



**Event:** Presentation entitled “*Overcoming Employment-Related Challenges: Job Creation and Job Retention and Job Advancement*” as part of the Region VI Head Start Mid-Winter Leadership Conference

**Date:** January 12-14, 1999

**Location:** Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dallas, Texas

## **I. Summary**

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network coordinated this presentation as part of the Administration for Children and Families’ (ACF) Region VI Head Start Mid-Winter Leadership Conference in collaboration with the Region VI office. The conference featured regional representatives from both Head Start and various public assistance agencies. These agencies included the Administration for Children and Families, the Department of Labor, the Health Care Financing Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Health Resources and Services Administration. The conference was sponsored by the ACF Dallas Region VI Office.

The purpose of this three-day conference was to bring together a mix of individuals and organizations that highlight strategies and activities to promote quality care for children and family self-sufficiency. Topics addressed included personal and family challenges as well as challenges in the community for families seeking self-sufficiency. This summary highlights the main points from the workshop presentations and subsequent discussions from one of the many topics addressed: barriers to employment. Discussions on this topic focused on how states and communities can work together to overcome recipients’ challenges by creating employment, retaining it, and advancing it through post-employment services.

## **II. Participants**

Workshop participants included representatives from the various agencies mentioned in the previous Section I *Overview*. In addition, a range of State, tribal, and community professionals were also present. The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network enabled public assistance agency representatives from the following states to attend this presentation: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The feature presenters for the *Overcoming Employment-Related Challenges* workshop were Mr. David Olds, Business Development Manager, Welfare to Work Programs, Virginia Department of Social Services and Mr. David Coufal, Program Administrator for Planning and Development, Texas Workforce Commission.

## **I. Session Summary**

### **A. Highlights from Mr. Old's presentation.**

Providing jobs for welfare recipients is not necessarily a complicated task. Ensuring job retention and potential for career advancement, however, is not quite so simple. Conference attendees offered many different perspectives on why they go to work and why they stay in the same occupation with their same employers over time. Personal, professional, and financial incentives were major contributing factors; fear of the unknown, risks at some other employer, and conforming to basic daily routines comprised the remaining motivational factors to retain one's current employment status.

For previously unemployed or underemployed welfare recipients, the luxury of picking and choosing employers, retaining employment, or advancing in a specific job or company are not always available choices. Re-employment itself provides many serious challenges. Adapting to additional costs (e.g., transportation, daycare, clothes, and supplies), meeting the performance, cultural, and emotional demands of the workplace, and dealing with negative reactions from family and friends (especially significant others who may feel threatened by the newly acquired employment status) are among these challenges. Furthermore, finding the right job is often a complicated task. Welfare recipients returning to the workforce should understand that the first job they accept is not necessarily the one they would keep.

Statistically, 46% of welfare clients lose their jobs within the first six months; the total climbs to 73% by the end of one year. Fifty percent of these people actually quit their jobs within the first two weeks, often in anticipation of being fired. These figures highlight the need for intensive follow-up by case managers from the beginning. Those who remain in their jobs are still faced with the possibility that the job will come to an end or that they will ultimately be fired.

Reasons for quitting are varied. Many personal factors, as well as basic barriers to employment, contribute to the decision to resign. Newly re-employed personnel often lack the social skills to get along in a professional environment; they tend to resent authority and being told what to do. Reporting to work on time tends to be a problem, which may be attributable to childcare and transportation constraints. The job itself may be the major reason to resign. Low pay, lack of medical benefits, and the mundane duties of the position make the job undesirable. Re-entering the workforce often creates stress in the home; males tend to "interfere" with their working significant others.

Welfare recipients offer many reasons for disliking the jobs in which they are placed. "The specific duties of the job are unacceptable." "The boss plays favorites." "I am discriminated against." "I don't like being told what to do." "I'm given work that's not mine." "My coworkers are setting me up." Because most of these jobs are in the hospitality industry, many of those placed in them are inexperienced or unable to cope with the demands of direct customer contact.

Successful job retention and career advancement is a continuous process. Case managers must remain actively involved at every stage. Pre-employment assessments provide valuable information, but only if the information is used. Job readiness training must include strategies for coping with and keeping the job.

