

# State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation

Final Report

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## Volume 1 Evaluation of the FITAP and FIND Work Programs

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Submitted to:

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## Recommendation Locator

Rec. No.	Page No.	Recommendation
1	41	The Department of Social Services should improve the assessment process for FIND Work participants. The Department should explore the feasibility of developing contracts with Louisiana Community and Technical College System campuses that have developed workplace literacy assessment tools for low-literate adults. Such contracts would allow local parish offices to directly refer FIND Work participants for such assessment.
2	41	The Department of Social Services should expand FIND Work recipients' access to assessment and counseling for mental health issues, learning disabilities, and other disabilities. These services may be provided by other state agencies and contracted community-based service providers.
3	41	The Department of Social Services should expand countable job search and readiness classes to all Parish offices and encourage most FIND Work participants to take those classes.
4	41	The Department of Social Services should develop a work activity component that combines 10 hours per week (or up to 35 percent of scheduled hours) of basic education, workplace literacy training, or other job-related training with a 20-hours-per-week work experience component. This new work activity should be targeted to adults 20 years or older with low education levels or little prior work experience.
5	42	The Department should develop partnerships with the Workforce Commission and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to implement an education/work experience component at local campuses participating in the Adult Education and Workplace Literacy Training TANF Initiative. LCTCS campuses have implemented workplace literacy and skills-training programs targeting a similar adult population. Classes at the campuses could be combined with work-study or internships to meet the 30-hour weekly work requirement.
6	42	The Department of Social Services should continue to provide transitional transportation assistance to FIND Work participants who exit for employment. The Department should, however, review the process for providing transitional assistance to exiting FITAP recipients to insure that eligible recipients receive such assistance if desired. Based on this review, the Department should make any appropriate adjustments to procedures and provide additional directives/training to staff. The Department should also ensure that recipients (1) are adequately notified of the availability of transitional supportive services payments prior to program exit, and (2) receive clear instructions on the application process and compliance requirements.
7	58	The Department of Social Services should begin development of an after-care program for recipients who leave the program for employment, with the aim of improving job retention and reducing recidivism. An after-care program can consist of follow-up contacts that are scheduled regularly (e.g., at first, third, and sixth and twelfth months after exit) to identify any problems that former recipients may be encountering in keeping a job, make necessary referrals to other services, and provide support payments as appropriate. Referrals to additional education and job training programs in the community just prior to exit from FITAP should also be incorporated into such a program.

Rec. No.	Page No.	Recommendation
8	77	The Department of Social Services should review the process for ensuring that FITAP recipients comply with child support enforcement. SES and OFS staff should jointly analyze the reasons and circumstances that cause these cases to close. Based on these reviews, DSS should develop additional policies and procedures, if warranted, to improve compliance. Additional training may also be useful for FITAP analysts, to allow them to more proactively help recipients to comply with child support enforcements.
9	78	The State of Louisiana should review whether the school attendance requirement for children of FITAP families is warranted, and consider dropping this requirement for FITAP participation
10	78	The State of Louisiana should review whether the immunization requirement for children of FITAP families is warranted, and consider dropping these requirements as FITAP participation.
11	78	The Department of Social Services should study the feasibility of implementing a sanction response team, using either DSS staff, local service providers, or some combination of the two. The Department should review the Project Sanction Release pilots and other existing and past efforts to identify successful approaches to improve the rate of re-certification among sanctioned families. The Department should also develop guidelines for identifying families who were sanctioned for reasons other than unwillingness to comply with program requirements and who would therefore benefit from further assistance to return to compliance.
12	91	The Department of Social Services should identify alternative activities in addition to, or in place of, the monthly 20-job contact requirement for recipients who seek an exemption to the 24-month time limit. These activities should include participation in an intensive job search /job readiness program or job skills development program
13	91	The Department of Human Services should review its current strategies for identifying and assessing families reaching the federal 60-month lifetime limit for receipt of cash assistance. We recommend that DSS develop an intensive intervention track for families nearing or passing this limit. Such interventions should assess multiple aspects of recipients' situations (skills, education, physical and mental health, child care and transportation needs, etc.) and provide for comprehensive service delivery. We recommend that a team of professionals at the parish or regional level be made available as a resource to analysts and recipients. The team can regularly review cases approaching or passing the time limits and make necessarily adjustments to an intervention plan.
14	91	The Department of Social Services should review the current schedule of contacting clients nearing the time limits in order to allow more time for recipients to address any barriers they face. A first contact for families reaching the lifetime 60-month limit should occur at 48 months or earlier. This would allow families at least one year to implement a specific plan to address barriers before reaching the time limit.
15	91	The State of Louisiana should review the goals and merits of the 24-month time limit—relative to the 60-month lifetime limit on cash assistance—and consider eliminating or significantly modifying the 24-month time limit.

## Executive Summary

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This report presents findings from Berkeley Policy Associates' evaluation in 2002 of Louisiana's two principal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs: the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP), which provides cash assistance to low-income families; and the Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work), an employment and training program for adult FITAP recipients.

To conform to federal TANF rules, the State has established a lifetime limit of 60 months for receipt of cash assistance by adult-headed families, a mandatory work requirement for adult recipients, and a child support enforcement requirement. In addition, the State has adopted several distinctive program features. These include:

- A 24-month time limit on receipt of cash assistance during any five-year period;
- School attendance and immunization requirements for children;
- A time-limited \$900 monthly earnings disregard for employed recipients;
- Mandatory screening of all adult recipients for illegal drug use; and
- Transitional transportation payments for FITAP recipients who leave the program for employment.

During the initial years of FITAP and FIND Work, the State accumulated a large surplus of unspent federal TANF block grant funds. Consequently, the State decided to greatly expand the scope of TANF-funded assistance to serve needy families beyond the traditional welfare-eligible population. During federal fiscal year 2002, the State expended \$89 million on these so-called TANF Initiatives programs. Since the start of TANF in 1997, Louisiana has cumulatively spent \$809.3 million on TANF-related programs out of \$1.04 billion of the federal and state funds that were made available for TANF.

Like most states, Louisiana has experienced a large drop in its TANF cash assistance caseload. Since program implementation in January 1997, the FITAP caseload has declined by over 60 percent. Currently, there are about 20,000 open FITAP cases, roughly half of which are headed by adults. Almost all adult FITAP recipients are single mothers, and over 70 percent are less than 30 years old. About half have not completed high school

or received a GED. There is little evidence that hard-to-serve recipients are becoming an increasing share of the FITAP caseload. However, some FITAP recipients do face serious obstacles. For example, long-term recipients nearing or reaching the lifetime limit have less education and limited recent work experience than other recipients. Although they still constitute a minority of the caseload, many of them could be described as hard-to-serve cases and present particular challenges to the program.

The principal goal of the FIND Work program is to help adult recipients prepare for and find employment. The FIND Work assessment process, however, is not designed to be an in-depth assessment of participants' actual educational or workplace literacy levels, nor does it readily facilitate identification of potential barriers to employment such as mental health problems or learning disabilities. The overarching emphasis of the program is instead to move participants into work as quickly as possible. Participants with prior work experience are generally encouraged to find a job. Recipients with little work experience are placed in a job readiness class and then a work experience program. Recipients who have had previous success in school may be encouraged to enroll in a vocational education program if they have well-defined career interests. Consequently, the majority of adults in the FIND Work program participating in work activities are engaged in paid employment (52 percent); smaller numbers of adults participate in vocational education (20 percent) and work experience programs (17 percent). FIND Work participants also have access to a variety of support services payments. These support services, however, are predominantly focused on transportation.

FITAP and FIND Work participants who fail to comply with various program requirements could face sanctions. About one-third of recent adult-headed case closures resulted from noncompliance with various program requirements. About 8 percent of adult-headed cases in June 2002 were facing benefit reduction due to noncompliance. Failure to meet work participation requirements is the most common reason for sanctioning FITAP cases in Louisiana. The second most frequent reason for sanctioning is failure to comply with requirements related to child support enforcement. Most recipients whose cases were closed due to sanctions do not regain cash assistance within a year of closure. Sanctioned recipients tend to be slightly younger, have younger children, and have significantly lower education levels than non-sanctioned recipients, and thus are more likely to face challenges finding and keeping a job. Analysts spend a substantial amount of time monitoring various program requirements. Many analysts believe that monitoring efforts are sometimes counterproductive, as they may detract from their ability to provide active case management for their clients.



Employment outcomes for recipients leaving FITAP indicate that former recipients continue to face difficulty in achieving self-sufficiency through employment after they leave the program. Post-FITAP employment rates immediately after exit ranged from 45 to 52 percent, and have not shown any notable improvement since the program was implemented in 1997. Only a small fraction of FITAP leavers were continuously employed over the year after their exit from the program. Most former recipients were employed in service and retail trade industries, which have numerous low-skill low-wage jobs. Not surprisingly, the earnings of most employed former FITAP recipients were not high enough to lift their families out of poverty. Median quarterly earnings among former recipients were about \$1,600 in 2001 in the quarter after exit. The level of earnings, however, increased for FITAP leavers who were able to retain employment over the long run. For example, median earnings increased by 23 percent among FITAP leavers who were continuously employed for two years after exiting the program.

Neither the State's 24-month time limit nor the federal 60-month time limit was an immediate concern for the majority of adult recipients who had been on FITAP. Louisiana established a range of exemptions to both its 24-month and 60-month time limits, allowing most needy families to stay on the program even after they reach the time limits. Over 20,000 adults had accumulated 24 or more months by March 2002, and nearly 600 adults had accumulated 55 or more months. The majority of recipients who reached the State's 24-month time limit continued to receive cash assistance. Exemptions can be granted to unemployed recipients who complete a monthly 20-job contact requirement. Parishes reported that this 20-job contact requirement is not meaningful in ensuring that the clients were actively engaged in job search, since their contact activities were not verified.

Based on these findings, this report presents a number of recommendations to the State. Some of our recommendations aim at improving the design and implementation of the FIND Work program. These include, for example, the improvement of assessment tools and processes, the expansion of services to address mental health and other hard-to-diagnose barriers, and increased use of work activity assignment in education, literacy programs, and job-related training. In order to reduce recidivism and facilitate a successful transition from welfare to work, we also recommend the development of after-care strategies for recipients leaving the program for employment. Improvement in follow-up of clients after case closure is also recommended for recipients who leave FITAP involuntarily for sanction reasons. Other recommendations are related to the monitoring of program rules and requirements, including the reassessment of the merits of attendance

and immunization requirements, enhanced cooperation with Support Enforcement Services on child support enforcement, and a review of the current time-limit exemption practice based on 20-job contacts. Finally, as more recipients start to reach their time limits, we also recommend improved and early assessment of the needs of families approaching the time limit and a review of the State's 24-month time limit policy.

## Chapter 1

# Overview of TANF Programs in Louisiana

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### Chapter Highlights

- Louisiana created two new welfare programs—the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) and the Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work)—in response to the 1996 federal welfare reform legislation creating the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program.
- In addition to FITAP and FIND Work, Louisiana has expanded the scope of TANF-funded assistance to serve needy families beyond the traditional welfare-eligible population. These programs are collectively known as the TANF Initiatives.
- Since the start of TANF in 1997, Louisiana has received a total of \$978.6 million in federal TANF block grants and contributed \$310.6 million of its own revenues to meet the TANF maintenance of effort requirement. As of June 2002, the state had spent \$809.3 million on TANF-related programs out of a total of \$1.04 billion available for the program.
- During SFY 2002, cash assistance payments to FITAP families and spending for TANF Initiatives accounted for the majority of TANF program expenditures.
- After declining rapidly between 1997 and 2000, the FITAP caseload declined at a slower rate in 2001 and 2002. This is in contrast to the recent experience of many other states, where TANF caseloads have increased during the past year.

- Almost all adult FITAP recipients (98 percent) are single mothers and over 70 percent are less than 30 years old. About half have not completed high school or received a GED.

## Introduction

In 1996, the landmark federal welfare reform legislation—the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)—replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Unlike AFDC, which entitled families to cash assistance as long as they met eligibility criteria, TANF imposes time limits on benefits receipt and requires parents to work or to participate in work-related activities. TANF also has widened the scope of assistance beyond traditional cash benefits and has given states greater discretion in designing program rules, requirements, and support services.

In response to PRWORA, the State of Louisiana in January 1997 established two tightly integrated TANF programs: (1) a cash assistance program for low-income parents and their minor children, known as the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP), and (2) an education, training, and employment program for adult FITAP recipients, known as the Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work). All adult FITAP recipients are required to participate in FIND Work unless they are determined to be exempt. In March 2000, Louisiana launched the Kinship Care Subsidy Program (KCSP), which targets children living with relatives other than a parent as part of the TANF program. KCSP aims to keep children in the care of family members as an alternative to placement in a foster care setting. These three programs—FITAP, FIND Work, and KCSP—currently constitute the core of Louisiana’s TANF system.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to establishing the three core programs, Louisiana has used TANF funds to support a variety of programs that target needy families beyond the traditional welfare-

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<sup>1</sup> The State also started a new Diversion Program in July 2002. The Diversion Program provides one-time lump-sum cash payments to FITAP-eligible families that have a strong connection to the labor market, but are unemployed or at risk of losing jobs. Payments are equivalent to four times the FITAP flat grant for a given family size. Recipients of diversion payments cannot apply for FITAP for at least four months, and cannot receive diversion payments more than once in a 12-month period and twice in their lifetimes. Because this program was only recently implemented, it is not discussed in this report.

eligible population.<sup>2</sup> For example, since 1997 the State has transferred some of its TANF funds into the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which serves FITAP recipients as well as low-income working families not receiving welfare. In 2001, the State also began using TANF funds for a wide variety of programs, referred to as TANF Initiatives, that are implemented by the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS) and other state agencies. TANF Initiatives are targeted at a broader segment of at-risk families and individuals, including, for example, victims of domestic violence, families facing housing instability, and incarcerated parents. TANF Initiatives are discussed in more detail in volume 2 of this report.

Berkeley Policy Associates (BPA), a social policy research and consulting firm in Oakland, California, is under contract with the Division of Administration (DOA) to conduct an evaluation of TANF programs in Louisiana.<sup>3</sup> During the past nine months, BPA, with assistance from its in-state partners at Louisiana State University and Southern University at New Orleans, has collected and analyzed data for FITAP, FIND Work, and selected TANF Initiative programs. The main components of the evaluation are summarized in Exhibit 1.1. Mid-term findings from these studies were presented in BPA's *State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation: Interim Report on FITAP and FIND Work Programs*, submitted to DOA in April 2002. This current report presents the final findings from BPA's evaluation and research activities under the contract. Our report focuses on new findings from the evaluation of FITAP and FIND Work that were not covered in the Interim Report.

In this volume, Chapter 1 summarizes FITAP and FIND Work policies, program expenditures, and overall caseload trends. Chapter 2 examines how the State helps recipients to become job-ready through the FIND Work Program. The chapter also discusses various support services available to families participating in FIND Work as well as after leaving FITAP. Chapter 3 describes the employment experiences of recipients who have exited FITAP. Chapter 4 discusses the implementation of various FITAP program requirements and sanctions. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses findings on cash assistance time-limit policies in Louisiana and their application.

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<sup>2</sup> States are given considerable flexibility in using TANF funds to meet any of the four federally legislated goals: (1) to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) to end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

<sup>3</sup> A description of BPA's evaluation design is provided in the appendix of the *Interim Report*.

**Exhibit 1.1**  
**Components of Louisiana TANF Evaluation**

Component	Data Sources	Research Measures
Caseload Trends and Expenditures Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSS TANF Files (FITAP and FIND Work Administrative Records)</li> <li>• TANF ACF-196 Forms &amp; DSS Expenditure Reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caseload Trends, Size, and Characteristics</li> <li>• Recidivism Rate</li> <li>• Number and Rate of Sanctions</li> <li>• Number of Cases Reaching Time Limits</li> <li>• Percent of Long-Term Recipients</li> <li>• Participation in FIND Work activities</li> <li>• FITAP Expenditures by Type of Assistance</li> </ul>
FITAP/FINDWORK Implementation Study	Interviews with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSS Administrators</li> <li>• Parish &amp; Regional Managers</li> <li>• FITAP and FIND Work Program Staff</li> <li>• Contracted Service Providers</li> <li>• Community-Based Organizations</li> <li>• Focus Group with Clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recipient Assessment Process</li> <li>• Assignment to Education, Training, and Work Activities</li> <li>• Sanction Process</li> <li>• Impact of Time Limits</li> <li>• Use of Outside Service Providers</li> <li>• Exemption Practices</li> <li>• Post-program Supports</li> <li>• Local Office Needs</li> </ul>
Employment Outcomes Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Unemployment Insurance Records</li> <li>• DSS FITAP Administrative Records (TANF Files)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment Rate</li> <li>• Job Retention</li> <li>• Earnings Levels &amp; Growth</li> <li>• Poverty Rate</li> <li>• Industry of Employment</li> <li>• Relationship between FIND Work Services and Employment Outcomes</li> </ul>
TANF Initiatives Implementation Study	Interviews with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other State Agency Administrators Who Oversee TANF Initiatives Programs</li> <li>• Front-Line Personnel and Managers of Programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability and Utilization of Services</li> <li>• Outreach Activities</li> <li>• Use of Outside Service Contractors</li> <li>• Program Expenditures</li> <li>• Implementation Challenges</li> </ul>

## Key Features of the FITAP Program

To be eligible for cash assistance under FITAP, a family must reside in Louisiana and include a dependent child.<sup>4</sup> Minor parents and their children are required to live with the minor's parents (or other relatives or guardians) to be FITAP-eligible. Family net income, after taking into account various deductions, must be below the State-defined need standard as well as flat grant amount. In addition, family assets must be \$2,000 or less, excluding the value of a residence and one vehicle. Further details on eligibility criteria are provided in the Appendix (see Exhibit A.1).

Currently, maximum monthly FITAP payments are \$188 for a family of two, \$240 for a family of three, and \$284 for a family of four. FITAP cash payments are made via electronic benefit transfer, in which a recipient uses a Louisiana Purchase Card at ATMs and point-of-purchase machines.

Specific provisions of FITAP and FIND Work were discussed in detail in the Interim Report and so are not repeated here. Briefly, the chief program requirements stipulated by federal TANF regulations include:

- a 60-month lifetime time limit on cash assistance for adult recipients;
- work requirements for all recipients unless determined exempt; and
- cooperation with child support enforcement authorities.

Additional state-specific features that characterize Louisiana's TANF program include:

- a 24-month time limit on the receipt of cash assistance during any five-year period;
- a school attendance requirement for children in families receiving FITAP;
- immunization of children;
- a parenting skills program for FITAP parents under the age of 20;
- a time-limited \$900 monthly earnings disregard for FITAP recipients;
- mandatory screening of all adult applicants for the use of illegal drugs;
- exemption from program requirements for domestic violence victims; and

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<sup>4</sup> The dependent child must be either (a) under age 16, or (b) between ages 16 and 19, and attending school or participating in FIND Work. An unborn child is not eligible to receive benefits, but a woman who has completed her fifth month of pregnancy is eligible.

- transitional transportation assistance payments for FITAP recipients who leave the program due to increased earnings.

## Key Features of the FIND Work Program

The FIND Work Program is designed to implement federally mandated work requirements. Accordingly, the participation requirements for FIND Work closely follow federal TANF regulations regarding work requirements. Under the FIND Work Program, adult recipients from single-parent cases must work or participate in work-related activities for at least 30 hours per week, or 20 hours per week if they have a child under age 6. In a two-parent household, both parents must work or participate in work-related activities for a combined total of at least 35 hours per week, without child care, and 55 hours with child care. Allowable work activities in FIND Work include those activities that are countable under federal regulations. These are:

- unsubsidized or subsidized employment;
- unpaid work experience;
- on-the-job training;
- job search/job readiness activities;
- vocational education;
- secondary school attendance and GED preparation;
- education directly related to employment (for recipients without a high school diploma or GED);
- job skills training directly related to employment;
- community service; and
- provision of child care services for an individual who is participating in community service.

Not all activities allowable under the State TANF Plan are used in practice. For example, community services or provision of child care services are not currently used as work activities in Louisiana. Also, federal TANF regulations specify limits on the number of hours per week recipients can spend in education, training, and job search activities, and still have them count toward meeting the state's required work participation rate. TANF rules also limit the number of people who can be assigned to vocational education or other education activities to 30 percent of the total number of recipients participating in work activities. In Louisiana, the Department of Social Services allows parish offices to place



recipients in non-countable education activities if they are meeting the federal work participation rates.

The major exemption from the work participation requirement is for a single parent providing care for a child under age one. This exemption is allowable for up to 12 months per adult recipient. In addition, the State has established various good-cause reasons for not participating in FIND Work. Additional details on work requirements and exemptions under FIND Work are provided in the Appendix (Exhibits A.2 and A.3).

## TANF Program Expenditures

### **Total TANF Resources since Program Inception to Date**

During the first five and half years of the TANF program, Louisiana received federal TANF block grants totaling \$978.6 million. According to federal guidelines, states are allowed to transfer up to 10 percent of each year's TANF block grant into the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and may transfer a maximum of 30 percent into the SSBG grant and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) combined. As of June 2002, Louisiana had transferred \$253.7 million, or 26 percent of the total TANF block grant funds to date, to the CCDF and SSBG combined. Exhibit 1.2 shows total TANF grants and expenditures in Louisiana since program implementation in 1997.

In addition to using federal TANF grants, Louisiana spends its own state funds on the TANF program. Under the TANF program, each state is required to annually contribute at least 75 percent of the amount it spent on Title IV-A and Title IV-F programs in Federal Fiscal Year 1994.<sup>5</sup> (If states do not meet their work participation requirements for the fiscal year, they must contribute 80 percent.) These required state contributions to TANF are known as maintenance-of-effort (MOE) requirements. As of June 2002, Louisiana had contributed \$310.6 million of its own funds to TANF since the start of the program. Including Louisiana's MOE spending on TANF programs, the total funds made available to TANF program amounted to \$1.04 billion from the inception of the program to June 2002.

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<sup>5</sup> Prior to the TANF program, the Title IV-A Emergency Assistance Program provided child welfare services to families whose children were at risk of being removed from the home. This program (along with Title IV-F programs—AFDC and JOBS) was consolidated into the TANF block grant program.

**Exhibit 1.2**

**Total TANF Grants and Expenditures in Louisiana**  
 Grants from FFY1997- 2002 (through June 30, 2002)

	<u>\$ Million</u>
<b>TANF Block Grant Awarded</b>	
Grant Year FFY 1997 to 2001	\$ 834.7
Grant Year FFY 2002	143.9
Total to date	978.6
<b>Use of Federal Funds from Grant Years 1997-2001 (as of June 2002):</b>	
( 1 ) Total Grant Amount	\$ 834.7
( 2 ) Amount Transferred to Child Care & Development Fund	210.5
( 3 ) Amount Transferred to Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)	0.0
( 4 ) Federal Block Grant Funds Available for TANF: (1) – (2) – (3)	624.2
( 5 ) Federal Block Grant Expenditures on TANF	492.9
( 6 ) Obligated but Unspent Federal TANF Block Grant Funds	76.6
( 7 ) Unobligated TANF Block Grant Funds (which can be used for assistance payments in the future)	54.7
( 8 ) State MOE Expenditures for FFY 1997-2001 Grants	267.5
<b>Use of Federal Funds from Grant Year 2002 (as of June 2002):</b>	
(Note: Most of FFY 2002 Grant was allocated in Sept. 2002 and is expected to be spent out during FFY 2003.)	
( 9 ) Total Grant Amount	\$ 143.9
(10) Amount Transferred to Child Care & Development Fund	30.1
(11) Amount Transferred to Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)	13.1
(12) Federal Block Grant Funds Available for TANF: (1) – (2) – (3)	100.8
(13) Federal Block Grant Expenditures on TANF	5.8
(14) Unspent Federal Funds (Obligated & Unobligated)	95.0
(15) State MOE Expenditures for FFY 2002 Grants	43.1
<b>Total Funds Available and Expenditures on TANF (as of June 2002)</b>	
(16) Total Federal and State Funds Available: (4)+(8)+(12)+(15)	\$ 1,035.6
(17) Total Federal and State TANF Expenditures: (5)+(8)+(13)+(15)	809.3

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana's ACF-196 Reports.

Although Louisiana has so far received five annual federal TANF block grants (distributed on a federal fiscal year basis), actual program spending to date has been supported mostly from the first four grants. The most recent federal grant for FFY 2002 was largely

unallocated as of June 2002.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, Exhibit 1.2 shows overall program spending from the first four grants separately from the 2002 grant. By the end of SFY 2002, Louisiana had spent \$492.9 million of \$624.3 million available from the first four federal block grant funds. Of the remaining \$131.3 million of federal TANF funds, \$76.6 million had been allocated but not yet spent, and \$54.7 million was still unobligated.

Federal TANF regulations finalized in 1999 stipulate that unobligated block grant funds carried over into a subsequent year may only be spent on a relatively narrow set of benefit categories, defined as “assistance” benefits. These include benefits for basic needs, such as cash assistance, housing, and food. So-called non-assistance TANF benefits are more flexible and can include any programs that meet one of the four purposes of TANF and are not for ongoing basic needs. Recipients of non-assistance benefits are not subject to time limits, work participation, or child support assignment.

During the first four years of the TANF program, Louisiana’s spending of TANF funds was concentrated on cash assistance payments, and a considerable amount of federal funds went unspent and unobligated each year. After 1999, these unspent funds could only be expended to provide assistance benefits. Consequently in 2001, the State expanded the range of programs to which it allocated TANF funds by launching the TANF Initiatives.

This shift in policy resulted in the obligation of \$104 million of the \$127 million (post-transfer) federal TANF block grant for 2001 for TANF Initiatives spending during FFY 2002. Exhibit 1.3 lists TANF Initiatives programs funded in the FFY 2002 program year. The State was able to divert a large portion of the 2001 grant to TANF Initiatives because of the significant roll-over of funds from previous TANF block grants that could only be spent on cash assistance and other “assistance” benefits. Preliminary data through the end of federal fiscal year (September 2002) indicate that of the \$104 million allocated to the TANF Initiatives, about \$89 million had been expended.

Over the past year, Louisiana has made significant progress in spending down unspent TANF funds from the previous years by expanding services beyond FITAP and FIND Work through the TANF Initiatives. This high level of spending on TANF Initiatives is not sustainable indefinitely. Spending on the TANF Initiatives will be curtailed as the surplus from the prior year block grant funds run out and FITAP and FIND Work

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<sup>6</sup> The State is allowed to make allocations grant year 2002 fund by September 2002 and spend it over the following federal fiscal calendar year (i.e., through September 2003).

**Exhibit 1.3  
 TANF Initiatives Budget for Program Year FFY 2002**

<u>Implementing Agency</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Budget Amount (\$)</u>
<b><i>DSS and DOA</i></b>		
(1) Department of Social Services	Transportation	2,500,000
	Youth in Transition	2,250,000
	Fatherhood Initiative	1,000,000
	Individual Development Acct.	2,000,000
(2) Division of Administration	Evaluation	750,000
	Training of DSS Case Workers	1,000,000
	Needs Assessment	<u>500,000</u>
Subtotal		10,000,000
<b><i>Other State Agencies</i></b>		
(3) Department of Education	Pre-K	15,000,000
	Pre-GED	14,000,000
	After School	3,150,000
	Education/Training (After School)	3,000,000
(4) Workforce Commission	Adult Education & Skills Training	10,000,000
(5) Supreme Court	Truancy	1,100,000
	CASA	3,600,000
(6) Office of Women's Services	Drug Courts	5,000,000
	Domestic Violence	4,000,000
(7) Department of Corrections	Microenterprise	1,000,000
	Project Return	3,000,000
	Job Skills Program	1,400,000
	Project Metamorphosis	400,000
(8) Office of Community Programs	Concordia Life Skills	200,000
	Private Pre-K Program	3,000,000
(9) Office of Addictive Disorders	Residential Treatment	2,988,000
	Screening/Outpatient Treatment	1,012,000
(10) Monroe Housing Authority	Housing Related Services	1,000,000
(11) Central City Economic Opportunity Cooperation	Housing Related Services	1,000,000
(12) Louisiana Housing Finance Agency	Energy Assistance	17,500,000
	Housing Related Services	<u>3,000,000</u>
Subtotal		94,350,000
Total TANF Initiatives Budget for Program Year FFY 2002		104,350,000
Total Expended (estimates as of 10/02)		89,329,326

Source: Louisiana Department of Social Services, preliminary expenditure data.  
 Note: The allocations were made against the federal funds from grant year 2001.

expenditures must be financed through current year TANF grants. This underscores the need for the State to evaluate the current TANF Initiatives programs, determine which

should be continued, and identify alternative funding sources for programs it deems worthy.

