



AGENDA

MEETING OF THE WORKFORCE READINESS COMMITTEE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.....Chairman, Eric Kennedy

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES..... Eric Kennedy

FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (FSET)
DELIVERY OPTIONS Staff

UPDATE ON EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE
EMPLOY FLORIDA MARKETPLACE LINK TO BETTER
SERVE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION CLAIMANTS Staff

REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER THE AMERICAN RECOVERY
AND REEMPLOYMENT ACT (ARRA) Staff

PARTNERING ISSUES WITH
THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES (DCF): Eric Kennedy and DEF Representative

- Federal TANF-SSI Project
- TANF Emergency Contingency Fund
- Forward March Project

OTHER ISSUES Committee Members

**WORKFORCE FLORIDA
WORKFORCE READINESS & PERFORMANCE COUNCIL**

**WORKFORCE READINESS COMMITTEE
Teleconference Meeting, February 9, 2009: 3:00 P.M.**

Meeting Summary

The Workforce Readiness Committee, of the Workforce Readiness & Performance Council, met via telephone and web conference on February 9, 2009. The committee members in attendance included: The Chairman, Eric Kennedy, J. B. Black, Mary Lou Brunell, Everett Kelly, and Don Winstead. Randy Johnson, Chairman of the Workforce Readiness and Performance Council was also in attendance.

The summary of the January 6, 2009 committee meeting was presented for approval. A motion was made by Everett Kelly and seconded by Mary Lou Brunell to approve the summary as the official minutes of the meeting. The motion was approved.

The committee considered an action item related to the distribution of Reed Act Funds for performance improvement. At the direction of the Workforce Florida Board a portion of the Reed Act funding to be distributed this program year to the state's regional workforce boards (RWBs) is to be based on performance improvement as set forth in a state implementation plan. Accordingly, the implementation plan provides for 3 periodic fund distributions based on approved award categories. Under one of the award categories, awards of up to \$50,000 are made for each RWB that meets the federal TANF program participation rates. In making the awards in this category thus far in the program year, \$200,000 was left uncommitted due to the number of RWBs who

qualified. As the approved implementation plan makes no provision for the distribution of unearned monies, it became necessary to consider policy for the distribution of the \$200,000 balance from the first round of performance improvement awards that can also be applied to the any unearned balance that might occur in next round. Staff presented a recommendation that any unearned balance remaining from the distribution funds under this award category be awarded to all RWBs using the TANF allocation formula as long as the state as a whole meets the participation rate targets as required by the implementation plan. A motion was made by Everett Kelly and seconded by Mary Lou Brunell to approve the staff recommendation. The motion was approved. The action item as presented to the committee is attached.

The committee next received a brief report by Eric Kennedy and staff regarding the action January 28, 2009 of the Workforce Florida Executive Committee to make \$6,000,000 in redirected state-level funding available for the Employ Florida Healthcare Workforce Initiative. This initiative will be rolled out first as pilot involving a memorandum of understanding between WFI, the South Florida Workforce Board, and the Healthcare Corporation of America (HCA) and will provide both incumbent worker training and training for unemployed individuals in the area. Subsequent roll outs of the pilot are anticipated in Central and North Florida as soon regional boards with available local funding are identified. The model can also easily be modified and expanded as part of the rapid deployment of additional funds that will become available under the proposed federal economic stimulus plan. The Chairman acknowledged the key role

Mary Lou Brunell played in developing the model and he cited this model and the recent memorandum of understanding among WFI, Gulf Coast Community College, Gulf Power and the St. Joe Company as excellent examples of ways the workforce system can work with the private sector to meet the challenges of the current economy. The committee also discussed some questions related to the pilot as raised by local workforce representatives that were participating in the call.

