

Comprehensive Evaluation and WorkFirst Participation: Local Planning Area Field Review

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**WorkFirst Performance Team
Office of Financial Management**

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2007, Office of Financial Management (OFM) WorkFirst Performance Team staff were tasked with reviewing eight (8) Local Planning Areas (LPAs) to:

- Assess current Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) practices and identify barriers to timely completion of the CE, and evaluate the quality of CE documentation; and
- Provide an early look at LPAs' readiness and capacity to implement new WorkFirst federal participation requirements.

Performance Team staff visited the following LPAs during the months of May and June, 2007:

- Spokane
- Whatcom
- Grays Harbor/Pacific
- Clark
- Benton-Franklin
- Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown
- Pierce
- Lewis

Each LPA participated in a series of structured interviews with management and line staff. OFM staff also reviewed a sample of completed CEs from each LPA, and observed elements of the CE process.

FINDINGS

Comprehensive Evaluation

- Current policy requires that all approved and likely to be approved applicants complete the Foundation segment of the CE. The statewide average for April was 84.1%. Five of the eight LPAs reviewed were above the statewide average (*Whatcom, Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown, Pierce, Lewis, and Clark*). Two LPAs (and one CSO within an LPA) had a significant drop off rate between the TANF financial interview and the CE Foundation because of local procedures and practices (*Lakewood CSO, Grays Harbor, and Spokane*).
- Parents currently are able to complete all elements of the CE within three to eight days, not including time needed to resolve child care and other barriers to completion. Four LPAs offer all CE elements daily (*Spokane, Pierce, Lewis, and Benton-Franklin*).
- Each LPA has developed its own system to track parents through the CE process. There is a wide variation in how effectively LPAs schedule, track and notify staff of no shows.
- Of the LPAs reviewed, few have consistent accountability standards based on WorkFirst policy for dealing with parents who fail to complete the CE. This lack of consistent follow-through may be the biggest factor under the management control of LPAs in determining timely completion rates.
- Most of the LPAs reviewed have not developed an overall strategy or approach to engage parents in the CE and keep them engaged throughout the CE process.

- CE documentation has improved since the CE review in summer 2006 and is generally satisfactory. However, better documentation could further optimize the CE tool and provide more benefit for the time and work involved in the CE process.

Policy and Training on the New Federal Participation Requirements

LPA managers and staff were asked to evaluate the policy and training they received January through March 2007. At the time of the review, they had just begun to implement the policy and were still incorporating the policy and training into actual practice. Staff's response to policy and training issues may not necessarily represent the level of understanding they would demonstrate today.

- Line staff rated the Captivate training "just satisfactory" and their agency training midway between "satisfactory" and "above satisfactory". Most of the managers and staff said the training would have been more effective if provided to all partners together. Almost all managers and staff agreed that Captivate training by itself would not be sufficient.
- On average, managers said their staff had barely enough knowledge and information to do what was expected of them. Line staff rated their knowledge and information somewhat higher, but still below the category of enough information.

Resources to Meet the New Participation Requirements

- Discussions with managers and line staff indicated the rate of referral to and placement in supported work activities at this early point in implementation varied considerably between LPAs. Local partners are still in the process of incorporating these new work activities into their local service delivery system.
- Discussion about stacking core and non-core education & training activities to meet federal requirements indicates that LPA partners have not yet fully taken into account these new requirements and actual hours verification when evaluating the need for non-core activities. Further review of the need for and availability of non-core training and education resources is needed.

INTRODUCTION

In April 2007, Office of Financial Management (OFM) WorkFirst Performance Team staff were tasked with reviewing eight (8) Local Planning Areas (LPAs) to:

- Assess current Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) practices and identify barriers to timely completion of the CE, and evaluate the quality of CE documentation; and
- Provide an early look at LPAs' readiness and capacity to implement new WorkFirst participation requirements.

Performance Team staff visited the following LPAs during the months of May and June, 2007:

- Spokane
- Whatcom
- Grays Harbor/Pacific
- Clark
- Benton-Franklin
- Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown
- Pierce
- Lewis

Each LPA participated in a series of structured interviews with management and line staff. OFM staff also reviewed a sample of completed CEs from each LPA; and observed elements of the CE process.

The remainder of this report includes:

- A summary of findings;
- Recommendations by the performance Team for improving LPA performance;
- Best practices identified during the reviews;
- Survey results;
- Supplemental review information, detailing how LPAs have designed their local CE processes (i.e. where each CE element is conducted, and when and how often it is provided), how LPAs engage parents in the CE process, track them from start to finish, and deal with parents who fail to complete the CE.

In addition, Appendix A provides a detailed snapshot of each LPA's process and performance indicators for applicants who start the CE Foundation and those who complete the CE within 30 days.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Comprehensive Evaluation:

- Each of the eight LPAs has done a good job of designing their Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) process. Parents are currently able to complete all elements of the CE within three to eight days, not including time needed to resolve child care and other barriers to completion. Four LPAs offer all CE elements daily (*Spokane, Pierce, Lewis, and Benton-Franklin*). Two other larger LPAs should consider providing all elements daily (*Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown, and Clark*). This is not an area where making process improvements have high potential for improving the timely completion rate.
- Current policy requires all approved and likely to be approved applicants to complete the Foundation segment of the CE. The statewide average for April was 84.1%. Five of the eight LPAs were above the statewide average (*Whatcom, Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown, Pierce, Lewis, and Clark*). Two LPAs (and one CSO within an LPA) had a significant drop off rate between the TANF financial interview and the Foundation because of local procedures and practices (*Lakewood CSO, Grays Harbor, and Spokane*). Increasing the percentage of applicants who immediately start the Foundation is one way to increase the numbers that complete the CE within 30 days. In some locations this rate can be improved through management attention, in other areas changes in local CSO service delivery processes may be needed. Improvements in this area could have high potential for increasing timely CE completion rates for LPAs that are below the statewide rate of approved applicants who start the CE Foundation.
- Each of the LPAs reviewed has developed its own system to track parents through the CE process. There is a wide variation in how effectively LPAs schedule, track and notify staff of no shows. Sub 2 should survey all of the LPAs to identify the most effective tracking systems and either make them available to other LPAs, or develop a statewide scheduling and tracking system (or systems) for all LPAs to use. The use of effective tracking systems has a medium to high potential to help LPAs improve their timely completion rate.
- There is little consistency in the accountability standards based on WorkFirst policy for dealing with parents who fail to complete the CE. In most cases WorkFirst Program Specialists have developed their own individual practices for dealing with parents who do not show for appointments. This lack of consistent follow through may be the biggest factor under the management control of LPAs in determining timely completion rates.
- Effectively engaging parents in the CE process is another way to improve completion rates. All eight LPAs provide some type of an initial orientation to WorkFirst and the CE process. College and ESD staff normally provide information about their part of the CE process and what will be happening next. The effectiveness of the content and consistency of the message varies widely within and between LPAs. LPA staff have developed effective ways to move parents through the process to help facilitate engagement in the next step of the CE. Of the LPAs reviewed, few have developed an overall strategy or approach to engage parents in the CE and keep them engaged throughout the CE process.
- CE documentation has improved since the CE review in summer 2006 and is generally satisfactory. However, better documentation could further optimize the CE tool and provide more benefit for the time and work involved in the CE process.