## **TANF Expenditures by Program During SFY 2002**

During SFY 2002, federal and state expenditures on Louisiana's TANF programs, including FITAP, FIND Work, and the TANF Initiatives, totaled \$194 million. Exhibit 1.4 details TANF fund expenditures by program component during SFY 2002 (July 2001-June 2002).<sup>7</sup> Key expenditures for SFY 2002 include following:

- Cash assistance payments. These payments largely represent monthly basic cash assistance and other payments intended to meet ongoing basic needs of FITAP recipients. In SFY 2002, expenditures on cash assistance amounted to \$65 million, or 34 percent of the total spending.
- FIND Work services and transportation payments. These include services and support payments (e.g., uniforms) paid to FIND Work participants as well as payments paid to contractors providing work activity programs and transportation services to participants. In SFY 2002, expenditures for the FIND Work program totaled \$4 million (2 percent of the total spending) for transportation and \$8.9 million (5 percent) for other services and support payments.
- TANF Initiatives. These include over 30 programs implemented by 12 agencies, including DSS. Collectively, this is the second largest spending category as of June 2002. In SFY 2002, expenditures on TANF Initiatives accounted for 25 percent of total TANF spending.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the federal program year, total spending on TANF Initiatives is expected to end up higher than total expenditures on FITAP and FIND Work programs. Volume 2 of the report discusses selected TANF Initiatives and their spending in more detail.

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<sup>7</sup> The program spending in SFY 2002 is supported by federal grants from grant years 1999-2002, with the 2000 federal grant providing the bulk of cash assistance expenditures and the 2001 grant providing a large portion of other program expenditures.

<sup>8</sup> This reflects the estimate at the end of SFY 2002. Total spending for TANF Initiatives through the program year FFY 2002 is estimated be over \$89 million after all pending invoices are processed.

**Exhibit 1.4**  
**Estimated TANF Program Expenditures By Program Components**  
 SFY 2002

	Federal (\$ million)	State (\$ million)	Total (\$ million)	Total (%)
<b>PROGRAM EXPENDITURES</b>				
Cash assistance	60.4	4.7	65.1	33.6
FIND Work - - Services	7.0	1.9	8.9	4.6
- - Transportation	3.4	0.6	4.0	2.1
Post-FITAP services payments	2.3	1.1	3.5	1.8
TANF Initiatives (a)	48.0	0.1	48.2	24.8
Child care (b)	0.2	5.4	5.6	2.9
Teen pregnancy prevention	5.6	0.0	5.6	2.9
Other programs (c)	2.9	15.6	18.5	9.6
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>129.9</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>159.4</b>	<b>82.2</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURES</b>				
FITAP/FIND Work case mgmt.	0.1	12.6	12.7	6.6
Data Processing	0.3	4.4	4.7	2.4
Other admin. costs (d)	5.8	11.4	17.1	8.8
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>17.8</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136.1</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>194.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: BPA Staff estimates based on DSS, Office of Management and Finance, data. The estimates include the 13th accounting month of SFY 2002.

Notes: (a) These expenditures reflect those at the end of SFY 2002. A preliminary estimate for the total amount spent for the program year FFY 2002 is reported in Exhibit 1.3

(b) Child care payments include State MOE expenditures on Child Care Assistance Programs and Wrap Around Childcare program.

(c) Other programs include Starting Points and state MOE spending on programs in Office of Community Services and Dept. of Education.

(d) Other administrative expenditures are costs associated with FITAP/FIND Work programs but not directly related to the provision of services. Administrative expenditures associated with provision of other TANF programs (other than FITAP/FIND Work) are included as part of program expenditures.

- Post-TANF services payments. These include post-program support payments for those who left the program for employment. Expenditures on these payments amounted to \$3.5 million (or 1.8 percent of total spending). Most of these expenditures (\$3.4 million) were for monthly transportation support payments which employed former TANF recipients were eligible to receive for 12 months. Remaining expenditures were used to pay for uniforms, equipments and tools, medical exams, eye glasses, and other expenses associated with employment.

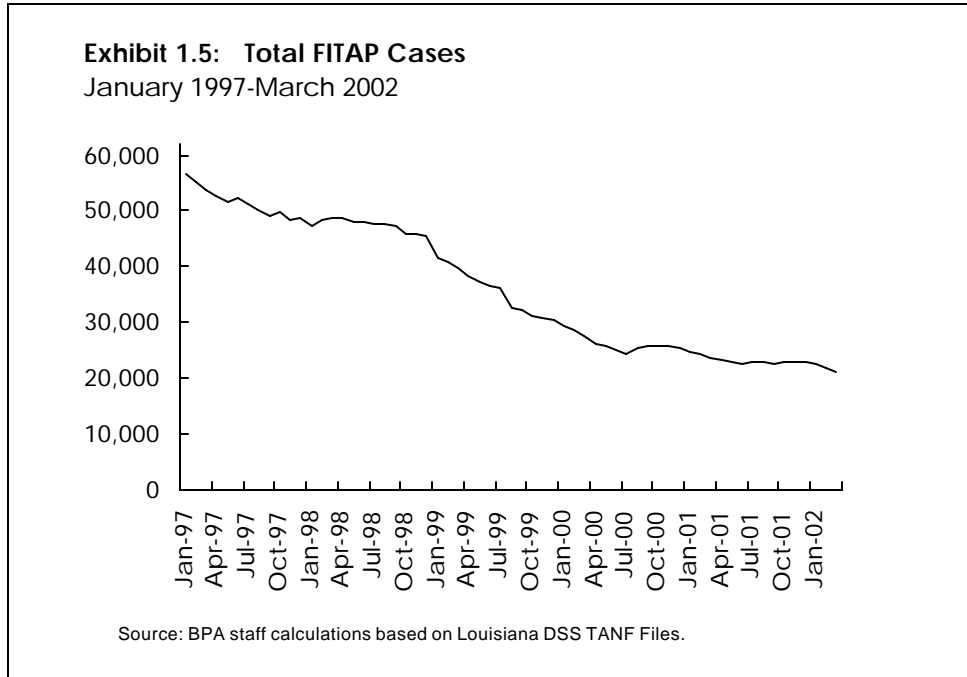
- Child care. These expenditures included the State's MOE spending on the Child Care Assistance Program and the Wrap Around Child Care Program. Expenditures on child care totaled \$5.6 million or 2.9 percent of the total TANF program spending.
- Teenage Pregnancy Prevention. As part of the TANF program, DSS has implemented a teenage pregnancy prevention program. In SFY 2002, expenditures for this program totaled \$5.6 million.
- Other programs. This category includes expenditures for Starting Points (a pre-school program) and for other non-TANF programs that are counted toward State MOE, such as child welfare programs in the Office of Community Services. Total expenditures on other programs were \$18.5 million in SFY 2002.
- Administrative costs. These include FITAP and FIND Work case management expenses, which are primarily salaries and benefits for program staff providing services (\$12.7 million), other indirect administrative costs of FITAP and FIND Work that are not directly related to the provision of services (\$17.1 million), and data processing expenses (\$4.7 million).

## Overall FITAP Caseload Trends

In this final section, we update the FITAP caseload trend information contained in the Interim Report. The Interim Report was based on data through September 2001. Here we present findings based on caseload data through March 2002, with an emphasis on changes that occurred in the most recent months.

### Aggregate Caseload Trends

In the Interim Report, we highlighted that the FITAP caseload had declined by about 60 percent between 1997 and 2001. However, we also reported that between summer 2000 and September 2001, the rate of caseload decline had in fact slowed. The most recent data (shown in Exhibit 1.5) indicate that the total FITAP caseload has remained virtually flat since September 2001, although it experienced a slight decline during the first quarter of 2002.



Louisiana's TANF caseload has continued to decline even as many other states have experienced increases in their caseloads. Between March 2001 and March 2002, two-thirds of states nationwide (34 states) reported caseload increases averaging about 10 percent.<sup>9</sup> During the same period, however, Louisiana reported an 11 percent decrease in its TANF caseload. In the first quarter of 2002, 28 states reported a small caseload decrease (averaging 2.1 percent), and 22 states reported a small increase (averaging 1.9 percent). Yet during this same quarter, Louisiana's total caseload declined by about 6 percent.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that the downward swing in the economy in Louisiana has so far not been as drastic as in some other states. Parishes we visited generally did not observe a large change in the local labor market conditions affecting FITAP participants.

<sup>9</sup> "New Data Show Most States Had TANF Caseload Increases in Last Year" Center for Law and Social Policy, on-line news brief, June 17, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> DSS administrators report that there has been a small increase in the FITAP caseload in September and October 2002.



**Exhibit 1.6**  
 FITAP Caseload by Case Type  
 March 2002

<u>Case Type</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Caseload</u>
Single-parent	11,762	55.3 %
Two-parent	184	0.9 %
Child-only	<u>9,323</u>	<u>43.8 %</u>
Total	21,269	100.0 %
Number of Kinship Care Cases	2,314	

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files.

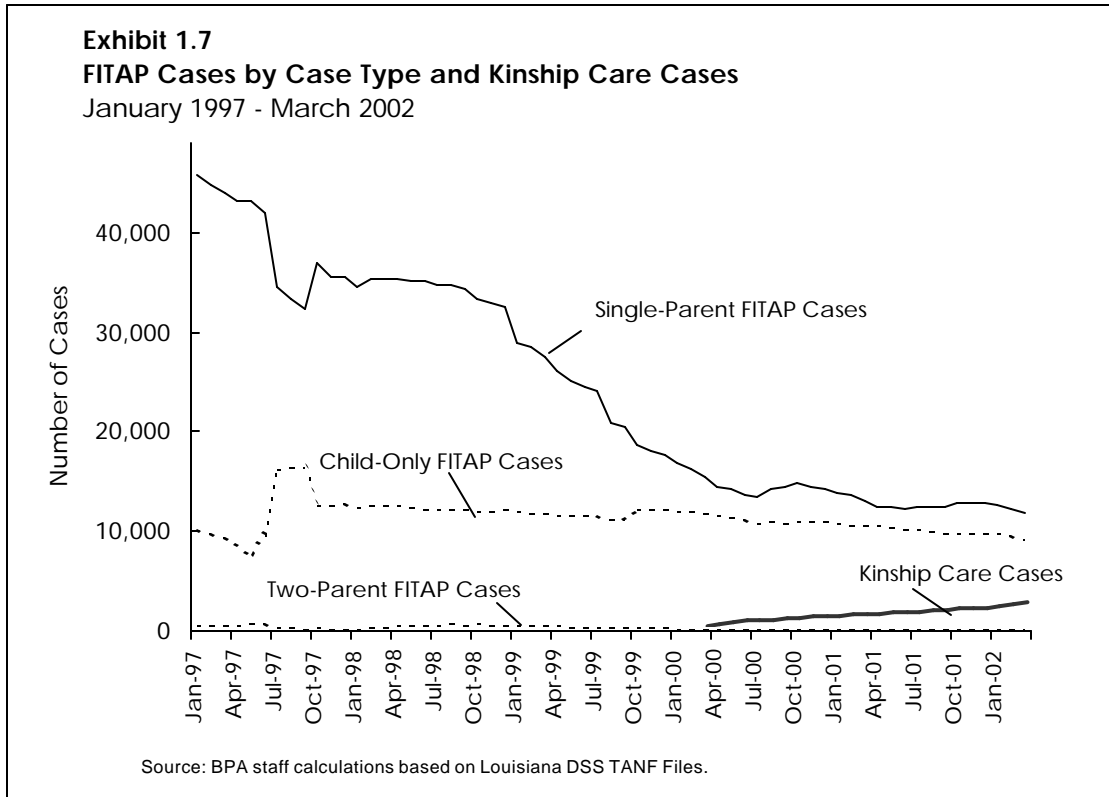
### Trends by Case Type

Of the more than 20,000 open FITAP cases in March 2002, about 55 percent were single-parent cases; 1 percent were two-parent cases; and 44 percent were child-only cases. These trends are illustrated in Exhibit 1.6. In this same month, there were 2,314 KCSP cases, an amount equal to nearly one-quarter of the child-only caseload. As of March 2002, 12,130 adults and 41,592 children were receiving FITAP payments, and 4,263 children were receiving KCSP assistance.

An examination of caseload trends by case type—single-parent, two-parent, and child-only—shows that caseload levels across all case types have been relatively stable in recent months. Exhibit 1.7 presents trends for single-parent, two-parent, and child-only FITAP cases, as well as for KCSP cases. As we discussed in the *Interim Report*, the bulk of the aggregate caseload decline in the first four years of FITAP was the result of a substantial decline in single-parent cases.<sup>11</sup> As shown in Exhibit 1.7, however, caseload trends for both single-parent and child-only cases have remained stable in recent months, while there has been a steady increase in the number of KCSP cases. In fact, the KCSP caseload increased by 94 percent between March 2001 (1,192 cases) and March 2002 (2,314 cases).

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<sup>11</sup> A sudden large shift during the third quarter of 1997 in single-parent and child-only cases was largely due to a one-time reassignment of single-parent cases to child-only cases. In the early FITAP implementation, such case-type conversions were not uncommon for relative caretaker cases.



As parishes continue to inform and encourage eligible applicants and eligible current FITAP recipients to sign up for KCSP, the number of KCSP cases will likely continue to grow. KCSP currently provides cash assistance of \$222 per month for each child who lives with a qualified relative other than a parent. Under KCSP, a kinship care case with two children receives \$444 per month in benefits. Under FITAP, this same household only receives \$188 in monthly benefits. Rough calculations suggest that if the current FITAP child-only caseload were to convert to KCSP, total benefit payments would increase from under \$2 million per month to about \$4 million.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, while the absolute number of children served by KCSP is still relatively small, its continued growth could have significant budget implications in the future if the KCSP caseload continues to grow at the current rate.

<sup>12</sup> This calculation is based on the assumption of about 18,000 children currently in FITAP child-only cases.

**Exhibit 1.8**  
**Recidivism among Adults Leaving FITAP in Calendar Year 2000**  
 Percentage of Leavers Who Returned to FITAP

	Adults who left FITAP during 2000
Returned to FITAP	
Within 6 months	17.6 %
Within 12 months	28.1
Within 24 months	36.1
Number of Adult Leavers in 2000	25,191

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files.  
 Note: Adult leavers include adult heads who left FITAP during 2002.

### Recidivism among FITAP Recipients

As noted in the *Interim Report*, a declining caseload alone does not guarantee that FITAP is achieving its goal of promoting long-term self-sufficiency. It is also important to know whether recipients who leave FITAP stay off cash assistance. For this reason, we update findings from the *Interim Report* on the recidivism rate, or the rate of re-entry, among program leavers. Exhibit 1.8 shows the updated estimates of re-entry rates for those who left FITAP in 2000.

We find that a significant portion of leavers indeed end up eventually returning to FITAP. As shown in Exhibit 1.8, 18 percent of adults who exited FITAP in 2000 re-entered the program within 6 months, and about 28 percent have returned to FITAP within 12 months. Over one-third returned to FITAP within 2 years of exit.

### Characteristics of Adult FITAP Recipients

Exhibit 1.9 summarizes the demographic characteristics of adult FITAP recipients in March 2002, the most recent month for which data are available. There have been no significant changes in caseload demographics in the months since September 2001, the last month for which data was available for the *Interim Report*.

Adult heads of FITAP cases in March 2002 were predominantly single or separated (97 percent) and female (98 percent). That is, nearly all adults in FITAP were single mothers.

**Exhibit 1.9**  
**Demographic Characteristics of FITAP Participants**  
 Adult Heads, March 2002

Case Type:	Single-parent cases	98.5%
	Two-parent cases	1.6
Average Age:		27.1 years
Age Distribution:	19 or younger	11.1%
	20–29	59.4
	30–39	20.4
	40 or older	9.1
Gender:	Female	98.2%
	Male	1.8
Marital Status:	Never married	81.1%
	Separated	10.2
	Widowed or divorced	5.4
	Married and living together	3.3
Race/Ethnicity:	African American (non-Hispanic)	82.1%
	White (non-Hispanic)	16.1
	Hispanic	1.3
	Other (a)	0.4
Family Structure:	Average number of children	2.1
	Average age of children (b)	4.7
	Percentage with a child under age 2	53.6%
	Percentage with a child under age 6	81.8
Level of Education Completed:	Less than high school	49.2%
	High school diploma or GED	50.4
	Post-secondary education	0.4
Geography :	Urban (c)	72.3%
	Rural	27.7
Parishes with Largest Caseloads:	Percentage of FITAP Caseload	
	Orleans	32.4%
	Jefferson	6.2
	Caddo	5.8
	East Baton Rouge	3.4
	Ouachita	2.8
	other parishes	49.4

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files. Num. of observations = 11,877.  
 (a) Other race/ethnicity category include, among Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans.  
 (b) Average of children's age within household.  
 (c) Urban areas include the following parishes: Acadia, Ascension, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Rapides, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Terrebonne, Webster, and West Baton Rouge.

The average age of adult recipients was 27 years, with 11 percent at age 19 or younger, 59 percent at ages between 20 and 29, and 30 percent at age 30 or older. The average family had 2.1 children. Eighty-two percent of families had a child under age 6, and 54 percent had a child under age 2. Almost half of adult heads (49 percent) had not completed high school or received a GED, and less than one percent had education beyond high school. About 82 percent of adult heads were African American; 16 percent, white; 1 percent, Hispanic, and the rest (less than 1 percent) from other racial or ethnic groups, including Asians and Native Americans. Adult-headed FITAP cases were also concentrated in urban parishes. The five parishes with largest caseloads were Orleans, Jefferson, Caddo, East Baton Rouge, and Ouachita. Orleans Parish had the largest caseload, representing 32 percent of the State total.

One of the key Interim Report findings from our examination of demographic trends was that the FITAP caseload has not become increasingly comprised of hard-to-serve recipients over time.<sup>13</sup> This observation has not changed for the final report. To recap, we reported in the *Interim Report* that:

- The share of long-term recipients in the FITAP caseload has declined.
- The percentage with a high school diploma or GED among FITAP recipients has increased.
- The proportion of adult recipients with no recent employment experience (i.e., during the previous 12 months) has declined.

Based on these observations, we concluded that the FITAP caseload is not becoming overwhelmed by hard-to-serve recipients. In fact, according to the measures above, the most recent FITAP recipients appear to be less disadvantaged than earlier recipients. However, as we underscored in the *Interim Report*, these results should be viewed cautiously. While the measures examined are important indicators of the hard-to-serve caseload, we are unable to measure many other potential barriers facing recipients. Even though the FITAP caseload as a whole appears to be growing less disadvantaged, this trend may mask the great difficulty faced by a relatively small number of recipients who are not exiting welfare despite long-term assistance. This point is further examined in Chapter 5, which examines the challenges faced by long-term recipients.

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 3 of the State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation: Interim Report, April 2002, Berkeley Policy Associates.

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## Chapter 2

# The FIND Work Program

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### Chapter Highlights

- The FIND Work assessment process is not designed to be an in-depth assessment of participants' actual educational or workplace literacy levels, nor does it readily facilitate identification of potential barriers to employment such as mental health problems or learning disabilities.
- The majority of adults in the FIND Work program participating in work activities are engaged in paid employment (52 percent); smaller numbers of adults participate in vocational education (20 percent) and work experience programs (17 percent).
- Louisiana's implementation of federal TANF rules limiting adult participation in basic education is particularly strict and prevents access to GED preparation activities by adults with low levels of education.
- During State Fiscal Year 2002, payments to FIND Work participants for transportation assistance increased seven fold to 5,673. The number of payments made for other supportive services, such as uniforms and work clothes remained relatively stable, with 4,436 payments made during SFY 2002.
- About 38 percent of employed FITAP leavers received transitional transportation assistance benefits of \$120 monthly. On average, these former recipients received benefits for five months after exiting FITAP.
- Nearly 24 percent of recipients who enter employment while still on FITAP are employed in eating and drinking establishments. The next largest industry of

employment is the health care sector. Other industries that employ participants in significant numbers include temp agencies, food stores, general merchandise stores, and hotels and lodging facilities.

## Introduction

The goal of the Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work) is to prepare adult FITAP recipients for work. The program helps recipients find jobs, offers them some access to education and training opportunities, and provides supportive services to assist recipients in the transition from welfare to work. In this chapter, we examine the major elements of the FIND Work program and assess its overall effectiveness. These program elements include:

- Assessment of incoming recipients;
- An Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP) developed jointly by the participant and his/her case manager designed to lead toward employment and self-sufficiency;<sup>1</sup>
- Assignment of participants to required work activities;
- Supportive services payments for transportation and work-related expenses;
- Specialized services provided by FIND Work contractors; and
- Transitional supportive services paid to recipients who leave the cash assistance program for employment.

In a well-designed work preparation program for TANF recipients, each of these elements is closely linked with the others. The assessment process should be thorough enough to identify participant-specific issues that may make obtaining employment difficult. The IRP should contain a plan of action, and be designed in a way that ensures the participant is obtaining services and participating in work activities to help address issues identified in the assessment. Ongoing case management by analysts should monitor the participant's progress in meeting the obligations of the IRP and moving toward work and self-sufficiency, and allow for revision and updating of the IRP if circumstances dictate such measures. Outside contractors should provide specialized services that are not easily provided to recipients through DSS or other state agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Department of Social Services, the job title for case managers is social services analyst. In this report, we will generally use the term 'analyst' and 'case manager' interchangeably when referring to DSS line staff.



An important supportive service that we do not discuss here is child care assistance, which is provided to ongoing and transitioning recipients through the State's Child Care Assistance Program.<sup>2</sup> One other supportive service available to FIND Work participants as they begin the transition to employment is a \$900 earned income disregard available for up to six months. The earned income disregard allows many recipients to remain eligible for FITAP benefits for a period of time after their earnings increase due to employment. This financial benefit is automatically provided to all recipients who start employment.

Data for the analysis in this chapter are based on interviews with program staff, service providers, and recipients, as well as administrative data from the Department of Social Services (DSS).

## FIND Work Assessment

All adult recipients who are required to participate in FIND Work undergo an assessment upon entering the program. Parish offices use a standardized two-page assessment form, which consists of a series of yes/no questions regarding the level of education completed and training received, as well as questions pertaining to child care and transportation arrangements, special needs of the participant or her children, previous work experience, and employment goals. The assessment interview may occur during the initial intake process or may be conducted later with a FIND Work analyst. The analyst uses information from the assessment to develop an IRP with the participant. Often the assessment interview occurs jointly with the development of the IRP. Many analysts reported that time constraints seriously limit how long they spend with recipients during the assessment interview and IRP-development process. Most analysts reported spending from 60 to 90 minutes on the overall assessment and IRP process.

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to the supportive services provided by the Office of Family Support under the TANF program, low-income families leaving FITAP may be eligible for an array of federal, state, and community-based support programs. These include Medicaid (Transitional Medicaid as well as Medicaid under other eligibility categories), Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP), the Food Stamp program, Supplemental Security Income, public housing, Section 8 housing subsidies, and the federal earned income tax credit (EITC). Although this report does not examine utilization of these other support programs, many former FITAP families will likely receive assistance from one or more of these programs.

As implemented in parish offices, the FIND Work assessment process generally is not designed to be an in-depth assessment of participants' actual educational or workplace literacy levels, nor does it readily facilitate identification of potential barriers to employment. Depending on the skill level, motivation, and time brought to the process by the individual analyst, the participant assessment may range from cursory to detailed and involved. In most parishes, and for most recipients, assessment is a one-step process based on the State's assessment tool. Occasionally, recipients are referred to basic education or training providers who may conduct additional educational or job readiness assessment. One parish office did report sending its FIND Work participants to the local Board of Education for additional testing. This testing was subsequently used to place recipients with low literacy in GED preparation classes to help them learn to read. Still, in most parish offices there are no systematic referrals of participants for further testing to determine actual literacy, mathematics, language, or spelling skills.

The FIND Work program has generally not developed resources that would allow for in-depth psychological testing of FIND Work participants for mental health problems or learning disabilities. For example, during our site visits to parish offices, we did not find evidence of many referrals of FIND Work participants to Louisiana Rehabilitative Services for additional assessments of this type, even though this is a state agency that should be able to provide such assessment services. The Department contracted with the University of New Orleans (UNO) for the development of a pre-screening instrument to assist in the identification of social, psychological, and learning disabilities. Analysts can use this instrument for participants who are not making progress toward their IRP goals. Under a second contract currently in place, each pre-screening is reviewed by a clinician at UNO to determine whether further assessment or specialized services should be provided to the participant. This program is relatively new and has not been widely implemented.

## Development of the Individual Responsibility Plan and Assignment to Work Activities

The IRP is a standardized four-page form that specifies the actions the participant will take to move toward or retain employment and the steps that DSS will take to support the participant's employment and self-sufficiency goals, such as providing transportation or

child care assistance. The IRP also documents the number of weekly hours the participant must spend in one or more work-related activities. Both the analyst and recipient are required to sign the IRP, indicating that they understand and agree to the provisions contained therein.

Decisions regarding work activity assignments are influenced by the strong emphasis in federal TANF regulations on moving recipients into employment as quickly as possible. Analysts reported that the major factor influencing their approach to work activity assignment is the high priority their supervisors and office managers place on meeting the federally mandated work participation rate.<sup>3</sup> The approach to work activity assignment followed by many analysts was based on a set of informal guidelines:

- Recipients with prior work experience were encouraged to begin job search and find a job as soon as possible.
- Recipients with little or no work experience were placed in a job readiness class or a work experience program, or sometimes both.<sup>4</sup>
- Recipients who lacked a high school diploma or equivalent could be placed in a GED preparation class only if they were under age 20.
- Recipients with demonstrated previous success in school or a well-defined vocational interest might be encouraged to enroll in a vocational education program to obtain specific occupational skills.

A consequence of these informal decision-making rules is that the large majority of adults participating in work activities are engaged in paid employment, while a smaller proportion are engaged in work experience and vocational education. Exhibit 2.1 shows work activity participation by adult FITAP recipients in March 2002. Over half of those participating in a work activity in that month were involved in paid employment. Twenty percent participated in vocational education and 17 percent participated in a work experience program. Smaller proportions of adults participated in job search and readiness classes (5 percent) and in GED preparation classes (5 percent).

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<sup>3</sup> During Federal Fiscal Year 2002, federal TANF rules require that adults in 50 percent of all families be participating in a federally defined (i.e., countable) work activity category.

<sup>4</sup> A work experience activity typically involves working in an unpaid internship capacity with a public sector, nonprofit, or private sector employer, and includes job responsibilities that do not require much prior experience or skill (such as routine clerical activities).

Louisiana’s implementation of federal TANF rules limiting adult participation in basic education activities is particularly strict and, in fact, may be preventing access to GED preparation activities among adults with low levels of education. Federal TANF rules allow adults 20 years or older to participate in GED preparation, education related to employment, and job skills training as a countable activity for up to 10 hours per week after 20 hours of participation in other activities. This regulation has been adopted in the

**Exhibit 2.1**  
**Participation in Work Activities:**  
**Adult FIND Work Participants in Single-Parent Cases, March 2002**

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<u>Participation Status</u>	<u>Percent of Participants</u>
Participated in a work activity	37.4 %
Exempt from work activity participation	25.0
Required to participate, but granted a good-cause reason for nonparticipation	7.6
Did not participate in a work activity, with no exemption or good cause	30.4

<u>Type of Activity</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>	<u>Percent of Placements</u>
Unsubsidized employment	2,611	52.3 %
Subsidized employment in private sector	8	0.2
Subsidized employment in public sector	18	0.4
Work experience	844	16.9
On-the-job training	8	0.2
Job search and job readiness	266	5.3
Vocational education	986	19.8
Education related to employment	21	0.4
School attendance/GED preparation	230	4.6
 Number of Adults in Single-Parent Cases	 11,693	

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Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files.  
 Note: Some adult recipients are engaged in more than one activity during a month and are counted separately for each activity.

state code covering FIND Work.<sup>5</sup> In practice, however, analysts and local office administrators almost uniformly indicated that program policy does not allow adults to enroll in GED preparation activities. This perception likely stems in part from an earlier corrective action issued by DSS managers which did not allow placement of participants who were 20 or older in GED preparation activities in parishes that were not meeting the required federal work participation rate. At the same time, in all parish offices we visited, analysts commented that the age limits on GED preparation activities make it difficult for adult participants to address education-related barriers to employment.