Steve Urquhart and staff from WFI and AWI presented a status report on the progress to date to improve the Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM) link to better serve unemployment compensation (UC) claimants. Geographic Solutions, the state's vendor responsible for EFM, has submitted a formal quote to implement the proposed change order previously shared with members of the committee. Their quote is for \$13,750 to make the programming changes necessary to record additional employment history information now being provided via the interface with UC, to accommodate additional elements to be added by UC, and to utilize the claimants' email addresses once they become available to send automated messages to claimants to notify them of job opportunities and to encourage them to use EFM. On the UC side the project is also progressing. AWI staff is in the process of finalizing a project plan and costing out the programming necessary on their part to provide the claimant email address and additional information via the interface.

Don Winstead reported on Florida's opportunity to participate in a federal study co-sponsored by Health and Human Services and the Social Security administration. The

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Disability Transition Project is designed to examine the overlap in the TANF and SSI populations, document current approaches for identifying and working with individuals with a disability, and to identify approaches to work more effectively with individuals who may be eligible for SSI. The federal agencies are very interested in identifying one or two sites in Florida to participate in the project. Each state and local project participant would receive approximately \$100,000 to participate. The committee recognized this as a good opportunity for the state system to remain in the forefront of program innovation. Don Winstead will meet soon with those operating the project to express the state's interest and get further information. WFI staff will also work with Mr. Winstead to develop a process for interested RWBs to apply to participate. Eric Kennedy asked Randy Johnson to place the issue on the agenda for the upcoming meeting of the Workforce Readiness and Performance Council scheduled for February 18, 2009. Mr. Johnson agreed. See the attached project description.

The committee briefly discussed the federal stimulus plan legislation that has passed House and that is being discussed in modified version in the Senate. The members took note of the flow of information regarding the various proposals and acknowledged the need to continue to review the issue due to its importance to the state and the nation and the need the workforce system will soon have to implement whatever becomes final.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

As a result of the current economic conditions, Florida is faced with a unique situation. The State of Florida must decide how food stamps services will be offered to individuals and families for the rest of the federal fiscal year. There are three Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) program service delivery models the State of Florida may adopt. Each option is outlined below with information about the benefits (pros) of each model, the disadvantages (cons) of each model, and the activities considered allowable under each model.

Option 1: Statewide Waiver

Basic information: the State is able to excuse all food stamp recipients who meet the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) criteria from “time-limits.” Essentially, food stamp recipients that would otherwise meet the definition of “ABAWD” will be able to get food stamps without having to complete hours in a qualified activity every month. The State can offer an Employment and Training program with maximum flexibility because Florida will be operating under the statewide waiver provisions. The Statewide Waiver lasts one year. Florida has the opportunity to apply for a Statewide Waiver each year the federal extended Unemployment Compensation “Alternative Triggers” are met.

PROS:

1. Florida can establish a plan to engage food stamp recipients in a mandatory or volunteer program. The flexibility allows Florida to
 - Select the population that will be served,
 - Select where the participants will be served, and
 - Select what activities (also called services) will be included in the FSET State Plan (and how the activities will be defined).

Below are some **examples** of flexibility that maximize services to food stamp recipients:

- a. The FSET program may be designed to offer services to those who are already employed and need help paying for transportation costs. Employed individuals could receive assistance with educational goals to become self-sufficient.
- b. The FSET program may be designed to offer services to youth receiving food stamps who are engaged in the Summer Youth program. These participants could be dually enrolled and engaged to maximize support services and other funding.
- c. The FSET program may be designed to offer transportation assistance to non-custodial parents who are receiving food stamps and need help finding work so they can pay child support. These parents could be dually enrolled in both a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and/or Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program.
- d. The FSET program may be designed to offer services to those individuals recently dislocated from the work place who are looking for work and need transportation assistance, as well as other job search assistance. These participants could be dually enrolled in WIA, or if applicable, the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) program.
- e. The FSET program may be designed to offer services to those individuals recently dislocated from the work place who want to secure skills in a new vocation. These participants could be dually enrolled in WIA, or if applicable, the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) program.
- f. Engage food stamp recipients who are receiving Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and are participating in the Ticket-to-Work program.

