



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Community Services Division
Post Office Box 45440 Olympia WA 98504-5440

June 27, 2008

TO: Regional Administrators'
Community Services Division

FROM: Marijo Olson, Chief of Field Services
Community Services Division

SUBJECT: WorkFirst Participation Performance Improvement Target of 10%

Introduction:

Since the completion of the WorkFirst Re-examination process and the introduction of the Deficit Reduction Act; staff and partners at all levels in the organization have been working at the daunting task of meeting the federal participation requirements to avoid non-performance monetary sanctions. We are getting to a point where with caseload reduction credit, more extensive use of Career Services, and some other administrative efforts, success is within possible reach. One critical area that could help us reach our goals is an increase in the parent participation rate.

Further, we recognize that attaining self-sufficiency is a step-by-step process for many WorkFirst parents. Participation in countable activities, whether employment, training, job search, community jobs, work experience, basic education, or any combination of the above, helps parents gain skills and stability that contribute to becoming self-sufficient.

Performance Target of 10%:

With an April participation performance rate of between 2 and 8% (source: LPA website), I am asking for your assistance in steadily increasing the April figure to achieve at least 10% more participation on each CSO by December 30, 2008. In order for this target to be accomplished, it requires that each CSO thoroughly examine its current WorkFirst program. Each region and each CSO has different issues that impact the participation rate. For example, there may be a gap between what the parent is doing and what is put in e-JAS, or e-JAS data may not be making it to ACES Data Warehouse in a manner that maximizes the participation report. It may be a difficulty getting the Comprehensive Evaluation completed, or that parents referred to services do not show up, or maybe not enough of the services that are wanted by parents are available. It maybe the gaps between service segments that cause an entire month of participation not to count. There may be staffing issues at the CSO or with one of the partners who provide services. Because of these variations and others, it is crucial that the CSO's figure out for their office what is preventing greater participation.

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Some, and maybe most, of the issues can be solved locally with the creativity and persistence of our staff. Others are resource issues, policies and directives that can only be solved at the state level. We would like to know what those are so that we can do our best to make success possible for the field. Please focus on areas we can influence or have control of.

Local partnership role:

We, DSHS, cannot accomplish this increase without an active and supportive partnership that provides services in our communities. Many of the issues that are identified as reducing participation will not be resolved without working with our partners to get processes, communication and services delivered in a tighter, more orchestrated manner.

The ease or difficulty of achieving the target participation will depend on what our role is with the Local Area Partnerships. However, we are the first and only partner that touches all families, and we need to accept the primary responsibility for what happens to them in the WorkFirst program.

Roll-out:

First, we are counting on your help to engage your WorkFirst-related regional staff and your CSO's in accomplishing this target. In addition, Nancy Wolke and I will be visiting the 16 largest CSO's to get acquainted, but as part of the visit, to meet with WorkFirst staff.

After the first 16, we will figure out which ones to focus on next. We would welcome you, or your staff who work on WorkFirst issues, to join us in any of these visits.

Secondly, we would like each CSO to develop a participation improvement proposal and submit it to you by August 22, (or earlier at your discretion). We would like you to review the proposals and assess their likelihood to succeed, re-negotiate as necessary, and submit a regional package by September 5, 2008. Starting October 1, we would like a monthly report of progress, success, challenges, ideas of how we can help, and ideas you have discovered that might help others. We will have many opportunities to discuss and share our opinions, information, and ideas about working on this performance target.

In summary, I know that this will be a challenging process and a lot of hard work for you and those you manage. I would not ask you to do it if I did not think we can be successful, and I am looking forward to celebrating our success together in December.

cc: Leo Ribas
 David Rendon
 Nancy Wolke
 Carla Reyes