



Charting a Course

A CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY WEB CONFERENCE SERIES

Meeting the Employment and Parenting Needs of Low-Income Families

March 27, 2007

Audience Q&A Session

Jerri Michael - 10:24 am

Q: How universal are the results of the Milwaukee study? Would you get the same results if you did the study in St. Louis for instance?

Mark Courtney - 10:28 am

A: That's hard to say, though it is hard to believe that the major caseload reductions seen across the country have left TANF agencies with the same caseload mix as before. We have also heard from TANF managers that they are serving a tougher to serve group.

Bruce Bower - 10:24 am

Q: Is there any research that shows the effect on longevity in TANF if the systems are coordinated or combined? Does coordination or combining of the systems result in people being able to leave cash assistance sooner or does it increase time on TANF?

Mark Courtney - 10:30 am

A: I am not aware of such research, outside of the evidence from El Paso County. That's a good topic for future work!

Amy Dworsky - 10:32 am

A: You might be able to do an interesting experiment or quasi-experiment--comparing families that receive integrated services to those that do not.

Janice Ellis - 10:32 am

Q: Was the flexible funding required to go through legislation? Indiana has two divisions; one for TANF and the other for child welfare. Any problems there?

David Berns

A: In El Paso County, the state legislature block granted the federal TANF funds to the counties. The counties were required to maintain a Maintenance of Effort. The County Board of

Commissioners had the authority to use the TANF block grant in accordance with the four federal TANF purposes.

The state legislature in the same legislative session distributed the state and federal child welfare funds to the counties in a fixed allocation similar to a block grant. This gave the counties considerable new flexibility with child welfare funds.

These two pieces of legislation gave counties the option to try new approaches but the counties could also continue their old approaches. Some counties used this new flexibility to expand services while others made their programs more rigid.

It is easier to integrate services in a single agency but that is not a prerequisite. Many of the services integrated in El Paso County such as substance abuse treatment, mental health and domestic violence services were not part of the local Department of Human Services but voluntarily collaborated and integrated into the effort.

The best description of the El Paso County model can be found through the Center for Law and Social Policy at www.CLASP.org in the child welfare section of their website. The report is “A Vision for Eliminating Poverty and Family Violence: Transforming Child Welfare and TANF in El Paso County Colorado”, by Rutledge Q. Hutson, January 2003.

Kristina Poly - 10:32 am

Q: When did the El Paso reform occur and have the initial outcomes related to reductions been sustained?

David Berns - 10:37 am

A: The integration of services started mainly in 1997. It was implemented very quickly-- about 90 days--but has continued to be refined. The results have been maintained but mainly at the same level for the past few years.

Kristen LaEace - 10:27 am

Q: Anything happening at the federal level to encourage this kind of coordination / shared services?

Amy Dworsky - 10:34 am

A: I think it has been more at the state level. If anything, recent federal legislation concerning TANF has become even more focused on employment.

Mark Jewell - 10:34 am

Q: With most states scrambling to meet the changes to TANF due to DRA, what advice do you have to states when TANF participation rates are taking center stage? NH-DHHS

David Berns

A: Most people receiving TANF want to get a job. If given the opportunity and support, they will reach their work participation goal. States do not need to become punitive to meet the work participation rates.

Katie Maguire - 10:34 am

Q: Wisconsin is considering creating a new Dept of Children and Families. Are you aware of this budget initiative, and if so, what are your thoughts on this proposal?

Amy Dworsky

A: It is definitely a step in the right direction. We will have to wait and see just how much integration results from bringing the two agencies back together under the same umbrella.

Ashlee Piper - 10:34 am

Q: David, how were costs split between the Welfare and Social Services workers? In Massachusetts, our agencies are funded independently in silos and revenue claiming is done independently by those agencies (Dept. of Transitional Assistance and the Dept. of S).

David Berns

A: Most of the staff in the blended units were paid from TANF. Their efforts to strengthen families met the federal guidelines for TANF funding. Most of the savings were in child welfare.

It was my job as the County Director to show the County Board of Commissioners that the savings in one program would grow if we made strategic investments in another. I told the Board of Commissioners that we would not ask them to spend more money in Human Services. We would only ask them for permission to invest the funds in improved outcomes.

lisa heyman - 10:35 am

Q: Do most states not have their TANF and Child Welfare working hand in hand?

Amy Dworsky - 10:37 am

A: Most states have separate agencies that don't do much in the way of coordination.

Stuart Oppenheim - 10:36 am

Q: Answering a couple of questions: Yes, the federal government is working on this--they have just awarded (last October 1) 5 competitive grants across the country to demonstrate the effectiveness of coordinating TANF and Child Welfare. California is one.

Clotilde Dedecker - 10:38 am

Q: What is the role of foundations in addressing the needs of this population? Are there limitations/gaps to public \$ that could be addressed by foundations?