2. If Florida offers a volunteer program, staff will not have to enter conciliations or sanctions. Participants in the program will not be subject to losing their benefits if they
 - a. Miss an appointment,
 - b. Miss a day at school,
 - c. Miss another activity, or
 - d. Fail to turn in documents on time.
3. Staff will not have to manage “compliance” issues, such as “good cause” for not participating in an activity.
4. Staff will not have to deal with program participants who call and state that they are not able to attend activities because they are disabled, caring for a disabled individual, etc. These issues currently cost the regions a lot of resources. Program staff have to collect documentation, enter deferrals on the system and contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to have the cases updated in DCF’s data entry system. *Only those participants who want to attend activities offered by the program will be engaged in the program.*
5. Florida can request additional 100% funds. The request for additional funding is based on the number of people Florida expects to serve. This provides Florida with the possibility of additional funding.

CONS:

1. When Florida begins to operate under the Statewide waiver, Florida will no longer be able to spend any Pledge State funds.
2. Changes to the data entry system will have to be made to accommodate the major changes in the service delivery model.
3. Staff will need to be trained on the new service delivery model. However, this will be much easier than the processes under the Pledge State model.

ACTIVITIES:

The model offers the State of Florida a lot of flexibility. The FSET State Plan may define activities in a more flexible manner. Activities may include: employment, adult basic education, vocational training, English as a Second Language, job search, job search readiness, employability skills training, etc. ***How is this more flexible than the current program?*** Currently, participants must complete 20 hours a week if assigned to an education and training program. Participant cannot complete hours in a job search and job readiness activity unless they are engaged in a qualified activity as well. If the participant is volunteering in the community, the participant **must** complete the calculated number of hours to avoid risking a sanction.

Under this model, the participant may

- Attend classes for less than 20 hours a week (which is common for many college programs since full-time is about 12 credit hours);
- Look for work (as his/her primary activity);
- Prepare for job searching as a primary activity;
- Work for less than 20 hours a week without risking a sanction or using a time-limited month;
- Participate in a vocational training for the number of hours required by the institution;
- Volunteer in the community;
- Etc.

Please note: food stamp recipients who volunteer cannot be asked to do more than benefits/minimum wage and are subject to protections under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). This is the same under all models.

Options 2: Pledge State

Basic information: Florida is currently operating under this model. The State of Florida has agreed with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to offer qualified activities to every time-limited ABAWD. This means that participants must be given the opportunity to participate in a qualified activity. For example, if the participant is interested in volunteering in the community and cannot find an agency to start volunteering, the participant must be offered assistance to secure a spot to volunteer or a different activity. The participant can be engaged in school, but the participant must complete at least 20 hours per week.

PROS:

1. Florida received additional funds to implement the pledge it took to help all time-limited ABAWDs find a qualifying activity.

CONS:

1. Food stamp recipients who meet the ABAWD criteria are subject to time limits. If the individual does not participate in a “qualified activity” for the required hours, (s)he uses a “time-limited month.” If a participant receives food stamps for more than three time-limited months during a 36-month period, his/her food stamps is stopped.
2. Food stamp recipients who are referred to the FSET program must participate in program activities. If the food stamp recipient does not comply with program requirements, the participant may lose his/her food stamps. The individual is subject to a penalty period that ranges from 30 days to 6 months.
3. Workforce staff have to offer each ABAWD a work activity. If the participant selects to complete his/her hours by volunteering in the community but does not know where to volunteer, the workforce staff must help him/her find a volunteer site or offer another qualifying activity. If the participant selects to complete his/her hours by going to school but does not know where to go to school, the workforce staff must assist the participant with finding the right school and right program.
 - Staff are reporting that there are fewer volunteer sites because the market is saturated with individuals looking to volunteer.
 - Staff are reporting that there are not enough educational programs to enter program participants into.
4. Several processes are time consuming for workforce staff. These processes are associated with a “mandatory” program.
 - Workforce staff must ensure that participants are complying with program requirements. This includes collecting documentation no less than monthly and entering hours of participation in the data entry system.
 - Workforce staff must initiate the conciliation process if participants do not comply with program requirements. Program staff must enter the data in the system and mail the required letters.
 - Workforce staff must request a sanction if participants do not comply before the end of the conciliation period.

