# WorkFirst Re-Examination One Table Meeting
# August 18, 2010 Meeting Summary

1. **July 21 One Table Follow Up**
   - All materials from the One Table meetings are posted on the WorkFirst website at: http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/reexam/onetablegroup.asp

   - Information about WorkFirst Re-examination focus groups is also posted on the website. Focus group results and analysis should be available in early September 2010, and will be shared with the One Table group.

   - The Tacoma Community House has completed one client focus group.

   - Laurie Lippold asked that the One Table group include representation from families who will be affected by the outcomes of the redesign.

   - Karen Lee, Tony Wright and Kelly Lindseth of the Employment Security Department discussed how WorkFirst Job Search services are different from Labor Exchange services.
     - The general labor exchange serves people who are not connected with other programs. These are self-serve participants who do not receive case management services.
     - WorkFirst participants receive case management services. Those with barriers are connected to services and programs designed to assist them manage barriers and attach to the labor market. Services are tailored to the needs of each individual and may include weekly or bi-weekly meetings, resume development, assistance in preparing for interviews, transitional soft skills, financial literacy, resolving issues, job readiness, and competency workshops. Job Search services may also be paired with educational activities such as Basic Education and GED completion. ESD does not provide the educational services directly, however they connect participants to local educational service providers. ESD is also in the process of developing an agreement with Microsoft to offer technical training resources that will increase engagement and educational opportunities.
   - The group discussed WorkFirst participation. Questions and comments raised:
     - When do we have the discussion as to how the 32 hours can be used?
     - Provide 2-3 examples of how parents are meeting the 32 hour requirement.
     - What are the goals for the program—meeting federal requirements or achieving employment and self-sufficiency?
     - Are we being as flexible as we can be?
     - Are participation requirements aligned with our outcomes?

- How do program outcomes align with research?
- If one of the goals of the program is helping families get to self-sufficiency, what does that mean? The MDRC study provides some information about what is effective in helping families achieve self-sufficiency.
- Significant cuts have been determined for the program. As we re-examine the program we need to look at how to focus limited resources to best meet the needs of families. It appears that 1/3 of families are able to exit the program with minimal assistance; 1/3 need program services and are willing to engage in those services to move toward self-sufficiency and it is unclear what is needed or effective in engaging the remaining 1/3. We need to discuss what works best for the middle 1/3 of families.

Information being gathered by the Best Practices Research team will be shared with the One Table group.

**Additional Information/Follow-up Items:**

- What percentage of parents in Job Search is participating in GED or other activities?
- How many offices are offering the one-week Job Search workshop?
- What is the number of job applications required per week for Job Search participants?
- Clarify what job search is and is not.

**2. <u>Sanction Presentation</u>**

Dasha Mitchell provided a presentation to describe the current WorkFirst sanction process.

**Additional Information/Follow-up Items:**

- How many parents who exited the program due to non-compliance sanction returned to TANF?
- Conduct research to determine what has happened to families who exited WorkFirst due to the non-compliance sanction and have not returned to the program.

3. **Adult Risk Analysis Presentation**

David Mancuso with Research and Data Analysis (RDA) provided a presentation of the information gathered in the TANF Adult Risk Analysis presentation.

**Additional Information/Follow-up Items:**

- How does data in the study correlate to data provided earlier during the legislative session which indicated that 65% of the people entering TANF each month have been on TANF before?
- Provide a correlation to age and usage for each category on slide 14.
- How many Quick Leavers participated in Job Search?
- How many people with mental health and/or chronic health conditions participated in Job Search?
- How many parents are not able to access treatment due to the freeze in treatment expansion funding?
- How many people are on waiting lists for chemical dependency treatment?
- How many families are enrolled in Healthy Options?
- Clarify the criteria for identifying the families involved in Children's Administration services.
- Does the criteria include investigations where allegations are founded AND unfounded?
- Clarify how services are being defined.
- How do the findings for families involved with Children's Administration (CA) compare to the broader CA caseload?
- Secretary Dreyfus asked if there is an opportunity to look at the childhood history of the parents included in the cohort to determine if childhood experience/trauma impacted their future. Do we have the opportunity to pull ACES into this work?
- Does this information provide us with the ability to build assessments that help determine what category (leaver, stayer, cycler) a family might align with? If we could build assessments to give us this information, we could build engagement strategies that target resources and increase effective outcomes. For example, these assessments might identify families that would benefit from intensive case management and which families could succeed with a more self-directed engagement model.
- Can the Best Practices Research group look at what services can be provided to each category to "break the cycle"? That would be

helpful in understanding what case management strategies can best impact a family.

- Would like to see data based on the length of stay in program and ages of children.
- How many people left the caseload each year?

**Addressing Key Questions:**

The group began this part of the session with a discussion of desired program outcomes. The discussion included the following comments/ideas:

*Defining Self-Sufficiency*

- Supporting your family without the assistance of the state.
- Working or having some income source that doesn't require TANF, Basic Food or Medical assistance. People who leave TANF and don't return are a success.
- Self-sufficiency is a journey, not a destination.
- Family structure (number of children and ages of them) impacts ability to leave TANF and/or obtain self-sufficiency.