As we stated in our *Interim Report*, about half of recipients placed in work experience activities do not have a high school diploma or GED.<sup>6</sup> As a group, these FIND Work participants—who possess little or no work experience or skills and have low education levels—are being placed in activities that are unlikely to address any of these barriers. In fact, analysts at several parish offices reported difficulty in continuing to place recipients in work experience programs because of employer resistance stemming from negative prior experiences with FIND Work participants. This indicates that for at least some participants, the work experience placement does not adequately help them prepare for work.

Federal TANF rules are sufficiently flexible to allow education activities to be combined with other work activities and count toward meeting the state's required work participation rate. In particular, some states have created a modified work experience activity that combines work experience with an education or training activity.<sup>7</sup> To comply with federal TANF regulations, the training or education activities may not exceed 35 percent of the scheduled hours per week. This still allows for any number of possible combinations of activities. For example, a participant interested in office work could combine a 21-hours-per-week work experience placement in an office with 11-hours-per-week enrollment in a computer keyboarding class at a local community or technical college. Alternately, a participant could combine a work experience placement in a local nonprofit agency with a GED preparation class, provided the class hours did not exceed 35 percent of the required weekly hours. The development of a modified work experience activity also allows program staff and service providers to jointly plan and integrate the

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<sup>5</sup> Louisiana Administrative Code, Section 2911.

<sup>6</sup> Berkeley Policy Associates, *State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation: Interim Report on FITAP and FIND Work Programs*, submitted to State of Louisiana, Division of Administration, April 2002, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> For an example, see Colorado Department of Human Services, Agency Letter TCW-00-15-A, August 17, 2000; available at <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us>.

education/training and work components, thereby affording participants a better opportunity incorporate the education/training component into their schedule.

In addition to those enrolled in a work activity, some recipients are exempted from work activity participation. Adult recipients can be exempted from participation if they are providing care for a child under age one. As shown in Exhibit 2.1, in March 2002, 25 percent of adult recipients had received an exemption from work activity participation.<sup>8</sup> A recipient can also be excused from participation in a work activity for good cause.

Allowable good cause reasons include physical or mental incapacity, personal illness or injury, domestic violence, and difficulty in obtaining child care or transportation. In March 2002, 8 percent of adult recipients had an allowable good cause reason for not participating in a work activity.

Finally, some adult recipients do not participate in a work activity during the month, but have not been given an exemption from participation or have a good cause reason for not participating. In March 2002, 30 percent of adult recipients were not enrolled in a work activity and had no exemption or good cause reason for not participating. Some of these recipients are recent entrants to FITAP who are still undergoing assessment and have not been enrolled in an activity. Others are waiting to start an activity in which they have enrolled. Still others are not complying with the requirement.

## Supportive Services Payments to FIND Work Participants

FIND Work participants are eligible for several types of supportive services payments. These are payments made directly to individual participants or to a vendor on behalf of a specific participant to cover the costs of a particular service. The most widely used type of supportive services payment in FIND Work is for transportation assistance. Participants are eligible for up to \$500 per month for transportation-related expenses, including costs for public transportation (bus passes or tokens) and reimbursement for mileage incurred either by the participant using her own vehicle or by a relative or friend providing transportation to the participant.

FIND Work participants are also eligible for up to \$600 per year of other supportive services payments for a range of work-related expenses including:

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<sup>8</sup> This exemption is allowed for a maximum of 12 months.

**Exhibit 2.2**  
**Supportive Services Payments for FIND Work Participants and Those Exiting FITAP for Employment**

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Transportation Payments

Payments of up to \$500 per month are allowed for transportation expenses associated public transit fares or mileage reimbursement.

Other Supportive Services Payments

Payments of up to \$600 per year are allowed for work-related expenses, such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, uniforms/clothing, tools and training materials, placement test fees, safety equipment, and one-time transportation-related expenses such as car repairs or vehicle registration fees.

Transitional Transportation Payments

FITAP recipients whose cases are closed due to earnings are eligible for \$120 assistance payments for each month in which they are employed, for a total of 12 months (lifetime limit).

Other Transitional Services Payments

In any month in which transitional assistance is received, recipients are also eligible for up to \$200 of other supportive services payments. A lifetime limit of \$200 of assistance is available.

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Source: Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 67, Part III (August, 2001).

- work uniforms and clothing;
- employment and training pre-costs, such as licensing fees or exam costs;
- one-time transportation-related expenses, such as car repairs, insurance, driver's license fees, and vehicle registration and inspection fees;
- eyeglasses and hearing aids;
- tools and safety equipment;
- medical exams; and
- union dues.

Exhibit 2.2 summarizes the supportive services payments available to FIND Work participants.

During State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2002, payments made to FIND Work participants for transportation assistance expanded significantly. As indicated in Exhibit 2.3, the total number of transportation payments to participants increased from 834 in SFY 2001 to

**Exhibit 2.3**

**Transportation and Supportive Services Payments to FIND Work Participants  
 SFY 2001 and SFY 2002**

	Average Monthly Payment		Number of Payments Made	
	SFY 2001	SFY 2002	SFY 2001	SFY 2002
<u>Transportation Assistance:</u>				
Mileage reimbursement	\$ 115	\$ 128	436	2,823
Transportation expenses	126	126	385	2,669
Supplemental payments	88	106	13	181
Total Transportation-Related Payments			834	5,673
<u>Other Supportive Services Assistance:</u>				
Uniforms and clothing	120	123	1,985	2,012
Employment/training pre-costs	85	91	1,079	986
Transportation costs	248	205	445	586
Eye glasses/hearing aids	148	164	314	322
Tools	135	146	337	331
Medical exams	61	58	115	179
Union dues	44	38	6	10
Total Other Supportive Services Payments			4,281	4,436

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS OFS data.

5,673 in SFY 2002. In 2002, payments made for mileage reimbursements slightly outnumbered those for transportation expenses associated with public transit. The average payment in 2002 was \$126. Estimated total expenditures for transportation payments increased \$99,794 to \$716,824.

Despite the large increase in transportation assistance payments to recipients during SFY 2002, relatively few adults participating in work activities receive this assistance. In most months during that year, between 4,400 and 5,000 participants were engaged in a work activity. Between 8 and 12 percent of these participants received a transportation assistance payment in a given month. We do not have sufficient data to determine whether this rate of utilization is adequate to meet recipients' needs. Access to reliable and efficient transportation was viewed by program analysts and recipients alike as a crucial resource for FIND Work participants attempting to make a successful transition to work. This view was not confined to rural parishes. Even respondents in urban parishes



mentioned the importance of transportation and the difficulty of relying on public transit to get to and from both work and child care providers.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to making transportation assistance payments directly to recipients, nearly all parish offices contract with one or more service providers to transport recipients to and from work. These contracted services are discussed in more detail in the following section.

Direct payments to FIND Work participants for other supportive services amounted to \$579,230 in SFY 2002. Exhibit 2.3 reports the number and average of amount of these payments by type of supportive service. The total number of payments made for other supportive services remained relatively stable between SFY 2001 and SFY 2002. In 2002, 4,436 such payments were made to participants. The most common type of supportive services payment was for uniforms or other work-related clothing, followed by employment or training pre-costs, and one-time transportation-related costs. In SFY 2002, payments for work-related clothing totaled \$247,000; payments for employment pre-costs totaled \$90,000, and payments for one-time transportation costs amounted to \$120,000.

In most parishes we visited, analysts reported that it is unlikely that a FIND Work participant would fully utilize the total dollar value (\$600) of supportive services allowed annually. Some analysts reported that participants typically must take the initiative to request this type of assistance. Other analysts indicated a reluctance to provide this type of assistance to recipients. This reluctance is reflected in the actual level of use of supportive service payments by FIND Work participants. During SFY 2002, between 6 and 11 percent of work activity participants received a supportive services payment in a given month. Analysts and recipients reported a need for two supportive services not covered under this program: dental care and work attire appropriate for an office setting.

## Use of Contract Service Providers

Parish DSS offices also set up contracts with local service providers to run work activity programs and provide supportive services to FIND Work participants. As of January 2002,

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<sup>9</sup> While intra-city public transit is prevalent in New Orleans, respondents there did note difficulties in getting to jobs in the greater metropolitan area outside the city .

**Exhibit 2.4**  
**FIND Work Contracts in SFY 2002**

	Number of Contracts	Total Value
Work Activity Contracts		
Vocational Education	61	\$4,563,379
Educational Services	8	286,379
Job Readiness/Job Search	14	1,332,638
Job Development and Placement	3	275,266
Combined Educ./Readiness & Search/Placement	17	2,135,124
Other	2	4,700
Supportive Services Contracts		
Vocational Assessment	3	163,750
Transportation	71	5,459,433
All FIND Work Contracts	179	\$14,220,669

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Department of Social Services contract information as of January 2002.

182 contracts worth a total of \$14.2 million were in place for SFY 2002.<sup>10</sup> Work activities contracts totaled \$8.7 million and supportive services contracts totaled \$5.5 million. Exhibit 2.4 shows the number and total value of those contracts by contract type.

Most work activities contracts (61) are for vocational education. Stand alone contracts for job skills/job readiness classes or contracts in which a job readiness component is combined with job development and placement are less common (31). There are eight contracts for education services, which are usually for GED preparation classes for participants below age 20. Vocational education programs are typically run through local campuses of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, although some local school boards and community based organizations such as Goodwill Industries also contract with the FIND Work program to provide vocational education.

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<sup>10</sup> The contract values we report represent maximum contract values. Since many of the contracts pay on a “participant served” basis, actual expenditures for these contracts in SFY 2002 may be lower. Information on FIND Work contracts is from an internal Department of Social Services memorandum, January 9, 2002.

Vocational education programs for FIND Work participants should ideally be designed to be completed in a year or less because federal TANF regulations limit countable participation in a vocational education work activity to a maximum of 12 months. This rule can limit enrollment by participants in some technical college programs that require more than a year to complete. To respond to this constraint, parish managers at some local DSS offices have worked with technical college staff to develop 12-month certificate programs in fields such as office technician, automotive, culinary, and certified nursing assistant. Participants who complete these programs then have a certificate credential that aids in finding a job and allows them to continue their education at a higher level in the future.

Job skills/job readiness work activities contracts are less numerous than vocational education programs and are in place in only about half of all local DSS offices. The West Jefferson Parish office has a model job readiness program run by a contractor. The 20-day program covers basic job search skills, employer contact, completing job applications, interview skills, workplace dress and appearance, and social skills on the job. This type of program is not widespread.

Transportation contracts are currently the predominant type of supportive services contract in FIND Work. Several contracts are also in place for vocational assessment. Transportation contractors may include local transit agencies, van services, and even cab companies. Van services are most commonly used in rural parishes. FIND Work program analysts and administrators identified a number of participant barriers that are both difficult for them to assess and impede participants' success in moving toward employment and self-sufficiency. These include mental health problems, client motivational issues, and domestic violence. Parish offices have very little capacity, either internally or through relationships with service providers, to assess and refer recipients with these kinds of problems to counseling or treatment programs. As of January 2002, no parish offices had contractual relationships with service providers for assessment or service delivery in these areas. Analysts said that when they believe that a recipient has a particular problem, such as a mental health issue, they typically make a referral to a local service provider. However, these referrals are voluntary, and the recipient must take the initiative to follow up with the provider.

## Transitional Supportive Services to Exiting Recipients

FITAP recipients who leave the program for employment and remain employed are eligible to receive monthly transportation assistance payments of \$120 and other supportive services payments of up to \$200 for a 12-month period. These supportive services payments are intended to encourage FITAP leavers to retain their jobs.

Almost all of the transitional supportive assistance received by individuals leaving FITAP are in the form of monthly transportation payments. Only a small number of former recipients receive assistance payments for other supportive services. Exhibit 2.5 summarizes the number of individuals who received transitional supportive services payments in SFY 2001 and SFY 2002. For example, during SFY 2002, 6,034 individuals received monthly transportation payments, with each receiving a median of \$120 per

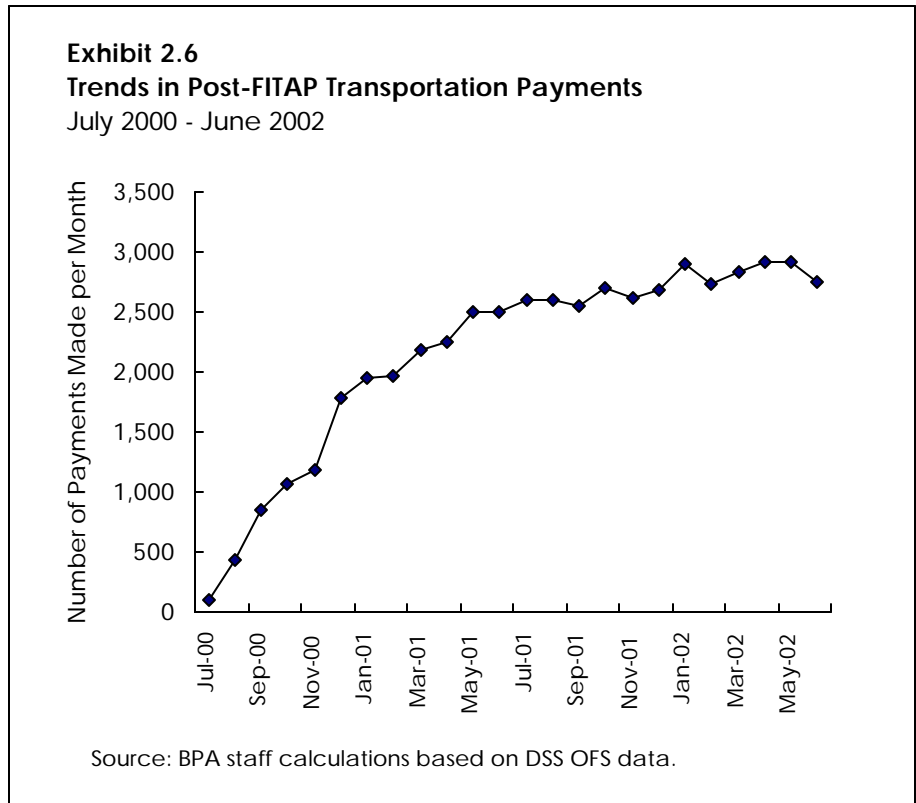
**Exhibit 2.5**  
**Post-FITAP Payments**  
 SFY 2001 and SFY 2002

	SFY 2001	SFY 2002
<u>Number of Individuals Who Received Post-FITAP Assistance</u>		
Monthly transitional transportation assistance	3,728	6,034
Other transitional supportive assistance	99	214
One-time transportation costs	27	55
Uniforms and clothing	50	110
Other employment-related expenses	28	69
 <u>Median Payment</u>		
Monthly transitional transportation payment	\$ 60	\$ 120
Other transitional supportive services payments	141	105
One-time transportation costs	200	200
Uniforms and clothing	108	76

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS OFS data.  
 Notes: Some individuals received more than one type of post-TANF payments in a given period.  
 Other employment related expenses include eye glasses, tools, medical exams, and employment-related training fees.

month. The number of individuals receiving monthly transportation assistance payments increased by 38 percent from SFY 2001. On average, exiting recipients received transportation payments for over five months during SFY 2001. In contrast, only 110 individuals received payments for uniforms or work clothing during SFY 2002; 55 individuals received one-time transportation-costs payments; and 69 individuals received assistance for other work-related expenses.

In most parishes, transportation payments are made automatically as long as former recipients submit a paycheck stub or some other verification of employment each month. Beyond that, recipients are not required to demonstrate specific transportation needs. Both analysts and recipients indicated that knowledge of this transitional assistance benefit is widespread among exiting recipients. By comparison, receipt of other supportive services assistance is not automatic, and unless recipients' need for such assistance is identified at the time of program exit, far fewer recipients are likely to take advantage of the \$200 available for post-TANF supportive services. Receiving this assistance generally requires additional contact with the DSS office.



Despite an increase in the number of individuals receiving monthly transitional transportation assistance payments, utilization of this benefit by employed FITAP leavers remains relatively low. As shown in Exhibit 2.6, the number of monthly transitional transportation payments made to former recipients steadily increased during SFY 2001 and continued to increase into SFY 2002 (through March 2002). This increase likely stems from two policy changes made by DSS. In July 2000, the transitional transportation payment was changed from a one-time payment intended to cover three months to a maximum of 12 monthly payments. A second policy change in October 2001 raised the monthly payment from \$60 to \$120.

Although both the number of monthly payments and the number of employed leavers receiving transitional transportation payments has increased over time, we estimate that in SFY 2001, only about 38 percent of eligible employed leavers received transportation benefits.<sup>11</sup> While some eligible individuals choose not to receive transportation payments or other post-TANF supportive services, others are likely to fail to apply for eligible services inadvertently.

In our interviews with local program staff, lack of transportation was repeatedly identified as a major obstacle to employment among FITAP recipients.<sup>12</sup> In remote areas, public transportation is scarce. Even in areas where public transportation is available, bus routes or schedules may not always meet individuals' needs. Many FITAP leavers rely on friends and family members for transportation. Although transitional transportation payments are meant to address transportation-related barriers to employment, it is not clear whether a monthly cash payment can have a significant effect in meeting leavers' transportation

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<sup>11</sup> This utilization rate is the proportion of employed leavers who received transitional transportation payments after exit. Of 10,683 leavers who were employed upon exit in SFY 2001, about 38 percent received transportation payments at some point in SFY 2001 or SFY 2002. Because we can only observe employment status at any time during the quarter after exit and not precisely at exit, some leavers who we define as eligible for transitional assistance may not have been actually eligible if they were not employed at exit from FITAP. Even taking into account this potential overestimate of eligible leavers, it seems unlikely that significantly more than 50 percent of employed leavers received the benefit.

<sup>12</sup> The preliminary survey data from Louisiana's *Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Low Income Families* conducted by Maximus this year also indicate, based on BPA calculations, that about half of families who did not own a car expected transportation to be a moderate to major problem if respondent/spouse/partner wanted to go to work in the next month. The survey data also indicate that families that had been on welfare at the time or within 3 months of interview were much less likely to own a car (58 percent car ownership among current and recent welfare participants vs. 82 percent among others). Consistent with our field study findings, these results suggest that FITAP recipients, who are more likely not to own car, would regard transportation as problematic to some degree.

needs, especially when access to transportation is severely limited and there are few alternatives. For employed FITAP leavers, a cash payment for transportation assistance primarily functions as a financial incentive to stay employed rather than as a resource that solves their transportation problem. Although an incentive payment can indeed have a positive influence on job retention, addressing the long-term transportation needs of employed FITAP leavers may call for creative, case-by-case solutions involving former recipients, employers, and analysts, and possibly other agencies and community organizations.

## Entry to Employment by FIND Work Participants

In any given month, the majority of FIND Work participants engaged in work activities are in a paid job (see Exhibit 2.1). This suggests that through FIND Work, many recipients are successfully transitioning to employment. Using state Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records, we can also examine the types of jobs FIND Work participants are obtaining. Exhibit 2.7 reports the industry of employment for FIND Work recipients employed during the fourth quarter of 2001, ranked by total FIND Work employment. Nearly 24 percent of these participants were employed in eating and drinking establishments. The next largest industry of employment was the health care sector, where 12 percent of participants were employed. Other industries in which a significant number of FIND Work participants had jobs included: temp agencies (8 percent); food stores (7 percent); general merchandise stores (7 percent); hotels and lodging (7 percent); and other business services, which includes call centers and telemarketing (6 percent).

These employment patterns suggest that close to one-third of participants who begin working while on FIND Work are finding employment in relatively low-skilled industries (eating and drinking establishments, hotels and lodging). About 20 percent find employment in industries that require mid-level reading and math skills (food and general merchandise stores, call centers/telemarketing). Those finding jobs in health care will generally require specialized occupational training. The skill levels associated with temp agencies can vary: some jobs may be low-skilled manual labor, while others are office jobs that require at least a moderate level of reading skill.

The quarterly earnings levels associated with employment in these industries generally reflect the skill demands required of their employees. Exhibit 2.8 ranks industries of employment by quarterly median earnings for adult FIND Work participants who were

**Exhibit 2.7**  
**Industry of Employment for FIND Work Participants**  
**Ranked by Total Employment**  
 Adult FITAP Recipients Employed in Fourth Quarter of 2001

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>	<u>Percent of Total Employed</u>	<u>Median Quarterly Earnings</u>
Retail trade: eating & drinking places	1,416	23.5%	\$ 963
Services: health	708	11.7	1,342
Services: business-temp agencies	455	7.6	578
Retail trade: food stores	414	6.9	1,035
Retail trade: general merchandise	403	6.7	1,292
Services: hotels/lodging	397	6.6	1,110
Services: business-other	377	6.3	924
Retail trade: other	302	5.0	1,242
Services: social	235	3.9	1,621
Services: education	230	3.8	1,275
Retail trade: auto dealers/gas stations	177	2.9	1,356
Manufacturing	162	2.7	1,463
Services: recreation/entertainment	142	2.4	1,266
Services: personal/household	109	1.8	1,357
Public administration	86	1.4	2,506
Finance, insurance, and real estate	75	1.2	1,755
Agriculture	69	1.1	751
Transportation/communication/utilities	65	1.1	2,266
Services: other	49	0.8	1,350
Wholesale trade	48	0.8	1,408
Construction	47	0.8	2,044
Services: auto, miscellaneous repair	43	0.7	1,688
Mining	15	0.3	1,112
Other	5	0.1	828

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.  
 Number of participants = 2,194.

employed during the fourth quarter of 2001. Of the industries employing significant numbers of FIND Work recipients, health care had the highest median quarterly earnings (\$1,342), while eating and drinking establishments and temp agencies reported low quarterly earnings of under \$1,000. Somewhat surprisingly, those employed in other business services (call centers, telemarketing) similarly had low earnings (\$924 per



quarter). Food store employment was low paying compared to employment in general merchandise stores and gas stations.

These employment and earnings patterns point to a dilemma that has confronted FIND Work participants and program staff. In the strong economy of the late 1990s, it was relatively easy for anyone, regardless of skill level or educational background, to get a job.

**Exhibit 2.8**  
**Industry of Employment for FIND Work Participants**  
**Ranked by Median Quarterly Earnings**  
 Adult FITAP Recipients Employed in Fourth Quarter of 2001

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>	<u>Percent of Total Employed</u>	<u>Median Quarterly Earnings</u>
Public administration	86	1.4%	\$2,506
Transportation, communication, and utilities	65	1.1	2,266
Construction	47	0.8	2,044
Finance, insurance, and real estate	75	1.2	1,755
Services: auto, miscellaneous repair	43	0.7	1,688
Services: social	235	3.9	1,621
Manufacturing	162	2.7	1,463
Wholesale trade	48	0.8	1,408
Services: personal/household	109	1.8	1,357
Retail trade: auto dealers/gas stations	177	2.9	1,356
Services: other	49	0.8	1,350
Services: health	708	11.7	1,342
Retail trade: general merchandise	403	6.7	1,292
Services: education	230	3.8	1,275
Services: recreation/entertainment	142	2.4	1,266
Retail trade: other	302	5.0	1,242
Mining	15	0.3	1,112
Services: hotels/lodging	397	6.6	1,110
Retail trade: food stores	414	6.9	1,035
Retail trade: eating and drinking places	1,416	23.5	963
Services: business-other	377	6.3	924
Other	5	0.1	828
Agriculture	69	1.1	751
Services: business-temp agencies	455	7.6	578

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.  
 Number of participants = 2,194

For low-skilled workers, however, that job was likely to be a low-paying job in a low-paying industry such as fast food restaurants. Many, if not most, analysts recognize that such employment will not help participants move toward long-term self-sufficiency, even if, in the short term, it satisfies program requirements and the need to enroll participants in countable work activities.

## Implications of Findings and Recommendations

All TANF work activities programs, including FIND Work, are required to balance the strong imperatives in the federal regulations to place recipients in jobs as quickly as possible with the need to adequately prepare participants with minimal job skills or work experience and/or low levels of education for jobs that provide them with a reasonable prospect of moving towards self-sufficiency. Properly structured, education and training activities are feasible under TANF rules.

As currently structured, the FIND Work Program does not provide widespread assistance to recipients in the areas of workplace literacy assessment and job search/job readiness skills. Although a significant number of recipients do participate in vocational education activities while on FIND Work, many of these recipients tend to have stronger educational backgrounds to begin with. Recipients with low education levels are unlikely to benefit from many of the current vocational education programs currently in place. Often, those recipients, who—for various, possibly not evident, reasons—are not making progress toward finding a job, are placed in a work experience program as a last resort. Such work experience programs are unlikely to address the underlying issues preventing those recipients' progress.

Many, if not most, parish offices seem ill equipped to work with hard-to-serve clients. The rudimentary assessment process is not designed to identify serious literacy, mental health, or psychological issues that recipients may have. Some progress has been made during the past year in diagnosing and treating recipients with substance abuse problems using a new instrument administered by the Office of Addictive Disorders. Many DSS offices also do not offer an intensive job readiness class that covers job search and interview techniques, life skills, and proper appearance and behavior in the work place, even though it is likely that most FIND Work participants could benefit from such a class. Finally, low literate adults generally do not have access to basic education and GED preparation under FIND

Work. Most program staff operate under the assumption that this is not allowable for adults 20 or older.

Supportive services payments to recipients and contracts with outside service providers are predominantly focused on transportation. While transportation is a significant employment barrier for many recipients, a variety of other supportive services, as indicated above, are not currently funded through recipient assistance payments or service provider contracts. The scope of supportive services provided through FIND Work should be greatly expanded. Accordingly, we make the following recommendations to improve the FIND Work Program:

### **Recommendation 1**

The Department of Social Services should improve the assessment process for FIND Work participants. The Department should explore the feasibility of developing contracts with Louisiana Community and Technical College System campuses that have developed workplace literacy assessment tools for low-literate adults. Such contracts would allow local parish offices to directly refer FIND Work participants for such assessment.

### **Recommendation 2**

The Department of Social Services should expand FIND Work recipients' access to assessment and counseling for mental health issues, learning disabilities, and other disabilities. These services may be provided by other state agencies and contracted community-based service providers.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Department of Social Services should expand countable job search and readiness classes to all Parish offices and encourage most FIND Work participants to take those classes.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Department of Social Services should develop a work activity component that combines 10 hours per week (or up to 35 percent of scheduled hours) of basic education,

workplace literacy training, or other job-related training with a 20-hours-per-week work experience component. This new work activity should be targeted to adults 20 years or older with low education levels or little prior work experience.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Department should develop partnerships with the Workforce Commission and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to implement an education/work experience component at local campuses participating in the Adult Education and Workplace Literacy Training TANF Initiative. LCTCS campuses have implemented workplace literacy and skills-training programs targeting a similar adult population. Classes at the campuses could be combined with work-study or internships to meet the 30-hour weekly work requirement.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Department of Social Services should continue to provide transitional transportation assistance to FIND Work participants who exit for employment. The Department should, however, review the process for providing transitional assistance to exiting FITAP recipients to insure that eligible recipients receive such assistance if desired. Based on this review, the Department should make any appropriate adjustments to procedures and provide additional directives/training to staff. The Department should also ensure that recipients (1) are adequately notified of the availability of transitional supportive services payments prior to program exit, and (2) receive clear instructions on the application process and compliance requirements.

## Chapter 3

# Post-FITAP Employment Outcomes

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### Chapter Highlights

- Employment rates among former recipients ranged from 45 percent to 52 percent immediately after exit from FITAP. Employment outcomes for recipients leaving FITAP have not shown any improvement since the program was implemented in 1997.
- Only a small fraction of FITAP leavers were continuously employed over the year after their exit from the program. For example, among recipients who left FITAP in 2000 and stayed off the program for a year, only 28 percent were employed consecutively over four quarters following exit.
- The earnings of most employed former FITAP recipients were not high enough to lift their families above poverty. Median quarterly earnings among former recipients were about \$1,600 in 2001 in the quarter after exit. Only 13 percent of employed former recipients who left FITAP in the third quarter of 2001 had earnings at or above the federal poverty level in the quarter following exit.
- Most former recipients were employed in service and retail trade industries, which have numerous low-skill low-wage jobs. The single largest industry of employment for former FITAP recipients is eating and drinking establishments.
- Earnings levels varied by type of industry in which former recipients were employed. Former recipients employed with temporary help agencies, other business services, and eating and drinking establishments had lower earnings than those in child care, social services, education, and recreation.
- The level of earnings increased for FITAP leavers who were able to retain employment over the long run. For example, median earnings increased by 23 percent among FITAP leavers who were continuously employed for two years after exiting the program.