5. The DCF has to review each ABAWD case. If the participant was not in a qualified activity for the required number of hours (or granted good cause for not meeting the hours) the DCF has to update the time-limit screen.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Participants must be engaged in “qualified activities.” This includes at least 20 hours in a training or training combined with job search/job training or volunteering or volunteering combined with job search/job training. The participant cannot be engaged in job search unless it is during the first 30 days of participation: after the first 30 days of participation, the individual must be engaged in a volunteer activity.
2. If the participant is not engaged in a qualified activity, the participant must provide a good cause reason to be excused. Program staff must collect the required documentation (if appropriate) and enter the good cause reason in the system. Staff must follow-up with each individual excused from participation in activities because “good cause” is time-limited.

Options 3: Mixed State

Basic information: The State of Florida may choose to submit a plan to operate mandatory programs for ABAWDs in certain areas with Pledge State funds. The other areas can either run a “volunteer” program or opt not to offer any services.

PROS:

1. The State of Florida may be able to continue to use Pledge State funds. The use of funds would be limited to those areas that implement a mandatory program for ABAWDs.
2. Areas that do not operate a Pledge State program could choose not to offer any services, or the region could opt to offer services that are appropriate under the waiver.
3. The State of Florida may still attempt to request additional 100% funds.

CONS:

1. If a region opts to operate a mandatory program for ABAWDs to utilize Pledge State dollars, the region must designate where the “pledge” will be implemented. The region must ensure that each ABAWD in that area is offered the opportunity to participate in a qualified activity to be in compliance with the program requirements. Program staff in the area must:
 - a. Continue to engage every ABAWD;
 - b. Collect hours of participation;
 - c. Enter hours of participation in the data entry system;
 - d. Offer a FSR if the participant attends his/her activity and documents a cost associated with participation;
 - e. Initiate a conciliation if the participant does not comply with the program;
 - f. Request a sanction if the participant does not comply within the conciliation period;
and
 - g. Offer sanctioned participants the opportunity to comply to lift their sanctions.

Additionally:

- Food stamp recipients who meet the ABAWD criteria are subject to time limits. If the individual does not participate in a “qualified activity” for the required hours, (s)he uses a “time-limited month.” If a participant receives food stamps for more than three time-limited months during a 36-month period, his/her food stamps is stopped.
- Food stamp recipients who are referred to the FSET program must participate in program activities. If the food stamp recipient does not comply with program requirements, the participant may lose his/her food stamps. The individual is subject to a penalty period that ranges from 30 days to 6 months.

- The DCF has to review each ABAWD case. If the participant was not in a qualified activity for the required number of hours (or granted good cause for not meeting the hours) the DCF has to update the time-limit screen.
2. When Florida took the pledge to offer a qualifying activity to every time-limited ABAWD, data was provided to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA used this data to determine the amount of funds Florida received. If the entire State is not operating a Pledge State program, the USDA stated they may opt to reduce the amount of funds that will be given to Florida for the remaining quarters. Florida will have to submit a revised plan with updated numbers before finding out how much Pledge State funds will be given to Florida.
 3. If the region opts to offer a “volunteer” program in a “waived” area using 100% funds, the region must be very careful to offer non-qualified activities. If the participant would otherwise meet the ABAWD criteria and is engaged in a qualified activity, the participant would be subject to time-limits. The DCF would have to monitor the case. If the participant did not comply for more than three time-limited months, his/her food stamps would be terminated. Unlike a sanction, getting back on food stamps is very arduous.

ACTIVITIES:

If the region opts to implement a volunteer program, the region can only offer “non-qualifying” activities. This provision is relatively complicated under this model because the Florida would not be operating under a Statewide Waiver but under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The State Plan would have to be very specific and define how activities are “non-qualifying,” which could pose a real challenge to the regions, the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) and the DCF.