David Berns

A: I suggest that foundations invest our limited resources in filling the holes and in flexible approaches that could not be financed from other sources.

Diana Reing - 10:36 am

Q: Has El Paso had to make adjustments to its system in response to TANF reauthorization under DRA?

David Berns

A: I do not have this recent information.

Ashlee Piper - 10:36 am

Q: How was revenue collection maximized/achieved? Did the state/county change its approach? Moreover, was additional funding (i.e. a grant) necessary to start up the "one stop shops" and was additional training required?

David Berns

A: In El Paso County, the coordinated sites did not cost more money. They were financed primarily through increased efficiency and through improved outcomes. Good outcomes proved to be less costly than the poor outcomes that resulted from not working together.

Rachel Nyden - 10:37 am

Q: How do coordinated services impact federal work participation requirements?

Amy Dworsky

A: Integrated services could potentially make it easier for states to meet their federal work participation requirements---at least that is what the El Paso examples suggest.

David Berns

A: El Paso County has had one of the best work participation rates in Colorado.

Stuart Oppenheim - 10:37 am

Q: Answer #2--re evaluation/research. California has one of the federal grants and will be evaluating the outcomes in TANF and CWS across 40 California counties during the 5 year federal grant. This is our Linkages program--info at www.cfpic.org.

Danna Fabella - 10:38 am

Q: California launched a Linkage project in 2000 modeled after El Paso and we have a Federal Grant to expand. But with the DRA requirements for work participation, many counties feel they must focus on that and can't focus on well-being of children. Thoughts?

David Berns

A: It is hard for parents to work if they are worried about the well-being of their children.

Elizabeth Gonzalez - 10:39 am

Q: Were "leavers" followed in the El Paso study? What were poverty outcomes for the community?

David Berns

A: El Paso County conducted a "leavers" study. They were one of the few counties in the country with a full-time Doctoral level researcher on staff. Results of the study should be available from Dr. Matthew Caywood (MatthewCaywood@elpasoco.com).

David Thompson - 10:39 am

Q: How do TANF workers in Oregon identify the risk factors for child maltreatment?

Ramona Foley

A: TANF applicants in Oregon complete a strengths based self assessment process with their case managers. An integral part of this process is the DHS 7823 form, My Self Assessment. Among other questions clients are asked to identify:

7a. Problems I Have To Solve

Problems you have to solve. Check all the problems you have to work on in order to reach your goals. (Include yourself and family)

- drug and alcohol abuse
- an abusive or unsafe situation
- unstable housing
- depression or emotional problems
- lack of work experience
- bad work record
- health problems
- child care
- transportation
- trouble with reading or math
- lack of education
- criminal record or other legal problems
- fear of partner or household member
- other

What help do you need. What can we do to help you work toward your goals? (Check all that apply)

- child care assistance
- help with drug or alcohol abuse
- transportation assistance
- counseling or help with stress management
- how to look for work
- help to leave an abusive situation
- education and/or training
- help with stable housing
- getting child support
- encouragement
- help with relationship skills
- help with my children's problems
- other

When identified risk factors are indicated, case managers make a referral to Family Support and Connections. Case managers are asked to check the following risk indicators which have been found to be present in families whose children entered foster care.

- Prior child welfare history;
- Caregiver's mental and physical health;
- Caregiver's drug or alcohol abuse;
- History or current domestic violence;
- Caregiver's criminal history;
- Significant issues with children;
- Family isolation;
- Age of caregiver; and
- Composition of household.

The TANF program continually assesses the client's needs and at any point in the case if risk factors are found to be present, a referral for Family Support and Connections can be made.

Ashlee Piper - 10:39 am

Q: David, what were the start-up costs in 1997 and how is revenue being collected under this shared services model?

David Berns

A: There were very few new expenses in El Paso County for start up. Existing resources were redeployed. The TANF block grant gave the county a few million dollars in TANF to expand services. This TANF money was available because fewer people were on welfare so the funds could be deployed.

Caitlyn Brazill - 10:38 am

Q: How will the changes in federal TANF regulations impact the integrated programs?

David Berns

A: Unknown by me at this time. I left El Paso County 3 ½ years ago.

Carolyn Thiele - 10:39 am

Q: For El Paso County: Please explain the voluntary aspect of compliance without sanctions? How did this lead to a reduction in TANF numbers.

David Berns

A: Families were engaged in the plan for self sufficiency at the time of intake. About half of the applicants got jobs before they actually received TANF. They designed their own self sufficiency plan with guidance and support from TANF staff.

Families that did not follow their own plan were immediately interviewed and the plans were modified if necessary. Sanctions or closing the case for noncompliance was considered a breakdown in communication and the worker and the family were mutually considered responsible.

The trust and support were proven justified because the case loads plummeted virtually without the use of sanctions.

Nancy Taylor - 10:41 am

Q: What factors in the communities allowed the two agencies to collaborate (public policy, grassroots lobbying, political leverage, etc.)

