

DEL TANF Redesign Focus Groups

DEL conducted four focus groups to gather information from a variety of clients, stakeholders, and subject matter experts regarding the TANF Redesign and a re-examination of Working Connections Child Care (WCCC). Information from the focus groups will be used by DEL and other One Table agencies during the TANF redesign process. Below is a summary of the responses provided by the focus group participants.

In your experience and knowledge of WorkFirst, what are barriers to success for families?

- Requirements are not individualized — individual responsibility plans and comprehensive evaluations don't address an individual family's strengths and needs
- Clients are forced into low-wage, "dead-end" jobs — need sustainable, real-wage jobs
- Lack of support and assistance from caseworkers
- Transportation (limited gas vouchers and clients disqualified for gas vouchers when can't produce a valid insurance card)

The WorkFirst program often requires a parent to be involved in multiple activities at one time. How has this requirement impacted you or other families in WorkFirst?

- Overwhelmed by program requirements
- Torn between the short-term goals of the program to gain any employment and the long-term goal of self-sufficiency

There are families on TANF and low-income families not on TANF that do not use WCCC even though they are eligible. In your community, how are these families meeting their child care needs?

- Using family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care - informal care
- Using an older child to take care of younger child
- Turning down work so can stay home with child
- Taking a child to work
- Finding sliding scale fee providers
- Working opposite shifts of the other parent/adult in family

What should be the top three priorities of WCCC?

1. Provide stable, quality child care for children and working parents
2. Support parents with the cost of child care so that they are able to work and receive an education
3. Child care providers should be able to earn a livable wage, so that there is equal access to quality child care for all children

What are the strengths of WCCC?

- No waiting list for families
- Simplified application for families and billing process for providers
- Family choice of provider type and care

What are the weaknesses of WCCC?

- Limited child care options for 0-3 year olds, non-standard hours, and in rural areas
- Focus on parent employment instead of child development
- Lack of monitoring for quality child care and fraud

Focus Groups

1. Parent Advisory Group
2. Seasonal Child Care contractors and Spokane Tribe of Indians
3. WorkFirst client focus group
4. Early learning professionals and subsidy subject matter experts