- a. The region can offer individuals who would otherwise meet ABAWD criteria job search/job training as long as the activity did not qualify as Up-Front Job Search, as well as education and training (for less than 20 hours per week). The State Plan would have to clearly outline the activities that would be offered and how the activities do not meet the definition of a “qualifying” activity.
- b. If the FSET State Plan includes offering services in non-pledge areas to populations that qualify as “non-ABAWD,” the operating regions could offer activities in a more flexible manner. However, this would require the DCF to determine the status of each food stamp recipient (ABAWD or non-ABAWD) and to refer these individuals accordingly. This would be required so Florida could monitor the participation of ABAWDs and enter the use of time-limited months on the DCF’s data entry screen.

spouses in Department of Labor job training programs under the Jobs for Veterans Act. Under sec. 1010.310(b)(3) of these regulations, when the veterans priority is applied in conjunction with another statutory priority like the Recovery Act's priority for recipients of public assistance and low-income individuals, veterans and eligible spouses who are members of the Recovery Act priority group must receive the highest priority within that priority group, followed by non-veteran members of the Recovery Act priority group.

D. Hiring of Personnel

Due to the limited funding life and the economic crisis faced in many local areas, ETA strongly encourages states to work as quickly as possible to hire staff to accomplish the aforementioned allowable activities, in accordance with the staffing requirements of Wagner-Peyser codified at 20 CFR 652.215 and 216. Accordingly, ETA strongly encourages Governors to consider lifting state-wide hiring freezes for Wagner-Peyser, as well as other workforce programs receiving funds under the Recovery Act, in order to effectively meet the intent of the law. In making hiring decisions, however, states should be mindful of the temporary nature of the Recovery Act funding.

15. Reemployment Services. The Recovery Act makes available funding for reemployment services (RES) in the amount of \$250,000,000. These funds will be distributed to states using the Wagner-Peyser formula to supplement existing RES for UI claimants, and to support integrating Employment Service and UI information technology to identify and serve the needs of such claimants. Per the Recovery Act, the funds are available for obligation through September 30, 2010 and for expenditure through June 30, 2011.

A. Allowable Activities

RES funding provides job search and other employment-related assistance services to UI claimants. As was the case with prior RES grants in PY 2001 through PY 2005, these funds are to be used to provide RES to UI claimants through the One-Stop Career Centers, in addition to the regular Wagner-Peyser Act funded employment services, in order to accelerate their return to work. States are expected to provide reemployment services within the One-Stop Career Centers.

Under Wagner-Peyser Act section 7(a) through (c), allowable activities include job search and placement services to job seekers including counseling, testing, occupational and labor market information, assessment, and referral to employers, and appropriate recruitment services and special technical services for employers. Specifically, this may include:

- Services provided to UI claimants identified through the UI profiling system;
- In-person staff assisted services;
- Initial claimant reemployment assessments;
- Career guidance and group and individual counseling, including provision of materials, suggestions, or advice which are intended to assist the job seeker in making occupation or career decisions;

- Provision of labor market, occupational, and skills transferability information that clarifies claimants' reemployment opportunities and skills used in related or other industries;
- Referral to job banks, job portals, and job openings;
- Referral to employers and registered apprenticeship sponsors;
- Referral to training;
- Assessment, including interviews, testing, individual and group counseling, or employability planning; and
- Referral to training by WIA-funded or third party service providers.

States should also evaluate potential technological changes and updates that would improve their capacity to serve growing numbers of UI claimants, as Recovery Act funds may be used for information technology required to identify and serve the needs of UI claimants.

B. Recommended Strategies

In utilizing RES funding in the Recovery Act, ETA encourages states to consider the following:

Collaboration between State Employment Service, Unemployment Insurance, and Labor Market Information Offices. ETA strongly encourages states to bring together all partners in their state workforce system, including the UI, Employment Services and Labor Market Information offices, as well as the State Workforce Agency and State Workforce Investment Board leadership, to create a comprehensive strategic plan to most effectively serve UI claimants and businesses in need of a job ready, labor market connected workforce. In designing the strategic plan, ETA encourages states to consider the full range of Recovery Act economic stimulus projects and funds that will be available to the state, in addition to employment opportunities that may be available in the state in industries that continue to need more workers. For example, some areas have seen a general decline in economic activity and these states will receive significant economic stimulus funding for a wide variety of “shovel-ready” infrastructure projects. ETA encourages states to post these positions in the public job bank and to fill these positions with One-Stop Career Center customers. This type of coordinated response will optimize federal investments and benefits to unemployed workers.