## Introduction

A key measure of success for the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) and Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work) is whether recipients are able to find and retain employment and earn wages that promote self-sufficiency after leaving cash assistance. In our *Interim Report*, we examined the short-term employment outcomes of FITAP leavers and found that, on average, just less than half of adult FITAP recipients who left the program between 1997 and 2001 were employed in the quarter immediately following exit. We also reported that a majority of FITAP leavers appeared to be working less than full-time in the quarter following exit and that almost two-thirds of employed FITAP leavers earned less than the full-time minimum wage earnings level in the quarter following exit.

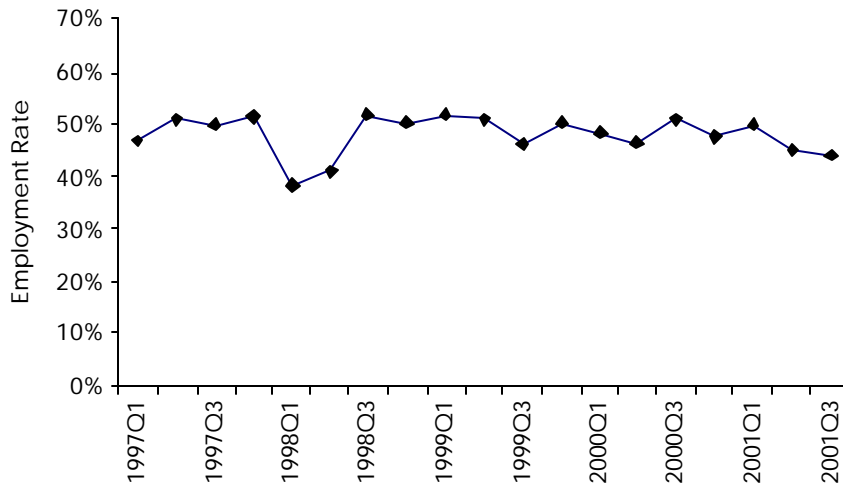
Building on these findings, this chapter investigates employment retention and wage growth over time, and also updates employment and earnings findings presented previously. As summarized above and discussed in detail below, the long-term employment outcomes of FITAP leavers are mixed. Many leavers, even if they were employed upon exit, do not retain employment over the long term. Those who manage to retain employment experience steady earnings growth over time.

We utilize Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records from the Louisiana Department of Labor (DOL) to examine employment outcomes for FITAP leavers. These records are based on employers' direct reports of employee earnings in a given quarter and are considered the most accurate and complete administrative data available for tabulating program participants' employment outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Because UI records only include employees' quarterly earnings, it is not possible to determine month-to-month employment patterns, the number of hours worked in the quarter, or hourly wages. Employment rates derived from UI wage records are also likely to slightly understate the actual employment rate of FITAP recipients. Certain types of employers are exempt from coverage by the UI system and therefore do not report wage information to the State. Exempted employers include very small businesses, some agricultural employers, and federal agencies. In addition, UI wage records do not capture earnings information for those who are self-employed or engaged in off-the-books employment. Employment information for former recipients who are employed out-of-state is also not available from Louisiana UI wage records.

**Exhibit 3.1**  
**Employment Rates of FITAP Leavers in the First Quarter following FITAP Exit**  
Adult Heads Who Exited from 1997 to 2001



Source: BPA staff calculations based on DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records. Individuals are counted as employed if they reported UI earnings of \$100 or more in the quarter following their FITAP exit.

## Employment Immediately After Exit

Exhibit 3.1 shows employment rates in the quarter following exit from FITAP for recipients who exited FITAP between the first quarter of 1997 and the third quarter of 2001. An individual is counted as employed if s/he earned \$100 or more in the quarter.<sup>2</sup>

In most quarters since 1997, employment rates for FITAP leavers ranged from 45 percent to 52 percent.<sup>3</sup> Over time, the employment rate for leavers has shown no sustained

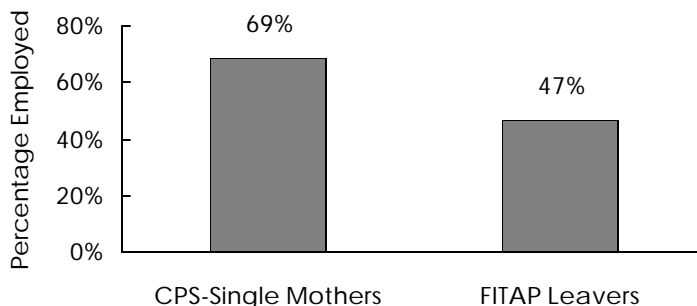
<sup>2</sup> We include in this sample all adult FITAP leavers, including those who returned to the program in the quarter after exit.

<sup>3</sup> Employment rates dropped to between 38 and 41 percent in the first and second quarters of 1998. It is unclear why rates for these two quarters were so much lower than for other quarters. During this time a large number of adults left the program. Some of these adults may have been caretaker relatives who decided not to participate in required work activities.

**Exhibit 3.2**

**Employment Rates**

Single Mothers in the U.S. vs. FITAP Leavers, 2001



Sources: BPA staff calculations based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Surveys, Louisiana DSS TANF Files, and Louisiana DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.

Notes: CPS employment rates are for single mothers aged between 21 and 65 who had a child under age 6. The rate is calculated as the average of the monthly employment-to-population rate in 2001. For FITAP leavers, the employment rate is calculated the average of employment rates in the quarter after exit for those who exited during 2000 Q4 and 2001 Q1-Q3

increasing or decreasing trend. In the most recent quarters for which data are available, employment rates for FITAP leavers were toward the lower end of the four-year range, at around 45 percent. This decrease in employment rates may reflect the general slowdown in the economy.<sup>4</sup> Louisiana's annual average unemployment rate increased from 5.5 percent in 2000 to 6.0 percent in 2001.

In order to provide a context for understanding the employment rates among FITAP leavers, we estimated the employment rates among all single mothers in the United States. Using the nationwide Current Population Survey (CPS), we calculated an employment-to-population rate of 69 percent in 2001 among single mothers between age 21 and 60 with children under age 6.<sup>5</sup> As shown in Exhibit 3.2, this is significantly higher than the average employment of 46 percent among FITAP leavers over the equivalent period.

<sup>4</sup> Another reason for the lower employment rates in the most recent quarters may be because UI wage records in these quarters are still subject to updating by the Louisiana Department of Labor.

<sup>5</sup> The data we used are from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is a monthly survey of about 50,000 households conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Individuals are counted as employed in CPS if during the survey week they did any work at all as paid employees or



Using the CPS data as a benchmark, we find that there is a notable gap between the employment rate among former FITAP recipients (46 percent) and that among single mothers generally (69 percent). Employment rates among TANF leavers in other states are also considerably lower than the nationwide average employment rate for single mothers. However, Louisiana's employment rate in the first quarter after TANF exit is at the lower end of the range reported by other states.<sup>6</sup> The employment rate gap suggests that FITAP leavers are facing obstacles to employment beyond those confronted by low-income single parents in general.

## Employment Retention over Time

In order to achieve long-term self-sufficiency and economic independence, FITAP recipients must not only find jobs, but also maintain employment after leaving the program. As summarized in Exhibit 3.3, the majority of FITAP leavers are either sporadically employed or not employed at all during the year following program exit. Among recipients who left FITAP in 2000, 31 percent did not report any earnings in four quarters after exit; 41 percent were employed for one to three quarters; and only 28 percent were employed in all four quarters. This suggests that many FITAP leavers have relatively weak attachment to their jobs and face obstacles to retaining a job over the long-term.

Employment retention for FITAP leavers appears to be somewhat lower than post-TANF employment retention reported by other states. Exhibit 3.4 shows the percentage of leavers who were employed in all four quarters in the year following exit (based on UI wage records) for nine states.<sup>7</sup> Whereas other states reported four-quarter employment retention rates ranging from 31 to 47 percent, Louisiana's rates ranged from 30 to 31 percent for the same period (1998 and 1999). This places Louisiana's retention rates among the lowest rates found in states for which study results are available.

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in their own business or profession, or on their own farm; worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers on a farm or a business operated by a member of the family; or had jobs but were not working because of illness, bad weather, vacation, or labor-management dispute, or because they are taking time off for personal reasons, whether or not they are seeking other jobs.

<sup>6</sup> See Exhibit 5.3, Berkeley Policy Associates, *State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation: Interim Report* (April 2002).

<sup>7</sup> We selected these nine state studies because their estimation methods are comparable to the methods used in this study.

**Exhibit 3.3**  
**Employment Retention during the Year following FITAP Exit**  
**Adult Recipients Who Exited in 2000**

Number of Quarters Employed after Exit	Number of Adult Leavers	Percentage of Leavers
None	5,192	31.0 %
One quarter	1,982	11.8
Two quarters	2,181	13.0
Three quarters	2,691	16.1
Four quarters	4,709	28.1
<b>Employed at Least One Quarter</b>	<b>11,563</b>	<b>69.0</b>

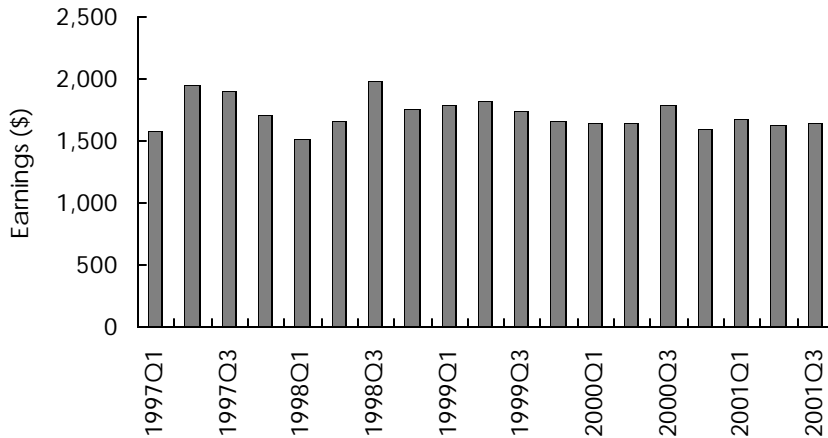
Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records. The sample includes adults who left FITAP in 2000 and did not return for 12 months.

**Exhibit 3.4**  
**Cross-State Comparison of Post-TANF Employment Retention**  
**Percentage of Leavers Continuously Employed for a Year after Exit**

	Exit Quarter or Year	Percentage of Leavers Employed in All Four Quarters in the Year following Exit
Louisiana	2000	28 %
	1999	31
	1998	30
Arizona	1Q98	32
California (Los Angeles County)	3Q96	35
Colorado	4Q99	34
District of Columbia	4Q97	39
Florida	2Q97	31
Illinois	3Q97-4Q98	39
New York	1Q97	40
South Carolina	4Q98-1Q99	34
Ohio (Cuyahoga County)	3Q98	47

Sources: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records; *Evaluation of the Colorado Works Program, Third Annual Report*, BPA, 2001; *Final Synthesis Report of Finding from ASPE "Leavers" Grants*, DHHS, ASPE/Urban Institute, 2001.

**Exhibit 3.5**  
**Median Quarterly Earnings in the First Quarter following Exit**  
Adult Heads Who Exited from 1997 to 2001



Source: BPA staff calculations based on DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records. Median earnings are computed for individuals who reported UI earnings of \$100 or more in the quarter following their FITAP Exit.

## Earnings of FITAP Leavers Immediately after Exit

Exhibit 3.5 shows median quarterly earnings for leavers who exited FITAP between the first quarter of 1997 and the third quarter of 2001. Median earnings are calculated for individuals who earned \$100 or more in the quarter immediately following exit. Mirroring the employment rate trends observed in Exhibit 3.1, earnings among FITAP leavers have remained unchanged in the most recent quarters. In 2001, median quarterly earnings for FITAP leavers were about \$1,600.<sup>8</sup>

For the most recent exit group included in this analysis (those who left FITAP in the third quarter of 2001), median quarterly earnings were \$1,663. This median earnings level is

<sup>8</sup> The earnings numbers shown in Exhibit 3.4 are slightly lower than those we reported in Exhibit 5.2 of the Interim Report. Exhibit 5.2 in the Interim Report indicated earnings in the first quarter after exit only for those who stayed off FITAP for at least five months.

substantially lower than the full-time minimum wage earnings level of \$2,253 (calculated based on 35 hours of minimum-wage employment per week). Furthermore, as shown in Exhibit 3.6, we estimate that of FITAP leavers who exited in the third quarter of 2001 and reported UI earnings, more than half (55 percent) earned less than 50 percent of the federal poverty threshold, while only 13 percent earned at or above the federal poverty threshold.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in order to help families transitioning off cash assistance, the Department of Social Services (DSS) provides post-FITAP services that include up to \$200 toward employment-related expenses (such as uniforms, tools, and medical exam costs). DSS also provides a Transitional Transportation Payment of \$120 per month for 12 months for employed leavers. These supplemental post-FITAP payments could considerably enhance the resources available to a typical leaver family during the first year off cash assistance. For example, for a recipient earning \$1,600 per quarter, a \$360-per-quarter supplement in the form of a Transitional Transportation Payment increases income by more than 20 percent. In addition, low-income FITAP leavers may be eligible for Food Stamp benefits, housing subsidies, child care subsidies, the federal earned income tax credit, and other supports. While we do not have data on how much a typical former FITAP recipient augments his or her income through these benefits, we expect that it is not a trivial amount. Therefore, the actual poverty rate among FITAP leavers should be somewhat lower than what is estimated based solely on earnings information.

**Exhibit 3.6**  
**Earnings of Employed FITAP Leavers during First Post-Exit Quarter**  
**Adult Recipients Who Exited in Third Quarter of 2001**

Median Quarterly Earnings	\$1,651
Percentage of FITAP leavers with UI earnings	
at or above the poverty threshold	12.7 %
below 100 percent of the poverty threshold	87.3
below 50 percent of poverty threshold	55.2

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.

Number of observations = 4,446. Median earnings are calculated among those who reported \$100 or more in quarterly earnings. Percentage of the poverty threshold is calculated including adults who exited in the third quarter of 2001, did not return to FITAP for at least three months, and reported UI-earnings of \$100 or greater.

Nevertheless, the relatively low level of earnings among FITAP leavers signals the kinds of challenges these individuals face in the labor market. For example, low earnings indicate that most leavers work less than full-time immediately after exiting the program. Low earnings also indicate that most leavers work in low-skill, low-wage industry sectors. In our field interviews, local program staff often reported that FITAP recipients are primarily employed in low-paying jobs in places like fast-food restaurants and retail shops. As shown in Exhibit 3.7, employment data confirm such reports. Indeed, of all

**Exhibit 3.7**  
**Industry Ranked by Total Employment for Former FITAP Recipients in the Quarter After Exit**  
 Adult Recipients, Employed in Third Quarter of 2001

Industry	Percent of Total Employment	Median Quarterly Earnings
Retail trade: eating and drinking places	22.7 %	\$1,296
Services: health	11.7	2,026
Services: hotel/lodging	6.8	1,527
Retail trade: general merchandise	6.8	1,614
Retail trade: food stores	6.5	1,456
Services: business-other	5.6	1,153
Services: business-temp agencies	5.4	776
Services: social	5.1	2,370
Retail trade: others	4.5	1,549
Retail trade: auto dealers/gas stations	3.9	1,354
Services: education	3.8	2,466
Manufacturing	3.3	2,055
Services: recreation/entertainment	2.6	2,437
Public administration	1.8	3,814
Services: personal/household	1.8	1,719
Finance, insurance, and real estate	1.5	2,690
Wholesale trade	1.1	2,352
Transportation, communication, and utility	1.1	2,453
Services: auto, miscellaneous repair	1.0	1,909
Construction	0.9	2,737
Services: other	0.8	2,796
Mining	0.4	3,695
Other	0.1	2,886
Agriculture	1.0	1,629

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.  
 Number of observations = 2,194

employed leavers who exited FITAP in the third quarter of 2001, nine out of ten worked in retail trade or service industries. Former FITAP recipients were concentrated in eating and drinking establishments (23 percent), health services (12 percent), hotels and lodging (7 percent), general merchandise stores (7 percent), food stores (7 percent), other business services (6 percent), and temporary help agencies (5 percent).

**Exhibit 3.8**  
**Industry Ranked by Median Quarterly Earnings for Former FITAP**  
**Recipients in the Quarter After Exit**  
 Adult Recipients, Employed in Third Quarter of 2001

Industry	Median Quarterly Earnings	Percent of Total Employment
Public administration	\$ 3,814	1.8 %
Mining	3,695	0.4
Other	2,886	0.1
Services: other	2,796	0.8
Construction	2,737	0.9
Finance, insurance, and real estate	2,690	1.5
Services: education	2,466	3.8
Transportation, communication, and utility	2,453	1.1
Services: recreation/entertainment	2,437	2.6
Services: social	2,370	5.1
Wholesale trade	2,352	1.1
Manufacturing	2,055	3.3
Services: health	2,026	11.7
Services: auto, miscellaneous repair	1,909	1.0
Services: personal/household	1,719	1.8
Agriculture	1,629	1.0
Retail trade: general merchandise	1,614	6.8
Retail trade: others	1,549	4.5
Services: hotel/lodging	1,527	6.8
Retail trade: food stores	1,456	6.5
Retail trade: auto dealers/gas stations	1,354	3.9
Retail trade: eating and drinking places	1,296	22.7
Services: business-other	1,153	5.6
Services: business-temp agencies	776	5.4

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.  
 Number of observations = 2,194

**Exhibit 3.9**  
**Earnings by Employment Retention Patterns in the Year after Exit**  
**Adult Recipients Who Exited in 2000 and Stayed off FITAP for at**  
**Least 12 Months**

Number of Quarters Employed after Exit	Median Quarterly Earnings during the Year Following FITAP Exit
One quarter	\$ 661
Two quarters	1,188
Three quarters	1,713
Four quarters	2,318

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records. The sample includes adults who left FITAP in 2000 and did not return for 12 months. The quarters in which a person earned \$100 or more are counted as an employed quarter. The median earnings reported here are the medians of average per-quarter earnings.

There is significant variation in earnings levels among different jobs within the trade and service industries. Exhibit 3.8 ranks industries of employment among former recipients by industry median quarterly earnings. Recipients employed in the eating and drinking establishments had particularly low median quarterly earnings of \$1,296. Recipients in some office jobs did not necessarily earn more: those who were in temp agencies had median earnings of \$776 per quarter, and those in other business services earned \$1,153, suggesting that the former recipients in both industries were not employed full-time. On the other hand, median earnings for former recipients in other services, including health, education, and social services, were over \$2,000 per quarter. Relatively few FITAP leavers were employed in high wage industries such as manufacturing with median quarterly earnings of \$2,055; finance, insurance, and real estate, with median quarterly earnings of \$2,690; and public administration, with median quarterly earnings of \$3,814.

### Earnings Difference by Employment Retention Patterns

The earnings of former FITAP recipients are influenced not only by the types of jobs they hold, but also by their level of employment retention. Exhibit 3.9 shows the relationship between quarterly earnings and the number of quarters employed after exit. FITAP leavers

**Exhibit 3.10**  
**Median Quarterly Earnings among FITAP Leavers : Sporadically Employed vs. Continuously Employed**  
 Adult Recipients Who Exited in 2000 and Stayed off FITAP for at Least 12 Months

Quarter after Exit	Leavers Employed for One to Three Quarters	Leavers Continuously Employed for Four Quarters
First	\$1,355	\$2,213
Second	1,271	2,403
Third	1,378	2,487
Fourth	1,472	2,418
Earnings change in four quarters	8.6 %	9.3 %

Sources: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files, DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.

Notes: Median earnings are calculated for those who reported earnings of \$100 or more for a given quarter. Number of observations: 3,734 for those employed for one to three quarters; 4,709 for those employed for four quarters.

who were employed for all four quarters had median earnings of \$2,313 per quarter, compared to \$661 per quarter for leavers employed for only one quarter.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that the wage difference between sporadically employed and continuously employed leavers does not occur solely because of wage growth resulting from employment retention over the year. Exhibit 3.10 shows that even from the very first quarter after exit, recipients who ended up being employed for four quarters earned considerably more than did recipients who went on to have sporadic employment: the median earnings of those continuously employed were \$2,213, compared to \$1,355 for those sporadically employed.

This difference in earnings could arise in two ways. First, leavers who landed higher-paying or full-time jobs might have felt more motivated than other leavers to remain on

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<sup>9</sup> Employment retention in this chapter is based on the reports of quarterly earnings from the UI wage records. Employment retention does not necessary mean job retention. For example, an individual reporting UI earnings consecutively for four quarters does not necessarily hold the same job continuously throughout the year. This individual could have multiple employers or work intermittently within a given quarter. Nonetheless, in the absence of better employment measures, we use the incidence of UI earnings report to approximate job attachment.



the job. Second, leavers who were better prepared to retain jobs might also have been more likely to find a higher-paying job. In either case, this earnings differential underscores the importance of helping recipients to train for—and find—higher-paying jobs before leaving FITAP, in order to increase their earnings and improve their likelihood of employment retention.

## Wage Growth among Continuously Employed Leavers

Findings presented in the previous section highlight the importance of securing relatively high-wage employment upon FITAP exit. Equally important for FITAP leavers, however, is employment retention and wage growth in the years following exit. Exhibit 3.11 shows earnings growth for those who were employed in all eight quarters in the two years after exiting in 1998. Median quarterly earnings steadily increased from the first quarter after exit to the eighth quarter after exit for those continuously employed. Over these two years, median earnings increased by 23 percent, from \$2,367 to \$2,899.

**Exhibit 3.11**  
**Earnings Growth among FITAP Leavers Continuously Employed for Eight Quarters after Exit**  
 Adult Recipients Who Exited in 1998

	Median Quarterly Earnings	Percentage of Leavers Earning at or above Poverty Level
First quarter after exit	\$ 2,367	18.8 %
Second	2,511	20.5
Third	2,595	23.2
Fourth	2,722	27.3
Fifth	2,790	27.9
Sixth	2,828	29.0
Seventh	2,872	29.0
Eighth	2,899	29.7
Earnings growth		
over four quarters	15.0 %	
over eight quarters	22.5 %	

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files, DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records, and poverty thresholds published by the US Census.  
 Notes: Individuals are counted as employed if quarterly earnings were \$100 or more. Median quarterly earnings are computed for those who earned \$100 or more in a given quarter.  
 Number of observations = 3,585.

Earnings growth over time has a significant impact on poverty reduction among former FITAP families. Even among former recipients who went on to be continuously employed for eight quarters, less than 20 percent had earnings at or above the poverty threshold *immediately* after their exit from FITAP. Over the two years, however, the proportion of recipients with earnings at or above poverty slowly increased. By the eighth quarter, nearly 30 percent were earning at or above the poverty level. Furthermore, as noted earlier, many families may have other unearned income and in-kind or cash assistance from public and private agencies. Thus, the actual percentage of families lifted out of poverty by increased earnings was likely higher than indicated in Exhibit 3.11.

## Implications of Chapter Findings

As we noted earlier, employment outcomes for former FITAP recipients have not improved in recent months. Just less than half of those leaving FITAP during this period were employed in the quarter following exit. The earnings levels of these former recipients continued to be low, indicating that the majority were earning below the poverty level. Our analysis indicates that these lower earnings are the result of former recipients working in low-paying jobs and not working on a full-time basis. We also find that obtaining the right type of job (e.g., in a higher-paying industry sector) and retaining employment—the latter of which is often associated with an increase in work hours and wage growth—are keys to a family attaining an earnings level that can lift them out of poverty. These findings underscore that preparing recipients for—and helping them to find—higher-skilled, better-paid, and full-time jobs are critical in increasing the families’ prospects for becoming self-sufficient.

Our findings also point to the urgency of addressing recipients’ barriers to employment, given the low employment and earnings realized by participants even after they manage to exit FITAP. Louisiana parishes, including DSS staff, service providers, and recipients themselves, repeatedly identified lack of education and job skills as one of the most prevalent barriers to employment. As one provider put it, “most of the clients don’t have skills to get a decent job.” This is echoed by a frustrated client who complained that, “I don’t want to work for fast food. But they [program staff] don’t think I’m educated enough to get a different job.” As noted in the *Interim Report*, post-FITAP employment rates and earnings levels for recipients lacking a high school diploma or GED are indeed significantly lower than those for recipients who completed high school. Exhibit 3.12 illustrates that FITAP leavers who did not complete schooling beyond the 8th grade had

**Exhibit 3.12**

**Employment in First Quarter After FITAP Exit by Education Level**

Adult Leavers Who Exited in First Quarter 2000 through First Quarter 2001

	Employment Rates	Median Quarterly Earnings	Total Number of Leavers
Completed grades 1-8 Only	33.9%	\$1,191	1,678
Completed grades 9-11 Only	44.6	1,472	11,685
High school diploma, GED or higher	53.1	1,873	12,511

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records. This table is reproduced from Exhibit 5.5 of BPA's *State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation Interim Report* (April 2002).

Note: A person is regarded as employed if he/she earned \$100 or more in a quarter. Median earnings are only calculated for leavers who earned \$100 or more in a quarter. Recipients who were coded as having no formal education are not included in this table because of potential coding errors. This table includes leavers who may have returned to assistance and subsequently exited during the observation period. Therefore, the sample used in this table may include leavers who were counted more than once.

both a considerably lower employment rate (34 percent) and lower median quarterly earnings (\$1,191), compared to those with a high school diploma or GED (53 percent employment rate and median quarterly earnings of \$1,873). These findings underscore the challenges faced by less-educated clients as well as the potential benefits that accrue from increased education and skills. Over half of FITAP recipients do not have a high school diploma or GED. Low education remains a significant barrier that many FITAP recipients will need to address in order to achieve self-sufficiency.

DSS staff, of course, are well aware that FITAP recipients face many challenges and barriers to employment, and that recipients stand to gain immensely from being better prepared to enter the labor market. The current challenge for DSS staff is to strike the delicate balance between—on one hand—helping recipients address employment barriers and obtain necessary training, education, and experiences, and—on the other hand—enforcing program provisions such as work requirements and time limits.

A significant proportion of FITAP leavers exit the program with tenuous connections to the labor market. Only a small number are continuously employed over the year after their exit from FITAP. Those with only sporadic employment after leaving FITAP experience significantly lower earnings and less earnings growth than those who retain employment. Many of these former recipients have not acquired sufficient job skills or other supportive

services by the time they leave the FIND Work Program to help them more successfully maintain employment.

## Recommendations

### **Recommendation 7**

The Department of Social Services should begin development of an after-care program for recipients who leave the program for employment, with the aim of improving job retention and reducing recidivism. An after-care program can consist of follow-up contacts that are scheduled regularly (e.g., at first, third, and sixth and twelfth months after exit) to identify any problems that former recipients may be encountering in keeping a job, make necessary referrals to other services, and provide support payments as appropriate. Referrals to additional education and job training programs in the community just prior to exit from FITAP should also be incorporated into such a program.

## Chapter 4

# Monitoring of Program Requirements

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### Chapter Highlights

- Many FITAP analysts believe that the amount of time they spend monitoring program requirements detracts from their ability to provide active case management to recipients.
- About one-third of recent adult-headed case closures resulted from noncompliance with various program requirements. About 8 percent of adult-headed cases in June 2002 were facing benefit reduction due to noncompliance.
- Failure to meet work participation requirements is the most common reason for sanctioning FITAP cases in Louisiana. The second most frequent reason for sanctioning is failure to comply with requirements related to child support enforcement.
- The drug screening, testing, and rehabilitation requirement leads to very few referrals or compliance issues because the screening tool is generally considered to be ineffective. The Office of Family Support (OFS), in cooperation with the Office of Addictive Disorders (OAD), is pilot-testing a new program to improve drug screening.
- Most recipients whose cases were closed due to sanctions do not regain cash assistance within a year of closure. Sanctioned recipients tend to be slightly younger, have younger children, and have significantly lower education levels than non-sanctioned recipients, and thus are more likely to face challenges finding and keeping a job.

## Introduction

Federal law mandates that states penalize TANF recipients who refuse to engage in required work activities or who fail to cooperate with child support enforcement authorities. However, states have flexibility in determining actual penalties and imposing other program requirements and sanctions.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, we examine Louisiana’s sanction policies and procedures for recipients who fail to comply with various program requirements as well as the incidence of sanctioned cases.