Policy and Training on the New Federal Participation Requirements:

LPA managers and line staff were asked to evaluate the policy and training they received January through March 2007 related to the new federal participation requirements.

- On average, managers rated the clarity and completeness of the WorkFirst policy “just below satisfactory.” Line staff rated it as “just satisfactory.”
- Line staff rated the Captivate training “just satisfactory” and their agency training somewhat higher (between satisfactory and above satisfactory). Most of the managers and staff said the training would have been more effective if provided to all partners together. Almost all managers and staff agreed that Captivate training by itself would not be sufficient.
- LPA Manager and staff groups were asked whether they thought the new federal participation policy information, combined with the training, was sufficient for line staff to adequately do their jobs. They were asked to rate whether they had enough knowledge and information to implement the new policies. On average, managers said their staff had barely enough knowledge and information to do what was expected of them. Line staff rated their knowledge and information somewhat higher, but still below the category of enough information.

Resources to Meet the New Participation Requirements:

LPA managers and line staff were asked whether they had sufficient core and non-core activities available for parents in order to meet the new federal participation requirements. Separate questions were asked about the new CTED supported work programs and college programs (i.e., vocational training, ABE and other Job Skills Training (JT) programs).

- 52% of staff and managers interviewed said there were enough supported work slots in their LPA. Given the newness of the CTED programs, it was not surprising that 37% of the manager and staff groups were not able to say if there were enough resources to meet the need. Discussions with managers and line staff indicated the rate of referral and placement at this point in implementation varied considerably between LPAs. Local partners are still in the process of incorporating these new work activities into their local service delivery system.
- Managers and staff were asked about the availability of core and non-core education and training activities in their LPA. 74% of the interview groups said they thought there were enough education and training resources in their LPA to meet the new federal participation requirements. 24% said there were not enough of the right type of resources. However, discussion about stacking core and non-core activities to meet federal requirements indicates that these new requirements and actual hours verification have not been fully taken into account when evaluating the need for non-core activities. Further review of the need for and availability of non-core training and education resources is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is a listing of the recommendations from the review. If these recommendations are adopted by Sub 2, the Operational Partners group (TOP) should be given the responsibility for further developing and clarifying the assigned tasks and monitoring outcomes.

1. Increase the number and percentage of approved applicants who complete the CE Foundation section
Where necessary, direct CSOs to modify their service delivery processes and practices to increase the number and percentage of applicants completing the Foundation.
2. Improve the CE scheduling and tracking system
 - A. Survey the LPAs to identify the most effective CE scheduling and tracking systems and make them available to other LPAs; or
 - B. Develop a CE scheduling and tracking system (or systems) for all LPAs to use. It may not be possible to develop a single tracking tool that would fit the needs of all LPAs; however all tracking systems should meet certain minimum requirements.
3. Consistently hold parents accountable for completing the CE
 - A. Direct the Division of Employment & Assistance Programs (DEAP) to develop clear WorkFirst policy for dealing with parents who fail to complete the CE; and
 - B. Direct LPAs to develop consistent accountability practices based on WorkFirst policy to deal with no shows, and provide oversight to monitor whether policy and standard practices are followed.
4. Create comprehensive CE engagement strategies for all LPAs
Direct LPAs to review their CE process and develop a comprehensive strategy for all partners to engage parents in the CE and keep them engaged. This action can build on the LPA Quality Reviews completed in last December and January.
5. Improve CE documentation in eJAS
Direct the Division of Employment & Assistance Programs to develop clearer guidance in the WorkFirst Handbook to all partners on how to document CE information in the eJAS tool.
6. Determine if policy on who must receive the CE needs to be changed
Review whether some applicants (such as parents working full time) should be given the option of not participating in the CE.
7. Provide any subsequent WorkFirst training as joint partnership training
Provide WorkFirst training that pertains to all partners as joint partnership training whenever feasible.
8. Determine the need for and availability of non-core training and education resources statewide
 - A. Direct SBCTC to complete a statewide review of the non-core education and training activities currently offered at Community and Technical Colleges; and
 - B. Direct TOP to survey LPAs to determine the need for non-core activities.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Following is a listing of promising practices identified during the review.

1. A Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) process design that allows parents to complete the four college and Employment Security Department (ESD) elements of the CE in one day. (*Spokane, Whatcom and Grays Harbor*)
2. Lewis County has demonstrated a strong overall approach to the CE process, including consistent and balanced message, well designed process, user friendly appointment schedule, good hand-offs between partners and consistent accountability standards.
3. Holding joint trainings with headquarters policy and operational staff representation, where questions and answers are shared by all partners. For example, after viewing Captivate training(s), having LPA partner staff develop a list of questions for state office staff and then holding joint training where the answers are shared across the partnership. (*Lewis County*)
4. Periodically assigning a regional trainer to a CSO for a day to provide one-on-one hands on assistance to WorkFirst Program Specialists and social workers as they develop participation plans for parents – stacking core and non-core activities. (*DSHS Region 4 Office*)
5. Providing a variety of open entry and short term classes that meet new WorkFirst participation requirements (i.e., Job Skills Training). (*Spokane and Grays Harbor*).