David Berns

A: The community through the very conservative County Board of Commissioners adopted a vision to eliminate poverty and family violence. Any one and all agencies were invited to participate if they shared the vision. Once the goal was established, the details for collaboration were worked out.

Kristen LaEace - 10:34 am

Q: United Way of Central Indiana, Indianapolis. So, what specifically do we need to advocate for in TANF Re-authorization?

Amy Dworsky

A: Policy makers need to recognize that employment goals are more likely to be achieved if parent and child problems are also addressed. This implies a need to expand the focus of TANF so that it becomes more like a family support program.

Janice Ellis - 10:42 am

Q: Does Wisconsin continue to have to meet "work" levels for the TANF parent? How does this affect the child welfare services offered?

Amy Dworsky

A: I believe the WI plan is still in the proposal stage so it is not clear how child welfare services will be affected. At this point, there is no reason to believe it will affect federal work requirements. That would probably require some sort of federal waiver.

Theresa Lo - 10:46 am

Q: Per the question asked earlier on federal level interagency coordination -- could HHS do anything better/differently to encourage more coordination and what impact would that have? (This is Theresa Lo, an analyst with the Govt. Accountability Office)

Mark Courtney - 10:58 am

A: Sounds like some of the model projects that HHS is trying out in collaboration with states/counties can provide some ideas for the field, over time.

Nancy McDaniel - 10:46 am

Q: I would be interested in hearing from the panelists more about what the integrated practice models; for example were parent mentors used or a specific model such as family team decision making, etc.

David Berns

A: Families were very much a part of the systems development. Family mentors were used in a variety of ways. Their participation was facilitated through stipends, salaries and paid expenses.

Diane Ponder - 10:48 am

Q: Both Oregon & Milwaukee identified alcohol & drug issues as a predictive factor for both TANF & CW involvement. What efforts & models exist or are recommended to involve A&D treatment & prevention, and mental health system services and funding streams?

Ramona Foley

A: TANF clients currently complete a client self-assessment form (DHS 7823). This form provides the client with an opportunity to disclose A&D, mental health and other issues. In addition, TANF clients are screened for A&D and mental health-related issues. While this screening does not always happen up-front, the TANF program is being redesigned to include up-front screening for all clients. If, based on the results of this initial self-assessment or screening it is determined the client needs further A&D or mental health assessment, the client is referred to a community partner for further assessment. If the assessment indicates that the client has an A&D or mental health issue that requires treatment, that treatment becomes a part of the client's case plan. A client's case plan may include other activities along with treatment depending upon the severity of the client's A&D or mental health issues and the needs and goals of the client.

In addition to the opportunities for self-disclosure and the screening for A&D and mental health that occurs, clients may also volunteer to participate in Family Support and Connections. FS&C is a contracted service that can provide intensive one-on-one services to clients, including helping them connect with and stay in treatment.

The TANF employment and training program pays for screening services. A&D and mental health assessment and treatment services are funded by Medicaid.

Janice Ellis - 10:51 am

Q: Most states are concerned with cost...was it more costly to add TANF techs and child welfare workers on teams? Was there a large learning curve for the workers?

David Berns

A: Not all families were served through the integrated teams. The teams targeted TANF families with multiple barriers such as domestic violence or substance abuse. They also targeted families that could be diverted from child welfare.

In both instances, the families would likely have been very expensive in the old system because they usually had such poor outcomes. By focusing resources in a unified manner, the outcomes

improved and the costs stayed the same or went down. Savings were redeployed to help widen this net or to move into prevention.

james weber - 10:53 am

Q: City of Roanoke, Virginia DSS - In the El Paso model, how did the reduction in paperwork and court involvement occur? Was it a result of providing services sooner?

David Berns

A: In child welfare, many cases were diverted through a differential response into the new units. Generally these cases no longer needed an open child welfare case or juvenile court involvement. The paperwork reduction as a result was incredible. On the TANF side, most of the services were voluntary and were given only when requested by the family. Funding was flexible and did not require much documentation beyond what was required already for food stamps, or Medicaid purposes. As a result, the additional paperwork was negligible.

Eileen Brennan - 10:55 am

Q: Dr. Dworsky, did your study uncover child disabilities as a major barrier to employment?

Amy Dworsky - 10:59 am

A: Yes. Having a child or other family member with a disability was negatively related to earnings from employment

Rodger Jowers - 10:58 am

Q: SW Council on Children & Youth, Jackson TN - How exactly did you help parents find work?

David Berns

A: In El Paso County, most of the employment services were provided via contract with Goodwill. They shared space with DHS and were fully integrated into the intake and the ongoing services proves. They also leveraged many of their own resources and support from their Thrift stores and from United Way. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One Stop Centers were also integrated into the process. The expertise of community partners was leveraged rather than duplicated.