We use the term “sanction” in this report to mean all penalties that are associated with failure to comply with various program requirements and regulations. The Department of Social Services (DSS) categorizes only specific types of penalties as “sanctions.”<sup>2</sup> We use the term more broadly.

## Overview of Program Rules and Sanction Policies

As discussed in Chapter 1, recipients in Louisiana’s Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) and Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work) must meet various requirements in order to remain eligible for cash assistance. Key program requirements in Louisiana include: a work participation requirement; drug screening, testing, and rehabilitation requirements; a requirement to cooperate with child support enforcement authorities; child immunization and school attendance requirements; and a parenting education requirement for teenage parents. These and other requirements are summarized in the Appendix (see Exhibits A.1 and A.2).

A recipient who fails to comply with program requirements can be penalized by program administrators. These penalties may take the form of benefit reductions (partial sanctions) or complete case closure (family sanctions). Sanctions can last for a specified period of time or until the recipient addresses the unmet requirement. The sanction policies

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of work requirements, states are directed to reduce the family benefit by a “pro rata” share or to drop the entire family from the case. However, federal law does not define pro rata. For non-cooperation with child support enforcement, federal law mandates a reduction of a family’s cash assistance payment by at least 25 percent. Beyond these general guidelines, states can decide on the amount and terms of sanctions.

<sup>2</sup> For example, DSS defines benefit reduction due to failure to comply with the work participation requirement as sanction, but benefit reduction due to noncompliance with drug screening requirements is not coded as a sanction.

## **Exhibit 4.1**

### **Program Requirements and Sanction Policies**

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#### **Work Participation Requirement (for all adults):**

Failure to participate in the FIND Work Program, without good cause, results in removal of the recipient's needs from the FITAP grant for three months. Continued noncompliance results in case closure, unless recipient becomes exempt or attains good-cause reason. A second or subsequent failure results in immediate case closure. The case will then remain closed until the recipient complies, attains good-cause reason, or becomes exempt.

#### **Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement (for all adults):**

Failure to cooperate with Support Enforcement Services to identify and locate the parent of any child in the assistance unit, establish the paternity of any child in the assistance unit born out of wedlock, and obtain child support payments, without good cause, results in denial or termination of cash assistance benefits.

#### **Drug Screening, Testing, and Rehabilitation (for all adults):**

Failure to participate in drug screening, testing, or rehabilitation/education, without good cause, results in removal of the recipient's needs from the FITAP grant for three months. Continued noncompliance at the end of the three-month sanction period results in case closure until the individual complies.

#### **Job Acceptance (for all adults):**

Eligibility for FITAP assistance is terminated for three months if the parent in the assistance unit refuses the opportunity for full-time employment without good cause.

#### **School Attendance (for children age between 7 and 16):**

At case redetermination, a child who has missed more than 15 days of school during the previous six months, without good cause, is placed in probationary status. During the probationary period, if the child is absent from school for more than three days in a month, without good cause, the child's needs are removed from the FITAP grant until child meets the attendance requirement.

#### **Child Immunization (for children under age 18):**

Children must be immunized according to the schedule developed by the Louisiana Office of Public Health. Failure to follow this schedule results in the child being removed from the FITAP grant until the required immunization has been received.

#### **Parental Skills Education (for teenage parents):**

Failure to attend a parenting skills education program, without good cause, results in ineligibility of the individual to be included in the assistance unit. Ineligibility continues until compliance is demonstrated.

#### **Exemption from Sanctions:**

- Single noncustodial parents or relatives caring for a child under six, if they are unable to find child care.
- Recipients involved in a domestic violence situation.

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Source: Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 67, Part III (February, 2002).

pertaining to key program requirements in Louisiana are presented in Exhibit 4.1. In addition, recipients must observe various logistical requirements such as keeping recertification appointments, submitting required documents and information, and reporting changes affecting eligibility. If they fail to follow these procedures intentionally and repeatedly, they could face benefit reduction or termination of benefits.

For the work participation requirement, Louisiana uses a progressive sanction policy. The first time a recipient fails to comply with a program requirement without good cause, the recipient is removed from the assistance unit's benefit calculation for a period of three months, resulting in a reduced payment to the family.<sup>3</sup> If the recipient remains in noncompliance, the case is then closed and remains closed until the recipient meets the program requirement. If the recipient fails to comply with a program requirement for the second time, then the case is immediately closed without a three month period of benefit reduction. Refusal to accept an opportunity for full-time employment also results in loss of eligibility, but only for a period of three months.

On the other hand, failure to comply with the child support enforcement in establishing paternity or obtaining child support results in immediate loss of eligibility for cash assistance.<sup>4</sup> A recipient may be sanctioned, for example, for failing to keep two consecutive appointments with OFS's Support Enforcement Services (SES), refusing to cooperate at an interview with SES, or failing to appear for cooperate during a court date or genetic testing.

Failure to comply with the drug screening, testing, education, and rehabilitation requirement will result in removal of the recipient's needs from the cash benefits for three months. If the recipient does not cooperate during this three-month period, the case is closed after the three-month period and remains closed until the recipient cooperates with

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<sup>3</sup> The assistance unit includes all members of a family who are receiving assistance.

<sup>4</sup> Good cause exemptions to the child support requirements are given if (a) the recipient's cooperation is anticipated to result in physical or emotional harm to the child or care take relative, (b) the child was conceive as a result of incest or rape, (c) leaving proceeding for adoption are pending before a court, or (d) the recipient is assisted by a licensed or private social agency to resolve of the issue of whether to keep the child relinquish him for adoption (the issue must not have been under discussion more than three months).



the requirements.<sup>5</sup> A subsequent to failure to comply with the drug screening requirement results in immediate case closure.

In families where a child fails to comply with the school attendance requirement or the child immunization requirement, the child's needs are removed from the FITAP grant until the child re-establishes compliance. Similarly, if a teenage parent fails to comply with the parenting education requirement, the teenage parent's needs are removed from the grant until compliance is demonstrated.

## Monitoring Compliance with Program Requirements

Our field interviews with staff at 11 parishes revealed that most analysts spend a significant portion of their time monitoring clients' compliance with program requirements. Analysts we interviewed reported that as much as 50 to 70 percent of their time is spent monitoring cases for compliance with program requirements. This meant that they had less time for case management to help recipients address barriers and make progress toward self-sufficiency.

In this section, we review the implementation of main program requirements of FITAP and FIND Work Program, namely: work participation requirements (also referred to as work requirements); drug screening, testing, education and rehabilitation requirements (also referred to as the drug screening requirements); child support enforcement; school attendance requirements; and immunization requirements. We do not discuss the parental skills education requirement for teenage parents because we did not specifically address this issue in our field study. Moreover, very few cases were sanctioned due to failure to comply with parental education requirement.

### Monitoring the Work Participation Requirement

Analysts' primary monitoring efforts involve making sure that clients meet their work participation requirement. In particular, analysts must ensure that recipients who are

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<sup>5</sup> If a recipient is found be using illegal drugs after completion of a required rehabilitation program, s/he will lose FITAP eligibility until OAD determines that the recipient has completed further treatment and is drug free. Other family members remain eligible for cash benefits as long as the recipient participates in the education and rehabilitation program.

nonexempt from work requirements put in the required hours in work activities that count toward the federally mandated work participation rate.

In the parishes we visited, most monitoring of work activity participation is conducted by analysts who review weekly activity sheets submitted by recipients. Service providers often assist with monitoring efforts by contacting analysts when recipients do not show up for their assigned work activities. Most analysts are instructed to meet the participation rates each month for the recipients in their caseloads. Analysts were generally aware that participants who miss even a few days of assigned work activities risk failing to meet their required hours for the month. Analysts who discover that a nonexempt client is falling short of the work participation requirement typically were encouraged to contact the client as soon as possible to determine if there is good-cause reason for nonparticipation. Lacking good cause, the analyst would proceed to place the client in sanction.

While analysts have some discretion in determining when a recipient is out of compliance with the work requirements and when a sanction should be enforced, in general, the monitoring of work participation requirements was one of top priorities at local DSS offices. The close monitoring and the prompt follow-up on noncompliant cases reflect a strong directive from management—at the parish level and above—to meet work participation requirements. This directive is driven by the desire to avoid federal penalties.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on meeting work requirements continued even though Louisiana's rapid decrease in the number of FITAP cases in earlier years led to caseload reduction credits, which reduced the state's required participation rate.

One implication of the strong emphasis on compliance with work requirements is that while analysts are motivated to place clients in the most appropriate and helpful work activities, analysts' decisions concerning work activity placement are often dictated by the need to place recipients in countable work activities as quickly as possible.

Although Louisiana has a sanction clause concerning refusal to accept a job offer, this particular sanction has not been widely implemented in the parishes we visited. This is

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<sup>6</sup> States can face reductions in the federal TANF block grant if they fail to satisfy work participation rate requirements (a penalty of 5 percent in the first year, increasing by 2 percent for each consecutive failure with a cap of 21 percent). Federal work participation requirements for FY 2002 mandate that 50 percent of all families in each state be engaged in a federally defined (i.e., countable) work activity category. States can also incur grant reductions if they fail to reduce recipients' benefits for refusing to participate in work activities without good-cause reasons (a penalty of 1 to 5 percent, based on the degree of noncompliance in a prior year).

partly because recipients rarely refuse opportunities for employment. Indeed, none of the parishes we visited identified recipients' reluctance to work as a problem. If a recipient fails to show up for work or quits work, the case usually is treated as noncompliance with work participation requirements. Thus, the recipient would be sanctioned for failure to comply with work participation requirements, but not for refusal to accept a job.

### **Monitoring the Drug Screening, Testing, and Rehabilitation Requirements**

The drug screening, testing, and treatment requirement in Louisiana is implemented in cooperation with the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Addictive Disorders (OAD). Using an OAD-approved assessment questionnaire known as the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-20), analysts or intake/assessment staff screen FITAP applicants for illegal drug use. DAST-20 is a standardized paper-and-pencil assessment tool consisting of 20 questions about the individual's drug use in the preceding year. In 10 parishes, a pilot program funded by a TANF Initiatives grant is utilizing an alternative drug screening method. In these pilot sites, OAD staff administer screening at the local DSS offices using a computer-based assessment instrument known as Addiction Severity Index-Multimedia Version (ASI-MV), which is considered to be more effective than the DAST-20. ASI-MV is an interactive program which guides an applicant through assessment questions. An applicant takes the screening test on the computer, and OAD staff review the computer-generated results with the applicant for possible follow-up actions.

In ASI-MV pilot sites, apprehension about the new screening process reportedly has caused some applicants to avoid screening or to not apply for FITAP at all. OAD reported that they have been working with OFS to train both OAD and OFS staff in improving communication with clients, with the aim of encouraging applicants to both participate in screening and take advantage of help available to them. Parishes reported that once applicants learn that screening does not include a urine test and that screening itself is not difficult, they usually are willing to undergo screening.

Our field study findings suggest that, in actual practice, the active monitoring of recipients screened for drug use is rare. The vast majority of applicants pass the drug screening test, thus not necessitating any further monitoring of the drug testing and treatment related requirements. Other individuals drop out of the screening process early in the application process or screen themselves out of FITAP after learning about the drug screening and

testing requirements during the initial orientation. In these instances, analysts do not even officially open the case, so the monitoring of the requirements is an irrelevant issue.

Parish staff we interviewed generally believed that the current drug screening tool (DAST-20) is ineffective, identifying only a fraction of those individuals who need help with substance abuse. According to many analysts, most applicants are aware of the screening requirement before coming in to apply and, moreover, already know the “correct” answers to give on DAST-20. Consequently, very few applicants tested on DAST-20 are screened out even for further assessment or testing, let alone for referral to treatment programs. In fact, the ineffectiveness of DAST-20 was recognized by both OFS and OAD; this provided the impetus behind the ASI-MV pilot program.

OAD reported that the ASI-MV pilot sites have shown some improvement in identifying individuals at risk of substance use. The rate of identifying individuals who would need further drug assessment and treatment was estimated to be 8.4 percent in the pilot sites using ASI-MV, compared to 2.3 percent non-pilot sites using DAST-20. Still, parish staff observed that few clients end up being actually referred to rehabilitation. They also suspect that there are still more clients who would benefit from substance abuse counseling and treatment that are not detected even by ASI-MV.<sup>7</sup> Further discussion of OAD’s drug screening and treatment program is provided in a separate volume containing BPA’s evaluation of TANF Initiatives programs.

### **Monitoring Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement**

FITAP applicants must report to SES within 10 days of application. As shown in Exhibit 4.1, FITAP participants are required to cooperate in identifying and locating the parent of a child, establishing the paternity of a child born out of wedlock, and obtaining child support and other due payments. FITAP staff’s involvement in monitoring recipients’ cooperation with child support enforcement is limited to referring applicants to SES. In our interviews, FITAP staff did not identify any particular systematic efforts to increase applicants’ cooperation with child support enforcement. Applicants who fail or refuse to comply with child support requirements from the start do not get certified for benefits, and their cases never get officially opened. Our findings suggest that cash assistance begins

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<sup>7</sup> In 1999, Research Triangle Institute did a needs assessment for substance abuse treatment services among all Louisiana households and arrived at a conservative estimate that at least 9.4 percent of the general adult population were in need of treatment for substance abuse. The rate among TANF population is believed to be higher than that among the adult population.

once an applicant reports to SES, but that some recipients fail to appear for subsequent appointments at the SES or stop cooperating later in the process. In such cases, analysts close the case. Parishes we visited reported that failure to cooperate with child support enforcement is one of the more common reasons for sanctions.

Child support payments can make a profound difference in the financial well-being of families—most of which are headed by single mothers with limited prospects for high-wage employment on their own—especially after leaving FITAP. Studies have shown that the benefit of child support is sizable, particularly for low-income children.<sup>8</sup> Ensuring that FITAP families establish a reliable child support arrangement, when possible and appropriate, can therefore help them make progress toward the long-term goal of self-sufficiency.

### **Monitoring Compliance with Children’s Immunization and School Attendance Requirements**

Although there initially was concern that monitoring the children’s immunization and school attendance requirements might place an undue burden on FITAP analysts, parishes generally have found that such a concern was not warranted. In addition, none of the parishes we visited reported that compliance with child immunization and school attendance requirements poses a problem for participants.

Parish staff find that compliance with immunization requirements is relatively easy to monitor. In the case of school-age children, it is assumed that any child enrolled in school has already had his/her immunization checked for compliance with the school system’s immunization requirements. In the case of younger children, FITAP staff use health records to verify immunization. None of the parishes we visited reported any problems with verifying immunization records or obtaining parental cooperation.

Most parishes we visited reported that they experienced no difficulty in obtaining and checking school records, or in ensuring children are enrolled in school. Monitoring school attendance is reported as burdensome in a few parishes where the reporting arrangement with the school system is not well designed. However, this problem is not widespread. There is some concern raised by the state-level DSS staff that some of the parishes or

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<sup>8</sup> For example, see Elaine Sorensen and Chava Zibman, “To What Extent Do Children Benefit from Child Support?,” *Assessing the New Federalism Discussion Paper*, Urban Institute, 1999. This study found that child support constitutes about one-quarter of the income for poor families who receive it.

analysts who report that school attendance is not difficult to monitor may not be strictly following record verification guidelines.

OFS staff we interviewed generally agreed that immunization and school attendance are important issues. However, OFS staff also voiced doubts about the usefulness of linking immunization and school attendance to FITAP receipt and questioned the efficacy of Department of Social Services (DSS) involvement in monitoring school attendance and immunization.

## Frequency of Sanctions in the FITAP Caseload

Although FITAP and FIND Work participants are subject to a wide array of program requirements that may potentially lead to sanctions, most sanctions imposed result from failure of recipients to meet work participation requirements or to cooperate with child support enforcement. As noted earlier, parishes find few recipients to monitor for the drug screening, testing, and rehabilitation requirements; most recipients pass the initial screening, and those who refuse screening are denied FITAP enrollment. Thus the number of individuals sanctioned due to noncompliance with the drug screening requirement is relatively small. Few families are found to be out of compliance with the children's immunization and school attendance requirements.

In addition to noncompliance with the program requirements mentioned above, recipients are penalized for not meeting general program requirements pertaining to the administrative process. As discussed earlier, examples of these sanctions include failing to appear at recertification appointments or to submit required information. As will be discussed below, a nontrivial number of cases are sanctioned for procedural reasons.

### **Partial Sanctions**

The share of FITAP cases under partial sanction (that is, penalized with reduction of benefits) for any reason is relatively small. The most common reason for partial sanction is due to noncompliance with work participation requirements. As Exhibit 4.2 shows, 508 cases, or about 5 percent of adult-headed caseload, were placed under partial sanction due to a work requirement violation in June 2002. The next common reason for partial sanction was associated with school attendance requirements, with 103 cases sanctioned in

**Exhibit 4.2**  
**FITAP Cases under Partial Sanction or Benefit Reductions**  
 June 2002

	Number of Cases	Percentage of Adult-Headed Caseload
Benefits Reduced Due to Failure to Comply with:		
Work participate requirements	508	4.7 %
School attendance requirements	103	1.0
Immunization requirements	43	0.4
Drug testing/treatment or parenting skills requirements	142	1.3
Other intentional program violation	40	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>7.7</b>

Source: Louisiana Department of Social Services estimates and BPA staff calculations based on DSS estimates.

Note: Total adult-headed cases in June 2002 is estimated by DSS to be 10,838. Other program violations may include, among others, failure to show up for appointments and failure submit required documents.

June 2002. Cases with benefit reductions due to noncompliance with the drug screening requirements or with the parenting skills requirement together represented slightly over 1 percent (142 cases) of adult headed cases.<sup>9</sup> Partial sanctions due to an immunization violation accounted for less than 1 percent of adult cases. Overall, 8 percent of the total adult-headed FITAP cases were partially sanctioned in June 2002.

Nationally, the use of sanctions varies considerably across states, reflecting the wide range of state sanction policies. To illustrate the variation, Exhibit 4.3 provides the partial-sanction rates reported in a study by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) for Louisiana and other states in 1998.<sup>10</sup> While Louisiana had one of lower partial-sanction rates by GAO's measure, its rate was not atypically low. Indeed, the significant cross-state variation in partial-sanction rates highlights the flexibility given to states in defining sanctions.

<sup>9</sup> Partial sanction data provided by DSS combine the drug testing/treatment and parenting skills requirements into one category which cannot be separated for analysis.

<sup>10</sup> *Welfare Reform: State Sanction Policies and Number of Families Affected*, US General Accounting Office, March 2000. Note that their 1998 estimates for Louisiana may not be necessarily comparable to the figures reported in Exhibit 4.2 due the difference in data sources and methodologies for calculating the sanction rates.

**Exhibit 4.3**  
**TANF Cases under Partial Sanction**  
 Louisiana, Nationwide, and Other Individual States, 1998

	<u>Average Monthly Rate of Partial Sanctions</u>
Louisiana	2.1 %
Nationwide (42 states)	4.5
Other individual states	
Alabama	7.4
Arkansas	2.0
California	0.9
Colorado	4.6
Georgia	0.9
North Carolina	28.6
Oklahoma	0.5
Texas	15.5

Source: US General Accounting Office (2000).  
 Note: The GAO report on Louisiana is based on the average monthly partial sanctions (1,003) which comprised 28 sanctions due to noncompliance with work requirements and 935 sanctions due to noncompliance with child support enforcements.

### Full Family Sanctions

Full-family sanctions (that is, penalized with case closure) represent a significant fraction of cases closures in Louisiana. As shown in Exhibit 4.4, using a conservative method, we estimate that, on average, 430 adult-headed cases, or 33 percent of adult headed case closures per month, were due to noncompliance with program requirements. Specifically, we estimated that 11 percent (142 cases) of recent case closures were due failure to comply with work requirements; 10 percent (131 cases) were due to child support enforcement; 1 percent were due to drug screening requirements; and 11 percent were due to other general program violations. Because of data limitations, we also estimated full family sanctions using a different estimate method.<sup>11</sup> Under this method, as many as 287

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<sup>11</sup> In our analysis, we find that a number of adult-only cases were erroneously coded as child-only cases when they were partially sanctioned. Some of those cases were subsequently fully sanctioned as child-only cases. These data irregularities cause the undercounting of the number of sanctioned adult-headed cases. Exhibit 4.4 provides the results from data only using adult-headed case information. Under the alternative method, we adjusted for erroneously recorded child-only cases. Using the adjusted sanctioned



**Exhibit 4.4**  
**Case Closures Due to Full-Family Sanctions**  
**Adult-Headed Cases, SFY 2002**

	Average Monthly Closures	Percentage of Total Monthly Cases
Case Closures Due to Non-Compliance with:		
Work requirements	142	11.0
Child support enforcement	131	10.0
Drug Screening/Treatment Requirements (a)	12	0.9
Other program violations (b)	145	11.1
Average Monthly Adult-headed Case Closures	1,302	100.0

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files. Based on cases closed in July 2001 to March 2002.

(a) Closures due to noncompliance with drug testing/treatment are not separately tracked and included in closure code "other." DSS estimated about 3.6 percent of case closure code "other" was closed due to noncompliance with drug testing/treatment, based on their one-time manual count of other reasons. This estimate was used by DSS for in their reporting to ACF. Accordingly, we estimated the number of closures due to drug testing/treatment noncompliance as 3.6 percent of those with case closure reasons "other."

(b) Other program violations include, among others, failure to show up for appointments and failure submit required documents.

adult headed cases per month were closed due to failure to comply with work participation requirements. This alternate estimation approach suggests that as many as 40 percent of adult head closures in recent months were due to sanctions for noncompliance.

While the exact degree of sanction rates cannot be precisely determined by available data, we can conclude that a considerable number of adult-headed cases were fully sanctioned because of recipients' failure to comply with various program requirements. Our estimates show that 33 to 40 percent of recent adult-headed case closures is due to such noncompliance. We also find that work requirements and child support enforcement are

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case number and total case closure number, we estimated that 287 cases or 19.8 percent of adult-headed cases per month were closed due to noncompliance with work participation requirements between July 2001 and March 2002, and that a total of 39.5 percent were closed for all sanctions or noncompliance reasons (including an estimate for case closures due to noncompliance with the drug screening and treatment requirement). Since we cannot precisely estimate total adult-headed cases that were miscoded as child cases but not fully sanctioned, our denominator is likely to be underestimated in projecting sanction rates. Therefore, the sanction rates under the alternative method should be considered to be upper-end estimates.

**Exhibit 4.5**  
**Variation in Local Implementation of Sanction Policies**  
 Five Largest Louisiana Parishes, SFY 2002

	Percentage of Adult-Head Cases Closed Cases to Noncompliance with:		
	Work Participation Requirements	Child Support Enforcement Requirements	Other Program Violating
Orleans	7.6	12.5	13.8
Jefferson	8.9	7.7	13.3
Caddo	13.8	8.4	11.6
East Baton Rouge	17.0	22.2	7.6
Ouachita	22.2	8.8	9.1
Other parishes	11.7	7.8	9.5

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files. Based on cases closed in July 2001 to March 2002. Other program violations include, among others, failure to show up for appointments and failure submit required documents.

two leading program requirements, although many families were also fully sanctioned for other program violations such as failing to appear at a meeting or to submit required information. On the other hand, sanctions due to the drug screening requirement is relatively infrequent. These findings are consistent with our earlier discussions based on our field interviews.

There is significant variation across parishes in the share of case closures that are due to sanctions. For example, as shown Exhibit 4.5, we estimate that about 8 to 9 percent of case closures in Orleans and Jefferson parishes were because of work requirement sanctions, compared to 17 percent in East Baton Rouge and 22 percent in Ouachita. Similarly, East Baton Rouge had a relatively high number of child support enforcement sanctions (22 percent of adult-head case closures), while less than 10 percent of adult-headed cases were fully sanctioned due to child support enforcement in Jefferson, Caddo, and Ouachita. This parish-to-parish variation may reflect local differences in recipient characteristics as well as differences in how sanction policies are carried out at the local level.

Once a case is closed due to sanction, the recipient cannot return to the FITAP caseload until he or she complies with the previously unmet requirement or attains good-cause or

**Exhibit 4.6**  
**FITAP Re-Entry by Adults from Cases Closed Due to Sanctions and Noncompliance**  
 Recipients Who Exited after July 2000

	Percentage Re-Entering FITAP after 3 or Less Months of <u>Case Closure</u>	Percentage Re-Entering FITAP after 12 or Less months of <u>Case Closure</u>
All Adults Whose Cases Were Closed	10.8 %	29.7 %
Adults Whose Case Were Closed Due to:		
Work requirement sanction	12.3	33.9
Child support enforcement sanction	13.1	33.4
Other program violations	11.8	31.5

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files.  
 Note: This table is based on cases closed in July 2000 to November 2001 for the 3-month re-entry rates and cases closed in July 2000 to February 2001 for the 12-month re-entry rates. Other program violations include, among others, failure to show up for appointments and failure submit required documents.

exemption status. Since those families did not leave FITAP voluntarily, one might expect that sanctioned families would try to get back on FITAP by addressing their requirements. We find that the majority of recipients who receive full-family sanctions do not manage to return to FITAP within one year. As shown in Exhibit 4.6, less than 15 percent of sanctioned recipients returned to FITAP after three months off the caseload. Even one year after case closure, only one-third of sanctioned recipients had returned to cash assistance. Exhibit 4.6 also shows that re-entry rates for sanctioned families were not significantly higher than for FITAP leavers in general. Thus, rather than trying to get back on FITAP, many families appear to choose not to comply or continue to have difficulty complying with requirements.

During the past year, DSS launched an initiative to help sanctioned recipients meet the necessary requirements to regain cash assistance. The Quality Assurance Division of OFS contracted with Evaluation and Development Services, Inc. to run the Project Sanction Release pilot program in five parishes from August 2001 to July 2002.<sup>12</sup> In this pilot, the contractor staff provided sanctioned recipients with counseling and assistance designed to help them reach compliance with unmet requirements. According to its report to DSS, the

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<sup>12</sup> The pilot was implemented in Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Livingston, and West Baton Rouge Parishes.

contractor served 546 closed cases in the five parishes between August 2001 and March 2002, of which 278 were work requirement sanctions and 188 were child support enforcement sanctions. The pilot program ended in July 2002, and DSS does not currently have immediate plans to offer a similar program.

**Exhibit 4.7**  
**Characteristics of Sanctioned and Non-sanctioned Leavers**  
 Adult Heads, SFY 2001 and SFY 2002

		Case Closed for Sanctions or Non- <u>compliance</u>	Case Closed for Other <u>Reasons</u>
Average Age:		26.2	28.2
Marital Status:	Never married	82.1 %	75.6 %
	Separated	10.3	13.3
	Widowed or divorced	2.7	6.6
	Married	4.9	4.5
Race/Ethnicity:	African American (non-Hispanic)	83.4 %	80.2 %
	White (non-Hispanic)	15.2	18.0
	Hispanic	1.0	1.3
	Other (a)	0.4	0.5
Family Structure:	Average number of children	2.2	2.2
	Average age of children (b)	4.6	5.5
	Percentage with a child under age 2	53.3 %	45.2 %
	Percentage with a child under age 6	84.4	77.9
Level of Education Completed:	Less than high school	55.0 %	45.7 %
	High school diploma or GED	44.8	53.8
	Post-secondary education	0.2	0.5
Number of Leavers		7,332	17,592

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files.

Notes: Cases closed due to sanctions or noncompliance include those whose closure codes indicated that cases were closed due to noncompliance with work requirements, noncompliance with child support requirements, or other program violations. Case closures with all other reasons are included in the second column. Cases with case closure code missing are excluded from the table.

(a) Other races/ethnicity category include Asian, Pacific Islands, and Native Americans.

(b) The average of children's age within a household.

## Characteristics of Recipients under Full-Family Sanction

One of the main policy concerns surrounding sanctions is that sanctioned families may possess characteristics that would make them especially vulnerable in the face of lost cash benefits. We find that adults recipients who left FITAP due to sanctions are slightly younger, less educated, and have more and younger children compared with recipients who left for other reasons (Exhibit 4.7). In particular, 53 percent of sanctioned leavers in State Fiscal Years (SFYs) 2001 and 2002 did not complete high school or GED, compared to 45 percent of those who left for other reasons. An even higher percentage (64 percent) of those sanctioned due to failure to comply with work requirements did not have a high school diploma or GED. These findings suggest that because sanctioned recipients have less education as well as more and younger children, they will likely would face greater difficulty in finding jobs than would other recipients.