The job search itself must be carefully conducted to facilitate successful placement. Job matching involves pairing the right client to the most suitable employer at a professional and personal level, providing the skills and satisfying the needs of both. The employer's active involvement in the

placement phase is crucial. On-site mentors should be available. The company should provide any necessary training. Potential issues or barriers need to be identified and addressed.

Post-employment strategies need to include intensive initial follow-up by case managers on an individual basis. Mentors and job coaches from the community or those supplied by the employer need to actively participate in the post-employment phase. Support services (e.g., day care and transportation) need to be available. Continuing education and training are also essential to long-term employment. A community/employer partnership would help to accomplish many of the post-employment objectives.

Traditional barriers to employment, however, will continue to obstruct the welfare-to-work process. Available day care and transportation, lack of education and work skills or poor work history, substance abuse, mental health issues, and domestic violence are integral problems at various social levels.

Economically, the labor market has been experiencing a decline in real (spendable) wages and an increase in the percentage of working poor. Approximately one-third of the Virginia population is below the Federal poverty level. Welfare reform has put a lot of people in low-wage jobs, primarily in the service industry. Many people entering the labor market do not have the skills to advance.

Low-wage jobs tend to be short-term, transitory opportunities with a high turnover rate. There has been an increase in the availability of part-time and temporary work; these jobs, however, usually lack benefits. Most new jobs are available in the service sector with small, unstable companies that are more likely to experience financial difficulties or failure.

The growing population and labor force affect future employment opportunities. Although the population is growing faster as measured by raw numbers, the labor force is growing faster on a percentage basis. Baby boomers (ages 40-64) comprise the largest segment of the existing and available workforce. They are mature and experienced workers; however, many require retraining in high tech areas. Of the ten fastest growing occupations, computers and data processing rank first, followed by healthcare. The remaining eight occupations include automotive service, water supply/sanitation, management and PR, residential care, freight, personnel, individual social services, and office physicians. Most of these opportunities require only short-term training without a four-year degree or even a two-year certificate. However, higher education invariably commands better pay and affords faster advancement opportunities.

We live in a global economy. Information and technology are available on the Internet anywhere in the world. This creates international options for employers; it also makes domestic rural areas accessible and provides potential employment to anyone with Internet access. Welfare recipients may be employed in computer programming, using an "assembly line" approach. A client learns and inputs specific codes that comprise a portion of an entire program. Job retention and advancement will require continuing education and training.

The rapid advancement of technology continues to challenge the existing workforce and limit the potential workforce to more highly qualified personnel. During the past decade, the trend has been toward reducing business costs; salaries are typically the first target. Currently, many available jobs require highly skilled, computer literate personnel; however, low unemployment has tightened the labor market.

Meeting the growing demands of a job market that is much larger than the qualified labor pool requires intensified workforce development, beginning with education in schools. Many employers are “inter-industry” recruiting to meet their employment needs. Students and professionals must embrace lifelong learning through higher levels of education and training to meet the demands of advancing technology.

**B. Highlights from Mr. Coufal’s presentation.**

Local Innovation and Job Retention Demonstration Grants, project Summary:

*Grant Strategies*

Under the FY 1998-99 job retention and local innovation grants strategy, TWC has developed demonstration projects for providing services to welfare recipients that will lead to model strategies for improving the ability of participants to retain and advance in a job, access reliable transportation, or move toward self-sufficiency through self-employment. The projects may involve any of a full spectrum of services that vary in intensity depending on the number of participants referred to an employer and/or the needs of particular participants. The goal of the grant strategy is to invest in the long-term success of welfare recipients in their transition from welfare to self-sufficiency.

*Eligibility*

Eligible applicants for both grants are private and public entities that can provide services in any of the workforce development areas in the state of Texas. Applicants were required to submit signed certification and endorsement of their proposed project by the Local

Workforce Development Board (LWDB) responsible for service delivery in the county(s) to be served by the proposed project.