DETAILED REVIEW INFORMATION

Comprehensive Evaluation

Where, When and How Often CE Components Are Offered

Each of the eight LPAs has done a good job of designing when and how often the elements of the CE are completed. Parents in these LPAs are currently able to complete all elements of the CE within three to eight days, not including time needed to resolve child care and other barriers to completion. Six LPAs have scheduled CE elements to enable parents to complete the process within three to five days (*Spokane, Pierce, Lewis, Benton-Franklin, Whatcom, and Grays Harbor*). Four LPAs offer all CE elements daily (*Spokane, Pierce, Lewis, and Benton-Franklin*). Two of the larger LPAs do not offer all elements daily and should consider doing so (*Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown and Clark*).

Since all eight LPAs have timeframes in place for timely CE completion, making design improvements in this part of the process will not improve the 30-day completion rate. No recommendations for improvement are indicated.

Linkage between the Financial Interview and the CE Foundation

All approved and likely to be approved applicants should complete the Foundation segment of the CE. The April statewide average for completing the Foundation was 84.1%. Five of the eight LPAs were above the statewide average (*Whatcom, Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown, Pierce, Lewis, and Clark*). Two LPAs (and one CSO within an LPA) had a significant drop off rate between the TANF financial interview and the Foundation because of local procedures and practices (*Lakewood CSO, Grays Harbor, and Spokane*). This means that TANF applicants are not routinely completing the Foundation the same day as the financial application interview. There are various reasons that this drop off is happening and it is within the control of CSOs to improve it. CSOs have the capability to change expectations of staff and procedures to appreciably increase the percentage of applicants who complete the Foundation. Increasing the percentage of applicants who immediately start the Foundation is one way to increase the percentage that complete the CE within 30 days. Improvements in this area could have high potential for increasing completion rates for LPAs who are below the average of approved applicants who start the CE Foundation.

Tracking Parents through the CE Process

Each LPA has developed its own system to schedule and track parents through the CE process. There is a wide variation in how effectively LPAs schedule and track parents, and notify staff of no shows. Examples include: electronic systems that are fully-accessible to all partners; Outlook Calendars that are not accessible to all partners; spread sheets with hardcopies distributed to partners; list serve emails that notify partners of no shows; and relying on staff checking the eJAS CE tool to see what parts of the CE a parent has completed. Most managers and staff rated their tracking system between somewhat “effective” and “very effective.”

Because of the differences between LPA CE processes, one system may not satisfy everyone. It is suggested that Sub 2 survey the LPAs to identify the most effective systems and make them available to other LPAs, or develop a statewide scheduling and tracking system (or systems) for all LPAs to use. The use of effective tracking systems has a medium to high potential for LPAs to improve their timely completion rate.

Holding Parents Accountable for Completing the CE

There is little consistency in applying accountability standards for parents who fail to complete the CE. In most cases WorkFirst Program Specialists (WFPS) have developed their own individual practices for dealing with parents who do not show. Most, but not all, WFPS try to call parents who do not show for a CE appointment. However, there is no consistent standard on how quickly to call, how many phone attempts to re-engage the parent, what is considered good cause for a no show, and what to do if the WFPS is not able to make phone contact immediately or if the parent fails to make a rescheduled CE appointment. There are considerable variations on when to start the good cause process and in some instances even “if” to start good cause for failure to complete the CE.

This lack of consistent follow through may be the biggest factor in determining timely completion rates that is under the control of LPAs to manage.

Engaging Parents in the CE Process

Effectively engaging parents in the CE is another strategy for improving CE completion rates. All eight LPAs provide some type of an initial orientation to WorkFirst and the CE process. Of the 11 CSOs reviewed, nine provide individual orientation by the WFPS (*Spokane Valley, Spokane North, Kennewick, Aberdeen, Columbia River, Chehalis, Pierce North, Capitol Hill, and Rainier*) and two conduct group orientations (*Bellingham and Lakewood*). College and ESD staff normally provide information about their part of the CE process and what will be happening next. Staff have developed their own talking points and so the effectiveness of the content and consistency of the message varies widely within an LPA.

Many LPA staff have developed effective ways to move parents through the process to help facilitate engagement in the next step of the CE. Others have not addressed the issue. Lewis County has developed a user friendly appointment schedule to help remind parents when and where their CE appointments are scheduled. Most of the LPAs use the Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP) as the schedule, but it is too big to easily carry around and is not user friendly to read.

Design of the CE process, tracking systems and consistent accountability standards discussed above are also part of an overall engagement plan. Few of the reviewed LPAs have developed an overall strategy or approach to engage parents in the CE and keep them engaged throughout the process. Below is a description of some potential elements of a CE engagement plan:

- A consistent and balanced CE message with talking points for all partners that stress:
 - the positive aspects of the CE (what’s in it for the parents); and
 - the parents’ responsibility to complete the CE and the consequences for failing to complete it.
- A well designed CE process that allows a parent to complete the entire process in 10 days.
- A well designed and easy to carry CE appointment schedule that clearly shows where and when all the CE elements are held.
- An effective electronic scheduling and tracking system available to all partners.
- A planned method for handing off the parent to the next part of the CE process:
 - A quick overview of what is going to happen next; and
 - Checking with the parent to make sure she/he is clear when the next appointment is scheduled.
- Clear and consistent guidelines for dealing with parents who fail to show for CE appointments/fail to complete, and oversight to make sure guidelines are followed.

Quality of CE Documentation

Managers and staff were asked to rate the quality, quantity, and clarity of the documentation in each section of the eJAS CE tool. They were asked whether they believed the CE documentation gave them sufficient information to make an appropriate participation plan to meet the new federal requirements. Overall, managers and staff said they received enough information from the CE “most of the time” to “almost all the time”.

