Together, we're making our families stronger.

tanf

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

TANF eNews

April 2015

An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Inside this issue:

adws
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

From the Assistant Director

By Phil Harris, Assistant Director, DWS-TANF

CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE
Empowering Arkansas Families for the 21st Century Workforce
Department of WORKFORCEServices
EDUCATE • INFORM • INSPIRE

When I visit with our local office staff, I keep hearing two questions—

1. How is the eligibility transition coming along, and how will it affect us in the field?
2. How will the recently passed Drug Testing Bill for TANF applicants and recipients affect what we do, and how we do we plan to implement those requirements?

Both of these will have huge implications on all aspects of our work life—training, change in policy and procedures, roles, IT system usage, and the list goes on. But most important of all is that this will affect the way we engage our clients!!

Let me start off with the Eligibility Transition. I am sure you have been reading the ATTOP project status updates in the newsletters, and hearing from your PACs and other sources. I am happy to let you know that the IT System development has seen significant progress. There are many innovative features—one of those includes the ability to perform a comprehensive Work Readiness Assessment to identify barriers, and help develop an Employment Plan. This feature is integrated with the Intake and Eligibility Determination process, so that when we service our clients, we do it with the understanding that most of our clients approach the program to become employable, and self-sufficient, and not just get cash assistance!!

However, the success of this Eligibility Transition depends on how well we engage and deliver TANF services to our customers through pre and post transition. This means, we need to be successful with more than just the IT project. The central office leadership team and myself are working very closely on a staffing plan with Director Bassett and Deputy Director Ron Snead, to organize our local offices and TANF personnel to ensure that you are well prepared to not just receive the new IT system and the intake and eligibility functions but also be upfront and participate in many of the activities leading up to the transition. Our staffing model is expected to be completed in the coming weeks, and we will have designated Central Office staff work with your area and local office leadership to begin local office readiness in anticipation for the Soft Launch (Pilot). We are leveraging in-house experience and TANF Subject Matter Expertise by

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

utilizing Program Area Coordinators (PACs) to assist with Field Operations and local office readiness.

Derwin Taylor is also proactively working on not just the new Policy, Forms, and the promulgation process, but also engaging with the IT development process. It goes without saying that the TANF training team will play an extremely critical role in the rollout of the system and the success of the transition. I am in the process of restructuring the TANF training unit to ensure that we do not drop the ball on this. Expect to hear more details on this in the next newsletter!!

The TANF Systems Support team is being ramped up to perform intensive Quality Assurance and User Acceptance Testing on the complex IT system and ensure that when it reaches you, it is usable, and it enables you to deliver a high level of service to our TANF clients. Last but not the least, there are many back-office functions like EBT, Fraud, Overpayments, Collections, Appeals and Hearings, and Special Investigations that need to be in place before the field begins Intake and Eligibility. I have assigned these functions to Carla Morris and Don Childers and instructed them that it is extremely important that these back-office units be established before we go live with the transition!!

Now coming to Act 1205 Drug Screening & Testing of TANF applicants and recipients—our strategy is to do one thing right at a time. We want to get the eligibility transition progressed satisfactorily in a timely fashion, and then begin the People, Policy, Technology, and Fiscal planning for implementing the Drug Testing Bill requirements in the second half of the year. I will share more detail as we get closer to the planning phase. But for now, I want you all to be proactive, and actively communicate with us at Central Office and with your local office leadership on ways we can partner and showcase the transition as a model project for other agencies and our constituents across the state. ***TANF staff, keep up the great work you are doing***. Our People, Improved/New Processes, and Technology will make the difference in how we deliver the best services for our TANF participants.

Keep embracing the change!!

ATTOP Update—the ATTOP IT System has a Name

The ATTOP IT system is now known as ARWINS (Arkansas Workforce Integrated Network System).

Our new IT system is sporting a new name, and we have completed initial development of the basic functions that allow it to provide, at a minimum, the features of the legacy systems, ANSWER, WISE, Mainframe, and so on, that it is replacing.

Some enhancements to these basic features are included in the initial release; others are planned to be added in future releases. The development team plans to move the new system with its current features into end-to-end user acceptance testing (UAT) by the System Support team starting the first week of May.

