

WorkFirst Local Planning Conference Call Conversations

October 16th, 2008

Call #1 – WorkFirst Participation

Sub3 Attendees: Deron Ferguson, Carl Wolfhagen, Ken Koernke, Diane Klontz, Marie Bruin, Carla Reyes, and Kelly Lindseth

- √ Region 1 – Chelan/Douglas LPA, Grant/Adams LPA, Spokane/ Lincoln Counties LPA, Okanogan County LPA, and Tri-Counties LPA
- √ Region 2 – Benton/Franklin LPA
- √ Region 3 – N. Snohomish County LPA, S. Snohomish County LPA, Skagit/Juan Counties LPA, Whatcom County LPA, and Whidbey Island LPA
- √ Region 4 – King North LPA, King South LPA, White Center LPA, Renton LPA, and Rainier, Capital Hill, Belltown LPA
- √ Region 5 – Pierce County (not on the call) – but sent updates that have been included below
- √ Region 6 – Grays Harbor County LPA, Mason County LPA and Thurston County LPA

Overview of Statewide Federal Participation by Deron Ferguson with input from Diane Klontz, Carla Reyes, Ken Koernke, Marie Bruin, and Kelly Lindseth

- √ Background on the change from scheduled to actual hours in October 07 – from 20% to about 8% average participation.
- √ Variation across the state in participation from 4% - 10% - what can be learned?
- √ How the Career Service Program is helping.

Other Participation Efforts:

DSHS – Employment Hours training is on-going with CSO staff including financial workers. Have begun entering hours during the referral process to keep parents engaged in activities and reduce gaps. LPAs need to continue working together to work on tightening gaps between activities.

CTED – Working on reports training for all CJ staff across the state. In July, began increasing hours for some CJ parents to 30 hours to increase participation and began providing JT in areas where there are limited or no available JT activities.

ESD – Career Services Program is beneficial to parents and with the addition of DCA parents and Food Stamps parents in 4/09 we hope to continue to see a steady increase in participation. Need to be sure that DCA applicants are getting information on the program.

SBCTC – Policy has gone out on Unsupervised Study Time, which will be a big help to those parents in educational activities. Continue to host participation strategy meetings with colleges and as of September have been generating a participation reports to colleges to help them increase hours.

LPA Participation Strategies:

Chelan/Douglas LPA –

1. Working on ways to increase participation.
2. Interested in how other LPAs are using incentives and what incentives they are using when. Would like a list developed that could be shared.

Grant/Adams LPA –

1. Case managers are now making referrals over the phone, while parents are at their desk. This is designed to increase engagement by reducing the “down” time between activities.
2. They are also using incentives to increase hours of participation.

Okanogan LPA –

1. They are focusing on unsubsidized employment – using AmeriCorps Program.
2. They are also using the Community Jobs Program.
3. Have started using incentives to motivate parents to participate.

Tri-Counties (Colville) –

1. Case managers are focusing on those parents already participating part-time to find ways to increase hours to full-time participation.
2. Partner line staff are meeting monthly to go over cases to identify strategies to increase participation.
3. This LPA is also using incentives.

Benton/Franklin LPA –

1. Concentrating on Community Works and Community Jobs Programs to increase participation for many families.
2. Challenge seems to be keeping the parent engaging in the stackable JT education activity.
3. College partner needs to develop additional JT options for parents beyond computer lab/GED.

N. Snohomish County LPA –

1. This partnership has developed a universal Resource Guide to help case managers identify the different stackable JT activities available in the community.
2. Partners have gone to entering hours weekly (workload issue – but working)
3. **Promising Practice:** Two Saturday's a month their local Community Jobs contractor (Service Alternatives) is proving an open entry/open exit lab for parents in all activities who need to make up core and non-core hours. *Diane Klontz to get details on this program.*

S. Snohomish County LPA –

1. Partners have gone to entering hours weekly.
2. They also have access to the Saturday lab (above) to help parent's make-up hours.
3. **Promising Practice:** This LPA has been using an open entry/open exit life skills workshop for sometime to help increase employability and engagement.

