
Engaged Universities Are Central to Strong Communities

Colleges and Universities Are Helping Welfare Recipients Move to Work

Colleges and universities are playing an active, positive role in the most far-reaching social change of the decade: welfare reform. Universities nationwide are forming partnerships with local agencies, service providers, and non-profit organizations to assist families in their efforts to move from welfare to work. Families attempting to break their dependence on welfare and become self-sufficient need support, assistance, and services to overcome the many challenges they confront.

"We all agree that a paycheck is better than a welfare check.... Welfare reform is designed to help families move from welfare to work."

*Andrew Cuomo
Secretary, U.S. Department
of Housing and Urban Development*

The challenges faced by many welfare recipients are more complicated than simply obtaining skills and finding employment. For example, many recipients confront obstacles—such as substance addiction or

mental or physical disabilities, in addition to a lack of marketable skills and isolation from job opportunities—that have historically prevented them from obtaining stable housing and becoming self-sufficient. Basic education, skills training, job-search assistance, affordable childcare, and transportation are all challenges that welfare recipients are struggling to meet.

To support themselves and their children, former welfare recipients need steady jobs that pay living wages. They need to be able to afford decent housing, food, clothing, and healthcare, among other necessities. Universities are working with local partners to provide welfare recipients with education and job training. They also assist families in their search for suitable employment and their efforts to keep their jobs once they are hired. Universities are helping welfare recipients with the hard skills—for example, computer literacy—as well as the soft skills, such as professionalism training, that are necessary to obtain and keep jobs.

Universities are also dedicating resources to study the issues that affect the success of welfare reform in their communities. Some universities are addressing the mismatch between the skills of local jobseekers and the skills required by local employers by defining the job-training needs of area residents. Other universities are organizing conferences to bring together local welfare reform players to discuss welfare-to-work issues and the status of welfare reform efforts in their cities.

When welfare recipients are at work, they need safe, affordable places for their young children to stay. Universities are working with local organizations to create more affordable childcare options for low-income people. Programs train area residents in home-based childcare, not only creating employment opportunities but also creating additional daycare so other parents can go to work. Because only 6 percent of welfare recipients

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KEY WELFARE REFORM FACTS

- The welfare reform bill, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, was signed into law in August 1996.
- This Act repealed the decades-old Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and other poverty assistance programs, replacing them with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.
- The federal government no longer guarantees cash assistance to eligible low-income families, or to some disabled children and legal immigrants.
- Every state receives a fixed amount of funds—based on a formula—from the federal government, with which they have broad discretion and flexibility to develop their own programs.
- A 5-year maximum lifetime limit is mandated for receiving TANF benefits (20 percent of a state's caseload may be exempt).
- There is a work requirement after 2 years or less for most TANF recipients.
- Welfare reform limits the eligibility of legal immigrants for food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Welfare caseloads plummeted by more than 30 percent nationwide in the first 2 years after the enactment of the Act.

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Welfare to Work

own cars and public transportation often does not reach the suburban areas where most job growth is taking place, welfare recipients who obtain employment often confront transportation problems as they try to commute to jobs that may not be located in their neighborhoods. Universities are creatively seeking solutions to these dilemmas.

Moving from welfare to work is a major life transition that is currently challenging millions of families in every state and metropolitan area. This issue of *COPC Central* demonstrates some of the ways that COPC grantees are working in partnership with the communities in which they are located to help families move from welfare to work. ■

Approaching large local employers proved a successful strategy for Trinity College in identifying Hartford businesses to become partners in welfare-to-work efforts. Guided by Trinity's research on this approach, Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) developed *first source agreements* with Hartford Hospital, the Institute for Living, and Trinity College. The agreements stipulate that when positions are available in any of these institutions, they give first notice to the HART Job Center. For more information, contact Jack Minnaugh, Trinity College, (860) 297-5177.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

UNC To Match Labor Skills With Local Employer's Needs

The mismatch between the skill levels of job-seekers and the needs of local employers is a major hurdle for many people attempting to leave the welfare rolls to become self-sufficient. The Community Outreach Partnership Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (UNC), along with local partners Durham Technical Community College, Durham Regional Economic Development Commission, the West End Community Center, and area residents, has put together a comprehensive project to address this mismatch. Under the leadership of Professor Harvey Goldstein, the project will link the labor needs of local and regional

businesses, the job-skill needs of local residents, and job-training opportunities in the area. Area residents will be qualified for jobs located near their homes, eliminating a major barrier to employment that forces many residents to travel long distances to work or move closer to their jobs.

The project will meet the needs of both employers and potential employees. Goldstein's team will survey area residents, local and regional businesses, and job-training providers to determine labor and skill needs. Survey results will provide a basis for developing a pragmatic program to eliminate the mismatch. UNC and its local partners

will develop an areawide job-training and vocational education plan based on the survey results. COPC partners will use local resources to train residents in the skills that employers identify as among their current or anticipated labor requirements. UNC will provide job-training scholarships to residents and fund childcare and transportation, removing two common barriers to participation in training programs. ■

For more information, contact Bill Rohe at UNC's Center for Urban and Regional Studies, (919) 962-3077.

Merrimack College

Childcare: A Key Element in Welfare Reform Success

If single parents on welfare are to gain a secure foothold in the labor market, they need daycare for their small children. One of the most pervasive challenges that states and communities face as they move toward welfare reform is ensuring that affordable, quality childcare facilities are available. To meet this challenge, Lawrence, Massachusetts, worked with the COPC at the Merrimack College Urban Resource Institute to train 300 community-based family daycare providers.