*Job Retention and Re-employment Grants*

Through two requests for applications, TWC has selected 23 demonstration projects to be funded in 10 workforce development areas in the state. The projects range from demonstration of a single job retention strategy to comprehensive approaches employing multiple strategies.

*Local Innovation Projects Addressing Transportation Barriers*

Through two requests for applications, TWC has selected 8 demonstration projects to be funded in seven workforce development areas in the state. The projects range from demonstration of a single transportation strategy to comprehensive approaches employing multiple strategies.

*Microenterprise Development Pilot Project*

Through a request for proposals, TWC has selected a single contractor to provide self-employment assistance services in four pilot counties: Bexar, Harris, Hidalgo, and Cameron. These counties were chosen to represent an urban and rural mix to capitalize on existing microenterprise

development experience and resources in those communities; they include a large segment of Texas' two-parent families on public assistance.

#### Evaluation

Each demonstration project includes a plan and budget for delivering a formative and outcome evaluation. External evaluators will perform the majority of evaluations under subcontract agreements.

### **Job Retention and Re-employment Services Demonstration Grants**

The *Choices Program* is Texas' employment service program for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Both State and Federal welfare reform legislation emphasize personal responsibility, time-limited cash assistance benefits, and the goal of work instead of welfare. To support these philosophies, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Local Workforce Development Boards have developed a service delivery model with primary emphasis on the goal of employment at the earliest opportunity for applicants and recipients of cash assistance.

- ***SER Individual Economic Development*** (Individual Development Account—IDA)  
SER will provide services to 200 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model. This project pilots an Individual Development Account (IDA) program that is designed to help participants accumulate assets for the following qualified purposes: education and training; first home purchase; and business capitalization.
- ***Voyage to Vocations*** (Mentoring)  
Alamo Area Development Corporation will provide services to 120 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model. This project, serving the rural counties around San Antonio, has a strong integrated design centered on one-on-one job coaching services.
- ***SER Employment Mentorship Program*** (Service Enhancement/Job)  
SER will provide services to 250 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model. This project establishes a special job retention unit within the one-stop workforce center to augment its *Choices* program with post-employment services.
- ***Coaching for Success*** (Mentoring)  
Lutheran Social Services of the South, Inc. (LSSS) will provide services to 30 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model. Coaching for Success, using volunteer resources of Lutheran churches and Family Pathfinder program materials, provides structured one-on-one mentoring by pairing volunteer coaches with *Choices* participants.
- ***Capital Area Job Retention and Empowerment Project*** (Peer Mentoring)  
Austin Outreach and Community Service Center, Inc. (AOCS) will provide services to 70 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model and who reside in Travis county public housing. This project creates ongoing peer support networks through structured, neighborhood-based, participant-led “supper clubs” at selected public housing locations.

- ***Success Women*** (Comprehensive Case Management/Mentoring)  
 Central East Austin Community Organization, Inc. (CEACO) will provide services to 200 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model, especially those *Choices* participants who are nearing end of time limits. Success Women is a systematic and comprehensive post-employment project of extended client-centered case management and mentoring services.
- ***Pathways for Paychecks*** (System-Building/Mentoring)  
 Austin Resource Center of Independent Living (ARCIL) will provide services to 60 *Choices* participants with significant disabilities located within the Capital Area Workforce Development Area who live within the service area of Capital Metro Transportation Authority. This project complements existing *Choices* services with a full menu of individualized job retention services, centering on a peer-directed approach, targeted to TANF recipients with some form of learning, emotional, cognitive, or other disability.
- ***Dallas Workplace Partners for Success*** (Job Coach/Incentive)  
 Women’s Center of Dallas (WCD) will provide services to 30 *Choices* participants who have entered employment with the project’s partnering employers. This project expands an existing successful program to include TANF recipients. It is based on an integrated service delivery model of both on-site and off-site one-on-one mentoring, on-the-job training, and an incentive program that provides bonuses for successful job retention.
- ***Staying on the Job Pays*** (Incentive)  
 Lockheed Martin IMS (IMS) will provide services to 350 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model. Lockheed IMS’ strategy is to focus on providing financial incentives of \$250 in the form of multipurpose store vouchers at both 3 and 6 months of successful job retention.
- ***Rapid Job Entry Program*** (Training/Temporary Employment)  
 Olsten Staffing will provide services to 260 *Choices* participants who are either determined to be “job-ready,” as defined by the local board, or have already entered employment after exposure to the *Choices* Work First model. Olsten Staffing’s Rapid Job Entry Program offers a powerful career development strategy that builds on the Work First model.
- ***Family Loan Program (FLP)*** (Family Loan)  
 Family Service, Inc. will provide services to 200 post-employment *Choices* clients who meet specified requirements. Family Services, Inc. will provide a blend of financial and social assistance, including small low-interest loans and other support services.
- ***Employer Pipeline Model*** (Mentoring/Job Coaching)  
 Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) will partner with AVANCE and Career Management International (CMI) to provide services for 90 *Choices* participants in the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Area. TEEX will provide *Choices* clients with occupation-specific, short-term job training, in non-traditional occupations.
- ***Post-Employment Retention is Key (PERK)*** (Comprehensive Case Management/Mentoring)  
 Career and Recovery Resources (CRR) will target 140 *Choices* participants, focussing on those who have a history of substance abuse. CRR will direct their job-retention program toward those who face multiple barriers to employment, including (but not limited to) literacy, substance abuse,

