

MEMORANDUM

TO: Presidents

FROM: Elizabeth L. Johns, Vice President  
Academic and Student Services

SUBJECT Best Practices Welfare Reform Group

As you know, North Carolina and other states have been working hard to find ways to move welfare recipients off of cash assistance and into good productive jobs. Participants in the state's Work First Program receive benefits through a program called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the new name for Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

In the next few months, local planning groups in North Carolina will be determining how to use additional funds provided through the federal "Welfare-to-Work Program," which provides additional funding targeted at welfare recipients who are considered the "hardest to serve" -- those who face some significant challenges to employment:

- Substance abuse
- No diploma or poor math and reading skills
- Long term recipients of TANF or AFDC
- Poor work history

Local planners may also choose to use Welfare-to-Work funds to provide services to get non-custodial parents of eligible participants to work (97% of welfare participants are female) in an effort to increase the total income of a family.

Most of the decisions about what specific services these participants receive to help them make the transition from welfare to work will be made on a local level, so those of us planning the efforts on a state level are looking for the most interesting, innovative ideas we can find about how to do this -- from our friends locally, regionally and nationally. Then we will share those ideas with those doing the local planning.

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I hope you will take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and share your successes with us, and urge you to fax it to Melissa Hollen at (919) 715-5796 at the NCCCS office by February 16, 1998. I've found that some of the most interesting "solutions" to the challenges we face come from people who "just do it" everyday.

Welfare-to-Work funds are primarily focused on placing employees into jobs and retaining employees once they are on the job, so I urge you to give me feedback on:

- ways you are linking employers with employees
- mentoring efforts for people with substance abuse issues or skills
- individual with skill deficits who are making the transition from welfare to work
- in-house employee job-coaching ideas
- means of providing basic skills training in or near the work environment during, before, or after the workday
- particularly successful training models
- links with church, civic or non-profit volunteer resources
- techniques for coordinating child care and transportation
- multi-dimensional integrated cross-agency efforts
- training/employment or other support services to assist
- non-custodial parents in getting to work
- other ideas that may help this population

Your ideas will be the basis of a "best practices" resource book that we send to local planners of the Welfare-to-Work initiative, and will help ensure that county planners are fully aware of the best thinking that is being done in their own backyards and throughout the country. If you are interested in receiving this guide, please indicate that as you complete the attached survey.

SD/bl

Attachment

c: HRD Coordinators  
Work First Coordinators  
JTPA Coordinators  
Basic Skills Coordinators  
Community-Based Literacy Volunteer Councils

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