

"I recently left my job for a better paying job with more hours and I love my newfound freedom!..."
WorkFirst client

WorkFirst is a partnership of five state agencies, with oversight provided by the Office of Financial Management:

- Department of Social and Health Services
- Employment Security Department
- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development
- Department of Early Learning

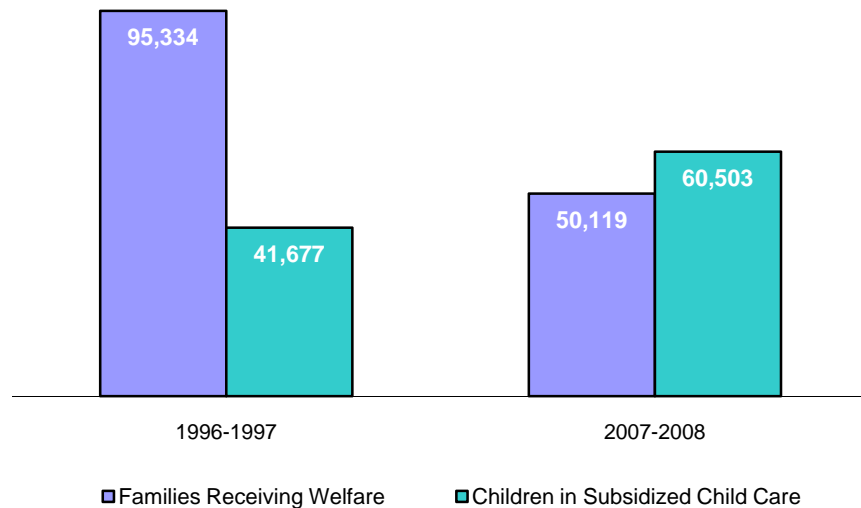
In addition, WorkFirst is a network of 32 local partnerships that include tribes, community organizations, community and technical colleges, workforce and economic development agencies, and individual citizens.

Washington's WorkFirst program began in 1997 with an **emphasis on helping parents** move away from dependence on welfare and toward stable employment and economic self-sufficiency. WorkFirst provides families the services and supports they need to "get a job, get a better job and have a better life."

Although caseloads are increasing, **less than 2 percent of Washington's population receives welfare benefits**. Even though the number of families receiving WorkFirst has dropped 40 percent since 1997, caseloads have increased since the summer of 2008, and, with the current economic decline, are expected to continue to rise.

The WorkFirst program continues to implement **quality improvements** to better assist low-income parents. Recent improvements include a more comprehensive evaluation to engage parents in the most appropriate activities, and increased program performance accountability.

WorkFirst is Working!



WorkFirst Facts:

How many parents receiving welfare are going to work?

More than 90,000 Washington WorkFirst parents got a job and left WorkFirst between July 2003 and November 2008.

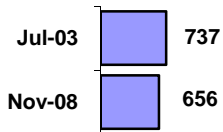
In District 31 alone, **1,625** parents left WorkFirst with a job so they could provide for their family.

Are parents becoming self-sufficient?

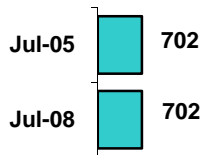
Yes. In July 2003 there were 35,041 families on WorkFirst in Washington. By November 2008, there were 33,199 on assistance – a 5 percent decrease. Over 160,000

In District 31...

Families On WorkFirst



Children Served by Working Connections Child Care



parents left the program and stayed off for more than 12 months and nearly 31,000 families with a one-time emergent need avoided enrolling in TANF by using the Diversion Cash Assistance program.

In District 31, there were 737 families on WorkFirst in July 2003. By November 2008 there were 656, an 11% decrease. During that time, 3,446 parents left the program and stayed off for more than 12 months, and 629 families received Diversion Cash Assistance instead of enrolling in WorkFirst.

Is there support for working parents after exit?

Yes. WorkFirst participants who leave with a job are eligible to receive support payments and follow-up services for up to six months through the Career Services program administered by the Department of Employment Security. Participants have received help with job advancement and retention.

In District 31, 73 WorkFirst parents have participated in this program since July 2007, when the program began.

How are working parents paying for child care?

Many are using Working Connections Child Care, a subsidy program for parents earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level – that’s a monthly income of \$2,933 for a single parent with two children. Parents contribute toward the cost of care based on a sliding scale with a monthly co-payment of at least \$15. Since July 2005, an average of 60,850 children received a child care subsidy per month.

In District 31, 702 children received a child care subsidy in July 2008.

How much child support is collected to help these parents?

In the past year, almost \$277 million was collected statewide on behalf of custodial parents who are or have been receiving welfare.

In District 31, more than \$6.7 million was collected for custodial parents.

Is training and education available?

Yes. WorkFirst supports training and education for low-income parents who are working at least 20 hours per week, including those who have left the welfare rolls.

Last year **in your area 5** low-income parents enrolled in customized job skills trainings, which are specialized, short-term (up to 22 weeks) programs developed with specific employers who commit to giving first consideration to hiring those who complete the training. Another 168 received free tuition at a community or technical college and 423 took advantage of literacy and other training services. Additionally, 127 were trained for high-wage high-demand jobs.

For more information about the WorkFirst program, visit www.workfirst.wa.gov

**A Job,
A Better Job,
A Better Life**