Best and Promising Practices Research

Overview

New research-based information is available on the strengths, needs, and complex challenges facing individuals and families who live in poverty, as well as effective models for moving them toward economic self-sufficiency. To provide the WorkFirst Subcabinet and WorkFirst Re-design Teams with information that will assist them in identifying redesign options and informed decisions, the WorkFirst partnership convened a cross-agency Best Practices Research Group that worked with researchers and subject matter experts from University of Washington's West Coast Poverty Center, non-profit Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the Research Division for the federal HHS Administration for Children and Families, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Center for Law and Social Policy, American Public Human Services Association and Abt Associates Inc. The group completed a comprehensive review of evidence-based best and promising practices that are in alignment with the core assumptions for Washington's WorkFirst redesign. The following researchers were involved in this review:

West Coast Poverty Center (WCPC), University of Washington, Seattle

***Becky Abbey**, Masters in Public Affairs student, and **Dr. Jennifer Romich**, West Coast Poverty Center (WCPC) Associate Director, helped state agency staff explore and summarize integrated case management approaches and best practices. This work assisted ESA staff in their evaluation of the nature of evidence available and extent to which programs are "research-based," and the development of criteria for summarizing key aspects of promising approaches. The WCPC researchers also reviewed the research on the outcomes of children in child-only TANF cases and provided the team with references for further review.*

The West Coast Poverty Center serves as a hub for research, education, and policy analysis leading to greater understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and effective approaches to reducing it in the west coast states. Founded in October of 2005, the Center is one of four poverty centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (OASPE).

Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), Washington, D.C.

***Dr. LaDonna Pavetti** is the Director of the Welfare Reform and Income Support Division at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Before joining the Center in 2009, Dr. Pavetti spent 12 years as a researcher at Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., where she directed numerous research projects examining various aspects of TANF implementation and strategies to address the needs of the hard-to-employ. She provided team members with invaluable analysis and assistance as they researched strategies for the hard-to-employ.*

***Liz Schott** is a Senior Fellow with the Center's Welfare Reform and Income Support Division. She is a former President and current Board member of the Washington State Budget and Policy Center and has also served as Adjunct Professor of Law at Seattle University Law School. Ms. Schott provided leads and contact information to help guide the Team and has been available to discuss different policy approaches with team members.*
The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) is a non-partisan research and policy institute working on federal and state fiscal policies and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income Americans.

Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Washington, D.C.

Seth Chamberlain *is a Social Science Research Analyst for the Division of Economic Independence/ACF/HHS for these areas: TANF, strengthening families, youth development, and adolescent pregnancy prevention He provided numerous leads on home visiting research and programs in the nation.*

Lauren Supplee *is the Coordinator for Home Visiting Research and Senior Social Service Research Analyst for Head Start and child welfare for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation/ACF/HHS. She provided information on what her office considered to be best and promising practices for home visitation programs and services aimed at strengthening low-income vulnerable families.*

APHSA (American Public Human Services Association), Washington, D.C.

Robert Ek *is an APHSA Legislative Associate, and provided assistance in identifying best practices, leads and contact information.*

Mr. Eck also organized an APHSA conference call involving 26 states that focused on the engagement of private sector employers in transitional jobs programs (e.g., Washington's Community Jobs) and I-BEST-type programs. (I-BEST is an alternative method of instruction that combines the teaching of content courses and skills training with basic skills education. Washington State, which pioneered the I-BEST model, currently has 128 different I-BEST programs offered at 34 colleges. These programs range from CDL and childcare provider training to hospitality trades and welding.)

APHSA is a nonprofit organization made up of multiple programs that assist families improve their lives. APHSA provides services to state and local governments and organizations in several policy and practice areas.

CLASP (Center for Law and Social Policy), Washington, D.C.