and a lack of stable housing arrangements.

- ***Institute for Excellence*** (Mentoring)  
Housing Community College System (HCCS) will provide intensive counseling and post-employment support services to 150 *Choices* participants. HCCS will serve the participants in its Institute for Excellence to investigate the impact of post-employment services and short-term occupational skills training on employer satisfaction, job-retention, and earnings growth.
- ***Galveston County Job Retention Project*** (Mentoring/Job Coaching)  
Image Enterprises (IE) will provide services to no fewer than 156 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model in the Galveston area. IE will provide job-retention services to *Choices* participants in Galveston County.
- ***Wheels to Work*** (Wheels for Work)  
Volunteers of America (VOA)/Texas will provide 100 *Choices* participants with vehicles over the life of this one-year contract. VOA will administer the program for *Choices* clients who have been offered employment but cannot accept it, or are in danger of losing employment due to lack of transportation.
- ***Urban League Comprehensive Case Management Project*** (Support Network)  
Houston Area Urban League (HAUL) will provide job-retention services to 150 *Choices* participants who have entered employment in the Houston area. These services will include: assistance in accessing transitional benefits, medical services, and transportation; assistance in applying for the Earned Income Tax Credit; job-retention counseling and mentoring; and access to an emergency grant fund to cover one-time job-related expenses.
- ***Bilingual Call Center*** (ELS/Mentoring)  
SER Jobs for Progress of the Texas Gulf Coast, Inc. will provide services to 150 Spanish-speaking *Choices* participants in the Houston area. SER will recruit bilingual and monolingual Spanish-speaking *Choices* participants to be trained for employment in bilingual call centers in Houston.
- ***Sure Start Program*** (Job Coaching/Incentives)  
County of Hildago Office of Employment and Training (CHOET) will provide services to 100 *Choices* participants who have or are about to enter employment after exposure to the Work First model. CHOET will provide participants an array of services to support job-retention efforts, including re-employment assistance, mediation with employers, vouchers for emergency goods and services, and job coaching.
- ***Quest Program*** (Mentoring/Incentives)  
Palo Pinto Community College will provide who have or are about to enter employment after exposure to the Work First model. The Quest Program, developed by the Palo Pinto Community Service Corporation, is designed to help clients achieve self-sufficiency through employment.
- ***Ark-Tex Rural Transit*** (Public Transportation Enhancement)  
Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) will provide services to 100 *Choices* participants and their children in the Bowie and Cass County areas. ATCOG will utilize its Geographic Information System (GIS) department to create a system of fixed and demand-response routes to *Choices* participants not currently served by a public transportation system, and who lack reliable private

transportation.