OFM staff read a small sample of CEs, completed start to finish, from each LPA (five completed CEs for each of the CSOs – 55 in all). The review indicated that CE documentation had improved since the review in summer 2006 and is generally satisfactory. However, better documentation could further optimize the CE tool and provide more benefit for the time and work involved in the CE process.

One of the problems identified is the lack of clarity in the WorkFirst Handbook on what type of information is needed in each section of the CE. For example, the question on housing in the Foundation section states, “*Tell me about your housing*”. More often than not the documentation is one or two words – “Apt” or “rents a house”. This type of answer was not the intent of the question. The question was meant to illicit information on number of issues such as: kind of housing, stability of housing, cost, whether it is subsidized or not, living with relative, household composition etc.

Other CE Issues

The following CE related issues surfaced during the review and require follow-up:

- Spokane reported a high number of telephone interviews to determine TANF eligibility. Managers and staff say that an increasing number of parents are requesting TANF eligibility by phone even if there is not a specific reason given. This practice has a serious negative impact on CE completion and overall WorkFirst participation. Managers and staff believe they need to provide phone interviews for TANF if requested. Managers referenced a DEAP Policy in Focus quick guide dated 3/15/06 and a memo from John Clayton dated 11/13/06. The policy memos deal specifically with the Basic Food program, but the CSOs believe it also pertains to TANF. Clarification on the issue is needed. Determining TANF eligibility over the phone as a normal practice runs counter to the intent and philosophy of WorkFirst, which requires participation by parents.
- Two LPAs (three CSOs) are conducting a large and growing number of CE Final Decision/IRP interviews by telephone (*Rainier/Capitol Hill/Belltown and Grays Harbor*). Further guidance on this practice is needed.
- Staff in several LPAs requested that some approved TANF applicants not be required to complete the CE process. An example given was the parent who was currently working full time. After a year of CE experience, it appears appropriate to re-look at which TANF applicants need to complete a CE.

Implementing the New WorkFirst Participation Requirements

WorkFirst Participation Policy

Managers and staff were asked about the new participation policy in the WorkFirst Handbook and other written agency policy dealing with core and non-core activities, stacking etc. They were asked to rate the policy in terms of clarity and completeness. On average, managers rated the policy “just below satisfactory.” Line staff rated it as “just satisfactory.” Discussion with line

staff indicated that current policy in the WorkFirst Handbook is not as clear and complete as it was in earlier editions.

Training on New Federal Participation Requirements

Managers and staff were asked about the training they received on the new federal participation requirements, core and non-core activities, stacking activities etc. They were asked to rate the effectiveness of the training. Overall, managers rated the Captivate training “not quite satisfactory” and their agency training as “satisfactory”. Line staff rated the Captivate training “just satisfactory” and their agency training “satisfactory”. DSHS staff were the only line staff group that rated the Captivate training “not satisfactory.” Five of the eight college staff groups said they did not receive agency training or that the training was very early on, before the actual policy was set. Therefore, the college agency rating is based on only three LPA group responses.

From the group discussions, it was clear that the different LPAs, agencies, and in some cases units in a CSO, approached the Captivate training in a variety of ways. A few LPAs used the Captivate training as the basis for partnership training for the LPA. Some LPA partners just asked their staff to view the Captivate material on their own without providing dedicated time for the training. Other sites asked staff to view the Captivate material and then had unit meetings to discuss the information within the group. Almost all the managers and staff said the training would have been more effective if provided to all partners together. Almost all managers and staff agreed that Captivate by itself would not be sufficient.

Sufficiency of the policy and training that was provided

LPA Manager and staff groups were asked whether the new federal participation policy information, combined with the training, was sufficient for line staff to adequately do their jobs. They were asked to rate whether they had enough knowledge and information to implement the new policies. On average, managers said their staff had barely enough knowledge and information to do what was expected of them. Line staff rated their knowledge and information somewhat higher, but still below the category of enough information.

The readiness of staff to implement the new participation policy varied by LPA and by partner agency. It appeared that LPAs that trained together felt more comfortable with their ability to implement the new policy. DSHS staff rated themselves slightly lower and in discussions seemed more concerned about their readiness to put the policy into practice. This is not surprising since WFPS and social workers have the primary responsibility for stacking core and non-core activities.

100% Case Review

The 100% case review was initiated as one of the strategies to maximize participation. It appears this clear focus was lost between when the strategy was developed and when it was implemented via a March 15, 2007 instruction memo. The primary purpose – maximizing participation – was reduced in importance to one of several reasons to complete the case review. This lack of focus made the review less effective than was anticipated.

CSO staff had completed between 40%-95% of the case reviews depending on the date of the LPA visit. A statewide review format was developed and CSOs either used that format or developed their own based on the state office guidelines. The review was conducted in different ways. Most WFPS and social workers reviewed their own cases. A few offices assigned the

review to one or two WFPS. In one CSO, the staff reviewed each other's cases. In some CSOs supervisors audited all the reviews; in others a sample was reviewed.

The biggest drawback of the review design was that no information was collected on the results, aside from individual notes in eJAS. From discussion with supervisors and line staff, it appeared that the primary result was a "caseload cleanup"- insuring that IRP and coding were correct. It did not appear that the review resulted in an appreciable number of referrals to additional activities. In almost all locations, ESD, college and CTED partners said that they saw few if any referrals coming from the review. In some areas, CSO staff reported referring a small number of parents to CTED as a result of the review.

A number of reasons were given by staff for the few referrals to additional activities:

- parents were already participating full time
- parents were not able to participate in additional activities – mainly X cases
- parents were resistive and staff were working with them to participate more hours
- Staff were still processing the case
- still unclear on how to stack core and non-core activities
- parents would not participate and staff were starting the sanction process

In several months, depending on the federal participation rate, Sub 2 should consider initiating a limited and more targeted case review that focuses on specific WorkFirst populations.

