



Joint Newark & Essex County Welfare to Work Committee
Tuesday, April 4, 2017
50 S. Clinton Street, East Orange, NJ
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Aleksandra Adamczyk, Mary Alexander, Tameka Allen, Jasmyne Beckford, Kelli Bell-Taylor, Linda Brodie, Allyson Carvajal, Joseph Epps, Ethel Gilbert, Shevan Hercules, Angela High, Keisha Lanier, Dominick Manzo, Betty Mirda, Curtia Orr, Miriam Rodriguez, Janine Schaeffer, David Weiner, Howard Weiss

Meeting Called to Order, Chairperson, David Weiner

David introduced himself. A round table roll call of meeting attendees was completed.

Meeting attendees reviewed the minutes from the last meeting held on 2/7/2017. David presented a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. The minutes were approved with one correction on Page 2 at the fourth sentence from the bottom; 46 should be 48.

Case Management Plan for GA, Aleksandra Adamczyk

Since the beginning of the year, administrators and key staff have been meeting with DFAB and Janis Solutions Consulting Firm to map case management for Essex County GA, Food Stamps and ABAWD. Once everything is mapped out and processed, it will be sent out for state approval by April 19th. Once approved, further details can be provided and it can be presented. The details will focus on effective tracking and client participation while meeting state requirements so that clients are not sanctioned. The agency is looking to place clients toward career pathways by referring them to educational, occupational and volunteer programs. The agency has been meeting with the Department of Labor and NWDB to observe the program, presenters, intake and transition into activities.

Internal changes have been made at DTE to handle GA case management consisting of two units that will house five workers each, a supervisor and a flex unit. The agency is coordinating and meeting to be sure that resources and staff are being best utilized to provide the best comprehensive services.

David mentioned that the union that represents non-supervisory employees will lose funding. He asked what a flex unit is. Aleksandra explained that it was short for a flexible unit and advised that at this point she was unsure of its responsibilities. David asked if the contract with Janis Solutions was specific to the task, but Aleksandra was not certain. Ethel stated that she was

unsure of how the Janis Solutions contract is relevant to the work of the committee. David advised that he was not pleased with the move because it means a loss of work for his unit and loss of funding to the agencies. He does not know what the plans are because they have not been discussed with the unions or IBEW. He expressed that he has big concerns of the justification of what is happening and asked if anyone can tell him what the comparative numbers were that concerned the DFD. Aleksandra replied that the real cause of it was over sixty percent reduction in the time population. Ms. A added that there were not any contracts coming out of the office. There were only referrals to outside vendors and agencies, which resulted in ridiculously low numbers. This caused the agency to have to give money back to the vendors. Aleksandra suggested that this comes from the state so we do not know all the reasons and we cannot express them in this forum. Howard and Ethel added that there have not been any financial changes.

Howard expressed his appreciation for all the entities coming together to put the interest of the customers first.

Mr. Epps asked Aleksandra if there would be an increase in oversight of vendors in terms of placement and performance. Aleksandra affirmed that everything would be monitored. Howard suggested that we bring the vendors back to the committee to address any concerns. He also advised that contracting for training would not change, but there will be changes in working and monitoring customers to put them in training.

The self-initiated job search will no longer be acceptable. Thirty hours is the goal for ABAWD, SNAP, GA and DFAB clients. The agency is trying to send clients towards a career path so that they can become self-sufficient. Case management is not just putting them in an activity but also tracking them through the process while identifying any barriers and utilizing resources to assist them.

Training Slots for TANF, GA, SNAP- Dominic Manzo

The WFNJ TANF participation rate is hovering between 28 and 29%, which is a step in the right direction. Clients are being placed in countable work activities, cases are being monitored, sanctioning is being conducted and coding errors are being addressed. The communication has been wonderful between both divisions. There has been an increase in TANF and GA clients. There has also been an increase in the submission of Med-1 Forms. This has been an alarming concern by case management staff, especially in cases where money has been spent on work activities. As a result, the agency has collaborated with the Division of Medicaid to have a medical doctor review the Med-1 Form and request any additional supporting documentation such as bloodwork, MRIs and X-rays. In about 90% of the cases, the physician has found that the conditions do not exempt clients from a work activity whereas their treatment plan could be rectified by other means. By doing this, the agency realized that some clients may challenge the doctor's medical opinion and may result in the right to a fair hearing. Because of the partnership and review process, more people are getting jobs and working part-time, while the TANF and GA numbers are dropping. Clients are being sanctioned in a timelier manner. The customer service initiative is working and there has been a drop in customer service complaints. Many internal changes have contributed to the success of the programs.

In the past, two-parent households were taken out of the equation, now they are back in the denominator report. Eighty to ninety families fall under this category where both parents must be in an activity for thirty-five hours. Aleksandra called the clients who were not in an activity to inform them according to their individual cases and worked with them.

Howard told the committee that it seems that the co-enrollment of WIOA Services and Welfare to Work has been put on the back burner.

Howard advised that the emphasis for the next meeting would be in training areas and past performance.

A new reporting system has been put in place for all supervisors to get a monthly placement count to ensure that clients are being placed appropriately. Contracts were adjusted to make sure there were more low literacy slots. Tracking is being done to find out how many referrals are placed for specific activities and they are then compared with slot management. There are a variety of slots which include job searches, CWEP, medical billing, forklift driving and forklift training. The agency is always looking to have RFP's to reflect what clients are looking for and ITA's are still available for clients who qualify.

One of the concerns raised by Tameka was the difference in rate that vendors charge walk-ins vs. ETPL. Aleksandra advised that she has seen that with SORA; however, she does believe that the state is looking into the matter. Changes to the ETPL are scheduled to take place on May 2nd. These changes exclude Literacy, ABE and HSE. Those who were already awarded will be allowed to continue until the end of the program year. Howard added that it should be interesting to see how the Department of Labor handles the variation in pricing.

David advised that there is a written response from DFAB, which Ethel briefly summarized. Based on the last meeting, Ethel brought up a few issues regarding the strategic plan with emphasis on the committee's goals. The communication identified her concerns and asked that the authors of the 2016 strategic plan would consider the concerns for the 2017 Strategic Plan. Mr. Epps explained that the make-up of the committee is much different than it is now and advised that when the 2016 plan was created it was done to help provide a better understanding to committee members of who and how the welfare to work system operates. Ethel stated that it seemed that the authors might not have fully understand how DFAB operates. For example, touring a facility where clients are presents a confidentiality issue. Ethel added that she and Jeanetta did attend the Joint WDB Retreat and had no knowledge of some of the outlined items in the plan. Perhaps, if a preliminary copy had been presented, the concerns could have been voiced sooner. She did not think that it was appropriate to mention this at the Joint WDB Meeting in December 2016. Howard advised that there seems to be a misinterpretation of the written plan. He will present the submitted communication with Sam.

David advised that we must look at the big picture with our president and his staffing. There has been a bill to drug test the unemployed population and a push to block grant Medicaid, which will create a financial hardship for many states and counties. He also mentioned that the Wisconsin governor wants to drug test Medicaid clients. He added that of the places where TANF Drug Testing was adopted, millions of dollars were spent for miniscule results. David

spoke of a sixteen million dollar budget cut to county funding which creates an increased work load for employees. This in turn increases the chance of error and can adversely affect tasks being completed in a timely manner.

Motion to adjourn. Meeting is adjourned.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for June 6, 2017.