One example of an enhancement to the basic features is the Application Management system included in Release 1.0 that will assist TANF staff in processing applications. Here is an overview of the Application Management system for your review:

- Workers can select a prior application for further processing, or when no prior applications exist in the system, workers may initiate a current application.
- An Application Intake Wizard—
    1. Records the date an application is received, how and where it is received, and which service program group the application is requesting.
    2. Identifies all members to be included in the application; workers may add members who do not currently exist in the system through the Client Profile and then select them as applicants.
    3. Allows workers to identify a primary applicant within an application unit.

4. Records relationships between applicants when these are already established in the system; if they are not already in the system, workers may enter them.

5. Records answers to basic questions required for the program and the agency.

6. Displays a summary of application information with options to save the application or return to earlier steps and change the information recorded.

Workers can save the application in any step above and later resume it by editing the application, as long as the application has not been disposed of, or it is less than 30 days from disposing the application.

- An Application Processing Wizard confirms the information provided and requests any additional information required to process an application for one or more programs for a particular applicant. It allows workers to add agreements and documentation that support the information provided. It also—

    1. Displays application screening results to identify any particular information that will pass or fail eligibility determination, and it provides an option to add or edit information that fails eligibility determination.

    2. Provides basic eligibility rules and allows workers to complete the application by selecting one or more service programs or to reject the application by selecting a valid reason.

    3. Provides an initial determination of application unit composition based on applicant composition and their relationships:
        a. Single Parent
        b. Two Parent
        c. Minor Parent
        d. Child Only

- Application Processing—

    1. Screening: Displays application detail and status

    2. Data Verification: Allows data verification and correction as necessary, without going back through the application wizard.

    3. Document Verification: Allows document verification and addition as necessary, without going back through the application wizard.

    4. Screening results: Displays the application screening results based on data verification; if a failure is based on any of the information provided, the system provides an option to add or correct that information.

This system allows workers to complete intake and process the applications that the TANF Division receives quickly and efficiently, with all available information entered into the system by the end of these processes.

Some of you have asked what we mean by “soft launch,” so we thought we would define that here for you. Soft Launch is a phase of the IT development that is currently scheduled to occur the first week of July, 2015. For those of you familiar with the DWS IT Development and Deployment lifecycle, this is UAT. It is a dry run performed at a few selected offices, to test the IT system, new policy, and Local Office procedures together. This allows us to identify and make needed corrections prior to our initial production release that is scheduled for October 1, 2015.

Exciting times ahead! Are you ready?

Questions & Answers – Dr. Beverly Ford

Creating a Case Management Partnership

Beverly O. Ford, Ph.D., is president of ASM Associates, a training and consulting firm that specializes in training professionals in case management, welfare reform, and client empowerment. Dr. Ford's workshops are informal, interactive sessions focusing on practical concepts and strategies staff can easily transfer into their everyday work. The author of *Making Case Management Work* (www.asm-associates.com), Dr. Ford was a special presenter at the 2011 TANF Staff Training Conference for Arkansas. Here, she provides an overview of case management in TANF programs.

Q What is a case management partnership?

A Case management is the process of moving participants toward greater self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency includes the skills to solve problems, find and access resources, develop plans, and manage resources.

A case management partnership is a relationship between you and participants in which these tasks are a shared responsibility. The participant is the lead partner. They have primary responsibility for these tasks. Your role is to help them enhance these skills and to function as a backup partner to support their efforts.

Q Why is a partnership important?

A Working as partners benefits both you and your participants. Participants are able to use their strengths and resources, enhance their self-sufficiency skills, feel a sense of pride in their accomplishments, and take more ownership and responsibility for their lives.

Partnerships are a more effective way for you to achieve outcomes. Participants control outcomes. They decide whether to set goals and follow through with them. Having their active engagement as partners enables you to save your time and energy since responsibilities are being shared rather than shouldered by you alone.

Q What should I do to create a partnership with my participants?

A Your words matter. Use partnership rather than helping language.

Helping Language: We can help you with childcare.

Partnership Language: You and I will work together to find child care.

- Ask for participants' ideas first before offering yours. This approach encourages them to think and take more ownership.
- Ask participants for the resources they have before offering yours. You want them to invest their resources to build their commitment. Your resources should support theirs.
- Engage participants in developing each step of their plan. Your task is to help them organize the plan. Their task is to set their goals, action steps, and timetables first.
- When presented with problems, ask participants what they think they can do to solve the problem before offering your problem solving ideas. This helps them enhance their problem solving skills.