Resources to Meet the New Participation Requirements

CTED Supported Work Programs (Community Service, Community Works, and Community WEX)

Managers and staff were asked about the availability of supported work activities in their LPA. 52% of the interview groups said there were enough supported work slots in their LPA. Given the newness of the CTED programs, it was not surprising that 37% of the manager and staff groups were not able to say if there were enough resources to meet the need. Only three responses indicated that there were not enough supported work slots. LPA partners are still in the process of incorporating these new work activities into their local service delivery system.

Discussion with managers and line staff indicated that at this early date, the rate of referral to supported work programs varied considerably between LPAs. One reason for low referrals in some areas was lack of information about supported work by LPA partners. It appeared that only a limited number of referrals to supported work resulted from the CE process. In a number of LPAs, ESD lacked the information needed to make an appropriate CE recommendation for supported work programs. Likewise, there was a high variation among WorkFirst Program Specialists (WFPS) in making referrals. In one large CSO, only five referrals had been made for supported work, all by the same WFPS. Often times WFPS did not have enough specific information on what type of work sites and activities were available. The newness and complexity of stacking services also was a factor for many WFPS. Case managers were not yet uniformly developing WorkFirst plans with parents that provide the needed number of core and non-core hours of participation.

Another reason for low referrals and/or placements in some areas was the inability of some WFPS, social workers and CTED contractors, at least during the start up phase, to fully embrace the concept of unpaid supported work programs. This showed itself in several ways. Some

contractor and CSO staff stated that they placed parents who met supported work criteria in Community Jobs (CJ) because they felt CJ was a better program (i.e., the paid work and wrap around services). Some staff stated that parents would not participate in work activities that did not pay. Unpaid work is clearly not for everyone, but for some parents it is a valuable stepping stone to paid employment or allows them to participate in education and training. How staff perceive these resources has much to do with how they market and engage parents in them. Some contractor staff appeared to have a difficult time engaging parents in services that they themselves did not yet fully value. These initial reservations may also contribute to the difficulties that some contractors are experiencing in meeting the new engagement timeframes mentioned below. Many of the concerns about supported work have some validity. However it should be noted that some LPAs, who have viewed the new work programs as positive new resource to help parents move toward full participation, do not appear to be experiencing some of these difficulties.

Most CTED agencies voiced concern about the short amount of time to engage the parent in a supported work activity. WorkFirst policy requires a face-to-face contact within five days and placement in a work activity within ten days of the first contact. This is a shorter timeframe than was historically allowed for CJ because of the need to place parents in countable activities as soon as possible. It appears that some of the concerns expressed are valid and need to be further studied. However it also appears that some of the CTED contractors have not yet transitioned to a new operating paradigm. Specifically, contractors need to re-think their initial engagement strategies. This includes working with their partners to make sure parents are given the clear message that they are responsible to make contact – not the contractor. Some areas need to modify their intake processes to accommodate the new timeframes. Additionally, some initial referral activities may need to be undertaken simultaneously instead of sequentially as was past practice.

College Education and Training Programs

Managers and staff were asked about the availability of core and non-core education and training activities in their LPA. 74% of the interview groups said there were enough education and training resources in their LPA to meet the new federal participation requirements. 24% said there were not enough of the right type of resources. The answers were clear cut with only one LPA management group undecided between “NO and Don’t Know” in response to college programs.

Overall, most partnerships are satisfied with the training and education resources available in their LPA. However, discussion about stacking core and non-core activities to meet federal requirements indicates that LPA partners have not yet fully taken into account these new requirements and actual hours verification when evaluating the need for non-core activities. Further review of the need for and availability of non-core training and education resources is needed.

Other resource Issues

Two resource related issues came up repeatedly during discussions with managers and staff.

- A number of LPAs indicated that a growing percentage of the WorkFirst population have felony convictions. Felonies are a serious barrier to employment and LPAs say they do not have the resources to deal with these parents. The issue came up in terms of job search, CTED work programs and college vocational training. This is an area where more data and program information is needed to determine what course of action, if any, is needed.

- Transportation is an issue that affects participation in WorkFirst, particularly in rural areas. A number of LPAs recommended that the dollar amount for gas vouchers needs to be increased to reflect the higher cost of fuel.

Appendix A: Summary of Local CE Practices

The following matrix provides a brief description of how LPAs have designed their local CE processes (i.e. where each CE element is conducted, and when and how often it is provided); and how LPAs engage parents in the CE process, track them from start to finish, and deal with parents who fail to complete the CE. CE performance indicators are also included for applicants who start the CE Foundation and those who complete the CE within 30 days.

Local Planning Area (LPA)	Where, When and How Often CE Components Are Offered	Comments	Engagement, Tracking, and Accountability	Comments	% of Approved Applicants Who Start CE ¹	% Who Complete All Required Elements w/in 30 Days
Statewide					84.1%	38.9%
Spokane (North CSO and Valley CSO) 6/13-6/14/07	<p><i>Foundation</i> (CSO) – Daily; Foundation is not routinely completed same day as financial interview, and it is often difficult to get parent back into CSO for Foundation. Emergent SW Assessment generally is available on same day as Foundation.</p> <p>CASAS (WorkSource) – Daily, in morning.</p> <p><i>ESD Work Skills Assessment WSA</i> (WorkSource) –Daily in morning immediately following CASAS.</p> <p><i>College Interview</i> (WorkSource) - Daily in the afternoon.</p> <p><i>ESD Recommendations</i> (WorkSource) - Daily in the</p>	<p>CSOs can increase the % of applicants who start the CE by developing processes to insure that the CE is completed immediately following the financial interview.</p> <p>Higher than average telephone TANF applications may also negatively affect Foundation completion. This is an issue that may need to be addressed at the state office level.</p> <p>Parent completes a learning disability screening prior to college interview. A very organized process between college and ESD.</p> <p>All college and ESD elements</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> – Marketing of the CE by the WFPS begins at the Foundation. ESD provides 15 minute overview of CE process prior to CASAS and schedules afternoon appointment slots for college and ESD interviews. College and ESD staff make sure parent knows when Final Decision appointment is scheduled with WFPS.</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> – IRP lists date and time for CASAS test and the date for the Final Decision Interview. Appointments for CASAS are scheduled using Web based system (developed by DSHS) which is available to CE partners. CASAS no shows are put in system immediately.</p>	<p>CSOs could strengthen the initial engagement process by developing a consistent marketing strategy and CE talking points for WFPS.</p> <p>The ESD overview of CE process at WorkSource appears to be an effective engagement tool. The pass off between college and ESD and on to DSHS helps to keep the parent engaged until CE completion.</p> <p>The tracking system is available to all partners. The system is reliant on WFPS checking daily for no shows. However, a large percentage of WFPS instead wait to see if parent shows for Final Decision which is usually the next day. LPA may want to establish a more consistent practice for using tracking system.</p>	<p>North 66.4%</p> <p>Valley 68.4%</p>	<p>21.7%</p> <p>38.2%</p>

¹ April 2007 data.