Julia Strawn*, Senior Fellow on the Workforce Development team at CLASP, provided valuable leads and contact information to the research team. Ms. Strawn has been active in the workforce development arena for many years, authoring numerous reports, and recently testifying before the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support of the House Ways and Means Committee in a hearing on the role of education and training in the TANF program.*

Elizabeth Lower-Basch *is a Senior Policy Analyst at CLASP and provided valuable leads on LEP programs throughout the country.*

CLASP is a national non-profit organization which develops and advocates for federal, state and local policies to strengthen families and create pathways to education and work.

Abt Associates, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts

Karin Martinson*, Senior Research Associate, is a lead researcher on the Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self-Sufficiency (ISIS) Project, funded by the Administration for Children and Families, which is a national evaluation of promising programs and policies for improving employment and self-sufficiency outcomes for low-income families, which is just getting started. Ms. Martinson provided leads on promising programs that have been identified for possible inclusion in this evaluation.*

Abt Associates is one of the largest government and business research and consulting firms in the world, providing technical-assistance expertise on a wide range of issues in social, economic, and health policy, international development, and business research.

Summary of Identified Best and Promising Practices

Strengthening Families		
Best Practice		
	State	***Program***
1.	*Florida*	***Healthy Families Florida****: Provides home visits, life skills, parenting, emergency supports and referrals to community resources for expectant parents or those with newborns to prevent child abuse and neglect. About 85% are TANF eligible, although there are no income and resource limits.*
2.	*Florida*	***Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY):*** *Provides **e**vidence-based training curriculum and training for community home visitors so they can help parents of any income level prepare their age three, four or five children for success in school.*
3.	*Nationwide* *Sites in 11 counties in Washington including Thurston, King, and Pierce*	***Nurse Family Partnerships:*** *Ongoing home visits from specially trained, registered nurses from early pregnancy through a child's second birthday. Provides low-income, first time mothers with support they need to have a healthy pregnancy and provide responsible and competent care for their children.*
4.	*Nationwide* *30 sites stateside in Washington*	***Parents as Teachers:*** *Evidence-based training curriculum to provide child development/school readiness knowledge and parenting support. Trained home visitors work with low-income, first-time parents with newborns until their children are age 5.*
Promising Practice		
5.	*Nationwide* *6 sites in Washington; 4 in Seattle & 2 in Yakima*	***Parent-Child Home Program:*** *Evidence-based training curriculum to provide early childhood literacy/school readiness knowledge and parenting support. Trained home visitors work with parents with children ages 16 mos. to 4 years.*
6.	*Nationwide* *Operating in Regions 2 & 3 in Washington*	***SafeCare Model:*** *Evidence-based training curriculum for the treatment and prevention of child abuse. Trained home visitors work with at-risk families with children ages 0-5.*
Not Moving Forward as a Recommendation		
	Oklahoma City (Hankins)	***Building Strong Families:*** *Group sessions, individual support from family coordinators and referrals to services for unwed, low-income couples expecting a child or just had a baby. Program is only successful in 1 of 8 nationwide models and success is limited to just some participants.*
	New Mexico (Judge)	***Golden Opportunities for Lifelong Development****: Hires persons age 50 and older to mentor at-risk TANF adults who are entering/re-entering the workforce. High costs, few performance measures, minimal mentor screening and funding cut by half.*
	New York (Hankins)	***Pay for Performance****: Incentives for TANF parents and children completing activities like homework, work activities or high grades. Program ended due to high cost and few measurable outcomes*

