

Ideas that Work Issue 9 September 1999

Issue briefs designed to provide practical and innovative technical assistance to practitioners implementing the U.S. Department of Labor's Welfare-to-Work grants

Helping New Workers Keep Jobs

Besides the "internal" barriers discussed in previous issues, many welfare recipients face "external" barriers to employment that can often seem overwhelming. WtW programs must know how to connect their customers to a wide array of services to help them navigate these challenges and stay employed.

In a survey of 1200 Post-Employment Services Demonstration (PESD)¹ participants, the greatest barriers to job retention cited were problems with: child care (34%), finances/budgeting (33%), family (29%), coworkers or supervisors (28%), transportation (25%), and housing (19%). This issue is designed to broadly present background, service strategies, information resources, and program examples related to meeting new workers' transportation, child care, money management, personal support, housing, and other job retention needs.

Overviews of Support Services

Several publications discuss the need for a broad range of job retention services for current and former welfare recipients and list program examples.

* Ancillary Services to Support Welfare to Work by Amy Johnson and Alicia Meckstroth. Mathematica, 6/98, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/isp/ancillary/front.htm> or (609) 275-2334.

* Keeping Welfare Recipients Employed: A Guide for States Designing Job Retention Services by Anu Rangarajan. Mathematica, 6/98, <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/PESDEMP.PDF> or (609) 275-2334.

* Rural America and Welfare Reform: An Overview Assessment, Rural Policy Research Institute, February 1999. See <http://www.rupri.org/pubs/archive/old/welfare/p99-3/index.html> or call (573) 882-0316.

* The Road to Retention: Reducing Employee Turnover through Welfare-to-Work by the Welfare to Work Partnership profiles 16 employers' strategies. See <http://www.welfareto-work.org/resources/roadto-retention.html> or call (202) 955-3005.

Transportation

As welfare caseloads become increasingly concentrated in rural and especially inner-

city areas while most job growth is in suburbs, transportation is one of the most pressing needs of WtW customers. Service strategies include:

- * Expanding urban transit systems to serve "reverse" and "off-hours" commuters
- * Training or micro-enterprise programs in van/bus driving or auto repair

Good News Garage: Vermont

Good News Garage (Burlington, VT) offers donated cars, auto repair training, and ride-sharing for low-income workers. Founded by Lutheran Social Services of New England in 1996, it also receives funds from foundations, HUD, and the state welfare and local transportation agencies. See <http://www.goodnewsgarage.together.com/gnghome.htm> or call Hal Colston, Program Director, at (802) 864-6017.

- * Rural transit/van programs
- * Car ownership assistance
- * Using school buses during off-hours

Resources:

- * The Welfare Information Network summarizes transportation issues and lists innovative programs in two Issue Notes briefs available on-line or at (202) 628-5790: "Transportation: The Essential Need to Address the 'To' in Welfare-to-Work" (June 1998) at <http://www.welfareinfo.org/transitneed.htm>, and "Transportation and Welfare Reform" (May 1997) at <http://www.welfareinfo.org/transita.htm>.
- * Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) houses the National Transit Resource Center (NTRC), funded jointly by the USDOT, USDOL, and USDHHS. Call NTRC's toll-free Transit Hotline (1-800-527-8279) for advice or to order the Employment Transportation Assistance Toolkit for local workforce agencies (\$50). Visit the NTRC website at <http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc> for a list of innovative programs and other resources.
- * The USDOT Federal Transit Authority's Welfare-to-Work website (<http://www.fta.dot.gov/wtw>) includes a Welfare-To-Work Information Notebook and lists of Job Access and Reverse Commute grantees.

Child Care Innovations

- * Dolores Mission Women's Cooperative (Los Angeles, CA) was founded in 1988 by a Catholic parish as a day care center for the community, which includes many low-income single mothers from Mexico. The mothers pay a sliding-scale fee and take turns volunteering at the center. They can also receive free child development instruction and certification through a local community college. A longer profile is at

http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/religion_online/publications/crea_solutions/CS_Dolores.html.