Local Planning Area (LPA)	Where, When and How Often CE Components Are Offered	Comments	Engagement, Tracking, and Accountability	Comments	% of Approved Applicants Who Start CE ¹	% Who Complete All Required Elements w/in 30 Days
	<p>afternoon following College Interview.</p> <p><i>Final Decision & IRP (CSO)</i> – Scheduled the day following ESD Recommendations.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete entire CE within three days, not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>	<p>completed in one day.</p> <p>Good potential to improve % of applicants who start CE by insuring Foundation is routinely completed on same day as financial interview and by reducing the number of phone-in TANF interviews.</p>	<p>The small numbers of no-shows for the remaining college and ESD elements are documented in the eJAS CE tool.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> – There is not a stated LPA approach to deal with parents who do not complete the CE. Most WFPS immediately call no show parents to re-engage. However, there is no consistent practice in terms of number of phone attempts, or how many no shows are allowed before good cause process is initiated.</p>	<p>The LPA could increase accountability and completion rates by establishing a more consistent approach to deal with parents who do not show for CE elements. Currently, there is a wide variation between staff and between CSOs on when or if to start good cause. Some staff, particularly in one CSO appeared reluctant to start good cause process for failing to complete the CE.</p>		
Benton-Franklin 6/5/07	<p><i>Foundation (CSO)</i> - Daily, Foundation is done immediately following the financial interview if possible. Emergent SW Assessment is not always available the same day, but only a small number of applicants require these.</p> <p><i>CASAS (CSO)</i> –Daily, Monday to Thursday in afternoon, Friday in the AM.</p> <p><i>College Interview and ESD WSA (WorkSource)</i> Daily, normally the day after CASAS is completed.</p>	<p>Starting in July, WFPS will also do the financial interview which should increase the % of applicants who start the CE</p> <p>CASAS completed at CSO because of space issues at WorkSource.</p> <p>CT Choices conducted during the same time period that college interview is being done, some parents doing interview while others are taking CT Choices</p> <p>The CSO just recently began</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> – WFPS does individual orientation as part of Foundation. College and ESD staff provide short overview of process to continue engagement message. LPA provides incentives for CE completion: \$25 gas voucher after CASAS and after Final Decision.</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> – IRP lists date and time for all elements of CE. All appointments are scheduled using Web based system (developed by college) which is available to all partners. WFPS</p>	<p>LPA partners appear to send a positive and consistent message about the CE. Staff provide effective hand-off to next element by reminding parent of next appointment time.</p> <p>Good tracking system in place. All partners' state that they like the tracking system and feel that it is effective.</p> <p>There appears to be a good process in place to deal with no shows.</p> <p>Overall, the LPA appears to have a strong CE design in place, and the LPA continues to refine and improve different aspects of the process. It is unclear why</p>	82.8%	33.5%

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	<p><i>ESD Recommendations</i> (WorkSource) Daily, normally day after college interview and ESD WSA.</p> <p><i>Final Decision & IRP</i> (WorkSource) Daily, completed by co-located WFPS immediately following ESD Recommendations. Back-up is done at CSO.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete CE within three to four days not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>	<p>completing Final Decision & IRP at WorkSource. The co-location should help improve completion rate and provides case management for parents during CE and Job Search.</p> <p>LPA is continuing s to improve and refine the CE process.</p>	<p>is notified by email of no shows for any appointments.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> – WFPS normally calls no show parent to re-engage. If WFPS is unable to contact, or there is a second (or third) no show, the case assigned to Sanction WFPS whose primary goal is to re-engage parent in CE.</p>	<p>this LPA is below the statewide completion rate. Their January-March completion rate averaged 32.94%. It is recommended that the LPA undertake a more in depth assessment of how the process is actually operating verses the design.</p>		
<p>Whatcom 5/15/07</p>	<p><i>Foundation</i> (CSO) – Daily, directly following the financial interview; emergent SW Assessment normally available immediately after Foundation.</p> <p><i>CASAS</i> (WorkSource) –Two days a week, Tuesday and Thursday in the morning.</p> <p><i>College Interview</i> (WorkSource) – Two days a week in AM, immediately following CASAS.</p> <p><i>ESD WSA</i> (WorkSource) – Tuesday and Thursday in the PM, following College Interview.</p>	<p>Good system in place to insure that applicant completes CE same day as financial interview.</p> <p>This is a very tight process, even though college and ESD CE elements are provided only twice a week. ESD & college staff feel that providing all the WorkSource CE elements on one day improves the completion rate and is helpful to parents by cutting down on trips to office.</p> <p>Regular appointment times for</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> - CSO provides group orientation followed by individual discussion during the foundation to engage parent in CE process. College and ESD reinforce marketing message and make sure parent knows when next segment of the CE is scheduled. ESD used to call parent night before WorkSource appointments.</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> – The IRP lists day and times for all CE elements. Appointments are scheduled on Outlook Scheduler and all partners have access to it.</p>	<p>LPA has a pro-active marketing approach. All partners seem to be clear on CE message. Line staff feel they can still improve engagement process. LPA wants to decrease the drop off rate between ESD Recommendations and Final Decision.</p> <p>The LPA has an effective tracking process.</p> <p>The CSO has recently changed the way it deals with no shows. It has tightened the CE process by starting the good cause process at the same time the WFPS calls parents to re-engage them.</p>	<p>94.0%</p>	<p>50.0%</p>

