

WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK

Integrating TANF and WIA

Nashua, Concord, and Salem, New Hampshire

February 23-24, 2004

Technical Assistance Report

In anticipation of the re-authorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and with the goal of increasing effectiveness in a time of decreasing resources, the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (RI DHS) sought assistance from the State of New Hampshire for methods of integrating TANF and WIA services.

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Network provided introductions and logistical support to allow the author of this summary report, Diane Cook, Policy Specialist for RI DHS, to travel to New Hampshire for two days of interviews regarding the New Hampshire Employment Program (NHEP). These interviews were held at the following venues:

- two New Hampshire One Stop Career Offices known as “New Hampshire Works;”
- the New Hampshire Employment Services (NHES) administrative offices;
- the State Workforce Investment Board, known as the “Workforce Opportunity Council, Inc.;
- the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) central office; and
- CompuSkills classroom, a New Hampshire training vendor.

Joy Tinker, Program Specialist for the Administration for Children and Families Region I Office, was integral to setting up the TA connections and providing onsite support.

Interviews were held with the individuals listed below:

Employment Counselor Specialists:

- Fran Clougherty and Roberta Gabriel, Salem, New Hampshire; and
- Diane Drum, Mandi Sutton, and Ruth Mason, Nashua, New Hampshire.

New Hampshire Works Center Manager:

- Christine Nelson, Nashua, New Hampshire.

Field Support Manager, DHHS:

- Maureen Farmer, Concord, New Hampshire.

Adult Workforce Director, Workforce Opportunity Council, Inc.:

- Jackie Heuser, Concord, New Hampshire.

Workforce Development Operations Administrator, Southern New Hampshire Services:

- Christine Beauvais, Manchester, New Hampshire.

Employment & Training Coordinator, New Hampshire Employment Program:

- Carol Varney, Concord, New Hampshire.

Director of Employment Services and Operations, NHES:

- Doris LaChance, Concord, New Hampshire.

Administrator of Transitional Assistance, DHHS:

- Marie Maio, Concord, New Hampshire; and
- five TANF recipients in Nashua, New Hampshire involved in CompuSkills training.

Purpose of TA Visit

The purpose of the TA visit was to learn about the NEHP, its success, and the context for its existence. NHEP is an example of the integration of TANF and WIA service delivery. It is staffed by three different agencies that work together to deliver services to TANF recipients. The local service delivery teams consist of one DHHS staff (similar to a State social caseworker), one NHES staff member (similar to a State employment counselor), and one Southern New Hampshire Services (SNHS) staff member (similar to a non-profit employment and training specialist). Team members have a supervisor from their respective agencies. This tri-agency arrangement continues up through two management levels: field support managers and an oversight team. The service delivery teams are located in 13 New Hampshire Works offices (One Stops under WIA) around the State. The Field Support Managers are primarily located in the DHHS central office.

Historical Context

From multiple sources, the history of NHEP was obtained. During the time of national welfare reform discussions, and prior to passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, the Governor of New Hampshire determined that a useful service delivery method for welfare was a tri-agency approach, utilizing the expertise of the partners identified above. Prior to WIA in 1998, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) was the equivalent of the non-profit partner with training expertise. The Workforce Opportunity Council, Inc., was a participant in designing NHEP in 1995, along with DHHS and NHES, as members of an Interagency Work Group. After WIA, the Technical College received funds for the State and subcontracted the Community Action Program (CAP) agencies. These CAP agencies became the service delivery vehicle for WIA. SNHS was accessed to provide administrative support to the State Workforce Opportunity Council (State WIB) and partner with NHEP.

Presently, NHEP is fully funded by DHHS through a contract with SNHS and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DHHS and NHES. The MOU functions like a contract between the two parties in many respects. It also appears to constitute the DHHS partnership investment in the One Stop system. The same MOU delivers Food Stamp Employment & Training services in the One Stop environment.

NHEP

There are two tracks for TANF recipients in New Hampshire. The Family Assistance Program (FAP) provides financial assistance to families where the adult(s) are determined to

be unable to work. There is no requirement for work, but adult(s) may volunteer. The second track is NHEP for adults who are mandated to work. The purpose of creating separate tracks was to concentrate resources appropriately.

For most NHEP participants, the first expectation is preparation for a job and a job search. If the search is unsuccessful after 26 weeks, the expectation becomes an unpaid work experience, on-the-job training; or other paid employment. However, some educational and training opportunities are permitted to enhance employability. It is an individualized approach, negotiated between employment counselor specialists and their customers, and some activities (e.g., GED, if under 21) are mandated.

