

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 has convened a Best Practices Research Group with representatives from the University of Washington's West Coast Poverty Center and WorkFirst partner agencies, with additional input from several national organizations. This group is doing 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 are 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 the Best Practices team in its 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 at the University of Washington 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 the Best Practice 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.

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

Robert Ek is an APHSA Legislative Associate, and provided assistance in identifying best practices, and identifying leads and contact information. To assist the Best Practices examination effort, he is organizing a series of national conference calls on TANF re-design topics of interest to Washington State.

Twenty six states participated in the first call, which 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.

The second call will focus on child-only TANF and kinship care and will take place sometime in early to mid-August.

APHSA is a non-profit, bipartisan organization of state and local human service agencies with a mission to develop and promote policies and practices that improve the health and well-being of families, children and adults. 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 CLASP Workforce Development team, has provided valuable leads and contact information to the Best Practices 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.

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, MA

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.

DSHS Research and Data Analysis (RDA)

In addition to the Best Practice examination work underway, RDA will contribute information and analyses to help inform the discussions of policy makers, including the two analyses described below:

- *Analysis 1 - Risk, Cycling, and Cost among TANF Adults on WorkFirst (Leavers/Stayers/Cyclers)* - This analysis will look at how TANF leavers, stayers, and cyclers differ in terms of individual characteristics, risk factors, employment, and service use.
- *Analysis 2 - Safety and Health Risks for Children on TANF* – This analysis will describe the safety and health risks (such as homelessness, mental illness, chemical tendency, as well as physical health risk indicators) for children on TANF, including child-only cases. Differences in risk and service use will be examined to look at appropriate subgroups, particularly child-only cases (e.g., kinship care, undocumented immigrants, and disabled parent).