For more information, see <http://www.proyectopastoral.org/dmwc.html>, e-mail dmwc@proyectopastoral.org, or call Pat Navarette-Davis or Lupe Avila at (323) 881-0000.

* Participants in Canton (Ohio) City Schools Even Start receive adult literacy and basic education, job readiness training, and work experience at their children's elementary schools. Parents and children ride school buses together, and the younger children receive free child care. Contact: Jane Meyer, (330) 588-2148, x 130.

* Working Far From Home: Transportation and Welfare Reform in the Ten Big States (Margy Waller and Mark Alan Hughes, Progressive Policy Institute and Public/Private Ventures, July 1999) focuses on the ten states with the most TANF families. It advocates emphasizing car ownership assistance using TANF block grants. See <http://www.dlcppi.org/texts/social/transportation.htm> or call (202) 546-0007.

Child Care Welfare reform has greatly increased the demand for child care. In a GAO study of welfare-to-work programs in 38 states, 60 percent of participants named the lack of child care as a barrier to work. WtW programs need to be sensitive to customers' situations and work with the full range of child care options. Service strategies for WtW programs include:

- * 24-hour workplace child care centers
- * Cooperative, community/housing-based child care centers
- * Giving child care providers training, technical assistance, peer support, and better pay to improve quality and reduce turnover
- * Training customers as child care providers
- * Employment and training in public schools for parents of students

Resources:

* Child Care You Can Count On: Model Programs and Policies, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1998, <http://www.aecf.org/publications/child/afford.htm>.

* "Child Care by Kith and Kin: Supporting Family, Friends, and Neighbors Caring for Children" by AnnCollins and Barbara Carlson, National Center for Children in Poverty, September 1998, \$5. To order, see <http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/cwrib5.html> or call (212) 304-7100.

* National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA),

[http:// www.childcarerr.org](http://www.childcarerr.org), (202) 393-5501.

* National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), <http://nccic.org>, (800) 616-2242

* The National Association for Sick Child Daycare (NASCD) publishes program guidebooks, a national directory, and conference synopses. See <http://www.nascd.com/index2.html> or call (804) 747- 0100.

* Cooperative Extension System's National Network for Child Care has resources on a wide range of topics, including special-needs care, school-age care, and rural child care. See <http://www.nncc.org> or call Lesia Oesterreich at (515) 294-0363.

* "Public-Private Partnerships for Child Care" by Helene Stebbins, National Governors' Association, February 1998, <http://www.nga.org/Pubs/IssueBriefs/1998/980223Childcare.asp> or (202) 624-5300.

* "State-Funded Prekindergarten Programs" by Jan Kaplan, Issue Notes, Welfare Information Network, June 1998, <http://www.welfareinfo.org/preschoo.htm> or (202) 628-5790. Budgeting / Money Management Skills Former welfare recipients have significantly more trouble making ends meet than low-income working mothers who never received assistance, even though both groups work in similar jobs at similar wages. For example, 33% of former welfare recipients reported having to reduce or skip meals due to food shortages and 39% reported difficulty in paying housing costs, compared to 23% and 28%, respectively, of other low-income mothers.

Such difficulties arise from the costs of working (in terms of expenses and reduced benefits/subsidies), combined with variable earnings and unexpected emergencies. WtW programs can help their customers prevent and survive financial emergencies with:

A WtW Grantee Offering Comprehensive Job Retention Services The Workplace, Inc. is the regional Workforce Development Board for southwestern Connecticut, which includes some of the nation's richest and poorest communities. By leveraging its Round 1 WtW competitive grant and other funding sources and collaborating or subcontracting with numerous organizations, The Workplace offers several services that assist job retention:

* State-certified Child Care Assistant training for WtW customers

* Public transit (rail, bus and shuttle) expansions developed by the People to Jobs Task Force (which includes employers and transit officials) or by direct collaborations between transit systems and Workplace subcontractors

* Emergency loans and grants to prevent job loss (e.g., by paying for sudden expenses

such as car repair), funded through corporate sponsorships n A new auto repair training program in conjunction with a Goodwill Industries car donation program. For more information see <http://workplace.org>, or contact Barbara Stracka at (203) 576-7030, x308 or stracka@workplace.org.