Full Array of Services. ETA expects states to provide a full array of services for UI claimants through RES, Wagner-Peyser Act, and WIA grant funding as applicable. ETA encourages states to develop a comprehensive and integrated service delivery model to ensure the UI claimants receive an enhanced level of service. Based on the claimants' needs, ETA encourages states to consider the following service strategies and tactics:

- Claimant reemployment job clubs and/or networking support groups, including White Collar Job Clubs;
- Expanding the basis under the UI profiling system for referring UI claimants for services through the One-Stop system;
- Providing training for One-Stop staff on assessments, including worker profiling; autocoder software; labor market information, etc. to help staff understand how to use information and technology tools to target RES;

- Collaboration with UI to identify claimants who would benefit most from RES or WIA services, and encouraging UI to adjust the profiling models to target these individuals;
- Targeting job development efforts to better identify the skills transferability needs of UI claimants;
- One-on-one career guidance and counseling to include examination of whether an individual is likely to return to previous occupation or industry and, if not, use of skills assessment and testing techniques, labor market information data, workforce information, O*NET, and other tools to identify the claimant's transferable skills and other occupations and/or industries in which these skills can be used;
- Development of individual reemployment plans for claimants who, based on assessments, would not be a candidate for immediate reemployment in the regional labor market area and would benefit from additional RES and/or WIA intensive and training services; and
- Soft-skills pre-training services such as computer and internet keyboarding, and other competency classes to improve claimants' ability to job search and apply to jobs online.

Profiling and the Use of Statistical Modeling. With the limited funds available and the large numbers of claimants that would benefit from RES, ETA encourages states to assess claimants through the use of existing statistical profiling models using claimants' characteristics, as known from their initial UI claim, to help identify the most effective mix of interventions and services for different groups of UI claimants. Matching the types of services with the skills and abilities of claimants to be served will vary from state to state depending on the type of profiling model used, the local labor market dynamics, and the claimant characteristics. Close coordination and collaboration with UI is required to make this a success. Based simply on the claimants' potential duration of UI benefits (the maximum number of weeks of UI they are eligible to receive) and their profiled likelihood of exhausting those benefits, states may make the generalizations about service referrals described below. This information is not intended to place individuals into defined categories that have defined service delivery strategies, but instead can be used by states to guide development of the most effective strategies for all UI claimants.

- Claimants with low likelihood of benefit exhaustion and short potential benefit duration may be referred to immediate and intensive job development and job referral services. These claimants tend to be seasonal workers or multiple job holders. Their short potential duration on UI is a powerful incentive to return to work and their general characteristics (e.g., multiple employers, relatively low levels of wages, tenure, and education) generally indicate a claimant who is likely to regain employment quickly.
- Claimants who have a high likelihood of exhaustion and short potential benefit duration may be referred to skills training or skills transferability analysis. These claimants tend to have a strong work history, but need additional skills. This group is characterized by relatively longer job tenure, lower wages, and lower education than the average UI claimant.
- Claimants who have a high likelihood of exhaustion and long potential benefit duration may be referred to job search assistance services. These workers often have long tenure, very high education, and high wages. These claimants have strong attachment to the workforce but may not have looked for a job in a long time. They are often good job

candidates, but may need job search assistance such as resume writing assistance, job search workshops, and labor market information. They may also be facing an adjustment in wage expectations as a result of their work histories.

- Claimants who have a lower likelihood of exhaustion and long potential benefit duration may be referred to assessments, intensive services, and training. These claimants, who are characterized by low job tenure, high reserve wages, and low education, may have other barriers that affect their ability to find and maintain employment in the regional labor market.