Addressing Major Barriers		
Best Practice		
	State	***Program***
1.	*Minnesota, Ramsey County*	***Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services****: Master's level staff provides clinical/functional assessments, weekly home visits (life skills and rehabilitative services) and SSI facilitation to TANF clients. The county also provided the Intensive Integrated Intervention Program (IIIP) that was very similar to ARMHS except it also provided subsidized work and was limited to those nearing the end of their TANF time limit. The IIIP project ended due to costs.*
2.	*Nebraska*	***Building Nebraska Families****: University Extension staff provides TANF clients with weekly home visits, life skills training and practice.*
3.	*Utah*	***Intensive Case Management****: Co-located Master's level clinical therapists provide TANF clients with in-depth clinical assessments, crisis intervention, and short-term therapy, referrals and SSI facilitation. They also consult/train TANF staff.*
4.	*Minnesota, Anoka County*	***Partnerships for Family Success****: In-depth, in-home screening followed by one year of intensive, family-based case management, weekly home visits, support groups and SSI facilitation.*
5.	*Vermont*	***Reach Up****: DVR staff provides disabled TANF clients with case management, assessment, specialized employment activities and SSI facilitation.*
6.	*Various states, including Kansas*	***Screening Assessment for Engagement, Retention and Recovery (SAFERR):*** *Collaboration between child welfare, courts and chemical dependency programs for substance-abusing parents, including TANF.*
7.	*Utah*	***Transitional Jobs****: Utah uses a performance-based contract with mental health agencies to provide unsubsidized jobs, with the agency paying the wages the TANF agency providing work supports.*
Not Moving Forward as a Recommendation		
	Minnesota, Hennepin County	***Co-located CBO social worker*** *addresses TANF clients' chemical dependency/family violence issues. On-site psychologist provides mental health assessment, counseling and monthly support groups. Compared to the other two Minnesota Integrated Services Project sites (in Ramsey and Anoka County) the findings were less conclusive due to small samples.*
	San Francisco	***Tiered subsidized work:*** *Subsidized job for the hardest to employ TANF clients provided by CBOs, clients with some barriers by counties/cities and for job ready clients by the private sector. Similar to Community Jobs and Career Jump.*
	Pennsylvania	***Maximizing Participation Program****: Multidisciplinary teams conduct case staffings to develop treatment recommendations & joint plans. Similar to Washington State's WorkFirst program.*
	New York	***PRIDE (now WeCORE):*** *Contracted medical professionals conduct extensive series of assessments/medical evaluations followed by work experience or job search for TANF clients found able to work. Ended due to high costs and low results.*
	Georgia	***GoodWorks!:*** *Similar to Community Jobs, but with Master's level 24/7 in-home personal advisors and job coaches and a 4-week DVR assessment (including medical/vocational testing). Good results, but very limited availability and a 99% budget reduction due to high costs.*
	Iowa	***10-day TANF staff training*** *to identify/address disabilities, assessment tools and enhanced TANF/DVR coordination. Too new to assess results.*

Workforce Developmen		
BEST PRACTICES		
	State	***Program***
1.	*California*	***CalWorks:*** *Targeted to TANF recipients after 4 weeks of job search, combines college certificate or degree programs with off campus work study jobs that align with program of study. Employers pay 25% of wages.*
2.	*Washington*	***Community Jobs:*** *Administered by the Department of Commerce through contracts with 17 CBOs statewide, provides paid temporary employment with resolution of barriers. Parents gain work skills in a structured, supervised setting, usually leading to an unsubsidized job. Community Jobs is a national model for transitional jobs programs.*
3.	*Washington*	***I-BEST:*** *Helps TANF clients qualify for targeted in-demand occupations by* ***c****ombining ABE/ESL with job skills and vocational training. Based on proven "tipping point" – level of knowledge and skills at which adults can begin to access family-wage jobs. Developed in Washington State, I-BEST is a national model for contextualized vocational education.*
4.	*El Paso, Texas*	***Project Quest:*** *CBO-centered program with strong employer and community involvement, combines college-based training with intensive case management, support services, and job placement and retention services.*
5.	*Kentucky*	***Ready-to-Work****: Provides work study jobs, support services and on-site academic/employment counseling to help TANF clients pursue post-secondary degrees and credentials. Kentucky allows 24 (instead of 12) months of vocational education and 20 (instead of 19) hours of work study.*
6.	*Portland, Oregon*	***Welfare-to-Work:*** *Based on solid upfront assessment of client skills and needs, and strong partnerships between the state Department of Human Services and various local providers, including colleges, chambers of commerce, and JTPA agencies. Program far outperformed all others in employment and earnings gains in the NEWWS randomized evaluation by MDRC.*
7.	*San Francisco, California*	***Welcome Back Center:*** *Counseling and educational programs for internal health professionals immigrants. Services include assistance in obtaining appropriate licenses, credentials and orientation, and job placement in the U.S. health care system.*
PROMISING PRACTICES		
8.	*St. Louis, Missouri*	***ARCHS:*** *Subsidized jobs program for TANF clients in sanction. Run by nonprofit, with strong partnership with private employers.*
9.	*Arkansas (Berry)*	***Career Pathways Initiative****: Uses specialized college staff (counselors and tutors who follow students as they move through the program) and comprehensive support services, to help low-skill adults find high-wage work in high-demand fields. College staff get special training on serving low-income students and colleges are subject to per capita and institutional incentives. Arkansas has adopted a Career Readiness Certificate, a statewide, portable, assessment-based credential that measures key workplace skills.*
10.	*New York*	***Career Pathways Program:*** *New program that links basic education to occupational training (including in green technology and construction). Services provided by local nonprofits. "Feeder" programs being established to address reading, math, and English deficiencies.*