HELPING NEW WORKERS KEEP JOBS Ideas that Work

- * Education on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and its advance payment option
- * Training in budgeting and money management skills
- * Emergency financial assistance

Resources

- * Center for Budget and Policy Priorities distributes an annual EITC Outreach Kit and Strategy Guide. In late 1999, see <http://www.cbpp.org> or call (202) 408-1080 for the 2000 edition.
- * Contact your state or county Cooperative Extension for training in low-income family budgeting. For a list of curricula from around the country, see <http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu/welfare/curriculum1.html> or call Maria Pippidis, Newcastle County (Delaware) Cooperative Extension, at (302) 831-1239.
- * See links to other resources from the National Network for Family Resiliency, <http://www.nnfr.org/econ/budget.htm>.

Personal Support

The transition from welfare to work creates personal challenges regarding job stress and work-family balance. While these issues impact all working parents, WtW customers may be less prepared to cope with them. Low-wage employees have less control over their working conditions and schedules, and their support networks may be unable to advise them if they too lack job experience. Welfare recipients' job access may also be impeded by other factors, such as legal problems or lacking business attire.

Strategies to help WtW customers' transition to the workplace include:

- * Intensive Case Management and Individual
- * Counseling 6
- * Supervisor Training
- * Mentoring
- * Peer Support Groups
- * Hotlines
- * Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

Examples

Union County (NJ) Department of Human Services, a WtW grantee, uses a team-based approach to provide comprehensive case management. Each team serves 125 customers and includes a social worker, a job coach, and a job developer, plus other staff (e.g., a drug counselor) as needed. The teams communicate with employers at least weekly to find out about any issues impacting customers' work and solve the problem. For example, some teams have made sure customers get to work on time or obtained proper work attire for them. Contact: Bob Ewing, Director, (908) 527-4880.

The Denver Workforce Initiative's "Managing to Work it Out" curriculum raises supervisors' awareness of new, entry-level employees' needs and develops their problem-solving and communication skills so that workers "feel productive, appreciated, and willing to stay." The training occurs at the workplace and can be customized to fit employers' needs and schedules. Train-the-trainer sessions are also offered. Contact: Carol Hedges, Director, (303) 825-6246, x332.

Mentoring Works! in eastern Kansas employs successful, college-educated retirees as resources for welfare recipients bringing together the most and least experienced workers. Some mentors assist welfare caseworkers by giving recipients job readiness training, referrals to resources such as transportation and child care, and additional personal attention. Other mentors are stationed at major employers of welfare recipients, to provide guidance and counseling and address problems that might otherwise lead to new employees quitting or being fired. Contact: John Green, Southeast Kansas Area Agency on Aging, (316) 232-5944.

The Sister to Sister Network (St. Paul, MN) is a peer support group for current and former welfare recipients. The group's non-hierarchical philosophy is that each member can give as well as receive help, which builds participants' self-confidence. In addition to discussing members' experiences, the monthly meetings include dinner, child care, and informational presentations. Contact: Jeanine Hackert, (651) 917-3324, M-F 9:30-3:30 Central Time.

JOBKEEPER (San Jose, CA) is a 24-hour hotline for low-income workers' employment, personal, or family issues. Established in October 1997 by the county TANF agency, it is operated by Contact Cares, an accredited non-profit hotline provider since 1970. Highly trained volunteers answer the calls, supported by professional staff. Bilingual operators or translators are available. The free, anonymous, confidential services include referrals, "supportive listening," and problem solving. Contact: Barbara Joachim, (408) 275-6176.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is piloting an Enhanced Employee Assistance Program (EEAP) for welfare recipients in 11 counties. Participants are pre-screened for substance abuse and other issues, and their employers receive a free EAP for all their workers. Additional services include follow-up, supervisor training, and mentoring. Contact: Roy Sonovick, NCDHHS, (252) 733-4555,

x268.

By referral from member agencies, Dress for Success provides free interview suits to low-income women seeking employment. For a national list of affiliates and similar organizations, see <http://www.dressforsuccess.org/cousins.html>.