ETA encourages states to work with their UI offices to ensure that all UI applicants are simultaneously referred to their One-Stop Career Center, regardless of their eligibility for UI.

Upgrading of Information Technology. Given that the Recovery Act allows for funds to be spent on information technology to better target and serve UI claimants, ETA encourages states to consider whether the following activities would strengthen and support their ability to more effectively serve RES participants and incorporate as appropriate:

- Updating the state's UI profiling model to improve effectiveness in targeting claimants;
- Integrating and/or significantly improving the communication and or the data transfer of UI claimant identification and characteristics data between the UI and One-Stop Career Center or Wagner-Peyser Act funded employment service management information and/or case management systems to eliminate the wasteful and redundant data collection and to improve the accuracy of UI data shared with RES;
- Implementing O*Net-SOC AutoCoder software and/or system in the UI claims taking process and in One-Stop Career Center intake operation. AutoCoder converts plain English job descriptions into O*NET standard occupational classification (SOC) codes, enabling case managers to quickly evaluate a UI claimant's work history and his/her competitiveness in the regional economy;
- Integrating labor market data into a strategic decision-making system would provide immediate and future benefit to the efficiency of service delivery; and
- Infrastructure upgrades to administrative systems, case management, and Internet access to improve efficiency.

16. WIA Youth Program. The Recovery Act makes available \$1,200,000,000 for WIA Youth activities. Funds will be distributed to states via the existing WIA Youth formula per TEGL No. 13-08, which specified amounts for each state. These funds are available for states to provide activities for youth in accordance with WIA requirements. Per the Act, the funds shall remain available to states for the same period of time as standard PY 2008 Youth formula funds, or until June 30, 2011.

TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project

November 2008

Numerous studies have identified substantial overlap in families and individuals served by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. Over the past decade, as the TANF program has developed policies to help recipients enter the workforce and increase self-sufficiency, it has become increasingly important for TANF agencies to screen applicants and recipients in order to meet their needs. Individuals who appear to have a disability that interferes with work pose a challenge with respect to work and work-related activity requirements. For these individuals, TANF agencies may take any number of actions, one of which may be to refer the individual to the Social Security Administration (SSA) to apply for SSI. However, given the strict definition of disability for becoming eligible for SSI, it is likely that many TANF recipients never become eligible, even if they have some form of disability. It is in the interest of TANF applicants and recipients and of TANF agencies that the screening for disability be as accurate as possible. And because well-informed referrals for SSI applications permit the best use of SSA's adjudicative resources, it is in the interest of SSA as well.

To improve program interaction, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), which administers the TANF program, and the Social Security Administration (SSA), which administers the SSI program, are working together and in collaboration with several states and localities to examine the overlap in the TANF and SSI populations, document current approaches for identifying and working with individuals with a disability, and to identify approaches to work more effectively and efficiently with individuals who may be eligible for SSI.

The TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project (TSDTP) will take place in two major stages, each lasting approximately 12 months. The *first stage* consists of understanding the current environment through data exchange, analysis and model development. During this stage, the project team will work with each site to document the number of cases involved and their current procedures for identification of disability and referral to SSI. ACF and SSA are finalizing data-exchange agreements with five states, involving six local TANF agencies, chosen based on their interest in participating and the belief that their programs would yield useful information. Following the data analysis, ACF, SSA and its evaluation contractors, MDRC and the Lewin Group, will work with sites to develop locally-driven innovations for engaging individuals with disabilities in employment-related activities and making appropriate referrals. These innovations will be supported by sound logic models and a conceptual framework.

In the *second stage* of the project, programmatic innovations will be pilot-tested and monitored for program performance. This stage will document the implementation of innovative approaches and provide recommendations for evaluating these or similar pilot interventions. For the entire project, states and local agencies will have opportunities for input, including by participating in the Advisory Committee, chaired by SSA staff, which will oversee the initial data exchange and analysis.