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	<p><i>ESD Recommendations</i> (WorkSource) Tuesday and Thursday in PM following WSA.</p> <p><i>Final Decision & IRP</i> (CSO) Wednesday and Friday, the day following the college and ESD elements.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete entire CE in three to five days not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>	Final Decision & IRP are between 11:00AM and noon, Wednesday and Friday.	<p>Information on shows (including unscheduled parents) and no shows are emailed to all partners through list serve email.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> – the WFPS immediately calls no show parent. Some WFPS also start good cause process at the same time.</p>			
<p>Rainier/ Capitol Hill/ Belltown (Rainier CSO and Capitol Hill CSO)</p> <p>5/23-5/24/07</p>	<p><i>Foundation</i> (CSO) – Daily, immediately after financial interview; emergent SW Assessment usually immediately available.</p> <p>CASAS (WorkSource) - Three days a week, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday in AM.</p> <p><i>ESD WSA</i> (WorkSource) - Three days a week in AM immediately following CASAS.</p> <p><i>College Interview</i> (WorkSource) - Daily</p> <p><i>ESD Recommendations</i> (WorkSource) – Daily immediately following College</p>	<p>Good system in place to insure that applicant completes CE on the same day as the financial interview.</p> <p>LPA may want to consider increasing the CASAS and WSA to five days a week given the number of approved applicants per month for the entire LPA.</p> <p>Many WFPS complete Final Decision and IRP by phone particularly if the ESD recommendation is Job Search. This is done to expedite entry into JS, since ESD immediately signs parent into JS before the Final</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> – The WFPS provides individual orientation at Foundation. College and ESD provide a brief overview of what the next steps are in the CE process.</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> – Initially there were no specific appointments set. Parents were given a return date for the IRP. In March/April, the LPA changed how they schedule the CE. Now, the WFPS schedules the CASAS and WSA and sets a 7-10 day return date in the IRP. The CASAS and WSA are scheduled in Excel and a hard copy is given to the college and ESD staff. After WSA, ESD</p>	<p>LPA could strengthen the initial engagement process by developing a consistent marketing strategy and CE talking points for all partners. Capitol Hill CSO is reviewing its current marketing strategy and is piloting new training on partnering with parents</p> <p>Current tracking system is somewhat cumbersome and confusing. LPA plans to change to Outlook but is having difficulty providing all partners access. LPA may wish to evaluate other tracking systems in use across the state.</p> <p>LPA could increase accountability by developing a more consistent approach in dealing with no show parents between CSOs. Rainier CSO provides more consistent follow through.</p>	<p>Rainier 85.3%</p> <p>C Hill 88.2 %</p>	<p>38.2%</p> <p>24.3%</p>

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	<p>Interview.</p> <p><i>Final Decision & IRP (CSO)</i> – Daily, generally scheduled five-seven days after CASAS appointment; a high number of interviews are conducted by telephone.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete entire CE in six to eight days not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>	<p>Decision and IRP are completed. However, it appears that phone interviews are becoming the norm in other situations as well. The LPA needs to re-look at this practice.</p>	<p>schedules college interview and ESD Recommendations appointment. LPA plans to implement an appointment tracking system using Outlook.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> – Most WFPS call no show parent and reschedule. If unable to make contact after one-2 calls, generally will start good cause process. Staff in one CSO did not have a clear idea on when they would start good cause.</p>			
<p>Pierce (Pierce North CSO and Lakewood CSO)</p> <p>5/8-5/9/07</p>	<p><i>Foundation (CSO)</i> – Daily, emergent SW Assessment generally available immediately.</p> <p><i>CASAS (CSO)</i> – Daily, in AM.</p> <p><i>College Interview</i> – Daily, immediately following CASAS.</p> <p><i>ESD WSA (CSO)</i> Daily, in the AM; generally the day after CASAS/College Interview.</p> <p><i>ESD Recommendations (CSO)</i> – Daily, immediately following WSA.</p> <p><i>Final Decision & IRP (CSO)</i> North- can be scheduled same day as ESD Recommendation or one</p>	<p>Pierce North WFPS conduct the TANF interview and Foundation. Lakewood WFPS only does Foundation. Need to develop process to insure Foundation is completed immediately following financial interview.</p> <p>Pierce North and Lakewood CSOs are in the same building. North CSO, ESD and college staff are downstairs. Lakewood is upstairs. Plans are underway to move CSO to Lakewood area of Pierce County.</p> <p>Lakewood CSO very recently initiated the co-location of</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> - Pierce N provides individual orientation and Lakewood conducts group orientation using Power Pont slides. College and ESD reinforce CE message and provide information on next steps.</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> - Each CSO has CE liaison to track appointments and to immediately call no show parent to re-engage if possible. Liaison also will start good cause process if necessary. LW just changed to use of liaison. ESD and college staff notify liaison of no shows.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> - Process was</p>	<p>LPA could strengthen the initial engagement process by developing a consistent marketing strategy and CE talking points for all partners.</p> <p>All partners very positive about this current tracking system with use of liaison staff.</p> <p>LPA is hoping to see improvement in CE completions with stronger accountability and follow through.</p>	<p>North 90.0%</p> <p>LW 74.8%</p>	<p>35.9%</p> <p>29.1%</p>