Workforce Developmen		
11.	*Denver, Colorado*	***Essential Skills:*** *Combines 4-month work readiness and certificate program in high demand occupation with paid internships (Employ America). Features a comprehensive "whole life" approach with peer support groups and low staff-to-student ratio.*
12.	*Chicago, Illinois*	***Harborquest:*** *Subsidized jobs program for adults with barriers to employment, including criminal backgrounds. Graduated stress, peer support, and on-the-job coaching, case management by MSW staff. Strong partnership with private employers.*
13.	*Chicago, Illinois*	***Healthcare Bridge:*** *Contextualized vocational program for adults at low grade levels. CBO recruits and provides case management, with employers on advisory board. Funding includes Workforce Investment Act and local housing authority dollars*
14.	*Spokane, Washington*	***Individual Development Accounts:*** *A matched savings account and services from the Spokane Neighborhood Assistance Program (SNAP) that provide basic financial training and motivation to assist refugees to understand the American financial system and focus on specific savings goals.*
15.	*Columbus Ohio*	***Integrated Case Management:*** *This model boosts TANF participation and reduces sanctions by using one staff to provide both income maintenance and monitor all employment and training activities and served as the sole point of contact for any changes or issues (rather than contacting other CSO staff or providers).*
16.	*Pennsylvania*	***KEYS:*** *Helps TANF/SNAP clients succeed in community colleges via career counseling, tutoring and broad range of supports (e.g., college laptop loan program). Pennsylvania allows up to 24 months vocational education and has introduced "vocation-specific work experience", paid internships and practicums that count toward federal participation.*
17.	*Michigan*	***Michigan Works! (Peer-to-Peer)****: Trained peers (fellow union employees) provide orientation and help dislocated workers who are being laid off regain & retain employment by referring them to other agencies that provide assessment, job search, placement assistance, group counseling, OJT, skill-upgrading and skills training. Very short-term intervention with limited number of employers.*
18.	*Spokane, Washington*	***Microenterprise Development –*** *A Spokane Neighborhood Assistance Program (SNAP) program that offers business technical assistance, short-term training, a revolving microloan fund or loan loss reserve fund, and post-loan technical assistance to refugees.*
19.	*Minnesota*	***MnBEST****: New I-BEST-model program oriented to health services, with the addition of a 6-month long term care clinical placement, subsidized by TANF agency for first 3 months.*
20.	*Falls, Church, Virginia*	***Northern Virginia Family Services*** *- A program started in 1996 that enables students to qualify for entry-level office positions and also earn up to 17 credits through a partnership between the nonprofit Northern Virginia Family Services and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA).*
21.	*New York City*	***POPS:*** *Subsidized jobs program that includes a structured curriculum (STRIVE) on soft skills, resume-writing, work-readiness, interviewing, attire, etiquette, time management, health, and hygiene. Placements are with the city Parks and Recreation Department.*