The overall goal of the project is to provide valuable information to a broad audience of TANF and SSI administrators, program operators, policymakers and stakeholders, on the overlap between TANF and SSI, approaches for best serving individuals with a disability, and possibilities for program improvement and reform. ACF and SSA intend to use TSDTP findings to determine appropriate next steps, which may include a demonstration project to evaluate local innovations.

For further information, please contact:

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Overview of the TANF Provisions in the Economic Recovery Act

The TANF provisions in section 2101 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 create a new Emergency Contingency Fund under which states can receive 80 percent federal funding for increases (relative to a base year) in certain TANF-related expenditures in federal fiscal year 2009 and 2010. States can access "emergency contingency funds" based on increased expenditures in each of three categories: **basic assistance, non-recurrent one time payments, and employment subsidies**. To draw down funds for increases in basic assistance, a state must have a TANF/MOE caseload increase relative to the base year, but there is no caseload increase requirement for the other two categories.

The emergency fund is a temporary provision for 2009 and 2010. The appropriation is capped at \$5 billion total for the two years. This cap is roughly double the amount that the Congressional Budget Office assumes states will draw down; it is almost certain that the \$5 billion fund is sufficient to ensure that all states will be able to draw down the amount of funds they qualify for under the emergency contingency fund formula.

- **Maximum amount that a state can draw down:** A state is eligible for emergency contingency funds equal to 80 percent of its increased spending in each of the three categories up to a maximum. The law caps the total amount that a state can receive over the two year period at 50 percent of the State family assistance grant amount (without consideration of the supplemental grants). The 50 percent cap applies to the combined amount a state receives under the new emergency fund and the prior regular contingency fund. (The maximum a state can receive from the regular contingency fund is 20 percent of its block grant per year; the regular contingency fund is likely to run out of funds in 2009 or 2010.)
- **Base year:** The law sets the base year as either 2007 or 2008, whichever has the *lower* assistance caseload (for the basic assistance category) or lower expenditures (for the subsidized employment and non-recurrent short-term benefits categories). The base year for a state could be different for different expenditure categories.
- **Adjustments to base year data:** HHS is given broad authority in to make adjustments to caseload and expenditure data to ensure comparability between the current year and the base year. The adjustment authority is intended to ensure that comparable program or funding configurations are being compared, that is that the comparison is "apples to apples." For example, a state that has adopted a solely state-funded program since its base year might have its base year caseload and expenditures adjusted so that when current year caseload and expenditures are compared to the base year, the data are comparable. Without this adjustment mechanism, states that began or expanded a solely state-funded program might not have qualified even if their caseloads increased.
- **Tribal TANF:** The law provides that the emergency contingency fund is available to Indian tribes with approved tribal families assistance plans in the same manner that it available to a state.

- **How the funds can be spent:** The law provides that a state can spend the emergency contingency fund payments in any way that a state can use TANF block grant funding. While the funds can be used for any permissible TANF block grant expenditure, a state will only qualify for an amount of funds that represents increased spending in the three categories.
- **Implementation:** The law directs HHS to implement the emergency fund as quickly as reasonably possible pursuant to appropriate guidance to the states.

Caseload reduction credit modification: The recovery package also includes an option for state modification of the caseload reduction credit which establishes the target work participation rate that a state must meet under TANF. When calculating the caseload reduction credit that will be used to set a state's target work rate for 2009, 2010, or 2011, states have the option of using its caseload for 2007 or 2008 in lieu of the caseload of the prior fiscal year. This provision ensures that states with rising caseloads do not see their target work participation rate go up. It is important to note that, even with this provision, a state with a rising caseload will need to engage a larger number of families in work activities if their caseloads rise. (For example, 40% target rate applied to a larger caseload will result in a larger number of parents required to participate.)

TANF supplemental grant extension: The law extends TANF supplemental grants through federal fiscal year 2010.

TANF carry funds: The law authorizes states to use carry over TANF funds from prior years for any purpose permissible for TANF spending. Prior to this clarifying change, a state could only spend carry over funds on assistance. While states were able to shift funding under the prior limitation so that this was not an absolute barrier to spending, it sometimes added unnecessary complexity.