The employment rate is indeed lower for sanctioned adult leavers than for non-sanctioned adult leavers. Exhibit 4.8 provides employment rates for adult recipients who left FITAP in 2002, broken down by reason for case closure. Thirty-five percent of adult leavers sanctioned for work requirements, 46 percent of those sanctioned for child support

**Exhibit 4.8**  
**Post-FITAP Employment Rates of Sanctioned and Non-sanctioned Adults**  
**Recipients Who Exited in 2000**

	Percentage Employed, First Quarter following <u>Case Closure</u>	Percentage Employed, Fourth Quarter following <u>Case Closure</u>
Adults Whose Cases Were Closed for Reasons Other than Sanctions	55.3%	52.1%
Among Adults Whose Cases Were Closed Due to:		
Work requirement sanctions	34.8	36.4
Child support enforcement sanctions	46.4	45.5
Other program violations	49.4	46.4

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files and DOL Unemployment Insurance wage records.

Notes: Other program violations include, among others, failure to show up for appointments and failure submit required documents. Employment rates in the first quarter after exit are calculated for those who left FITAP in 2000 and did not return within 3 months (obs.=22,352). Employment rates in the fourth quarter after exit are calculated for those who left FITAP in 2000 and did not return within 12 months (obs=19,198).

enforcement, and 49 percent of those sanctioned for other program violations were employed in the quarter after exit, compared to 55 percent of recipients who left for reasons other than sanctions. It may not be surprising that sanctioned recipients, especially those who failed to comply with work requirements, had lower rates of employment immediately following case closure. Still, this difference in employment outcomes is indicative of the difficulties facing some sanctioned families after their cases are closed.

Our analysis of leavers' employment rates indicates that sanctioned families remain vulnerable over time. Exhibit 4.8 shows that, similar to other leavers, sanctioned families not regaining FITAP status within 12 months were no more likely to be employed in the fourth quarter after exit than in the first quarter after exit. Thus, it is likely that sanctioned families continued to face financial difficulties one year after case closure. While some families may deliberately choose to stay off FITAP despite their hardship, other families could be facing obstacles to compliance with program requirements.

## Implication of Chapter Findings

It is difficult to conclude from this study whether Louisiana's sanction policies and their implementation as a whole are effective. On the one hand, if the number of cases sanctioned is taken as a barometer for success of sanction policies, case closure rates due to sanction of between 33 and 40 percent can be interpreted as indicating that sanctions are a vital part of TANF implementation in Louisiana and are not an empty threat. On the other hand, a high number of sanctions could be interpreted as a failure of the program to ensure that recipients are adequately informed of program requirements and receive assistance in meeting those requirements as warranted. Summarized below are our key findings regarding specific aspects of the State's sanction policies.

Emphasis on compliance with program requirements in the Louisiana TANF program meant that analysts report spending substantial time monitoring. Many believe that the amount of time they spend monitoring program requirements detracts from their ability to provide active case management. In particular, the major priority of parish staff is to enforce work participation requirements. Close monitoring and strict guidelines for work participation requirements result in more sanctions being imposed than for other requirements. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the Department's challenge is to balance

the need to meet federally-mandated participation rates with the goal of ensuring that recipients are placed in the most appropriate work activity.

Failure to comply child support enforcement is one of the leading sanction reasons. Over 10 percent of recent adult-headed case closures are estimated to be due to failure to comply with child support enforcement. FITAP program staff monitor child support enforcement but do not necessarily actively help families comply with this requirement, as monitoring is primarily the responsibility of the SES staff. Given that failure to cooperate with child support enforcement is the second leading reason for sanctions in Louisiana, additional efforts by FITAP analysts to encourage recipient compliance with child support enforcement may be warranted.

Implementation of the drug screening, testing, and rehabilitation requirements is hampered by the ineffectiveness of a screening tool. OFS is currently attempting to address this problem in cooperation with OAD.

While ensuring FITAP children's well-being through immunization and school attendance requirements is a worthy goal, our findings show that the value gained from these requirements may not be high. We find that (a) the children of most FITAP recipients do not have school attendance or immunization problems; and (b) the additional administrative burden on analysts while not large, still detracts from other case management priorities.

Sanctioned families tend to be especially vulnerable in the face of lost cash benefits. This underscores the need to ensure that every effort is made to help families to comply with the requirement as long as they are willing to cooperate. Sanctioned families may also benefit from having access to assistance to help them comply with the requirements.

## Recommendations

### **Recommendation 8**

The Department of Social Services should review the process for ensuring that FITAP recipients comply with child support enforcement. SES and OFS staff should jointly analyze the reasons and circumstances that cause these cases to close. Based on these

reviews, DSS should develop additional policies and procedures, if warranted, to improve compliance. Additional training may also be useful for FITAP analysts, to allow them to more proactively help recipients to comply with child support enforcements.

### **Recommendation 9**

The State of Louisiana should review whether the school attendance requirement for children of FITAP families is warranted, and consider dropping this requirement for FITAP participation.

### **Recommendation 10**

The State of Louisiana should review whether the immunization requirement for children of FITAP families is warranted, and consider dropping these requirements as FITAP participation.

### **Recommendation 11**

The Department of Social Services should study the feasibility of implementing a sanction response team, using either DSS staff, local service providers, or some combination of the two. The Department should review the Project Sanction Release pilots and other existing and past efforts to identify successful approaches to improve the rate of re-certification among sanctioned families. The Department should also develop guidelines for identifying families who were sanctioned for reasons other than unwillingness to comply with program requirements and who would therefore benefit from further assistance to return to compliance.



## Chapter 5

# Time Limits among FITAP Recipients

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### Chapter Highlights

- Neither the State's 24-month time limit nor the federal 60-month time limit was an immediate concern for the majority of adult recipients who had been on FITAP. Still, over 20,000 adults had accumulated 24 or more months by March 2002, and nearly 600 adults have accumulated 55 or more months.
- Louisiana established a range of exemptions to both its 24-month and 60-month time limits, which allow most needy families to stay on the program even after they reach the time limits.
- The majority of recipients who reached the State's 24-month time limits continued on with cash assistance. Exemptions can be granted to unemployed recipients who complete a monthly 20-job contact requirement. Parishes reported that this 20-job contact requirement is not meaningful in ensuring that the clients were actively engaged in job search.
- The first group of FITAP recipients reached the 60-month limit in January 2002. Initially, most of those who reached the 60-month time limit continued to stay on cash assistance. Louisiana is unlikely to reach the 20 percent cap for using federal funds to support families beyond 60 months in the near future.
- Recipients nearing or reaching the lifetime limit have less education and limited recent work experience, and thus are likely to face difficulty in making a quick transition to self-sufficiency through employment. Many of these recipients may require intensive interventions before they are able to leave the program on their own.

## Introduction

A central feature of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996—the federal welfare reform legislation—is the time limit it places on benefits receipt. PRWORA prohibits the use of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to provide cash assistance to families that include an adult who has received cash assistance for more than 60 months total. The real-world application of this well-known time limit, however, is complex, as states are given considerable discretion in both determining major components of their time-limit policies and implementing the 60-month limit.

In Louisiana, the State adopted an “intermittent” time limit in addition to the federally mandated 60-month lifetime limit. This intermittent time limit allows adult-headed cases to receive cash assistance for no more than 24 months total over any 60-month period. As shown in Exhibit 5.1, Louisiana exempts disabled parents, pregnant women, and certain employed participants from counting months on aid toward this 24-month time limit. In addition, Louisiana provides extensions of cash assistance beyond the 24-month time limit for various hardship reasons. The State allows a similar set of hardship reasons for extending cash assistance beyond the federal 60-month time limit.<sup>1</sup> Under PRWORA, the State can offer such hardship extensions of federally funded cash assistance beyond the 60-month time limit, provided that such extensions do not exceed 20 percent of the State’s average monthly caseload for the current or preceding federal fiscal year. Compared to policies in other states, the criteria that Louisiana set for extending benefits are relatively flexible.<sup>2</sup>

Time limits apply only to adult-headed cases; child-only cases and Kinship Care Subsidy Program (KCSP) cases are subject to neither the federal 60-month lifetime limit nor the State’s 24-month time limit.<sup>3</sup> As is the policy in most other states, Louisiana discontinues cash assistance for all family members, including children, when adult recipients reach the 24- or 60-month time limit. Louisiana families began reaching the 24-month limit in January 1999 and the 60-month limit in January 2002. In this chapter, we examine the

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<sup>1</sup> In Louisiana, the term “exemption” is used to mean “extension” of benefits beyond time limits as well as exemption from being counted toward time limits. In this chapter, the terms “exemption” and “extension” are used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> *Welfare Time Limits: State Policies, Implementation, and Effects on Families*, Dan Bloom, et al. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. 2002.

<sup>3</sup> The State’s 24 month limit applies to cases headed by a parent only. Cases headed by adults who are not parents (e.g., a non-parent relative) are not subject to the 24 month time limit.

## **Exhibit 5.1**

### **Time Limits on Receipt of FITAP Assistance and Exemption Criteria**

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#### 24-Month State Time Limit

Families will not be eligible for cash assistance if the parent has received FITAP assistance for 24 months during the prior 60-month period. The state time limit clock started in January 1997. Months after June 1999 in which a recipient receives the earned income disregards are not counted toward the limit.

Months are not counted toward the time limit if:

- the parent is incapacitated or disabled;
- the parent is in the third trimester of pregnancy; or
- the parent has earned income and is eligible for the \$900 earned income disregard.

Payments can be extended beyond the 24-month time limit if :

- the parent is incapacitated or disabled;
- the parent has been actively seeking employment and has been unable to find employment;
- factors relating to job availability are unfavorable;
- the parent loses his/her job due to factors not related to job performance;
- an extension of benefits for up to one year will enable the adult to complete employment-related education or training;
- the parent is employed and entitled to the \$900 earned income disregard;
- hardships have occurred that impair the parent's ability to obtain employment; or
- the individual is at risk of domestic violence.

#### Federal 60-Month Lifetime Limit

No cash assistance will be provided to a family that includes an adult who has received assistance for a total of 60 months. Any month in which the individual is a minor child (and not the household head or married to the household head) is not counted toward the lifetime time limit. The assistance can be extended if one of the following hardships applies:

- the caretaker relative is incapacitated or disabled;
- the caretaker relative has been actively seeking employment and has been unable to find employment;
- factors relating to job availability are unfavorable;
- the caretaker relative loses his/her job due to factors not related to job performance;
- an extension of benefits for up to one year will enable the adult to complete employment-related education or training;
- hardships have occurred that impair the caretaker relative's ability to obtain employment; or
- the individual is at risk of domestic violence.

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Source: Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 67, Part III (February, 2002); Louisiana DSS Finance Assistance Manual.

**Exhibit 5.2**  
**Summary of FITAP Program Participation**  
 January 1997–March 2002

Number of adults who ever participated in FITAP (through 3/02)		106,722
By cumulative FITAP months:	1–12 months	58,055 (55.4%)
	13–24	28,685 (27.1%)
	25–36	14,796 (13.7%)
	37 or more	5,186 ( 3.7%)

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files.  
 Note: The sample consists of all adult recipients who had ever participated in FITAP through March 2002.

number and characteristics of families reaching time limits, the implementation of time-limit policies, and the State’s ability to keep benefits extensions under the federally mandated 20 percent caseload cap.

## Number of Families Reaching Time Limits

Exhibit 5.2 shows a summary of the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) months accumulated by adult recipients from January 1997 through March 2002. During this period, about 107,000 adults were enrolled in FITAP for at least one month.<sup>4</sup> Over half (55 percent) of these adults received benefits for a total of 12 months or less. At the same time, 27 percent were within 12 months of reaching the state time limit, and another 17 percent of recipients had already received over 24 months of cash assistance. Hence, although neither the State’s 24-month time limit nor the federal 60-month time limit was an *immediate* concern for most adult recipients who had been on FITAP, time limits did loom for a considerable number of recipients. We estimate that of recipients who ever participated in FITAP, about 22,000 adults and nearly 60,000 children had accumulated 24 or more months by March 2002, and nearly 600 adults and about 1,500 children had accumulated 55 or more months.

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<sup>4</sup> We counted total months of receipt of FITAP assistance, regardless of exemption status and across multiple spells of assistance.

## Characteristics of Recipients Approaching Time Limits

With regard to welfare time limits, a major concern of policymakers and advocates has been that the most vulnerable families—those having the least chance of attaining self-sufficiency—might be prematurely forced out of assistance. To assess the merits of this concern, we examined the personal characteristics and recent work experience of recipients who have reached or are nearing the federal 60-month time limit, and we assessed the likelihood that these recipients will leave the program through employment.

**Exhibit 5.3**  
**Characteristics of Recipients Approaching the Federal Time Limit**  
 Adults Recipients Receiving Cash Assistance in March 2002

	<u>Adults Who Had Received FITAP for 49–63 months as of 3/02</u>	<u>All Adults on FITAP 3/02</u>
Average Age	34.5 years	27.1
Race/Ethnicity:		
Percentage African American (non-Hispanic)	90.6%	82.1
White (non-Hispanic)	8.3	16.1
Hispanic	0.3	1.3
Other	0.7	0.4
Education Completed		
Percentage less than high school	61.6%	49.2
high school diploma or GED or higher	38.4	50.8
Family Structure		
Average number of children	2.8 children	2.1
Average age of children*	8.9 years	4.7
Percentage with child(ren) under age 6	56.8%	81.7
Work History		
Percentage employed during 2001	33.5%	59.8
Average annual earnings in 2001	\$1,965	\$3,332
Number of adults	695	11,877

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files.  
 \* Average of children's age within household.

Exhibit 5.3 summarizes the characteristics of current adult recipients who have accumulated 49 or more months on FITAP. Compared to the general FITAP population, recipients nearing the 60-month time limit are older and have more and older children. An especially important difference is that long-term recipients have lower educational attainment compared to FITAP recipients overall. About 62 percent of long-term recipients did not hold a high school diploma or GED, suggesting that many recipients nearing the federal time limit are low-skilled and, therefore, less likely to obtain jobs paying significantly more than minimum wage.

Exhibit 5.3 also shows that long-term recipients tend to have limited recent labor market experience. Using Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records, we find that among adult recipients with 49 or more accumulated months on FITAP, only about one-third (34 percent) were employed during 2001. Their average earnings were less than \$2,000 a year. Given such limited recent job experience, many long-term recipients may find it difficult to make the transition toward self-sufficiency through employment.

These findings suggest that recipients who may face the federal 60-month time limit are indeed more likely to need additional help in becoming self-sufficient and leaving welfare. While most needy families in Louisiana are likely to continue receiving cash assistance for the time being—thanks to FITAP’s flexible hardship exemptions—it is unlikely that long-term recipients will be able to make progress toward financial independence in the near future without concentrated efforts to address the obstacles they face.

DSS staff often acknowledged that it is challenging to help long-term recipients who had persistent difficulty in making progress toward self-sufficiency. Currently there is little evidence that the FITAP and FIND Work Programs systematically address the needs of long-term recipients who are approaching the lifetime time limit. Parishes we visited did not have intervention strategies targeted specially at those approaching the time limits. Analysts used the same tools and resources for both long-term and all other recipients. Not surprisingly, the pattern of work activity participation among recipients nearing the 60-month time limit is similar to that for FITAP recipients in general, except that families approaching the time limit are more likely to receive good cause to not participate instead of exemptions, as shown in Exhibit 5.4. Most long-term recipients who are engaged in work activities are in unsubsidized employment or unpaid work experience assignments. Very few are engaged in educational activities, despite a high ratio of recipients lacking a high school diploma or GED. Overall, recipients approaching the time-limit are no more likely than any other recipients to be engaged in a work activity to prepare them to leave FITAP.

**Exhibit 5.4**  
**Participation in Work Activities**  
**Adult Participants Receiving Cash Assistance in March 2002**

<u>Participation Status in March 2002</u>	<u>Percentage of Participants</u>
Participated in a work activity	39.0 %
Exempt from work activity participation (mostly due to having a child under age one)	5.9
Required to participate, but granted a good-cause reason for nonparticipation	24.5

<u>Common Types of Activity</u>	<u>Percentage of Participants</u>
Unsubsidized employment	21.3 %
Work experience	13.5
Vocational education	4.9
Job search and job readiness	1.9
Number of Adults in Single-Parent Cases	695

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF files.  
 Note: Some adult recipients are engaged in more than one activity during a month.

## Enforcement of the 24-Month Time Limit

According to our field study of 11 parishes, program staff—usually, supervisors or assistant parish managers—keep track of time limits using the monthly report (LAMR-905P), which is generated by the Department of Social Services’ (DSS’s) administrative data system (L’AMI). The monthly report shows the number of months each client has received benefits. If a given client has received benefits for 22 months, the supervisor or assistant parish manager alerts the appropriate analyst. The analyst then sends a letter to the client informing her/him that the State’s 24-month time limit is approaching. The client is instructed to make an appointment with the analyst to discuss the case. During this appointment, the analyst informs the client about any available options for time-limit exemptions.

Enforcement of the 24-month time limit does not appear to be strict. Many families that reach 24 months on FITAP do not leave the program immediately, nor do they ultimately

leave because of time limits. As shown in Exhibit 5.5, of those who reached 24 months by March 2002, about 10 percent left FITAP immediately, and 26 percent left after accumulating one or two more months. However, 25 percent of those who reached 24 months remained on FITAP beyond 36 months, and 7 percent accumulated more than 48 months on assistance. Furthermore, as shown in Exhibit 5.6, earned income was the most common reason for case closure among those who accumulated 24 or more months, accounting for 41 percent of closures among this group. Only 15 percent reported that the state time limit caused their case closure.

The results from administrative data—reported in Exhibits 5.5 and 5.6—are consistent with our field-study findings. Program staff we interviewed generally agreed that cases that accumulate 24 months usually do not get closed immediately. As mentioned earlier, there are various exemptions for the 24-month time limit (see Exhibit 5.1), and clients receive them in most cases. Most parishes we visited reported that benefits for most clients reaching the 24-month time limit are extended because they are designated as “actively seeking employment,” having made contact with 20 employers during the prior month. One parish reported that incapacity/disability is the reason most often cited for an extension of the benefits. One of the more rural parishes reported that about one-third of recipients reaching 24 months applied for benefits extensions, while the rest had found work by that time.

<b>Exhibit 5.5</b>	
<b>Exit Patterns among Recipients Who Received FITAP Cash Assistance for 24 or More Months</b>	
<b>Recipients Who Accumulated 24 Months as of March 2002</b>	
<u>Exited after accumulating</u>	<u>Percentage of Recipients Accumulating 24+FITAP Months</u>
24 months	9.8 %
24-26 months	25.6
24-36 months	74.6
24-48 months	93.4
 Total number of adult recipients who accumulated 24 or months.	 22,338

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files,  
 Note: For individuals who had multiple exits, we included the most recently observed exit only. Exit rates were estimated by adjusting for right-censored observations.



**Exhibit 5.6**

**Reasons for Case Closure among Recipients Who Had Received FITAP Cash Assistance for 24 or More Months at the Time of Exit Closures during SFY 2001 and SFY 2002**

Reason	Percentage of Cases
Employment or excess earnings	40.8%
Sanctions*	25.8
State time limit	14.6
Family voluntarily closed case	9.2
Not meeting eligibility criteria**	0.4
Other	9.2

Source: BPA staff calculations based on Louisiana DSS TANF Files and Case Closure Files.  
 \*Sanction reasons include work-related sanctions (13.1%), failure to appear at appointments or to submit required materials (7.3%), and child-support sanctions (5.4).  
 \*\* Eligibility reasons include excess unearned income and resources, and absence of minor child.  
 Notes: The sample consists of all adult recipients who accumulated 24 or more months of FITAP and exited FITAP during SFY2001 and SFY2002 (July 2001 through March 2002). If a person exited more than once during the observation period, the latest episode of case closure is included. The total number of adults in the sample is 8,094, of whom 6,632 had corresponding case closure reasons. The table is based on those 6,632 records.

Program staff in most parishes reported disappointment with the 24-month time limit. Initially, the 24-month time limit was thought to be an effective way of motivating recipients to work. However, as the time limit approached and many recipients still did not have jobs, DSS created exemption criteria that could be easily met by any non-working client. In particular, program staff repeatedly cited the 20-job-contacts requirement as an ineffective monitoring tool. Under this requirement, recipients must simply submit the names of 20 potential employers that they contacted during the prior month. The analysts usually do not verify whether such contacts were actually made or how they were made. Thus, it appears that the job contact sheet is primarily used as a paper trail to ensure continued benefits payments beyond 24 months for non-working clients. Program staff reported that once clients became aware that their benefits could be continued, the urgency of obtaining a job within the 24 months was greatly diminished. Some staff expressed concern that the credibility of time limits was lost because benefits could be extended easily. At the same time, the demands associated with monitoring the 24-month time limit and ensuring compliance with exemption criteria may be taking valuable staff time and resources away from helping recipients make progress toward self-sufficiency.

Our findings indicate that the 24-month time limit in Louisiana is not being implemented as it was envisioned, in part because the State's exemption policy allows recipients to remain in the FITAP program relatively easily. Of course, some recipients continue to receive cash assistance beyond 24 months for good reasons. As discussed earlier, many long-term recipients are unlikely to be adequately prepared to leave cash assistance. For these families, providing a safety net while helping them to make progress toward self-sufficiency is a preferred strategy. However, we also find that the exemption granted for those who simply fill a 20 job-contact sheet was viewed as ineffective in motivating or helping the recipients to find jobs. The challenge for DSS is to strike the balance between providing meaningful incentives to work and exempting those who truly need continued assistance.

## Extensions of Benefits beyond the 60-Month Time Limit

As noted earlier, the first group of families reached 60 months on FITAP in January 2002. Furthermore, we estimate that over 200 adult recipients have accumulated 60 months toward the federal time limit as of March 2002. Of these about 30 have left FITAP, mostly because of increased earned income. Thus, we presume that most families that reached 60 months were exempted from time limits at least for the initial few months. As was shown in Exhibit 5.1, Louisiana has instituted exemption criteria for the 60-month time limit that are equivalent to those for the 24-month time limit. If the exemptions are applied in the same way as for the 24-month time limit, the majority of families reaching 60 months can be expected to remain on the FITAP caseload until they find jobs or other sources of income and leave cash assistance.

As with months counted toward the 24-month time limit, the number of FITAP months accumulated toward the 60-month time limit is tracked by the administrative data system. When a client reaches 54 months, s/he receives a computer-generated letter concerning the approaching federal time limit. At 58 months, the analyst and the client meet and, if appropriate, fill out an exemption request form. Decisions regarding exemption applications are made by program policy specialists at the DSS regional offices. In parishes we visited, however, not all program staff had a clear understanding of how the 60-month time limit and its exemptions would be implemented, or how program staff would assist these families after their time limits expired. Apparently, this lack of clarity existed because there were still few or no cases reaching the federal time limit in most of

sites we visited, and because the exemption criteria for the 60-month time limit were only recently established.

## Federal and State Funding for Benefits Extensions

As mentioned earlier, states can choose to extend federally funded cash assistance beyond 60 months for certain hardship reasons, provided that the number of families receiving extensions is no more than 20 percent of the state's average cash assistance caseload.<sup>5</sup> Assuming that the average caseload in Louisiana remains around 21,000 through SFY 2002 and SFY 2003, the State will be able to grant benefits extensions to about 4,200 cases per month. This means that even if every FITAP case that reaches the 60-month limit were to be granted an extension and not leave the caseload, Louisiana would not encounter any difficulty remaining below the 20 percent cap through SFY 2003, and most likely through SFY 2004.<sup>6</sup>

Should the number of families reaching the 60-month time limit grow to exceed the 20 percent cap in the future, the State can continue to support time-limited families through other funding channels. For example, time limits do not apply to the State's maintenance-of-effort (MOE) spending. That is, MOE funds can be used to pay for monthly cash assistance for families that have exhausted the time limits. Federal time limits also do not apply to so-called "non-assistance" payments, which may include supportive services to employed recipients as well as work subsidies to employers. The State can therefore continue to pay for non-assistance benefits. While the ability to meet the needs of time-limited families is not an immediate concern in Louisiana, it is advisable that the State begin reviewing its methods of applying time-limit policies and its strategies for addressing the needs of long-term recipients. As will be discussed below, families that

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<sup>5</sup> To calculate the 20 percent limit, states can use either the current or previous year's total caseload size, including child-only cases.

<sup>6</sup> This projection is based on a conservative, worst-case scenario. We calculated that the cases receiving FITAP beyond 24 months could grow to about 2,000 by the end of SFY 2003, assuming that: (1) all recipients on the caseload in March 2003 remain on cash assistance continuously through June 2003; (2) all recipients not on the caseload in March 2003 return to FITAP on April 2003 and remain on cash assistance continuously through June 2003; (3) all recipients who reach the 60-month time limit will be granted extensions; (4) all recipients who are granted extensions remain on cash assistance once the extensions are granted; (5) the overall caseload does not increase, so that the 20 percent cap remains at the same level; and (6) there are not any other unexpected changes to the caseload (such as a sudden influx from recipients who have accumulated TANF months in other states).

have reached or are approaching time limits face more barriers to employment than do other families, and are likely to encounter difficulty in attaining self-sufficiency.

## Implications of Chapter Findings

Louisiana elected to impose a shorter state time limit than was federally required. Adult recipients are prohibited from receiving more than 24 months of benefits over a 60-month period. We find, however, find that because of various available exemptions, few recipients were actually affected by the State's 24-month time limit. Parishes find the exemption based on a 20-job contacts requirement to be ineffective in ensuring that recipients conduct meaningful job search and in motivating them to take time limits seriously and to prepare for self-sufficiency.

The first group of FITAP recipients reached 60 month limits in January 2002, and most were given exemptions. Federal law allows states to use the TANF funds to continue assisting families who have received benefits for more than 60 months but face hardships. States can offer such hardship extensions to up to 20 percent of their average monthly TANF caseload. We find that recipients nearing or reaching the lifetime limit have less education and limited recent work experience, and thus are likely to face difficulty in finding jobs. Accordingly, they are likely to remain eligible for an exemption for the time being. In our calculations, Louisiana is unlikely to reach the 20-percent cap in the near future, even if it decides to exempt every case that reaches the 60-month time limit.

Currently, DSS issues a letter notifying recipients are approaching the federal lifetime limit at the 54th month, with 6 months remaining on the clock. Recipients meet with analysts at the 58th month and process exemption requests if appropriate. This timeline may not be adequate for recipients to fully address issues that prevented them from leaving the program earlier. To ensure self-sufficiency after leaving FITAP, recipients nearing time limits may require more intensive interventions and assistance efforts than DSS currently provides. For example, such efforts may need to start earlier and to develop an individualized concrete plan to address barriers they face, rather than focusing on exemption options available to them.

## Recommendations

### **Recommendation 12**

The Department of Social Services should identify alternative activities in addition to, or in place of, the monthly 20-job contact requirement for recipients who seek an exemption to the 24-month time limit. These activities should include participation in an intensive job search /job readiness program or job skills development program.

### **Recommendation 13**

The Department of Human Services should review its current strategies for identifying and assessing families reaching the federal 60-month lifetime limit for receipt of cash assistance. We recommend that DSS develop an intensive intervention track for families nearing or passing this limit. Such interventions should assess multiple aspects of recipients' situations (skills, education, physical and mental health, child care and transportation needs, etc.) and provide for comprehensive service delivery. We recommend that a team of professionals at the parish or regional level be made available as a resource to analysts and recipients. The team can regularly review cases approaching or passing the time limits and make necessarily adjustments to an intervention plan.

### **Recommendation 14**

The Department of Social Services should review the current schedule of contacting clients nearing the time limits in order to allow more time for recipients to address any barriers they face. A first contact for families reaching the lifetime 60-month limit should occur at 48 months or earlier. This would allow families at least one year to implement a specific plan to address barriers before reaching the time limit.

### **Recommendation 15**

The State of Louisiana should review the goals and merits of the 24-month time limit—relative to the 60-month lifetime limit on cash assistance—and consider eliminating or significantly modifying the 24-month time limit.

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## Appendix

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### **Exhibit A.1 FITAP Eligibility Requirements**

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#### **General Eligibility Criteria**

- Families with dependent children under age 16, residing with parent(s) or other qualified relative (such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or first cousin), are eligible.
- Dependent children ages 16 to 19 who are in school or participating in FIND Work also are eligible.
- A minor parent with child must reside with the minor parent's parent(s).
- Each recipient must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien.
- Recipients must assign rights to the State for child support or spousal support.
- Recipients must cooperate with the child support enforcement agency.
- Children in the assistance unit must be immunized.
- Parents under age 20 must attend a parenting skills program.
- School-age children must meet minimum school attendance requirements to continue receiving assistance.

