviving on dead end jobs with a small daughter. Now hauls cattle coast to coast for a large farming operation making \$2000/week.



### Sharika

The mother of a 4-year-old receiving TEA, SNAP and housing assistance, she is a 2013 graduate of CPI. She now holds bachelor's and master's degrees and is now the director of a CPI program.



### Candace

Was a single mother at 19, responsible for four siblings due to incarcerated mother. Earned Doctor of Nursing degree and now working at UAMS.



### Penny

Was a single mother of a 7-month-old, working part time at McDonalds. Now sworn in a police officer and is continuing toward a bachelor's degree.



### Justine

Single mom who earned a Collision Repair Technology degree and is now employed in a job with benefits. She is no longer depended upon government aid.



### Jill

High school dropout working dead end jobs with 2 small children. Now working as an OB/GYN nurse and no longer depended upon government assistance.



### Jessica

A former waitress with small children, she now has a master's degree in education and is teaching first grade.



### Kenya

Single mother of four utilizing all aspects of government assistance including TEA. She is now gainfully employed as an LPN.

## Spotlight

### Searcy TANF Staff and Community Partners

“It takes a village to raise a child” is an old proverb that means an entire community of people is needed to provide a safe and healthy environment/ community.

No one understands this better than the Searcy TANF Staff. By working with community partners such as Restore Hope/100 Families, Community Action Programs for Central Arkansas (CAPCA), Operation Homeless, WIOA, Adult Education, AR Cares, DHS, and many others too numerous to list. We can see a difference in our community.



Peggy Poole CAPCA Homeless Event



What does this mean for TANF Staff? It means being part of the community. It is like a ministry. It is not just about helping TEA and Work Pays, but those TANF-eligible from every walk of life. TANF is more than just case management. It is time out of the office meeting people where they are.

The focus of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services is to provide individuals the tools they need to enhance and sustain their lives through employment and education. Searcy case managers Peggy Poole and Hannah Strayhorn, administrative assistant Laura Hurst and DWS Field Manager Jennifer Pike honor that focus by looking for ways

to make a difference in the lives of Arkansans. Thank you Searcy local office staff for looking beyond the norm and thinking outside the box about serving those who need our help!



## Searcy Local Office – The Power of Partnership!

### Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA), WIOA, Career Pathways, and Restore Hope 100 Families

Ms. Traci Davidson had been a minor parent TEA participant in 2010. In 2021, she was introduced to Restore Hope's 100 Families Program which focuses on alternative sentencing, re-entry, and helping families go from crisis to career. Restore Hope's 100 Families referred Ms. Davidson to the Searcy Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) office for help applying to the TEA program, which is when she and Workforce Specialist (WFS) Poole first met. WFS Poole saw the potential and desire in the single mom of six children, ages 2 to 13, and knew they had work to do.



On October 26, 2021, Ms. Davidson and WFS Poole began work to see how TEA could help. Ms. Davidson, armed with a GED, knew she wanted to continue her education, but with a lack of family support, she was not sure how to make it happen. During the assessment, WFS Poole worked to provide Ms. Davidson with TEA vouchers for childcare and to show her how close friends could provide support to her family. Ms. Davidson shared her acquired skills in diesel mechanics and her desire to attend the program at ASU-Searcy.

Ms. Davidson's college expenses were covered by grants, but she still faced the cost of transportation and housing while enrolled in college. WFS Poole referred her to Career Pathways, and they were able to provide gas vouchers, but housing was still in question. On November 8th, 2021, WFS Poole referred Davidson to WIOA. WIOA Career Counselor Hill stated, "The ability to work closely with WFS Poole gave us the ability to assist her more easily." Counselor Hill was able to provide funds to help Ms. Davidson pay her rent. During staffing, WFS Poole shared, "Ms. Davidson has worked hard to stay on top of her grades and keep up her attendance all while caring for her six children. She is determined to make a better life for her and her children."

On May 7, 2022, Ms. Davidson graduated from ASU-Searcy with her Technical Certificate in Diesel Technology. WIOA Career Counselor Hill remarked, "Traci has been a joy to work with. She is a wonderful success story of referrals and co-enrollment. Ms. Davidson has experienced some difficulties in finding employment in a male dominant field and has decided to continue her education in Business Technology to help her further her career opportunities in a supervisor's position." Ms. Traci Davidson's success affirms how partners working together can change lives. Her story is not over, we are all excited to see what the next chapter brings.

## Engaging Clients in the Employment Plan

By Dr. Beverly Ford, ASM Associates  
(Article reprinted from FY 2015)

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.