Q What should I do when participants ask for or expect my help?

A When participants seek your help you are often tempted to do for them because you care and want them to succeed. Remember, however, that your primary goal is to build skills participants can use to become more self-sufficient than you found them.

Before you "help," ask yourself:

- How do I partner with this person rather than do for him/her?
- What skills do I want them to develop as a result of our interactions?
- What strengths and resources do they bring with them?
- How do I use our strengths and resources to support them?
- What questions do I need to ask to help them think?

Q How do I change directions?

A Perhaps you are a helper for your participants. Some of them have become comfortable with a helping approach. Now you want to be their partner instead.

The next time you meet with a participant you have been helping, here is a suggestion to try. Tell them:

"I have been thinking about our work together. I realize now that I have not used all the strengths and talents you have. I am sorry about that. I would like for us to work together in a different way that respects the strong person you are."

Policy Corner

TANF Policy Unit, Central Office

Questions and answers for April

Question:

Are excused and holiday hours keyed into ANSWER?

Answer:

If an employer pays the participant for vacation/holiday/leave time, the hours should be reflected on the paystub and should be keyed. Per policy §3405.6: Paid leave time is an acceptable substitute for actual working hours.

If otherwise, the excused hours should only be narrated (for examples, unpaid leave time; maternity leave paid by an insurance company rather than the actual employer).

Question:

How many hours should be allowed for a college student who is enrolled in an 8-credit hour class that has 4 hours of lecture and 12 hours of lab a week?

Answer:

If the student attends every session and verifies attendance as required, you count 8 hours for study time plus 16 hours for classroom attendance, for 24 hours total for the week.

Question:

Can a TEA recipient be assigned to OJT at a child care facility where her child attends child care?

Answer:

No. This is commonly called "double-dipping," as the mother is being paid with TEA funds to care for her child.

Question:

A potential provider asks whether TANF will cover his losses (such as, theft of property) caused by a WEX participant.

Answer:

No. There is no provision for covering such losses, although TANF does have insurance for WEX participants who are injured on the job.

Question:

What is the proper action to take when an error is discovered in a case?

Answer:

Correct the case from the point where the error started and through to the end. An overpayment should be prepared or benefit refund authorized when a corrective error affects the amount of benefits.

Question:

A person received sanction payments for last month before the Work Pays case closed because no earnings verification was submitted. Can the person re-enter the Work Pays program without first receiving TEA?

Answer:

No. This situation is not considered "insufficient hours." The term "insufficient hours" refers to having some hours of work, but less than the federal participation requirement.

Good to Great - Monticello Workforce Center

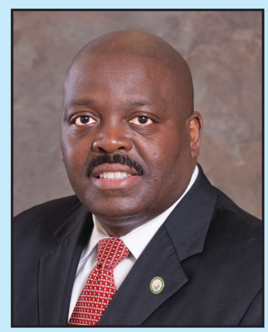
By Laura Foster, DWS Program Monitor

The Monticello Local Office has been awarded the Assessments-Sanctions-Keying (A.S.K.) Award. This award is based upon the cumulative results from the on-site Quality Assurance reviews and Work Participation rates during the period of March 2014 – August 2014. The initial A.S.K. awards were announced during the 2012 TANF Conference and recognize the local offices with exemplary performance in Assessments–Sanctions–Keying.

LR Standing: Jo Keegan; Adrian Clark; Tammi Nowlin; Shelia Wilson; Nancy Jones; Jennifer Scott; and Mary Bailey .
LR Seated: Tabitha Wallace; Vicky Harris and Mindy Chambliss
(Hester Handley – Not Pictured)

Please join me for the

2015 TANF STAFF TRAINING CONFERENCE



Champions of Change, August 19-20

Embassy Suites Hotel • Little Rock, AR

Director Daryl Bassett and Assistant Director Phil Harris are pleased to announce the 2015 TANF Training conference to be held at Embassy Suites in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The conference is scheduled for August 19-20 and will bring Arkansas TANF staff and other stakeholders into the capital city to discuss current information about the TANF program nationally as well as within the state of Arkansas. Participants will have the opportunity to network and receive training in a variety of topics critical to the ongoing success of the TANF program in Arkansas.

Confirmed presenters include:

- Dr. Beverly Ford of ASM Associates
- Paulette Bushers, TANF Program Manager
  Oklahoma Department of Human Services