Local Planning Area (LPA)	Where, When and How Often CE Components Are Offered	Comments	Engagement, Tracking, and Accountability	Comments	% of Approved Applicants Who Start CE ¹	% Who Complete All Required Elements w/in 30 Days
	<p>to two days out; Lakewood IRP completed immediately following ESD Recommendation by WFPS co-located with ESD & college staff.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete entire CE in three to five days not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>	WFPS with college and ESD staff in order to immediately complete Final Decision & IRP.	tightened up in March. Liaison calls parent to reschedule appointment. After one call, or no contact good cause letter is sent.			
Lewis County 5/4/07	<p><i>Foundation</i> (CSO) – Daily; directly linked to financial interview since WFPS does both the financial interview and Foundation; emergent SW Assessment is normally done as joint interview with WFPS.</p> <p>CASAS (WorkSource) –Daily in morning.</p> <p><i>ESD WSA</i> (WorkSource) Daily, in AM, immediately following CASAS.</p> <p><i>College Interview</i> (WorkSource) – Daily in the morning, the day following CASAS and WSA.</p> <p><i>ESD Recommendations</i> (WorkSource) – Daily in AM immediately following College Interview.</p>	<p>Very tight process to insure timely completion of Foundation.</p> <p>CSO and WorkSource are co-located in the same mall.</p> <p>CASAS and ESD WSA are normally completed on the same day.</p> <p>College Interview and ESD Recommendations completed on same day.</p> <p>Very effective coordination and communication between partners helps insure high completion rate.</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> - Individual orientation by WFPS. “What’s in it for me” check list is used by partners to consistently market the CE. College does an orientation/overview at CASAS. All partners have a role in marketing CE and keeping parent engaged. Very consistent message (e.g. never use the word “test” in referring to CASAS).</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> - LPA uses Outlook to schedule appointments and track no shows. Parents are called if no show to get them rescheduled so they can complete CE within IRP timeline.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> – LPA has a clear and consistent approach in dealing with parents through</p>	<p>LPA has developed a consistent positive message around the CE process. Staff enthusiasm for CE is apparent. Parents also told that CE is mandatory and that there are consequences for family if they do not complete it. Good balance between positive marketing and requiring accountability of parent.</p> <p>Good communication between partners to insure CE completion</p> <p>LPA has a very tight system in place. Parents are both positively engaged in the process and held accountable if they do not complete CE.</p>	94.4%	51.9%

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	<p><i>Final Decision and IRP (CSO)</i> – Daily, scheduled same day or day following ESD Recommendations.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete entire CE in three to five days not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>		out CE process.			
Clark County 5/16/07	<p><i>Foundation (CSO)</i> - Daily, directly linked to financial interview since WFPS does both the financial interview and Foundation; emergent SW Assessment normally available immediately following Foundation.</p> <p><i>CASAS (College Area of Mall)</i> – Three days a week Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.</p> <p><i>College Interview (College Area of Mall)</i> – Three days a week immediately following CASAS.</p> <p><i>ESD WSA (WorkSource)</i> – Daily in the afternoon.</p> <p><i>ESD Recommendations (WorkSource)</i> – Daily in the PM immediately following CT Choices.</p>	<p>CSO, college and WorkSource are all co-located in same mall. Linked financial and Foundation interviews helps insure timely completion of Foundation.</p> <p>Parents are not given set appointment times for CE elements. IRP directs parents to complete CE and return for Final Decision appointment about one week later.</p> <p>Daily availability of college sections of the CE could help streamline the CE process.</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> – LPA had provided group orientation since initiation of CE. As of May 1st, WFPS are doing individual orientations. ESD follows up with parents to ensure they know when the Final Decision/IRP is scheduled.</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> – The IRP does not list appointment times for CASAS and other CE elements. Only sets the return date for Final Decision. WFPS and partners can look at CE to see if parent has completed CE elements.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> - WFPS generally wait until Final Decision appointment before taking any follow up action. WFPS generally calls parent to re-engage. Most WFPS try</p>	<p>LPA is working on strategies to get more parents to CASAS and to Final Decision/IRP. The greatest drop off occurs at these two points. LPA could strengthen the initial engagement process by developing a consistent marketing strategy and CE talking points for all partners.</p> <p>College and ESD do not know who or how many are supposed to show for CE elements.</p> <p>LPA has made continuous improvement in CE completion rates since January – it is not clear the cause for the higher completion rates.</p>	94.0%	41.4%

Local Planning Area (LPA)	Where, When and How Often CE Components Are Offered	Comments	Engagement, Tracking, and Accountability	Comments	% of Approved Applicants Who Start CE ¹	% Who Complete All Required Elements w/in 30 Days
	<p><i>Final Decision & IRP</i> scheduled one week after Foundation; appointments are available daily at 10:00 AM.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete entire CE in five to seven days not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>		several times to re-engage to avoid starting sanction process.			
Grays Harbor 6/7/07	<p><i>Foundation (CSO)</i> – Daily, not routinely completed immediately following the financial interview; one specialized WFPS is assigned to complete the Foundation, back-up is provided by WFPS; emergent SW Assessment usually immediately available.</p> <p><i>CASAS (CSO)</i> four days a week, Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri in morning.</p> <p><i>College Interview (CSO)</i> Four days a week immediately following CASAS.</p> <p><i>ESD WSA (WorkSource)</i> Four days a week in the afternoon; normally completed same day as college elements.</p> <p><i>ESD Recommendations (WorkSource)</i> Four days a week, immediately following CT</p>	<p>CSO needs to strengthen link between TANF interview and Foundation interview. The percentage of applicants who complete the Foundation is appreciably lower than the state average.</p> <p>College and ESD elements normally are completed on the same day.</p> <p>Many WFPS complete Final Decision and IRP by phone primarily because of transportation issues; the LPA should re-look at this practice.</p> <p>Good potential to improve % of applicants who start CE by insuring Foundation is routinely completed on same day as financial interview.</p>	<p><i>Engagement</i> – For several months, the CSO has used a specialized WFPS who does the majority of CE Foundation interviews.</p> <p><i>Tracking</i> – Outlook Calendar is printed out and given to ESD and college. WFPS is notified if parents no show.</p> <p><i>Accountability</i> – If parents do not show, WFPS will call to re-schedule. If parent does not re-engage, WFPS then sends out a pre-good cause letter to parent to re-schedule CE.</p>	<p>LPA partners appear to send a consistent positive message about the CE.</p> <p>Use of pre-good cause letter adds an additional step to process and extends out the time frame for CE completion. LPA should re-evaluate the use of this letter.</p>	71.6%	50.0%

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	<p>Choices.</p> <p><i>Final Decision & IRP (CSO)</i> Daily; large percentage of interviews are completed by telephone.</p> <p>Normally possible to complete entire CE in three to five days not including time needed to resolve child care and other issues.</p>					