

Action for Prosperity

A partnership of the
Multnomah County Department of County Human Services,
Home Forward, WorkSystems Inc. and the
Oregon Department of Human Services



Overview

- Alignment of existing service systems to build comprehensive system of support to help low-income families increase economic opportunity and move towards prosperity
- Combines assertive engagement (case management), rental assistance, training/employment services, and access to support services to help participants:
 - Stabilize housing
 - Gain or improve employment
 - Increase income



Overview

- County's Anti-Poverty System network of non-profits provides intensive, employment-focused case management
- Worksystems provides set-aside of training/employment resources
- County and Worksystems co-fund liaison positions
- DHS provides coordinated case-planning for TANF families, including access to childcare and transportation when possible
- Home Forward provides rent assistance (contracted to non-profits)



Families Served

- Serve 150 households at/below 125% FPL annually
- Last year, of those who exited:
 - 64% female; average age of 35
 - 86% had children
 - 66% people of color; 26% not native English speakers
 - 20% had not completed high school; 35% high school or GED
 - 21% had a disability
 - 42% of females were survivors of domestic violence
 - Average annual household income: \$7500
 - 78% unemployed
 - 75% received rent assistance during their participation



Outcome Goals

- 50% employed at exit; additional 13% at follow-up
- 12% have incomes above 50% of AMI at exit; 15% at follow-up
- Of households receiving TANF/SNAP at entry, 63% no longer receive TANF and 20% no longer receive SNAP at follow-up
- 90% stably housed at exit and 70% at follow-up

Multnomah County

- Network of 8 non-profits provide Assertive Engagement to support families in creating action plans across 6 domains
 - Employment
 - Income
 - Financial Management
 - Training & Education
 - Employment-Related Life Skills
 - Housing
- Case managers support clients in Career Mapping, Resource Planning, accessing WorkSource or other appropriate resources, and job retention
- Flex funds available to clients to support plans
- Co-funds liaisons who provide technical assistance to case managers



Assertive Engagement

- Combines several evidence-based practices
- Centered around creating “helping relationships” with families that move them toward self-directed, lasting behavior change
- Belief in participants’ inherent capability to figure out and solve their own problems
- Meeting participants where they are through:
 - Active listening which promotes engagement, motivation and creativity
 - A “don’t take no for an answer” approach to engagement
 - A high degree of persistence and creativity by staff to discover what participants want and need



Worksystems

- Access to skill development workshops and job search assistance
- Set-aside of occupational training and On-the-Job Training slots
- Access to internships and job placement services
- Co-funds liaisons
 - Employed within the WorkSource system
 - Provide training and technical assistance to case managers
 - Troubleshoot with case managers as problems arise
 - Check in with case managers regularly to discuss client progress

Home Forward & DHS

- Home Forward provides:
 - flexible rent assistance to the 8 non-profit providers
 - technical assistance on administering housing funds
- DHS provides:
 - dedicated staff to work with all AFP participants who are on TANF
 - Coordinate to ensure DHS plan matches AFP plan
 - Communicate with JOBS program staff
 - Ensure AFP activities are counted towards JOBS program participation
 - access to childcare during approved activities
 - funding for transportation during approved activities



All Partners

- Participated in creation of an MOU that lays out agreed upon outcome goals
- Meeting bi-monthly to discuss progress, adjust program design, plan staff trainings, and review outcomes
- Share data



Outcomes

- Of those exiting in 2011-2012, by follow-up:
 - 52% employed with average wage of \$11.74/hour (39% at exit)
 - Over 20% had incomes above 50% of AMI at exit (over 10% at exit)
 - 81% stably housed (64% at exit)
- Of those exiting in 2012-2013, at exit:
 - 49% employed
 - Over 10% had incomes above 50% of AMI
 - 77% stably housed
- Non-native English speakers and those employed at entry were more likely to be employed at exit

Program Strengths

- Relationship-based and client driven
- Flexibility of funding
- Liaisons to help systems understand each other
- Regular meetings to evaluate progress
 - Designed cross-system training
 - Implemented new exit criteria

Challenges

- Tension between immediate employment vs. training that will put them on career track towards higher wages
- Keeping participants engaged in the face of frustration or a negative experience
- Outcomes that aren't aligned between systems
- Job retention and advancement
- Cost of childcare

Recommendations

- Align outcomes and time frames between systems
- Streamline enrollment across federally funded programs
- Employment programs that encourage and allow for survival jobs or paid work experience during training
- Funders should encourage small caseloads, which may mean serving few people
- Job retention and advancement support built in