Whatcom County LPA –

1. Partners are meeting monthly to do “case load clean-up” at DSHS.
2. They are meeting on the 16th of each month to discuss participation by partner.
3. They too have moved to entering hours weekly.

Whidbey Island LPA –

1. Experiencing similar issue as Benton/Franklin with regards to keeping parents engaged in their stackable JT educational activity. Partners are meeting to discuss “behavioral” issues and proposing a coaching model to increase engagement in JT.
2. They are using incentives to get more parents to complete the CE (Kmart/gas vouchers).
3. On Friday's they too have a core and non-core hour's make-up lab for parents.

White Center LPA –

1. Struggling with engagement due to the lack of adequate child care resources in the area. This continues to create challenges in quickly engaging parents and keeping them engaged.
2. Working on developing JT activities to stack.
3. Community Jobs continues to be a strong program for engagement in this area.

Renton LPA –

1. This LPA is one of three in King County (White Center, Rainier, and Renton) who are participation in the Bridge to Engagement pilot which provides an up-front job readiness life skills 2 week open entry/open exit workshop for parents needing countable activities to participate in while they are waiting to engage in other work activities. This pilot has also helped with school breaks.

2. Stacking educational activities has been challenging in keeping parents engaged.
3. **Issue:** Food stamps are up 75% in the Renton office and this is putting a squeeze on staffing in the office and the hiring freeze is really being felt in offices where there are staffing vacancies that can not be filled. This is impacting staff time with WorkFirst.

King (North) LPA –

1. This LPA is entering hours weekly.
2. They are developing strategies to shorten the referral process.
3. The college is offering daily JT activities – *open entry/open exit??*

Grays Harbor County LPA –

1. This partnership is meeting weekly to discuss participation issues.
2. Currently developing a joint participation plan.

Mason County LPA –

1. *Celebrating a 10.24% federal participation rate from monthly CAR!!*
2. In September they started to review strategies in place to determine whether they were helping increase participation.
3. **Promising Practice:** They have designated focus groups to take different parent populations to develop strategies to help increase their participation.
4. Just started using incentives with parents to complete the CE.

Thurston County LPA –

1. The LPA leadership is meeting weekly.
2. Have recently formed a partner line staff workgroup Partnership Enhancement Team (PET) to identify ways to increase partnership communication, strengthen WorkFirst processes and increase participation.

LPA Participation Strategies: Emailed from LPAs who were either unable to join the call or who experienced technical difficulties.

King (South) LPA –

1. Co-located staff – HCC is at Federal Way CSO & Kent CSO one day per week to work on participation issues with parents and to streamline services for parents. Kent CSO and White Center CSO plan on being co-located at HCC to assist our parents with bus passes, support services, IRP corrections etc. Kent CSO staff started their position at HCC Oct. 15. White Center CSO is working on a schedule but we hope to have them active at HCC very soon. Green River CC has Auburn CSO co-located once a week and the process has assisted GRCC to increase their participation numbers.
2. More meetings with CSO managers to go over CAR reports – college staff are scheduling more frequent meetings with CSO managers to go over CAR reports and to problem solve cases.
3. Community Jobs- HCC has created a new referral form in partnership with Melissa Tarabochia to ensure that CJ parents have a smooth transition into the colleges with employment and their educational requirement. HCC recognized that there was a disconnect with CJ parents when they arrived at the campus and the new form will assist all campus staff to direct the parents to the WorkFirst dept. and allow our WorkFirst front line staff to fully understand who the parents need to be meeting with (WorkFirst advisors for possible employment and registration for JT or GED etc). The HCC campus has benefited by having CJ parents working on our campus and we have heard excellent feedback from their supervisors. During opening week for fall quarter 3 WorkFirst parents were at the ceremony and spoke (student panel format) to staff and faculty about their experiences at HCC and how they entered the college system. Community Jobs was showcased along with the college WorkFirst program.
4. College WorkFirst Breaks – HCC is going to offer the break class during all college quarter breaks. We have hired an instructor part time to build a new curriculum with suggestions from the WorkFirst parents that we compiled from the previous break classes. One new element is building a portfolio. Each parent will leave with them a portfolio showcasing their work experience, class content, certifications, resume, recommendation letter, best essay,

computer competencies and more. They will have a hard copy and we hope to get flash drives donated so they can show potential employers by computer. We will use the same curriculum to offer mini workshops throughout the quarter instructed by WorkFirst staff. Parents that enroll late after the quarter starts will be able to register for the open entry, continuous enrollment class.