- ***WTOI Transportation Plan*** (Public Transportation Enhancement)  
West Texas Opportunities, Inc. (WTOI) will provide services to 40 *Choices* participants (on a continuous basis) who have or are about to enter employment after exposure to the Work First model. This project provides for the acquisition of vehicles and hiring of drivers for getting *Choices* participants without means of transportation to and from work.
- ***Webb County Job Retention and Re-employment Program*** (Job Coach)  
Webb County will provide services to 150 *Choices* participants in the Webb County area who have either a high school diploma or GED. This “Job Retention and Re-employment Program” provides continuity of service from job placement assistance through post-employment mentoring for two years.
- ***On the Road to Independence*** (Van Pool/Savings)  
Lockheed Martin, IMS will provide services to 112 *Choices* participants located within the Dallas County Workforce Development Board Area. This project provides for the purchase of a van to develop a reverse commute service through van pooling to areas of employer need under-served by public transportation.
- ***Telecommuting*** (Telecommuting)  
The University of Texas Graduate School of Business will provide services to 45 *Choices* participants who have or are about to enter employment after exposure to the Work First model, with a focus on those with computer literacy. This unique project utilizes technology in a non-traditional approach to closing the transportation to employment gap by providing telecommuting options to *Choices* participants.
- ***Tarrant County Wheels to Work*** (Transportation)  
Partnership for Texas Air Care (PTAC) will provide 30 *Choices* clients with vehicles during the one-year pilot project period. PTAC will administer the program for *Choices* clients who have been offered employment but cannot accept it, or are in danger of losing employment due to lack of transportation.
- ***SPARTAN Transit Program*** (Rural Transportation)  
South Plains Community Action Association, Inc. (SPCAA) will provide services to 60 *Choices* participants who have or are about to enter employment after exposure to the Work First model. This program expands public transportation services to and from rural areas to the surrounding Lubbock metro area.
- ***Voyage to Vocations*** (Rural Transportation)  
Alamo Area Council of Governments will provide services to 100 *Choices* participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model. This project provides demand response services to and from both work and childcare facilities.
- ***Intelligent Commuter Solutions*** (Rural Transportation)  
Intelligent Commuter solutions will provide services to 100 *Choices* participants who have or are about to enter employment after exposure to the Work First model. The project’s strategy is to make available and implement a cost-effective ridesharing transportation system by providing



services such as vanpooling, carpooling, ride matching, and employer outreach.

- ***Power of Five*** (Rural Transportation)  
San Antonio Positive Solutions will provide services to 50 Choices participants who have entered employment after exposure to the Work First model and who are working non-traditional hours, especially in the hospitality industry. This program provides services that address the traditional barriers to job retention encountered in jobs with non-traditional hours, such as child care, peer support networks, and transportation.
- ***Microenterprise Development Pilot Project*** (Microenterprise)  
YWCA of San Antonio will provide business training and microlending services to 415 Choices clients interested in starting and growing a business as a means to self-sufficiency. YWCA will provide microenterprise development training to participants referred to its program.
- ***Choices Pass Program*** (Public Transportation Enhancement)  
City Transit Management will provide services to 115 Choices participants who have entered employment in the Lubbock metro area on a first-come, first-served basis, until grant funds are exhausted. This project expands public transportation service to areas of Choices participant need by providing fare discounts for existing service and, where origins or destinations are outside public service areas, curb-to-curb service through a “demand response” system currently available only to passengers with disabilities.

### **C. Final Remarks**

Workshop attendees agreed that information sharing that occurred during this presentation was very helpful to their offices. They found that Mr. Old’s description of the low-wage labor market, barriers to employment, and the employment outlook provided an excellent background for his discussion on job creation, retention, and advancement. Mr. Coufal’s review of the Local Innovation and Job Retention Demonstration Grants provided participants with a wealth of ideas for demonstration grants on a variety of topics that could be duplicated in other states.

For further information on Virginia’s initiatives, contact David Olds at (804) 692-2251. For further information on Texas’ initiatives, contact David Coufal at (512) 463-2668.

For other welfare-related information, or to learn more about the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, visit our web site at [www.calib.com/peerta](http://www.calib.com/peerta). For questions about technical assistance contact Paul Purnell or Blake Austensen at (301) 270-0841. For questions on the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network Web site contact Jeanette Hercik or Aracelis Holguin at 703-385-3200.