Workforce Developmen		
22.	*San Antonio, Texas*	***Project ARRIBA:*** *Based on the "Project QUEST" model, program is run by a CBO that serves as an intermediary between local training providers and employers. Emphasis on support services to help overcome obstacles to graduation, including securing prior support from participant's family, friends, and community.*
23.	*Wisconsin*	***RISE:*** *Helps low-income adults secure good careers in career pathways and provides a skilled workforce for employers by helping adults earn postsecondary credentials related to high-demand jobs. Patterned after Washington State's I-BEST program.*
24.	*Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois*	***Shifting Gears****: A policy development process supported by the Joyce Foundation that attempts to bridge the gap between 1) college-based programs that prepare low-skilled adults for high-wage/high-demand careers through credentials and degrees, and 2) programs built on relationships with specific employers that lead to jobs with those employers. We examine examples of these efforts in three states.*
25.	*Grand Rapids, Michigan*	***The Source****: Not-for-profit employee support organization to help employed TANF recipients keep their job and qualify for a better job, including working with their employers to identify and provide needed supports and services.*
Not Moving Forward as a Recommendation		
	Illinois	***Chicago ERA****: Contracted job developers placed TANF clients into jobs/better jobs (with no skill-building) if unable to exit to employment within six months. Lost funding after two years, showing only modest earnings gains.*
	Riverside, California	***PASS****: Contracts with CBOs and one college to provide employed recent TANF recipients with case management, counseling, mentoring, reemployment, life skills and referrals to social services programs such as family violence, substance abuse or mental health treatment. The very modest employment outcomes of this program indicate that case management and employment/reemployment services by themselves are not an adequate model.*
	Diversion	*Per Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, no standout best-practice program*

Child Only/Kinship Care		
Promising Practices		
	State	***Program***
1.	*Washington*	***DSHS Children's Administration Family Team Decision-Making****: Meetings with parents, child, relatives, family friends, neighbors, caregivers, community members and service providers to help make placement decisions.*
2.	*El Paso County, Colorado*	***Integrated Services in El Paso County****: Nationally-recognized integration of TANF and child welfare services at the county level, including child-only and kinship care cases.*
3.	*Tennessee*	***Relative Caregiver Program****: A partnership between the Department of Human Services (DHS) which issues TANF grants and the Department of Children's Services (DCS) which administers this program and contracts with community-based agencies to deliver services to caregivers.*

Child Only/Kinship Care		
4.	*Tennessee*	***Families First Kinship Care Pilot:*** *began on April 1, 2005 to give additional financial assistance to relatives receiving a Families First child-only TANF grant to keep children with relatives instead of entering the state's foster care system. It operates in three regions in the state on a very limited basis.*
5.	*Georgia*	***Kinship Care Navigator Program****: Initiated on July 1 2005 to increase the pool of individuals trained to help other caregivers navigate the social services system and provide employment opportunities for older caregivers. The program lost its funding July 1, 2009.*
6.	*Georgia*	***Kinship Care TANF Program:*** *It provides supplemental financial and other supports to older or disabled caregivers to promote the stability of these households and the permanency of these caregiving arrangements.*
7.	*South Carolina*	***GrandFamily Resource Centers****: The program was created in 2008 by the South Carolina State Library in partnership with public libraries in South Carolina to provide a resource center for grandparents caring for young children.*
8.	*Kansas*	***Grandparents as Caregivers Program:*** *Provided cash benefits to relatives raising children, as an alternative to child-only TANF. The program was implemented in January 2007 and funding was eliminated as of July 1, 2009.*

Best Practices Research Group

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