Through onsite assessments, the Merrimack team found that many family daycare providers had difficulty obtaining and keeping licenses, were unfamiliar with common business practices and tax regulations, and were sometimes evicted by landlords fearing increased property damage and liability problems. Merrimack students and faculty mounted a series of 20, 2-hour training sessions for daycare providers. This pilot program was so successful that Merrimack is

now offering ongoing training to more than 40 daycare providers. Merrimack has also helped these self-employed providers organize an association of family daycare providers to share information, promote sound business practices among its members, and save money by buying supplies in volume. ■

For additional information, contact Patricia Jaysanne, Merrimack College, (978) 837-5468.

COPC Central is a free quarterly publication prepared by the University Partnerships Clearinghouse, the information service sponsored by HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP). *COPC Central* highlights the contributions of universities and colleges to local community revitalization efforts. You may contact the University Partnerships Clearinghouse at P.O. Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20849, (800) 245-2691, (fax) (301) 519-5767. See the Office of University Partnerships on the World Wide Web at <http://www.oup.org>.

One-Stop Employment Centers Serve Welfare to Work

Welfare recipients may face numerous roadblocks to employment. For example, some may confront daycare concerns, transportation difficulties, or special needs that require visits to multiple service agencies. Hampered by multiple obstacles that require a multitude of services to overcome, some recipients become overwhelmed.

To reduce the obstacles to self-sufficiency, the Florida Community Partnership Center (FCPC) is helping current and former welfare recipients become job-ready, learn interview techniques, find employment, locate affordable childcare, and access other necessary services. Through five, one-stop job/career development centers located throughout the Tampa Bay region, FCPC provides a fully integrated system of employment, education, training, and supportive services.

People can get frustrated if they need more than one service, explains Jerry Lieberman, director of FCPC. The one-stop centers bring many of these services together in one place, located in the neighborhoods

close to the people who need them. The program also continues to help its clients during the crucial period after they first enter the workforce. Post-placement monitoring of clients includes followup discussions with both employers and employees to troubleshoot any problems. The Florida Mental Health Institute independently monitors the program, providing feedback that has resulted in program improvement. Recommendations for change have included program revisions and staff training.

FCPC's one-stop centers have several features worth replicating. All of the one-stop centers are located within existing, community-based organizations in distressed communities. FCPC attempts to provide all the employment services necessary to retain and maintain employment in one location, including childcare, job-readiness training classes, and referral services. A part-time or full-time job coach is based at each center and works with clients individually to meet their needs. A job develop-

ment task force meets monthly to monitor the one-stop centers and assist with the development and implementation of job opportunities and training. Members of the task force include representatives of state and local governments, colleges and universities, service providers, and practitioners.

In addition to directly assisting welfare recipients to move towards self-sufficiency, the one-stop centers also help employers feel comfortable about hiring former welfare recipients. "Historically, it has been a sink-or-swim situation. An employer generally doesn't care if an employee has problems with childcare or substance abuse. But with us in the picture, the employer knows there is someone to turn to in the event of a problem," explains Lieberman.

Tarpon Springs, the first one-stop center developed by FCPC more than 3 years ago, continues to serve as a model for the other communities. The job coach's community outreach, job-development, and case management activities at the five locations have

resulted in more than 400 people finding and keeping jobs.

Funding for FCPC's one-stop centers comes not only from the university and the state of Florida, but also from the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, the Tampa Housing Authority, and the St. Petersburg Housing Authority. Corporate partners include GTE, Citibank, Chase Bank, and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

For additional information, contact Jerry Lieberman, FCPC, University of South Florida, (813) 974-3784.

Peer lending groups are helping South Texas welfare recipients develop their own small businesses, thanks to a partnership between the FEMAP Foundation and the University of Texas, Pan American (UT-Pan Am) COPC. Since December 1997 UT-Pan Am has been training four small groups of low-income women, many of them on welfare, in entrepreneurial skills. Group members cosign for each other on loans for small businesses—such as selling used clothing, operating a food stand, or importing novelty items from Mexico. The FEMAP Foundation acts as lender, providing infusions of cash that increase in size every 3 months, starting with \$200 and building up to \$1,200 in 24 months. For more information, contact Rosanna Ramirez-Robertson, UT-Pan Am, (956) 381-3361.



Urban Initiatives Conference Focuses on Welfare Reform

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's (UW-M's) first annual Urban Initiatives Conference—*Welfare Reform in Wisconsin: What Have We Learned So Far?*—expands on the university's mission to promote public service and

research efforts directed toward meeting the social, economic, and cultural needs of metropolitan Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin. The goals of the May 1998 conference were to increase dialogue on national and local welfare reform efforts and support collaborations among universities, businesses, governments, and communities to address the challenges of welfare reform.

Jason DeParle, a *New York Times* reporter who has written extensively on welfare reform and poverty issues, described the national view of Wisconsin's welfare program, Wisconsin Works, widely known as W-2. Former Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services and current Georgetown University Law School professor Peter Edelman presented the lessons that have been learned and additional issues that need to be understood.

Conference sessions addressed a wide range of issues, including the impact of welfare reform on women, children, minorities,

housing opportunities, families, neighborhoods, and healthcare. Other sessions examined W-2 research; labor market implications for W-2; university-community collaborations; and barriers to employment, including childcare and transportation. Conference participants—300 academics, practitioners, government representatives, local community organizations, and activists—left the conference with a better understanding of how W-2 is working and what major problems remain. ■

For additional information, contact Steven Percy, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, (414) 229-5916.



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