*Moving out of poverty*

- What is the role of government in reducing the number of families and children in poverty—since TANF is available up to 82% of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL), families who exit TANF (at 82% FPL) may still be living in poverty.
- This indicates a need to maintain Post-TANF supports for families post to keep them moving out of poverty and childcare is a key component of this support.
- Can we measure the effectiveness of treatment and how it impacts program outcomes? How do we address populations who are not achieving sobriety or mental health after multiple treatment attempts?
- We need to provide support to families who want to avoid having additional children. How do we help families understand the relationship between poverty and increasing family size?
- "Opportunity to live healthy and productive lives" research indicates a connection between self-sufficiency and the achievement of post-secondary credentials and the "tipping point". The impacts of education on income are not evident until a person obtains post-secondary credentials. The wage progression and wage at placement slides in the WorkFirst Performance Measure document seem to indicate a focus on immediate employment rather than a focus on education as ultimate goal to move families to self sufficiency.
- There are people living in poverty as we define it that are living healthy and productive lives. We need to take a broader view on what helps families achieve this goal. We need to consider a broader view on the definition of education such as participation in apprenticeships and the use of a career ladder.

- People lack basic skills (not just a high school diploma). These basic skills are necessary for parents to compete.
- Low income people don't achieve wage progression without some skill upgrade (not necessarily 4 year or advanced degree).
- Employment Security conducts vacancy surveys. Twice a year economists poll employers to identify where vacancies exist and what employers are looking for in employees. Employers look for educational experience and employment history as well as behavioral qualities. Post recession jobs are lower wage jobs as employers are evaluating their risks. TANF families tend to have more barriers and it is less likely that they will enter the labor market at $18.00/hour. We need to apply an employment ladder approach for families on TANF.
- Learning disabilities and other effects of childhood trauma impact these families ability to succeed. How do we identify people with high aces scores and then help them connect to services that will help them engage and succeed? An effective assessment and available treatment is essential to their success. The engagement approach for these families needs to be based on what we learn from this assessment.
- Basic needs such as housing and treatment (medical, mental health, chemical dependency) are a first step on a journey out of poverty for many of these families.

*Defining participation that achieves desired outcomes*

- Will any referral do or is it the right referral to the right program that is important?
- How we define participation might look differently depending on the group (leaver, stayer, and cycler) the family aligns with; one size fits all for the entire time on program can't be the only focus.

*Identifying what we should track to measure progression*

- We need to identify what information we should track or monitor in order to assess how the families are being served and how best to use the scarce resources. The State is one piece of the system that will help families move out of poverty. It will take coordination and leveraging of resources at the state and local community levels to impact poverty and homelessness.
- The progression of families who are pursuing education (GED, trade education, certificate programs).
- Measure wage progression for parents in these programs.
- Set expectations for progression and measure the impact of education on wage progression.

*Realigning current strategies*

- The economy of the 21st century is different than the economy of the 20th century. A high school education alone will not secure a "good job". Some post high school education is necessary. The goal of this program should be to put every family on path to self-sufficiency—not at day one but to see progression in year one and beyond. The best use of our scarce resources is to invest in some education to put people on the path to self-sufficiency and develop human capital. Job search should be targeted to the specific population that will benefit from it.
- Gather information about what assets people have. Monitor for an increase in assets and a decrease in barriers over time. We need to define these terms.
- Data can predict that helping a person find a job can reduce program costs. We need to work with families where they are and help them in the best way possible. We must show with our measures that we are making improvements and are attaching people to the labor market or SSI.
- UI data for employment, progression and wage amounts
- Education is a broad continuum--from literacy to college. The common denominator is wage progression. This program is not the answer to self-sufficiency but a critical first step. We need to identify what services we focus scarce resources on to help families get to the first leg of self-sufficiency and then connect them to other resources and support beyond the TANF box
- $10.00/hour will not get a family to the pathway to self-sufficiency
- Data about childhood adverse experiences is crucial to help us identify where to focus resources that will help families succeed. Early assessment and intervention is crucial to success.
- Factors such as the age of children, number of children and chemical dependency needs are critical to success. Redirect money from job search to focus on these services. Engage families without barriers in self-directed job search.
- Re-prioritize how to best use currently available resources in the short term and then think about where we would invest additional funds in the future.
- Discuss the resource and service gaps we identify and how the larger community (government, philanthropy, communities) can help fill the gaps
- The program should move people onto the path to self sufficiency. The activities we engage people in should address fundamental needs first
- Housing Hope in Everett uses a progression model that includes work experience. Homelessness is a significant barrier. We need to leverage resources available at CSOs with other community resources.
- Collect data to track children on the caseload. Engagement planning should include how engagement looks for single-parent families, two-parent families, and fathers. Work readiness is more challenging when basic human needs are not met. Barriers need to be addressed in the appropriate order. For example, address basic needs, then treatment, then education or other issues.

*Summary*

- People are on a pathway to self sufficiency.
- We should gather data to show progression on the pathway.
- Progression includes asset development, barrier reduction and gap identification.
- We need to look at assessments to determine if we are identifying the barriers as well as whether we can identify the right track (leaver, stayer, or cycler) for appropriate engagement.
- Case Management should not be a "one size fits all". The model might include more integrated case management for stayers with less intensive/more self-directed services for leavers.
- Restructure the program in the short term by prioritizing limited resources to stay within budget. Then, make a plan for key investments we would "buy back" in the long term as additional resources become available. Don't spend resources where we don't get the best return.
- Evaluate what Family Planning services are offered.
- Chemical Dependency services need to be reviewed for the assessment process, access to services and efficacy of treatment.
- The engagement pathway needs to include:
    - Inventory of assets
    - Assessment of barriers
    - Plan for progression
    - Measure of progression/Wage progression

**Additional Information/Follow-up Items:**

- Research career ladder programs in Kentucky and Arkansas.
- Research Washington Community and Technical College career ladder opportunities.
- Provide information about the family planning services we offer.
- Provide data on the number of WorkFirst parents that need treatment, how much money is available to serve them, how much additional money is needed to address the need and how effective treatment is in helping these families move forward.
- Provide the number of people on the caseload.
- Provide information about the Housing Hope program.