#### **Income Limits and Disregards**

- Income must be less than the need standard (for a family of three, the need standard is \$658 per month).
- Each individual in the assistance unit is entitled to a standard earned income disregard of \$120 per month.
- Each individual in the assistance unit is entitled to a time-limited earned income disregard of \$900 for a six-month lifetime limit.

#### **Asset Limits**

- The maximum resource limit for an assistance unit is \$2,000.
- Vehicles (other than recreational vehicles) are excluded from the resource limit.
- An Individual Development Account of up to \$6,000 is excluded from the resource limit.

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Source: Louisiana State Plan for TANF

## **Exhibit A.2**

### **Work Requirements for FITAP Recipients**

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#### **Hours Requirement**

- A single parent or caretaker relative in the assistance unit must participate in work-related activities for at least 30 hours per week, or 2 hours per week if s/he has a child under age 6.
- In two-parent/caretaker households, both parents/caretakers must participate for a combined total of at least 35 hours per week; if child care is provided, they must participate for a combined total of 55 hours per week.

#### **Exemptions and Good-Cause Reasons for Not Participating**

Exemptions: FITAP recipients may be exempt from participating in work activity. Exemptions are allowed for the following types of individuals:

- Dependent children under age 16
- Dependent children ages 16 to 19 attending school
- Single parent or caretaker relative providing care for a child under age one (for a maximum of 12 months)
- Parent or caretaker relative not included in the assistance unit

Good-Cause Reasons: FITAP recipients may be given good -cause reasons for not participating in work activity. Good -cause reasons include the following:

- Personal injury or illness
- Physical or mental incapacity
- Age 60 or older
- Family crisis or emergency
- Domestic violence
- Unavailability of transportation or child care
- Health or safety hazards at the participation site
- Discrimination based on race, religion, sex, age, or national origin
- Appointment with a health care provider

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Source: Louisiana State Plan for TANF



### **Exhibit A.3**

#### **Allowable Work Activities for Work Requirement**

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##### **Allowable Work Activities**

Work activities that are counted in the federal work participation rate include the following:

- Unsubsidized or subsidized employment
- Unpaid work experience
- On-the-job training
- Job search/job readiness (limited to six weeks)
- Vocational education (for a maximum of 12 months)
- Secondary school attendance and preparation for a GED
- Education directly related to employment (for recipients without a high school diploma or GED)
- Job skills training directly related to employment
- Community service\*
- Provision of child care services to an individual who is participating in community service\*

##### **Non-Countable Activities**

If a parish office is meeting the work participation rate, it may place recipients in non-countable education activities, including vocational education beyond the 12-month limit, secondary/GED education, and employment-related education.

##### **Limits on Participation in Education Activities**

- Not more than 30 percent of individuals who meet countable participation requirements in a month may be participating in a vocational education activity.
- For participants 20 years of age or older, participation in GED preparation, education related to employment, and job skills training is countable only after 20 hours of participation in other countable activities (for single-parent families) or after 30 hours of participation in other countable activities (for two-parent families).

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Source: Louisiana State Plan for TANF

\* While allowable under the State TANF Plan, Louisiana does not currently assign recipients in these activities.

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# State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation

## Final Report

October 2002

## Volume 2 TANF Initiatives Implementation Study

Submitted to:

**State of Louisiana, Division of Administration  
TANF Executive Office of Oversight and Evaluation**  
1201 North Third Street, Room 7-230  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

Submitted by:

**Berkeley Policy Associates**  
440 Grand Avenue, Suite 500  
Oakland, California 94610  
BPA #689



**Berkeley Policy Associates**

# State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation

Final Report

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## Volume 2 TANF Initiatives Implementation Study

Vincent M. Valvano, Principal Investigator  
Yasuyo Abe, Project Director

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## Executive Summary

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The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the landmark federal welfare reform legislation that established Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), gave states considerable discretion to widen the scope of the assistance they could provide beyond traditional cash benefits. Availing itself of this new flexibility, the Louisiana State Legislature in 2001 allocated \$104 million in federal TANF funds to support a variety of programs targeting needy families outside of its traditional target population. The programs thus funded are collectively known as TANF Initiatives.

Louisiana’s innovative approach, exemplified by the TANF Initiatives, stands out among the other states. Many states have taken advantage of the new flexibility in TANF to provide nontraditional services using TANF funds, but these services are typically tied to the receipt of cash assistance. Louisiana has gone a step further by extending TANF resources to a broader segment of at-risk families and individuals. A potential benefit of broadening the scope of the TANF program in this way is that these TANF Initiatives may actually help prevent new accessions to cash assistance by supporting families before they need to apply for FITAP and by increasing the human capital of parents whose children are potential future recipients of FITAP.

TANF Initiatives encompass over 30 programs administered by 12 different agencies. All of the programs target low-income families with minor children. They are funded through the Department of Social Services and overseen by the Division of Administration (DOA). Berkeley Policy Associates, contracted by DOA, is evaluating selected TANF Initiatives administered by the Workforce Commission, Supreme Court, Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Office for Addictive Disorders, Office of Women’s Services, Department of Education, and two parish-level housing agencies.

Many TANF Initiatives programs—especially newly started ones—experienced initial implementation delays due to administrative and logistical issues. Despite these delays, the TANF Initiatives we visited generally showed notable progress in implementation. They used TANF funds effectively to improve the quality of new or existing services, and were largely successful in increasing the number of clients served. TANF funds also stabilized the financial situations of many existing programs and allowed them to address service needs that had previously not been met. Specific accomplishments and implementation challenges of each program we examined are detailed in this report. The report also provides recommendations for program improvement where appropriate.

## Chapter 1

# Overview

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### Innovation of TANF Initiatives

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program was established in 1996 by the landmark federal welfare reform legislation—the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA ended the long-standing federal cash assistance program that entitled families to benefits as long as they met eligibility criteria, and started an income assistance program that imposes time limits on benefits receipt and requires parents to work or to participate in work-related activities. In response to PRWORA, Louisiana in January 1997 established two tightly integrated TANF programs: the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) and the Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work).

PRWORA also introduced radical devolution to the welfare system, giving states considerable discretion in designing TANF programs and widening the scope of assistance states could provide beyond traditional cash benefits. In particular, states are allowed to use TANF funds flexibly to meet any of the four federally legislated goals:

- (1) To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- (2) To end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- (3) To prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- (4) To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.



Availing itself of the new flexibility allowed by PRWORA, in 2001, Louisiana State Legislature allocated a sizable amount (\$104 million) of unspent federal TANF funds—funds not used by FITAP and FIND Work—to support a variety of programs targeting needy families beyond the traditional welfare-eligible population. These programs are known collectively as TANF Initiatives and include over 30 programs administered by 12 agencies, as shown in Exhibit 1.1.

Louisiana’s innovative approach to these TANF Initiatives stands out among states. Many states have taken advantage of the TANF program’s flexibility to provide nontraditional services, but these services are usually provided within the traditional social services system and typically are tied to a TANF program. Louisiana has gone further than most states by extending TANF resources to programs operating outside of the traditional social services system and those that target a broader segment of at-risk families and individuals, including, for example, victims of domestic violence, families facing housing instability, and fathers who are incarcerated.

A key advantage of broadening the scope of TANF expenditures through the TANF Initiatives is that these TANF dollars may actually help prevent new accessions to cash assistance by supporting families before they need to apply for FITAP or by increasing the human capital of parents whose children are potential future recipients of FITAP. In other states, the only way to access such resources is often to apply for cash assistance first, which creates an unwanted incentive for welfare dependency and unfairly disadvantages those who seek to remain self-sufficient.

In addition, as the remainder of this volume will demonstrate, the social causes and service needs to which TANF funds are redirected through the TANF Initiatives program were often seriously undersupported before being targeted by the program. Categorical state and federal funding rules often make it difficult to support local and regional programs that provide direct services across a range of social policy areas, and in particular those services aimed at preventing of future welfare dependency. In contrast, the broad mandate of the TANF legislation and the TANF Initiatives program makes it possible to address program needs in an innovative way, leveraging substantial federal support through a state-administered intervention that can effectively target the needs of low-income families in Louisiana.

Berkeley Policy Associates  
 State of Louisiana TANF Initiatives Program  
 Volume 2: TANF Initiatives Implementation Study

**Exhibit 1.1**  
**Budgeted Allocations for TANF Initiatives for Program Year FFY 2002**

<u>Implementing Agency</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Budget Amount (\$)</u>
<b><i>DSS and DOA</i></b>		
(1) Department of Social Services	Transportation	2,500,000
	Youth in Transition	2,250,000
	Fatherhood Initiative	1,000,000
	Individual Development Acct.	2,000,000
(2) Division of Administration	Evaluation	750,000
	Training of DSS Case Workers	1,000,000
	Needs Assessment	<u>500,000</u>
Subtotal		10,000,000
<b><i>Other State Agencies</i></b>		
(3) Department of Education	Pre-K	15,000,000
	Pre-GED	14,000,000
	After School*	3,150,000
	Education and Training	3,000,000
(4) Workforce Commission	Adult Education & Skills Training*	10,000,000
(5) Supreme Court	Truancy	1,100,000
	CASA	3,600,000
(6) Office of Women's Services	Drug Courts*	5,000,000
	Domestic Violence*	4,000,000
(7) Department of Corrections	Microenterprise	1,000,000
	Project Return*	3,000,000
	Job Skills Program*	1,400,000
	Project Metamorphosis*	400,000
(8) Office of Community Programs	Concordia Life Skills*	200,000
	Private Pre-K Program	3,000,000
(9) Office of Addictive Disorders	Residential Treatment*	2,988,000
	Screening/Outpatient Treatment*	1,012,000
(10) Monroe Housing Authority	Housing Related Services*	1,000,000
(11) Central City Economic Opportunity Cooperation	Housing Related Services*	1,000,000
(12) Louisiana Housing Finance Agency	Energy Assistance	17,500,000
	Housing Related Services	<u>3,000,000</u>
Subtotal		94,350,000
Total TANF Initiatives Budget for Program Year FFY 2002		104,350,000
Total Expended (estimates as of 10/02)		89,329,326

Source: Louisiana Department of Social Services, preliminary expenditure data.  
 \* programs evaluated in this report.

Louisiana's high level of spending on TANF Initiatives was made possible only because of a large sum of unspent TANF funds accumulated from previous federal grant years. Spending on the TANF Initiatives will be curtailed in the coming years as the TANF surplus is spent down. This underscores the need for the State to evaluate the current TANF Initiatives programs, determine which should be continued, and identify alternative funding sources for programs it deems worthy.

## Evaluation of TANF Initiatives

Berkeley Policy Associates (BPA), a social policy research and consulting firm in Oakland, California, is under contract with the Division of Administration (DOA) to conduct an evaluation of TANF programs in Louisiana.<sup>1</sup> Our evaluation examines TANF Initiatives as well as the core welfare programs, FITAP and FIND Work. Findings for FITAP and FIND Work are reported in a separately submitted volume. This volume presents findings from our evaluations of selected TANF Initiatives, based on field studies conducted by BPA staff and BPA's partners at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO). In particular, BPA's evaluation focused on the following TANF Initiatives:

- Domestic Violence Program (Office for Women's Services),
- Adult Basic Education and Skills Training Program (Workforce Commission),
- Housing Services (Orleans and Ouachita parish-level housing agencies) ,
- Pre-Release Program (Department of Public Safety and Corrections),
- Post-Release Program (Department of Public Safety and Corrections),
- Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment (Office of Addictive Disorders),
- Drug Courts (Supreme Court), and
- After-School Program (Department of Education).

Evaluation studies have been also conducted for several other TANF Initiatives programs. For example, the Department of Education has sponsored an evaluation of its TANF Initiatives Pre-K Program and Louisiana State University has conducted an evaluation of Supreme Court's Truancy Program.

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<sup>1</sup> A description of BPA's evaluation design is discussed more in detail in Volume 1 of this report and in our *Interim Report*.

## Overview of TANF Initiatives Implementation

As a funding agency, the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS) exchanged a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each state agency to specify services to be provided using TANF funds, outlining the scope of work and eligibility requirements for each program.<sup>2</sup> Implementation of each TANF Initiatives program is monitored by the Division of Administration (DOA). Each agency was required to submit bimonthly progress reports to DOA. In addition to overseeing each program's progress, DOA provided technical assistance during implementation.

TANF Initiatives encompass a wide range of services and programs, but all TANF Initiatives follow a few common program parameters. For example, all TANF Initiatives must address one of the four TANF goals noted above. All initiatives also must use TANF funds to serve minor children or adults with minor children. All initiatives must use TANF funds to expand an existing program or to start a new program, and cannot use these funds to replace existing funding of an ongoing operation.

As shown in Exhibit 1.1, a total of \$104 million was allocated for TANF Initiatives during the 2001-02 period, most of which (\$94 million) was allocated to programs outside DSS and DOA. Since funding is based on the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) cycle, many TANF Initiatives are supported through September 2002, with a few exceptions ending in June 2000 and December 2002. DSS reported that as of October 2002, 86 percent (\$89 million) of the funds allocated to the TANF Initiatives were expended. As any remaining pending payments are processed, total final expenditures may be higher.

While detailed findings on individual TANF Initiatives are provided in the following chapters, we briefly summarize here the overall findings.

TANF Initiatives we visited generally showed progress in expanding existing programs or starting new programs targeted at the TANF-Initiatives-eligible population. Newly started programs were generally meeting needs that were previously not addressed. Many existing programs used funds to improve the quality of ongoing services or added new services and generally increased the number of clients served. Administrators of existing programs also

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<sup>2</sup> In a few cases, DSS signed a contract directly with the service provider.

appreciated that TANF Initiatives funds stabilized their programs' financial situations. Some existing programs found the TANF Initiatives eligibility requirements to be limiting in that they had to withhold services from non-eligible clients. However, most TANF Initiatives we visited did not report this as a major problem, noting that they often could use other funds to continue providing services to clients not eligible for TANF Initiatives funding.

Most TANF Initiatives we visited were not set up to have direct programmatic relationships with DSS or other TANF Initiatives partners. Exceptions include the Office for Addictive Disorder's substance abuse screening and treatment programs targeted specifically at FITAP recipients, and the Office Women's Services' domestic violence training for FITAP staff. For most other TANF Initiatives we studied, program staff did not have much contact with DSS staff or strong knowledge of social services such as FITAP. A process for referring clients to FITAP or other TANF Initiatives program barely existed in most places. Considering that some of the clients of the TANF Initiatives might be eligible for FITAP or other DSS programs—as well as other TANF Initiatives—improved interagency collaboration and referral would be desirable. For the second year of TANF Initiatives, DOA is encouraging more collaboration among TANF Initiatives partners.

Because FFY 2002 was the first year of the TANF Initiatives, the initial several months were particularly challenging on the administrative front. State agencies and program staff we interviewed reported spending considerable time clarifying reimbursement logistics, communication protocols, reporting and eligibility requirements, and other state-level administrative issues. Most TANF Initiatives we visited experienced some delay in program implementation, partly owing to initial confusion over these administrative issues. The administrative challenges during the start-up period did not greatly affect those programs that were already ongoing or had already been under development. However, some entirely new programs were not able to begin operations until the early spring of 2002.

Since the start-up period, DOA staff have taken the lead in streamlining the administrative and monitoring processes for the TANF Initiatives, and DSS has also modified its internal procedure to processing TANF Initiatives reimbursements. Consequently, as of spring 2002, concerns about unclear program requirements or about the poor communication between the state agencies and local program administrators had largely been addressed.

In addition, the process for next year's TANF Initiatives allocations includes much more lead time for planning.

One area in which DOA as overseeing agency continues to work with TANF Initiatives program administrators is in the reporting requirements for performance indicators. For many TANF Initiatives, performance measures evolved over the course of the first year. DOA staff would need to continue to work with TANF Initiatives program staff to identify and refine appropriate performance measures and set meaningful and feasible program goals. DOA plans to continue to focus on this issue in the coming year.

In developing or revising reporting requirements for performance indicators, we recommend the following:

- DOA may want to require all programs to submit basic counts of services provided. In most cases, this will be the number of participants who were enrolled in a program or received service in a certain period. If there are multiple program components, the program should be required to report the number of participants in each program component as well as a total number participants served.
- If indicators are reported in percentage terms (e.g., a program completion rate), DOA should also ask for the counts used to compute such percentages. Our review of performance indicators in percentage terms indicated that many of them were hard to verify and interpret.
- Some implementing agencies at the local level may not have the experience or capacity to track required indicators. DOA should work with each state agency to ensure that local sites understand the requirement and are able to consistently record required indicators. This may require providing technical assistance to local staff or simplifying indicators.

In the remainder of the volume, we present evaluation findings for the TANF Initiatives we visited. Chapter 2 looks at domestic violence prevention services and related services provided by OWS. Chapter 3 presents findings on adult education and workplace literacy programs supported by the Workforce Commission. We discuss rental subsidies programs and a homebuyers program run by local housing agencies in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the Department of Public Safety and Corrections' pre-release and post-release programs respectively. Chapter 7 presents findings on drug court programs overseen by

the Supreme Court. In Chapter 8, we examine substance abuse screening and treatment services administered by OAD. Finally, Chapter 9 examines the implementation of after school programs provided by the Department of Education, based on our SUNO partners' findings.

## Chapter 2

### Governor's Office of Women's Services Domestic Violence Programs

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#### Key Findings

##### **Children's Services Program:**

- The Children's Services Program promoted and supported new services specifically for children who are exposed to domestic violence in their families, thus responding to the important needs of a previously unserved population.
- As of September 30, 2002, estimated 2,853 children had received needed services through the Children's Services Programs that included a personalized safety plan, a daily activity group, assessment by the Children's Advocate, and individual counseling.

##### **Rural Outreach Program:**

- The Rural Outreach Program demonstrated that community organizing is key to the development of coordinated systems of community support for the effective provision of direct services for women who have experienced domestic violence.
- An important element in the success of the Rural Outreach Program is the person selected as the community organizer. A local person with roots in the rural community can make all the difference in the ability of the rural outreach program to become well-established and self-sustaining.
- Another important element of community organizing is the provision of training and education to rural community regarding awareness of domestic violence



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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Children's Services Program

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Governor's Office of Women's Services
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$1,186,075 (for 11/01 – 9/02)
<b>Expenditure to Date:</b>	\$1,151,145 (as of 9/02, OWS report)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	Children in homes where one family member is abusing another are at greater risk of abuse and violence themselves and often experience long-term adverse effects from their exposure to family violence. The Children's Services Programs provide special safety, counseling, and other supportive services for children in families receiving domestic violence services.
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	OWS contracts with the 19 programs that provide domestic violence services across the state: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Calcasieu Women's Shelter</li><li>▪ Capital Area Family Violence Intervention Center</li><li>▪ Chez Hope, Inc.</li><li>▪ Crescent House Shelter/Catholic Charities</li><li>▪ Domestic Abuse Resistance Team (D.A.R.T.)</li><li>▪ Faith House</li><li>▪ Family Counseling Agency/Turning Point Shelter</li><li>▪ June N. Jenkins Women's Shelter</li><li>▪ The Haven</li><li>▪ Metropolitan Battered Women's Program</li><li>▪ New Start Center</li><li>▪ Safe Harbor Battered Women's Program</li><li>▪ Safety Net for Abused Persons, Inc.</li><li>▪ Southeast Spouse Abuse Program</li><li>▪ St. Bernard Battered Women's Program</li><li>▪ Taylor House/Project Celebration</li><li>▪ YWCA of Northeast Louisiana</li><li>▪ YWCA of New Orleans</li><li>▪ YWCA of Northwest Louisiana</li></ul>
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	The 19 domestic violence programs that are located across the state.
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Children whose parents or caretaker relatives are victims of domestic violence.
<b>Total Number Served:</b>	2,853 children have been served by the 19 domestic violence programs in Louisiana.

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issues, the availability of local resources, and methods of developing financial and other support for a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

- As of September 30, 2002, 1,621 women and children had received services from the rural outreach programs that included safe shelter, assistance with protective orders and other legal needs, crisis support, individual and group counseling, and other support that aided survivors of domestic violence in their journey toward self-sufficiency.

#### **Department of Social Services (DSS) Staff Training Program:**

- The DSS Training Program provided domestic violence training to more than 2,000 staff at all levels at the Office of Family Support (OFS), but only 224 staff at the Office of Community Services (OCS).
- OFS workers who received the DSS Staff Training found it helpful and reported using the techniques they had learned to recognize clients who are victims or at risk for becoming victims of domestic violence.

#### **Law Enforcement Training Program:**

- The Law Enforcement Training Program trained 767 law enforcement personnel at all levels on responding to domestic violence.
- Feedback from participants in the training, as well as “before-and-after” stories from several of our respondents, indicates that law enforcement personnel improved in their ability to respond appropriately and effectively to domestic violence following their attendance at the Law Enforcement Training sessions.

## **Program Overview**

The Governor's Office of Women's Services (OWS) was awarded \$4 million in TANF Initiatives funds for SFY 2002 to provide Domestic Violence Services.<sup>1</sup> There were four primary components to the TANF Initiatives at OWS:

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<sup>1</sup> OWS also received \$1 million in TANF Initiatives funding for a Microenterprise Program.

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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Rural Outreach Program

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Governor's Office of Women's Services
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$2,000,000 (for 6/01 – 9/02)
<b>Expenditure to Date:</b>	\$1,166,577 (as of 9/02)
<b>Projected Expenditure</b>	\$2,000,000 (through 12/02, OWS projection)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	In response to a significant need for domestic violence services in rural areas, the Rural Outreach Program, using a community organizing model, provides services and creates self-sustaining offices.
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	Ten full-time and six part-time programs based in domestic violence programs in the Parishes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Avoyelles</li><li>▪ Grant</li><li>▪ Allen</li><li>▪ Jackson</li><li>▪ Bienville</li><li>▪ Claiborne</li><li>▪ St. Helena</li><li>▪ Ascension</li><li>▪ Pt. Coupee</li><li>▪ Cameron</li><li>▪ DeSoto</li><li>▪ St. Landry</li><li>▪ Vermillion</li><li>▪ Franklin</li><li>▪ Madison</li><li>▪ Webster</li></ul>
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Persons who are victims of domestic violence who have a dependent child or children.
<b>Total Number of Families Served :</b>	1,621

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- Children’s Services Programs for children in families receiving domestic violence services at the 15 shelters and four non-residential domestic violence programs across the state;
- Rural Outreach Programs for women and children at 16 rural locations served by ten of the state’s domestic violence programs;
- A DSS Training Program on domestic violence for Department of Social Services (DSS) staff in the Office of Family Support (OFS) and the Office of Community Services (OCS); and
- A Law Enforcement Training Program on responding to domestic violence.

In addition to those four primary programs, OWS also provided small contracts under TANF Initiatives to four substance abuse treatment facilities in New Orleans and to the Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse for Greater New Orleans to train substance abuse professionals on local referral and treatment options for women with drug or alcohol abuse problems who were also experiencing domestic violence, and to provide individual clients with referrals to domestic violence services.<sup>2</sup>

OWS is chartered to assist in coordinating funding, services, and programs in the state that address the needs of women. OWS created its Family Violence Program to meet the acute need for safety and shelter for battered women and their children. OWS’ Family Violence Program provides much of the financial support for the shelters and non-residential programs that provide domestic violence services in Louisiana.<sup>3</sup>

OWS directly funded and had oversight for the TANF Initiatives Children’s Services Programs that were operated by the state’s domestic violence programs under contract to OWS. The Rural Outreach Program is administered and coordinated by the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV), under contract to OWS; LCADV in turn subcontracts with local domestic violence programs providers to provide the services. Also part of the OWS contract with LCADV was the DSS Staff Training Program, for which LCADV provided training using in-house and contract trainers. LCADV also administered and coordinated the Law Enforcement Training Program under this contract, subcontracting with a national training consultant to provide the training.

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<sup>2</sup> Those four contracts were funded out of the program management budget under Children’s Services Program.

<sup>3</sup> For these 19 programs, OWS provides, on average, 40 percent of the program’s total budget, with the rest being provided by other state and local sources.

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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Department of Social Services Staff Training Programs

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Governor's Office of Women's Services (OWS)
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$285,000 (for 11/01 – 9/02)
<b>Expenditure to Date:</b>	\$285,000 (as of 9/02)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	To increase awareness and recognition of domestic violence, trainings were provided for DSS staff at the Office of Family Support (OFS) and Office of Community Services (OCS).
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	Statewide
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Mandatory for OFS staff; recommended for OCS staff
<b>Total Number Served :</b>	2,279 DSS staff attended training

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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Summary of Law Enforcement Training Programs

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Governor's Office of Women's Services (OWS)
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$278,920 (for 11/01 – 9/02)
<b>Expenditure to Date:</b>	\$278,920 (as of 9/02)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	To increase awareness and recognition of domestic violence, trainings were provided for law enforcement personnel across the state.
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	Statewide
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Recommended for local and state law enforcement personnel across the state.
<b>Total Number Served :</b>	767 law enforcement personnel attended training

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This chapter provides an analysis of the TANF Initiatives programs operated through OWS. Findings presented here are based on site visits and telephone interviews with staff at OWS and LCADV, as well as a site visit to D.A.R.T. (Domestic Abuse Resistance Team), a non-profit provider of domestic violence services based in Ruston, where we interviewed the staff of their Children’s Services Program, attended a children’s activity group, met with current residents of the women’s shelter, visited the Rural Outreach Program office in Jackson County, attended a meeting of the Jackson County Community Coordinated Response Team, and met with other D.A.R.T. outreach staff.

### **Program Objectives**

OWS’ TANF Initiatives Program to provide Domestic Violence Services is intended to meet TANF Goal #4, to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families by providing training and crisis services to assist women and children living in a “special-needs” situation—family violence—in order to promote their safety and self-sufficiency, and provide the opportunity to develop healthy, non-violent two-parent families.

### **Program History and Background**

The need for domestic violence services in Louisiana is great: According to the Violence Policy Center, in 1999 Louisiana was third behind Nevada and Alaska in the number of women killed by men, with a murder rate (2.51 per 100,000) nearly twice that of the nation (1.35 per 100,000).<sup>4</sup> The Louisiana Department of Justice cites a recent telephone survey conducted by the Louisiana Office of Public Health, and extrapolating using U.S. Census data for the state, estimates that 40,281 women residing in Louisiana were raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner in the last 12 months. Statistics reported to OWS indicate that domestic violence shelters and non-residential programs in Louisiana served 18,480 women and 12,221 children during SFY 2002;<sup>5</sup> during this time period, 1,720 women and 1,279 children were “turned away” because maximum capacity at a program had been reached or because they were ineligible for services. Clearly, there are not programs enough to meet more than a fraction of the need for domestic violence services. For example, in New Orleans, there are just two programs: a residential shelter

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<sup>4</sup> *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 1999 Homicide Data: Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents*, Violence Policy Center, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> These statistics represent a duplicated count which includes carryovers (more than one month of service) and return stays. A woman and her children may stay at a shelter for 45 days.

for 30 families and a YWCA providing non-residential services. In particular, there are very few rural programs that deal with the unique barriers to receiving assistance facing rural victims of domestic violence.<sup>6</sup>

Domestic violence is recognized as a major barrier to moving from welfare to work for many welfare recipients, and both DSS and OWS share a concern about the barriers and risks faced by low-income families that are experiencing domestic violence. Especially at risk are children in homes where domestic violence occurs. Children in these homes are themselves often victims of violence, including the psychological violence they may experience as a result of witnessing or attempting to deal with violence in the home. Recognizing the need for greater awareness of domestic violence issues and for safety and supportive services, particularly in rural areas, DSS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with OWS to provide expanded domestic violence services that were to include rural outreach, services to children in shelters, and training of DSS and law enforcement personnel. DSS invited OWS to participate in TANF Initiatives programs designed to address these needs.

