



Joint Newark & Essex County Welfare to Work Committee
Tuesday, June 6, 2017
50 S. Clinton Street, East Orange, NJ
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Aleksandra Adamczyk, Mary Alexander, Tameka Allen, Kelli Bell-Taylor, Linda Brodie, Alfred Bundy, Delsy Castro, Joseph Epps Jr., Ethel Gilbert, Shevon Hercules, Angela High, Dominick Manzo, Betty Mirda, Miriam Rodriguez, Janine Schaeffer, David Weiner

Meeting Called to Order, Howard Weiss

A round table roll call of meeting attendees was completed. Howard thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He asked everyone to review the minutes. The minutes were moved by Howard, seconded by Mr. Epps and approved by the committee with one correction.

Case Management Plan for GA- Aleksandra Adamczyk

The plan is currently in a holding pattern. It was submitted to the State of New Jersey and the agency is awaiting a response.

Welfare to Work RFP Process- Howard Weiss

The RFP's have gone out and the agency is in receipt of proposals. Currently, volunteers are needed to review them. Any committee members interested in the reviewing RFPs were urged to contact Howard so that proposals could be distributed to them. Any vendors or state workers are exempt from reviewing RFPs.

NJDFD- Dominic Manzo

The denominator number has dropped about 100 from last month within the 1220- 1240 range. The agency continues to work with the Division of Employment and Training to review reports in an effort to get more clients engaged. Reports are being screened to call in clients who are either not in an activity or those who have not completed the thirty-five hour requirement. The agency's participation rate takes a hit when a cutoff is missed and must be carried over into the following month or when the therapist of clients in the mental health program indicates that the clients is limited in the number of work hours that can be completed. The NJ Work First sanctions are consistently between 230 and 250 monthly. The communication between DFAB and DTE helps to ensure that these numbers are accurate. If clients comply, they may come back on the roll within ten days. If there is no good cause, they serve a one month penalty. For example, if a client's grant is for \$322, it is decreased to \$161 for the first month. If the client does not come in the next month, they gain a suspense status in which they don't get a grant

at all. The case is closed I the third month and the client must reapply to be reconsidered for assistance. Ms. A advised that of the clients that she sees only about 50% of them are coming to have their cases reopened. Dominic advised that the clients still get Medicaid and food stamps and TRA is shut down if the emergency assistance is through DFAB.

Clients who relocate from another state are not exempt from the 72 month cap on TANF benefits. In this case, the responsibility to find out how much is left on the grant rests with the agency in which the client has applied for assistance. A client who relocates for promise of employment or a domestic violence assistance is eligible for TRA.

Allocation- Howard Weiss

The DFD allocation was level. The labor allocation had a reduction which is in the review process to determine whether it will be appealed. David asked whether the state and federal government were aware of the drop in TANF and GA. Howard affirmed that they are aware, but punitive measures have not been taken. David asked what causative factors have contributed to the reduction in clients. Dominic advised that in relation to TANF, several factors affect the drop; some clients are closing their cases out because of the 35 hour work requirements and the increased monitoring of TANF and GA clocks. More clients have gained employment and wage matches show reported earnings which prompted closed cases. Some clients are sanctioned off due to time restraints on receiving assistance. Lastly, it was suggested that many clients are relocating to Pennsylvania for a better quality of life, since New Jersey is an expensive place to reside. TRA continues to be an issue because of the difficulty in clients being able to find adequate affordable housing with the challenge of maintaining the unit once the TRA Grant has ended.

David stated that one of the major problems is there being a lack to study why things are as they are and the positive and/or negative effects on the population serviced.

Website

Mr. Bundy stated that the county website is terrible. The goal is to get an app for the One-Stop Center, but they have been unable to get far. Due to the radical reorganization, the process has been stopped. The app would be beneficial to customers. There is currently no feedback initiative. Mr. Bundy suggested that committee chairs must get involved in stressing the importance of a functional and efficient website.

Conclusion

David asked if Ethel's concerns regarding the strategic plan were ever addressed. Howard advised that although Sam has seen the document, he would have to defer the matter until he gets clarification. David suggested that moving forward, it is best to share concerns with the committee before presenting documentation of those concerns. He also asked if the Welfare to Work Committee has oversight over the welfare to work aspects of DFAB. Howard affirmed that the committee does have oversight, but he is not sure if anything was sent to directly to DFAB. David suggested that it be on the agenda for the next committee meeting.

Howard distributed an Activity Report for 2016 for the committee to review. He asked everyone to review it because he plans to have it updated for distribution in the near future. Mr. Epps advised that

issues regarding placement arose. He added that although many vendors added soft skills to training, many of them expressed that they were more focused on technical skills. Howard advised that one of the most discouraging aspects of the report has been the number of referrals for training versus the number of participants actually enrolled.

Ethel expressed that job search is limited in terms of a yearly number. The number can't be used as a regular activity. If there is nothing for a client to do, it isn't counted. Contracted agencies should look at the time limit that a client has been in the system. She added that this is very important in terms of a client's career ladder.

Mr. Epps expressed that one of the problems faced by the workforce population is that most jobs require an online application. This creates an issue due to the time constraints on client activities, while many clients lack computer literacy skills, putting them at a deficit. Mr. Bundy advised that many clients need confidence and coaching. In reviewing TABE Test results dating back to 2015, the average scores are 7.1 in Reading and 5.1 in Math. In order to qualify for vocational training, clients must score at least a 7.0 in Reading and Math on the TABE Test. Ms. A stated that one of the problems that she see is the agency being driven by participation Mr. Epps told the committee that representatives from the NJ Talent Network would be willing to come in to present to the committee.

Motion to adjourn. The meeting is concluded.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2017.