



## Recruitment Through Interagency Collaboration

A major challenge confronting Welfare-to-Work (WtW) administrators is recruiting enough participants to fill programs and services. The first three issues of *Ideas That Work* address this challenge. This issue, #3, is about developing arrangements with partner agencies to identify and refer participants and document their eligibility. Issue 1 focused on understanding the customer, and Issue 2 looked at strategies for marketing to individuals directly and through community outreach.

### **Making "Working Together" Work**

Many workforce development and welfare entities are finding that they can accomplish more by working together than by pursuing their goals separately. Yet, collaboration poses a new set of challenges. Veterans of such efforts say that groups must tackle both system level issues and interpersonal relationships in order to succeed.

This issue contains examples of how partner agencies at several sites have worked together on recruitment and eligibility determination. It also highlights some resources available to help with the process at both the system and interpersonal levels (see boxes, following pages).

### **Multi-level Collaboration: The New Hampshire Employment Program**

The employment and training portion of the **New Hampshire Employment Program** (NHEP)<sup>1</sup> is a collaboration among all levels of three different agencies: the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), NH Employment Security (NHES), and the NH Job Training Council (NHJTC), the administrative entity for the state's

single SDA. The most important goal of this collaboration is to provide "seamless" services to welfare applicants and recipients through integrated case management. To accomplish this goal, NHEP has set up three tiers of interagency collaboration: front-line teams, supervisory teams, and an oversight team of senior managers. Collaboration occurs both horizontally within teams and vertically among teams.

**Front Line:** Eligibility determination occurs at DHHS district offices. Applicants first meet with a DHHS employee to simultaneously apply for TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and child care assistance. All TANF recipients in the state who are subject to work requirements (mandatory and voluntary) are referred to Local Interagency Teams that include a DHHS Social Worker, an NHES Employment Counselor, and an NHJTC Case Manager. Team members, called "Employment Support Counselors," are cross-trained to assess customers, prepare them for work, arrange for support services, and help them find jobs. The local teams, piloted in March 1995 and statewide since October 1996, are located at NHES offices. They have full use of the NHES Job and Information Centers. This interagency collaboration and resource sharing has led to smaller caseloads; each team member serves an average of 50 customers.

**Supervision:** This interagency collaboration at the front line is supported by the statewide Profile Team, comprised of one Program Specialist each from NHES and NHJTC, two from DHHS, and headed by a DHHS supervisor. Each Profile Team member supervises three local

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teams. The Profile Team's purposes are to provide guidance and technical assistance to the Local Interagency Teams and to direct and monitor program implementation.

**Oversight:** Supporting the Profile Team is the Oversight Team, consisting of a senior manager from each of the three NHEP agencies. This team provides general coordination and policy guidance, and the members report directly to the agencies' top officials.

Involving every level, from the front line up to agency heads, is a key strength of NHEP. "All the teams are interagency, so everyone is in this together working towards the same goal," says Mary Anne Broshek, the Oversight Team member from DHHS.

Support from the top was also crucial to enabling front-line staff to accept the major changes required by NHEP and its feature of co-located, interagency teams. According to Broshek, employees were nervous about changes in everything from overall organizational culture to supervisors to computer systems to dress code. "Working together at all levels," says Broshek, "ensured that we weren't going to ask line staff to do anything we didn't ask of ourselves." In addition, an interagency training unit was established which provides ongoing training to the NHEP teams.

The transition to NHEP was also eased by a long history of collaboration between the three agencies, dating back to 1987. Most local team members had worked together before, just not at the same site. Although a few staff members chose not to make this transition, most stayed and have been happy with the change.

### Linkage Teams: Seattle, Washington

The **Seattle-King County PIC**<sup>2</sup> has approached WtW recruitment by hiring six Linkage Team members specifically to identify potential WtW customers and determine their eligibility. Team members also function as liaisons with the WorkFirst (the state's welfare program) staff, particularly from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Employment Security Department (ESD). Pairs of Linkage Team members are currently co-located at the three WorkFirst offices selected as Phase One WtW sites. Team members meet individually with customers to determine their WtW eligibility, assess their service needs, and link them to appropriate WtW contractors.

The Linkage Team completed its initial training and was outstationed in October 1998. Members are seasoned caseworkers from DSHS, ESD, the refugee pathway, and

### Building an Infrastructure for Collaboration

The Chandler Center for Community Leadership in Bend, Oregon seeks to help communities set clearly defined goals and pull together a variety of partners to meet them. In one of the Center's resources, *Community Based Collaboration: Community Wellness Multiplied*,<sup>3</sup> Teresa Hogue describes a continuum of ways that organizations work together and defines the differences between networking, cooperation or alliance, coordination or partnership, coalition, and collaboration.

The paper also describes the common characteristics of effective collaborations. Successful efforts, says Hogue, focus on outcomes and benchmarks, agree on and commit to impact, define roles clearly, are open to growth and change, acknowledge success, make mid-course corrections, take risks, embrace creativity, give credit where it is due, and evaluate their effectiveness.

the PIC. Their experience ranges from 7 to 23 years in a wide variety of human services and employment and training programs serving diverse customer populations, including limited-English immigrants and refugees. The team's depth of knowledge has greatly enhanced its ability to work with WorkFirst agencies and staff. The entire team meets at least weekly and also has ongoing training.

Linkage Team members and DSHS staff work together closely. DSHS regularly provides lists of persons who have received TANF for 30 months or more, which the team uses to identify potential customers and search for non-custodial parents. A customer's referral to a WtW contractor requires a DSHS case manager's approval. Customer tracking will use both DSHS and PIC data systems.