Legal Action of Wisconsin works to resolve legal issues such as driver's licenses, domestic violence, landlord-tenant disputes, child visitation, or improper criminal charges that would otherwise impede Milwaukee WtW customers' employment. Contact: David Pifer, (414) 278-7722 x3039.

Housing

WtW customers face a variety of housing problems. The working poor pay a disproportionate share of their incomes on housing that is often inadequate. Earnings can reduce eligibility for rent subsidies. These factors cause budgeting problems and frequent moves that disrupt transportation and child care arrangements.

Resources

* "The Effects of Welfare Reform on Housing Stability and Homelessness: Current Research Findings, Legislation, and Programs" by Laura Nichols and Barbara Gault. Welfare Reform Network News, March 1999, Institute for Women's Policy Research, <http://www.iwpr.org/WRNN10.html>, (202) 785-5100.

* Housing and Welfare Reform: Some Background Information by Barbara Sund and Jennifer Daskal. Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

Domestic Violence

Some WtW customers' family members resent their decision to work and may even actively thwart their self-sufficiency efforts, particularly if an abusive relationship exists. Domestic violence impacts an estimated 15-32% of the TANF caseload,⁸ which is an even higher percentage for long-term recipients (e.g., 55% in a 1998 Utah study).⁹ In a recent national survey of domestic violence survivors, 37% said the abuse impacted their job performance and 24% said it caused tardiness or absence from work. Due to the link between domestic and workplace violence, major employers are taking steps to identify and protect workers who are abused at home.

Resources

* National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799- SAFE

* My Sister's Keeper International (geared towards faith-based organizations), <http://www.mski.com> or (800) 988-0988

* National Coalition Against Domestic Violence,
(303) 839-1852.

* Family Violence Prevention Fund's National Workplace Resource Center on Domestic Violence, <http://www.igc.org/fund/workplace/> or (415) 252-8900.

* The Wireless Alliance for Safe Families donates free cellular 911 access and confidential voice mail to domestic violence survivors. Contact: Cellular Telecommunication Industry Association (CTIA) Foundation, (202) 785-0081.

NOTES

1 See the Keeping Welfare Recipients Employed report referenced on this page, or see <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/WELFAHOT.HTM> for more information about PESD.

2 Three out of four welfare recipients live in cities or in rural areas. See the Ancillary Services report referenced in "Overviews of Support Services."

3 See Ancillary Services.

4 See ITW Issue 5, pp. 2-3 for a profile of the Brooklyn College Child Care Provider Program.

5 Families Who Left Welfare: Who Are They and How Are They Doing? (pp. 21, 23) by Pamela Loprest, Urban Institute, July 1999, <http://newfederalism.urban.org/pdf/discussion99-02.pdf> or (877) 847-7377.

6 In the PESD demonstration, individual counseling and support was one of the services participants valued most. See Keeping Welfare Recipients Employed, p. 41.

7 EAPs are worksite-based programs designed to help identify and resolve personal (including health, marital/family, financial, substance abuse, legal, or other) concerns that may impair employee job performance.

8 See Ancillary Services.

9 See Ideas that Work, Issue 4, p. 2.

10 The nationwide telephone poll, conducted by EDK Associates, was developed by The Body Shop and the YWCA of the USA. It examined the impact physical, psychological and sexual abuse has on the workplace. See http://www.igc.org/fund/materials/speakup/01_12_98.htm#WORKPLACE, January 1998.

11 "Companies wake up to workplace violence," CNN Interactive website, 8-01-99.

12 See Ancillary Services.

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. 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@tadc.com, or call (202) 408-8282 (ask for Ideas that Work staff).

Other Issues in this Series

Future topics:

- * Job retention and advancement

Previous issues:

1. Getting to Know Your Welfare-to-Work Customers
2. Recruitment Through Marketing and Outreach
3. Recruitment Through Interagency Collaboration
4. Identifying Barriers to Employment
5. Serving Customers with Low Basic Skills
6. Serving Customers Facing Substance Abuse or Disabilities
7. Serving Non-Custodial Parents
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