5. Participation – RTC, GRCC & HCC have hired part time staff to assist with participation efforts. HCC hired faculty part time to meet one on one with WorkFirst parents to have them take the Employment Readiness Scale which assists parents with fully understanding their level of self efficacy and their readiness to go to work. This will be a 3 part series with each parent. In addition to the ERS we will go over in detail their new participation hours starting October 1st with the new policy for unsupervised hours. The one to one session will allow the parent to see on an excel form the dept. created which includes all levels of participation for each parent. PT work, CJ, WEX, and class time, supervised and unsupervised hours. The parent will take a copy of their revised schedule with them. During the session, any barriers the parent is facing will be discussed and we will assist the parent with on and off campus resources as needed. The session will allow us to connect with our parents more and assist with retention efforts.
6. **Promising Practice:** ESL parents to IBest then unsubsidized work and back for wage progression – the colleges have been working on efforts to retain ESL students and enroll them in IBest and other short term HWHD certificate programs. HCC's WorkFirst dept. has been scheduling orientations in the ESL classes to assist ESL TANF and the income eligible parent with fully understanding their options for training and the funding they could be eligible for along with support services from CSO's and other CBO's.

Pierce County LPA –

- 1) Aggressive marketing of Career Service to all agencies
- 2) Reviewing component codes (Some clients did not count due to incorrect coding)
- 3) Reviewed all actual hours to make sure they accurately reflected participation
- 4) Pilots that involve engaging the clients with all partners involved in case at same time so client has a clear understanding of the activities that they will be engaged in. (Clients seem to like this approach, still waiting for quantifiable data)

General Discussion and Q&A:

The Tri-Counties (Colville) LPA were quite interested in the Saturday lab approach that both North and South Snohomish Counties LPAs are using. Service Alternatives in the Community Jobs contractor in that area and Diane Klontz, Managing Director for the CTED Community Jobs Program agreed to follow-up with Service Alternatives to get more details on what they are doing and how so that I can share that with interested LPAs. This lab is providing both core and non-core activities; including life skills and some JT activities.

A question was raised regarding why the CAR reports are not reporting 30 hours of work activity for those Community Jobs parents enrolled in 30 hour CJ. Carla Reyes and Rick Krause (DSHS) shared that this is currently being worked into the development schedule. The hours are being picked-up behind the scenes.

Comments were shared regarding short-term sanction and the fact that it does not show-up the CAR reports. Carla Reyes did clarify that those hours are counted behind the scenes. Carla Reyes also clarified that 3 months of sanction does count, but it is any 3 months in a 12 month period of time.

The Spokane/Lincoln LPA expressed ongoing confusion and frustration with the lack of consistent data and the number of reports locals have to use to try and track performance. Requested a

discussion during the November call to discuss reports, what's available and how to use. Other LPAs agreed that this would be a useful discussion for our November call.

Kelly Follow-up and Next Steps:

1. Type up notes.
2. Gather life skills curriculum from Edmonds Community College being used with parents in the South Snohomish County LPA.
3. Gather information on the Saturday make-up lab being offered two Saturday's each month in both N. and S. Snohomish County LPAs by their local Community Jobs Contractors to provide open entry/open exit lab time to make up core and non-core hours.
4. Contact both Chelan/Douglas and Tri-Counties LPA to provide update on status of their Innovations Proposals.
5. Develop a list of incentives being used by LPA to be shared.
6. Confirm date and time of the November call – get out to all LPAs Tuesday, October 21st.

Next Call:

November 20th, from 8:30 to 9:30 am – WorkFirst Reports Discussion