Customers in NHEP receive the usual supports of childcare and transportation (bus passes or reimbursement). They also have received auto repair, dental services, uniforms, tools, books, supplies, auto registration, insurance, driver license fees, office clothing, and other supports associated with maintaining the employment/work experience. Recently, support became limited to those participating in work, unpaid work experience, or on-the-job training. New Hampshire also has two resources to enable car ownership for low-income and NHEP program participants.

Employment counselor specialists from the different agencies appear to work very well together to deliver and arrange for services. Throughout this site visit, both employee counselor specialist and administrators stated that their roles have fused together. In the original design, they brought different expertise to these positions. Now, six years after implementation, these differences are not apparent, and there is not a division of responsibilities along agency lines. Importantly, they seem to be primarily engaged in what they termed “barrier resolution,” which is responding to the needs presented by the customers.

Responding to those needs in the New Hampshire Works One Stop environment has clear advantages. Customers are closer to job listings, career decision-making, and job search resources. The “work” message is less likely to get lost in the midst of resolving barriers. Likewise, NHEP customers are registered in the Job Match System (JMS), which is a benefit to all parties.

During this site visit, NHEP customer interviews were conducted in the CompuSkills classroom. CompuSkills is a vendor jointly funded by NHEP and WIA. Joint funding was established because the cost was higher than the caps under either program. This is another example of TANF-WIA collaboration. When interviewed, NHEP customers knew the goal of NHEP. They could cite five or six program people from whom they were receiving services for job readiness and job search. Program staff identified included, the eligibility worker at DHHS, the employment counselor specialist at NH Works, the WIA counselor (also located at NH Works), the instructors in two other programs commonly used by NHEP, and the CompuSkills instructor. None of the customers expressed success in their job search to date. Some noted a degree of overlap in the programs, but all seemed hopeful to secure permanent employment upon completion of work site training. They all had different perceptions about their freedom or invitation to use resources in the One Stops. Some mentioned the value of “Employ On”, One Stop resource that is restricted for use by

the employment counselors. Interestingly, the employment counselor specialists also felt grateful for this service, as it provides more job leads than the customer could find on his/her own through the JMS.

The perspectives of administrators about NHEP yielded concerns that were not expressed by front line staff. Some expressed the continuing challenge to assure adequate supervision, support, and oversight to staff whose immediate (official) supervisors were physically located elsewhere. New Hampshire personnel or civil service rules that include annual performance evaluations, which can only be conducted by the official supervisor, may reinforce this dilemma. Interestingly, the same arrangement of staff working day-to-day and taking direction from someone other than their official supervisor exists at the top of NHEP management, as well.

NHEP performance statistics are maintained. Recently, DHHS recognized the performance of the Salem team for successes on some data measures. Return on investment is a separate concept and no information was available for review. Nevertheless, three lessons were learned from interviews and the performance statistics provided.

Lessons Learned

First, it is possible to integrate TANF in the One Stops, and NH is admired for having created a program for TANF recipients that is almost wholly delivered to the customer (after eligibility determination) from within a One Stop environment. At the front line, there appears to be a seamless system in place for the customer. The team members have the same business card and titles, and they genuinely seem to view TANF customers as “their customers,” rather than DHHS customers, per se.

The downside of conjoined teams may be that the members have become more like social caseworkers in response to customer needs, and that no one is sufficiently focused on the outcome of the NHEP experience. It may not be sufficient to house a TANF work program in a One Stop environment. It may be that a significant percentage of TANF customers need individualized job developments, post-employment support, and not simply job search resources. Both administrators and front line staff recognized that job search services alone are not sufficient. Therefore, a pilot job club was developed that has shown early success. The job club concept is likely to meet the needs of some additional NHEP customers; others may require a more intensive level of intervention. “We could use a job developer,” was a shared comment by employment counselor specialists. The three agencies involved in NHEP seem to not have job developers or employment specialists whose primary function is to actively recruit employers on behalf of NHEP (or other One Stop) customers.

Third, management challenges remain. A couple of different approaches have been tried in NHEP’s history, and another is being considered. There are basic challenges in sustaining and nurturing a collaborative model when the funding and consequences of failure rest more heavily on one entity. These challenges are similar to those experienced by other One Stops nationwide. Such challenges may be the rationale for the funding mechanisms in the two WIA reauthorization proposals. Equitable funding formulas appear necessary, but not

solely sufficient for successful collaboration. Partners also need to clearly see value-added services and have a sense of shared mission and shared control.