In planning its WtW program, the PIC sought to facilitate a strong partnership between all agencies involved by ensuring that WtW activities would complement DSHS's WorkFirst activities and help the agency achieve its WorkFirst goals. The PIC signed a memorandum of understanding with the DSHS regional office.

Interpersonal relations have been equally important. As noted by Amy Robins of the PIC, “Inter-agency collaboration comes down to developing individual relationships with case managers, supervisors, and others on up the chain—you really have to make people part of the process.”

### Data Exchange: Minnesota

Data exchange is an important aspect of state-level interagency agreements. Historically, welfare and workforce agencies have kept separate data systems, with welfare agencies focusing on client family characteristics and workforce agencies focusing on employment and training related data.

In Minnesota, the state’s Department of Economic Security (DES) and Department of Human Services (DHS) have worked together on welfare-to-work issues for 12 years. The agencies have exchanged data since 1991, when DHS began to send DES copies of its computer files for running queries and client record matching.

Since June 1998, DES and DHS have been working to create a more user-friendly, comprehensive data exchange system.<sup>4</sup> This “electronic information warehouse” will determine and document eligibility for multiple programs, including WtW, JTPA, employer tax credits, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The system will also generate monthly reports as Excel spreadsheets for distribution to PICs and county agencies. Local service providers will

use these reports to contact clients reaching 30 months on TANF (including those exempt from work requirements) for WtW recruitment. They will also be able to compare their participation rates to federal requirements and to identify recipients living near employers with job openings.

This database incorporates extensive input from all the agencies involved. The local monthly reports were built into the system in response to counties’ and PICs’ demands for more information. DES and DHS are in regular communication regarding the format and distribution of these reports.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For more information about NHEP, contact an Oversight Team Member: Mary Ann Broshek (DHHS) at (603) 271-4442 or mbroshek@dhhs.state.nh.us, Sandra Sweeney (NHES) at (603) 742-3600, or Jackie Heuser (NHJTC) at (603) 228-9500.
- <sup>2</sup> For more information contact Amy Robins or Stephanie Lucash at (206) 448-0474.
- <sup>3</sup> Available on-line at <http://crs.uvm.edu/ncco/collab/wellness.html>. For additional resources see the Chandler Center’s site at <http://www.teleport.com/~cccl>, and the web site for National Network for Collaboration at <http://crs.uvm.edu/ncco>. Teresa Hogue can be reached at (541) 388-8361.
- <sup>4</sup> For more information contact Steve Erbes of the Minnesota DES at (651) 297-4841.
- <sup>5</sup> For a copy of the participant guide, visit [http://wvw.doleta.gov/ideasthatwork/pub/issue\\_3.htm](http://wvw.doleta.gov/ideasthatwork/pub/issue_3.htm). For more information, contact Lura Bovee at (703) 324-7202.

### Building Working Relationships on the Front Lines

**T**o help create the culture change required for welfare reform to succeed, the Department of Family Services in Fairfax County, Virginia gave its case managers additional training that culminated in “Case Management: Working Collaboratively.”<sup>5</sup> This half-day course defines collaboration, explores when to use it, and teaches participants skills in cooperation, assertiveness, and personal leadership. Here are some highlights:

- Collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Make sure the advantages outweigh the disadvantages for the outcome you are seeking.

- Distinguish between *positions* (specific solutions) and *interests* (the needs, desires and concerns that motivate us to take a position). Disagreeing parties can usually find a win-win agreement if they focus on interests and are flexible about positions.
- If a partner isn’t holding up her end of an agreed-upon role, talk about it directly. Your intention should not be punishment, but clarity about roles, your needs, and your intentions. You will be surprised at how often clarity will resolve problems.

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## RECRUITMENT THROUGH INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION



### For More Information

“Training Resources for Workforce Development Practitioners” is a new web site hosted by America’s Learning eXchange (ALX) that provides hundreds of descriptions of courses, books, web sites, reports, and sample materials designed to help workforce development staff learn what they need to do their jobs. Training resources on partnering are included and can be found using a keyword search. Visit the site at <http://www.alx.org/workforce>.

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) is preparing a curriculum called “Partnering to Improve Customer Services: A Tool Kit for Workforce Investment Partners.” The course will be piloted in several sites and then made available nationwide using a train-the-trainers approach. Contact Deborah Kogan at (650) 617-8625, x 639.

### About *Ideas That Work*

*Ideas that Work* is a series of issue briefs designed to provide practical and innovative technical assistance to the local practitioners who are implementing the U.S. Department of Labor’s Welfare-to-Work grants. Anticipated topic areas include recruitment, job retention and labor force attachment, and serving families with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency.

The ideas presented in this series are intended to spark innovation and to encourage peer networking. Replicability may depend on individual state and local guidelines. Any activities carried out by a State or local Welfare-to-Work program, using WtW grant funds, must also comply with the Federal WtW law and regulations.

*Ideas that Work* is offered through the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Welfare-to-Work, and produced by Technical Assistance and Training Corporation (TATC). We want to hear your comments about this issue and your suggestions for specific topics or programs to include in future issues. To share your views, contact TATC via e-mail at [ITW@talc.com](mailto:ITW@talc.com), or call (202) 408-8282 (ask for *Ideas that Work* staff).

### Other Issues in this Series

Future topics:

- Serving families with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency
- Serving non-custodial parents
- Involving employers in WtW programs
- Job retention and advancement for new workers

Previous issues:

- *Issue 1: Getting to Know Your Welfare-to-Work Customers*
- *Issue 2: Recruitment Through Marketing and Outreach*

For current and previous issues:

- Read *Ideas that Work* on <http://wtw.doleta.gov/ideasthatwork>
- Printed copies are distributed through Regional offices within 4–6 weeks after publication on-line. Additional copies are available from your Regional WtW representative.