A key partner in the TANF Initiatives programs is LCADV, a statewide network of organizations that provide shelter, safety, and supportive services for battered women, as well as programs for the prevention of violence against women and children. LCADV's members include the 19 domestic violence programs/shelters that operate across the state. In addition to its work with OWS, LCADV also administers funds that the local domestic violence programs receive from other sources.<sup>7</sup>

### **Design of Children's Services Program**

For the Children's Services Programs, OWS established agreements with the local domestic violence programs across the state to use TANF Initiatives funds to provide services to all children and/or their parents or caretaker relatives who are victims of domestic violence. Services were not to be limited to needy families. OWS' program

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<sup>6</sup> "[G]eographic isolation, economic structure, social/cultural pressures, and lack of available services in rural communities significantly compound the problems faced by victims seeking to end the violence in their lives." From the Web site for the Violence Against Women Office (VAWO), U.S. Department of Justice: [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/rural\\_grant\\_desc.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/rural_grant_desc.htm).

<sup>7</sup> In particular, LCADV was involved in an earlier project, the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grant administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, that served as the model for the Rural Outreach Program.

design for the Children's Services Programs included specific standards and expectations for the services that were to be provided, including:

- A daily two-hour playgroup that allows children to learn consistency, structure, and nonviolent conflict resolution, as well as to talk about what has happened to them in a safe, empowering place;
- Individual counseling;
- A weekly parenting group (occurring at the same time as the play group) that helps parents understand and relate to their children who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence;
- An intake for the child within 48 hours of the mother's program intake;
- A personalized safety plan for each child; and
- Visits to the children's teachers, to give them forewarning of the domestic violence situation.

### **Design of Rural Outreach Program**

The design of the Rural Outreach Program was for local domestic violence programs to develop a coordinated community response to domestic violence in their rural areas, and then base direct services for domestic violence on this foundation. Each of the domestic violence programs participating in the Rural Outreach Program was to hire staff to create and enhance partnerships in their rural communities with the criminal justice system, child protective services, welfare agencies, faith communities, and other similar organizations. The main tasks of these community organizers were to get the community interested in developing and supporting domestic violence services and to assemble a Community Coordinated Response Team (CCRT) made up of members of the rural area's local government agencies, community organizations, and consumers and advocates.

An important element of the Rural Outreach Program's community organizing was to be the provision of training to individuals in rural areas regarding community awareness of domestic violence, local availability of resources for women and children facing domestic violence, and ways to develop financial and other support for a coordinated community response to domestic violence. Staff of the Rural Outreach Program were responsible for providing community awareness education to groups and individuals likely to come into contact with victims of family violence and to offer training in responding to domestic violence to law enforcement, medical, social service, and other professional personnel.



The domestic violence services that were to be made available once this foundation of community organizing had been established included: crisis telephone hotlines, assistance with locating safe shelter, legal representations and assistance with protective orders, advocacy and referral to other agencies, and individual and group counseling for victims and batterers. In addition the specialized children's services of the Children's Services Program were to be provided to the extent possible.

The Rural Outreach Program was designed as an eighteen-month program.<sup>8</sup> A first round of subcontracts covered an initial six-month period for ten rural areas each to conduct a public awareness program and establish a local CCRT. No direct services would be provided during the first six months, which focused on subgrantees achieving the community organizing goals including: meeting with community leaders and local businesses, establishing the CCRT, and providing general outreach in the community to develop domestic violence services and services funding. After successful completion of the community organizing goals, subgrantees could then apply for an additional twelve-month grant to set up an office for the provision of direct services and the continuation of community organizing.

The Rural Outreach Program also offered subcontracts to six programs that already had domestic violence services in their areas, to hire part-time staff to perform community organizing and establish a CCRT. Additionally, the Rural Outreach Program included the Rural Project Assistance Program (RPAP), which was designed to provide victims of domestic violence with computer education and with financial assistance for essentials such as utility deposits, first month rent, telephone deposits, civil legal fees, and child care. Under RPAP, each outreach office was given a computer system and was provided with Internet service for the duration of the twelve-month funding.

### **Design of DSS Staff Training Program**

The DSS Staff Training Program was designed to meet the need for training for OFS and OCS staff, to increase awareness of domestic violence issues for caseworkers and other staff providing FITAP and child welfare services. The TANF Initiatives-funded DSS Staff Training Program was the first statewide attempt to train Louisiana's OFS and OCS workers on awareness and recognition of domestic violence and on the resources to which their clients who are experiencing domestic violence could be referred. The trainings were

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<sup>8</sup> LCADV has an eighteen-month contract for this TANF Initiative.

mandated for OFS caseworker staff, and strongly encouraged for OCS staff. Trainings were held in each of the eight DSS regions, at locations that were convenient for local staff. LCADV hired consultants and expert trainers to conduct the one-day trainings; some trainings were conducted by LCADV staff with training expertise.

### **Design of Law Enforcement Training Program**

The Law Enforcement Training Program was designed to provide law enforcement personnel, including dispatchers, across the state with training in how to respond to domestic violence. LCADV contracted with a nationally recognized expert in domestic violence policing, who conducted seven two-day trainings on “Law Enforcement Response to Domestic Violence,” including two Train-the-Trainer sessions. LCADV worked with the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) to do outreach to the State Police, Sheriff’s Departments, and city police forces to encourage participation in the training.

## **Status of Program Implementation**

### **Status of Children’s Services Program**

Despite significant delays in start-up at most of the locations, the Children’s Services Programs have been fully implemented at each of the 19 domestic violence programs in the state. Although a few of the domestic violence programs already had individuals on staff who were qualified to serve as Children’s Advocates and could thus begin providing services to children in the early months of the program (November – December 2001), most of the programs did not have a Children’s Advocate on board until after several months had passed, and did not begin service delivery until February or March 2002. However, Children’s Services Programs are now are up and running at all 19 programs, and are providing services as expected to children whose mothers are receiving residential or non-residential domestic violence services.

As of September 30, 2002, 2,889 children had been served by the Children’s Services Programs operated by the state’s domestic violence programs. This non-duplicated count exceeds the projected annual goal of 2,644 children served. The services received by these children included a personalized safety plan, the daily two-hour playgroup, assessment by the Children’s Advocate, and individual counseling.

Performance measures related to the delivery of service were developed—for example, percentage of intakes completed within 48 hours of shelter arrival, percentage of children provided with personalized safety plans, and percentage of individual child assessments or evaluations completed within 72 hours of shelter arrival—and the individual programs reported on their performance on these measures monthly. Exhibit 2.1 shows the estimates for various performance indicators for the Children’s Services Program for the program year that ended September 30, 2002. The exhibit appears to suggest that the program met the targets by some measures. However, because the quality of the data reported is inconsistent across sites and because aggregation methods used by OWS to calculate these indicators are also not reliable, we find it difficult to make conclusive remarks for the Children’s Services Program as a whole based on these indicators.

Inconsistency in the reported indicators across sites are due to a lack of familiarity with the type of data needed by DOA and DSS on the part of OWS and the domestic violence programs, and to confusion about what was actually to be reported. In addition, it became apparent over the course of the program that some of the original performance measures needed to be clarified or even modified in order to account for the different circumstances—and the different timing—under which a child might enter a shelter or a non-residential program. Changes have been made in the Children’s Services Program performance measures for the next program year, so that more consistent and easier-to-aggregate measures across sites can be tracked.

### **Status of Rural Outreach Program**

The Rural Outreach Program began on July 1, 2000 with ten rural sites that had been contracted to conduct community organizing for six months prior to the establishment of services. With the exception of three sites that were “defunded” for non-performance and were replaced by three new sites, all of the programs were implemented as planned and on

**Exhibit 2.1**  
**Indicators for Children’s Services Programs**

<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Total for Program Year</u>	<u>Annual Goal</u>
Number of children served	2,853	2,644
# of intakes completed within 48 hrs of shelter arrival	2,315	2,274
% of intakes completed within 48 hrs of shelter arrival	80%	86%
# of child assessments or evaluations completed within 72 hrs of shelter arrival	1,928	2,008
% of child assessments/ evaluations completed within 72 hrs of shelter arrival	67%-	81%
# of playgroups	3,734	3,380
% of children, ages 3 to 11, either living in a shelter or receiving services, that participated in playgroups	--	79%
# of parenting groups	610	719
% of women, living in a shelter or receiving services, that participated in parenting groups	---	50%
% of children provided with personalized safety plans (based on 2,243 children who received personalized safety plans)	78%	85%
% of children receiving services upon completion of assessment or evaluation by a Children’s Advocate (based on 2,407 children who were receiving services upon completion of assessment or evaluation by a Children’s Advocate)	83%	83%

Source: OWS estimates.

schedule.<sup>9</sup> During the first six months of the program, rural outreach staff engaged in gathering community support, assembling the Community Coordinated Response Teams (CCRT), and providing awareness education and training to individuals and groups in the community. Following this initial period, the ten sites began to establish local offices and to provide direct domestic violence services in addition to their community organizing and training activities; service delivery is now underway at all ten sites. In addition, community organizing activities have begun in the past several months at the six part-time

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<sup>9</sup> These three sites – East Feliciana, West Feliciana, and Plaquemines – lost their funding due to non-performance, primarily by non-achievement of their standards for developing community support.

sites that are charged with developing community infrastructure in rural locations where domestic violence services already existed.

Although we are unable to assess the *degree* of “community organizing” that has been achieved—it is very difficult to measure such an outcome without extensive surveys of the population being targeted for community organization—we are able to report that all ten full-time programs are up and running, with well-established CCRT. In all ten areas, the CCRT is working toward increasing the availability of services in their rural areas by holding forums, making educational presentations, raising money, and helping the community identify ongoing funding for continued services.

Between March 1, 2002 (when direct services began to be offered at most of the rural sites) and September 30, 2002, 1,621 women and children received services from the rural outreach programs. The goal for this performance indicator is that 1,600 women and children will be served by the local rural outreach offices over the course of the eighteen-month contract. The Rural Outreach Program exceeded the target by the end of September 2002.

The Rural Outreach Program had an additional performance indicator, “Number of people trained on domestic violence and coordinated community response to domestic violence.” To date, this measure has been reported in terms of training units; as of September 30, 2002, 3616 training units had been provided, or 164% of the goal of 1,470.5 training units. Data available for the period of July 2002 through September 2002 indicate that 1,250 people received training during this time, which included a major, national training conference.

### **Status of DSS Staff Training Program**

The DSS Staff Training Program was successfully implemented as planned. Training was provided to 2,055 OFS staff and 224 OCS staff on topics that included how to recognize signs of domestic violence in DSS clients and how to make referrals to local resources.<sup>10</sup> However, the number of OCS workers that participated in the training was disappointing; it appeared that the low attendance figures for OCS staff were due to the limited support given to the DSS Training Program by OCS management, which, unlike OFS, did not require staff to attend the domestic violence training.

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<sup>10</sup> The program goal was to train 1,932 OFS staff and 529 OCS staff.

The indicator of whether the DSS Staff Training Program was considered successful was the attendees' rating of it as excellent, good, fair, or poor with regard to increasing their knowledge of appropriate assessment and referral techniques for children and non-abusing parents experiencing domestic violence.<sup>11</sup> For both the OFS and OCS trainings, the vast majority of those in attendance (93 percent) rated the DSS Staff Training Program as excellent or good. Evidence that the OFS workers who received the DSS Training in fact utilized the knowledge they gained to benefit their clients was found in the site visits that were conducted for BPA's evaluation of Louisiana's FITAP and FIND Work programs. FITAP analysts and other OFS staff reported in the site visit interviews that the domestic violence training they received reduced their "preconceived ideas about the clients that come in," and made them more aware and sensitive "so as not to 'scare off' a client who may be in that situation." In particular, they reported using the techniques they had learned to recognize that the client is a victim or at risk for being a victim of domestic violence, and to be aware of resistance on the part of the client to discuss domestic violence. They also reported relying on the resource and referral books they received as part of the training.

### **Status of Law Enforcement Training Program**

The Law Enforcement Training Program was also successfully implemented as planned. Training on topics that included helping abuse victims in need, best practices for domestic violence advocates, and train-the-trainer instruction was provided to 767 law enforcement officers in 15 two-day trainings.<sup>12</sup> The indicator of whether the Law Enforcement Training Program was considered successful was the attendees' rating of it as excellent, good, fair, or poor with regard to increasing their knowledge of how law enforcement should respond to domestic violence.<sup>13</sup> The vast majority of those in attendance (98 percent) rated the training as excellent or good. Both LCADV and OWS received feedback from participants in the training indicating that they were using the lessons from the training in their work in

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<sup>11</sup> The indicator for the OFS training was attendees' rating of the statement, "Overall the training has increased your knowledge of appropriate assessment and referral techniques for survivors without endangering the family." The indicator for the OCS training was attendees' rating of the statement, "Overall the training has increased your knowledge of appropriate and safe treatment strategies for children and non-abusing parents in domestic violence cases." For both trainings, the goal was to achieve an overall rating of 60 percent on "Percentage reporting increased knowledge."

<sup>12</sup> The program goal was to train 600-800 law enforcement officers.

<sup>13</sup> The indicator for the Law Enforcement Training Program was attendees' rating of the statement, "Overall the training has increased your knowledge of law enforcement's response to domestic violence." The goal was to achieve an overall rating of 60 percent on "Percentage reporting increased knowledge."

domestic violence investigation and intervention. In addition, several of our respondents related “before-and-after” stories of improvements in the ability of local law enforcement personnel to respond appropriately and effectively to domestic violence following their attendance at the Law Enforcement Training sessions.

### **Program Budget and Spending**

OWS was awarded \$4 million for TANF Initiatives programs for the program year FFY 2002. The budget allocated to each OWS program component was as follows:

- Children’s Services Programs: \$1,186,075<sup>14</sup>
- Rural Outreach Programs: \$2,000,000
- DSS Training Program: \$285,000
- Law Enforcement Training Program: \$278,920

The remaining funds, in the amount of \$250,005, were to be used by OWS for program management and administrative costs and to pay for the training and domestic violence referrals to be performed at substance abuse programs in New Orleans.

The OWS TANF Initiatives programs encountered start-up problems that delayed program spending, especially by the Children’s Services Programs. In addition, programmatic and fiscal problems at OWS during the period of the TANF Initiatives programs resulted in a fiscal audit for that agency, and ultimately, major staff cutbacks, and the removal of the office’s fiscal functions to DOA in June 2002. Related to this organizational crisis, there were numerous complications and delays in the processing of expenditures and in actual spending for the TANF Initiatives programs. The fiscal problems of the TANF Initiatives programs were largely resolved once DOA took over OWS’ fiscal functions.

As shown in Exhibit 2.2, the final expenditures for OWS’ TANF Initiatives programs will have reached a total of \$3,715,065 (of the \$4,000,000 total allocation) when the Rural Outreach Program ends on December 31, 2002.<sup>15</sup> For the three OWS programs that ended

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<sup>14</sup> The \$1,186,075 amount budgeted for the *Children’s Services Programs* was divided equally across the 19 domestic violence organizations, giving each program \$62,425.

<sup>15</sup> As noted earlier, the Rural Outreach Program was designed as an eighteen-month program. As of September 30, 2002, \$1,166,577 of the Rural Outreach Program’s \$2,000,000 budget had been spent. The remaining amount will be expended by the close of the program on December 31, 2002. Spending for this program is progressing as expected, with greatly increased expenditures in the last months of the program

**Exhibit 2.2**  
**Expenditures for OWS TANF Initiatives Programs**

Program	Budgeted	Expenditures through 9/02	Projected Expenditures through 12/02
Children’s Services Programs	\$1,436,080	\$1,151,145	\$1,151,145
Rural Outreach Programs	\$2,000,000	\$1,166,577	\$2,000,000
DSS Training Program	\$285,000	\$285,000	\$285,000
Law Enforcement Training Program	\$278,920	\$278,920	\$278,920
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,000,000</b>	<b>\$2,888,642</b>	<b>\$3,715,065</b>

Source: Office of Women’s Services and Division of Administration.

on September 30, 2002—the Children’s Services Programs, the DSS Training Program, and the Law Enforcement Training Program—\$1,715,065 of the \$2,000,000 total allocated to them was spent by the programs’ close date. As of September 30, a total of \$2,725,036 had been spent for the three completed TANF Initiatives programs and the Rural Outreach Program combined.

Of the \$1,186,075 that was allocated to the 19 domestic violence programs for Children’s Services Programs, approximately \$135,600 was unspent. The main reason for this underspending was that the local domestic violence programs are, for the most part, small, nonprofit organizations with very limited budgets, and a number of them had to cut back on planned services because they could not afford the up-front payment of program costs as required by the cost-reimbursement contracts for the TANF Initiatives programs. Approximately \$150,000 of the \$250,005 budgeted for administrative and other programmatic costs was unspent, including \$50,000 that was intended to pay for contract monitoring that never took place, as well as approximately \$27,000 of the \$40,546 for training and domestic violence services at substance abuse programs in New Orleans.

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as the rural outreach coordinators, who initially did community organizing only, established new offices and provided direct services to increasing numbers of women and children.



## Implementation Challenges

### Challenges Faced by Children's Services Program

The Children's Services Programs experienced start-up delays at both the state agency level and the program level. OWS found it more difficult than anticipated to accomplish the fiscal tasks and to communicate with DSS and DOA regarding the TANF Initiatives contracts with the local domestic violence programs. In particular, start-up delays occurred due to the need to modify these contracts to bring their proposed services and budgets in line with the requirements and expectations for TANF Initiatives funding, which were unfamiliar both to the domestic violence programs and to OWS. In addition, as part of the previously-mentioned organizational problems at OWS during the time of the TANF Initiatives programs, OWS had very limited in-house ability to handle its contract arrangements expeditiously, which translated into ongoing problems and delays with the contracts with the domestic violence programs. In the opinion of the respondents for this study, these problems were finally ameliorated when DOA took over OWS' fiscal functions in June 2002 and instituted improved fiscal controls and communication processes.

The major challenge for the Children's Services Program was how to implement services for children at domestic violence programs that had always been oriented to services for adults. The domestic violence service providers needed to accomplish a number of tasks that were new to them, including ensuring that they had on staff Children's Advocates who were experienced in working with children and in addressing their family violence issues; organizing service delivery so as to accommodate the educational, therapeutic, recreational, and other needs of children; and making sure that the appropriate physical space was available for providing services to children.

A typical example of how this challenge was addressed by a domestic violence program may be found at the Children's Services Program we visited at D.A.R.T. (Domestic Abuse Resistance Team), a non-profit organization based in Ruston that serves Lincoln, Jackson, Bienville, Claiborne, and Union Parishes. First, D.A.R.T. hired two part-time Children's Advocates with backgrounds in child development and education, rather than the usual social work or counseling. The Children's Advocates led the required daily playgroups for children at the shelter for battered women and their families in Ruston, as well as the weekly evening groups for children at the shelter and at locations in two of the outlying parishes. All playgroups and other sessions with school-age children were scheduled for

after school and evening hours. The addition of the Children’s Advocates to the staff freed up D.A.R.T.’s Children’s Counselor to conduct individual counseling sessions, family sessions, and parenting groups, and to work intensively with the children on coping skills, crisis intervention, safety, anger management, depression, and self-esteem. All of the staff who work with the children at the shelter and in D.A.R.T.’s non-residential programs were qualified and experienced; having a specialized, dedicated staff for the Children’s Services Program appeared to be key to the program’s success.

D.A.R.T. also used TANF Initiatives funds to acquire resources for the children’s activity groups and to enhance the children’s activity room at its new shelter location.<sup>16</sup> TANF Initiatives funds were used to purchase appropriate playroom materials, including culture- and gender-sensitive toys, skills-building games, etc. D.A.R.T. also purchased enough art supplies to outfit three separate locations: the shelter, the main office, and the “mobile playroom” of the Child Advocate who travels to the outlying parishes. The creation of a safe and comfortable place for the children has greatly improved D.A.R.T.’s ability to provide high-quality services for the children of the women who are receiving domestic violence services in both their residential and non-residential programs.

### **Challenges Faced by Rural Outreach Program**

The Rural Outreach Program also faced start-up challenges. The program was seen as an expansion of existing services (the earlier Department of Justice-funded Rural Project), and the expectation was that it could be implemented relatively quickly. However, the required timetable for conducting a competitive RFP process and beginning project implementation was extremely short, and it appeared to LCADV that the establishment of ten new program sites would necessitate more planning and start-up activities than the time allowed. LCADV devised several strategies for implementing the Rural Outreach Program quickly, including:

- Suggesting that those applying for a grant begin to think about possible office locations and other logistical issues during the application process, rather than waiting until they received an award;

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<sup>16</sup> D.A.R.T. obtained permission from its Board of Directors to convert (using non-TANF Initiatives funds) the free-standing garage at the new location into a physical space that was large enough to address the needs of a large group of children or to permit the division of the children into age-related groups.

- Announcing in the RFP that special consideration would be given to applicants who could demonstrate the ability to obtain donated equipment and/or office space and to start up quickly.
- Encouraging subgrantees to hire a local person, familiar with the rural community and known to its residents, to perform community organizing activities and staff the local office; and
- Offering training and technical assistance to the community outreach workers and others in the community involved in domestic violence issues. This assistance was to cover not only how to initiate the required community organizing, but also practical information on how to secure safe office space and how to solicit donations of furniture and equipment.

Following these strategies helped the domestic violence programs involved in the Rural Outreach Program accomplish their program start-up quickly and efficiently. The programs were particularly effective when they hired outreach staff who were already well-positioned to perform the community organizing activities required by the grant, such as participating in community events and making presentations throughout the area with regard to the issue of domestic violence. Seven of the ten original subgrantees achieved the six-month community organizing objectives and are currently meeting all expectations for service delivery and ongoing community organizing. As noted earlier, three of the original programs that did not perform well were replaced with other sites which are currently operating successfully.

The Rural Outreach Program is primarily a systems change program, which has as its desired result the creation of a community infrastructure. Having the goal of systems change, rather than the goal of achieving specific desired outcomes as a result of program activities, can become an issue when attempting to evaluate the success of the program or to assess the ways in which it has added value to the system. It may sometimes be possible to identify outcomes that have resulted from specific networking and community organizing activities, for example, a telephone tree that has been established for purposes of keeping the members of the network in touch with each other may have a service provision outcome, such as the provision of emergency transportation for women who are experiencing domestic violence. In general, however, it is difficult to demonstrate that specific outcomes occurred because of the change that has occurred in the system overall. It is thus an ongoing challenge to identify ways to measure the success of a program designed to result in overall system change.

### **Challenges Faced by DSS Staff Training Program**

The primary challenge for the DSS Staff Training Program was assuring the participation of DSS staff in the training. This was not a major issue for the trainings that were conducted with OFS staff, as there was significant buy-in from senior OFS management for this effort, and LCADV's training on domestic violence issues was made mandatory for OFS caseworker staff. However, OCS staff were not required to attend the training, and it became a challenge for LCADV to find ways to encourage their participation. To that end, LCADV attempted to minimize the amount of travel for the OCS attendees, as well as the time away from the office, and arranged to conduct the training in convenient locations across the state, in each of the eight DSS regions. They also contracted with locally recognized training consultants who were known to OFS and OCS staff as being knowledgeable and interesting. LCADV was successful in reaching a large number of DSS staff, with the training on domestic violence issues.

Participants in the training gave very high ratings to the training with regard to knowledge that they had gained about domestic violence issues and about resources and treatment. In a separate field study conducted in 11 parishes by Berkeley Policy Associates for the evaluation of the statewide FITAP program, FITAP staff were asked about the domestic violence training and about its value to them. FITAP staff responses were consistently positive, with staff reporting using the techniques they had learned to recognize client who are victims or at risk for becoming victims of domestic violence. FITAP staff also commented on the importance of the training in providing them with resources for their clients and on their utilization of the information they learned in the DSS Training Program.

### **Challenges Faced by Law Enforcement Training Program**

The Law Enforcement Training Program encountered a challenge similar to that faced by the DSS Staff Training Program, with regard to assuring the participation of law enforcement personnel across the state, including dispatchers and support staff, in training on how to respond to domestic violence. LCADV pursued a similar strategy of scheduling the training in a variety of locations for the convenience of the attendees. In addition, they contracted with a nationally recognized expert in domestic violence policing, who is well-known in law enforcement circles as a dynamic and compelling speaker. Working with the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) proved to be an effective outreach

method of encouraging attendance from members of the State Police, Sheriff's Departments, and city police forces; the use of the LCLE "endorsement" provided LCADV with additional visibility and credibility among law enforcement personnel. LCADV was also successful in achieving high ratings in the officers' evaluation of the extent to which the training made them more knowledgeable about the subject of domestic violence.

## Recommendations

- Both Children's Services and Rural Outreach Programs should pursue strategies to increase awareness in the community of the TANF Initiatives programs' services and resources. For the Children's Services Programs, it is important that the availability of services be promoted in order to direct community attention and support to the important needs of children in families where domestic violence has occurred. For the Rural Outreach Program, program visibility is a key component of the development of community infrastructure that supports the provision of domestic violence services in rural areas and breaks taboos about this issue. For both programs, increasing program visibility can be accomplished by such efforts as attendance at community events, presentations to local groups, and memberships on local boards and commissions for CCRT members.
- The Children's Services and Rural Outreach Programs should develop more formal linkages with the local FITAP and OCS offices, particularly for the Children's Services Programs. Formal linkages can be strengthened by continuing outreach to local FITAP offices (for example, presentations on local domestic violence programs and resources), which, to date, have proven valuable to the TANF Initiatives programs, with regard to increased visibility in the community.
- The Children's Services and Rural Outreach Programs should develop good working relationships with key individuals with an insiders' knowledge of how the system works and who the important players are in law enforcement, the court system, and other parts of the legal system. The staff at D.A.R.T.

reported that one of the keys to their success was having someone on the inside in the District Attorney's Office and other court offices who could facilitate their interactions with the courts and help expedite legal processes, such as preparing paperwork for temporary restraining orders.

- For the Rural Outreach Program, additional opportunities should be created to meet and network with one another for mutual support and to share ideas and experiences. Learning from each other's experience, and providing one another with peer support, has proven to be an important way through which individuals involved in domestic violence programs can share their ideas for improving services, and maintain their commitment to the work.

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## Chapter 3

### Workforce Commission

# Adult Basic Education and Job Skills Training

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## Key Findings

- The program provided course tuition and job skills training to 3,540 participants through every community and technical college campus in the state. More than 2,400 adults received tuition payments, and 907 people participated in targeted skills training through upgrade services. Many participants also received support services including child care assistance, transportation stipends, and career counseling.
- Campus program staff reported that tuition services benefited students who would not otherwise have pursued further education and skills training. While tuition services exceeded enrollment targets, respondents report that many students in tuition programs were not low-literate learners that the program aimed to serve, in part a result of inadequate recruitment of the program's target population.
- Program administrators observed that it was difficult to incorporate low-literate learners into the existing programs at colleges. To address this gap in service, the Workforce Commission and Louisiana Community and Technical College System offered workplace literacy enhancement grants. More than \$2.3 million of Year One money was used to provide computers, Work Keys assessment software, and other resources to enhance campuses' ability to provide workplace literacy instruction.
- Only 15 percent of participants receiving tuition and upgrade training accessed child care stipends. Program requirements and lack of convenient, qualified child care facilities at or near schools contributed to the less than expected uptake of child care services. Campuses spent approximately \$404,000 through child care capacity building grants offered by Initiative administrators to expand hours and services in onsite child care facilities.



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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Basic and Job Skills Training and Retention Services Program

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$10,000,000 (for 10/01-9/02)
<b>Expenditures:</b>	\$7,429,644
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	Basic and Job Skills Training and Retention Services Program providers workplace literacy education and to low-income parents and customized skill upgrade training for eligible employed parents. TANF Initiative funds were used to provide services that target Louisiana's low-literate population.
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	The Workforce Commission contracts with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) to provide education and training services.
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	Services are provided at all locations of the LCTCS system, which includes 7 Community Colleges and 42 branches of the Louisiana Technical College. Services are also provided at local community-based providers.
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Adults with children under age 20 and earned income levels at or below 200 percent of federal poverty line
<b>Total Number of Participants Served:</b>	3,540 participants (from 11/01 to 9/02)

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### Program Overview

As part of the State's TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Initiatives, in October 2001, the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS) contracted with the Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission to develop a program offering workplace literacy skills and customized training for low-income parents.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Workforce Commission was created in August 1997 to oversee development of a comprehensive job training system for the State. It also promotes industry -based certification, which provides training

Basic and Job Skills Training and Retention Services Program is to provide workplace literacy education and job training to low-literate, low-income parents. This objective addresses the second purpose of the TANF program to “end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.” In particular, the program emphasizes literacy instruction provided within the context of job skills training for Louisiana’s low-literate population. The State has a relatively high proportion of low-literate adults.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing the importance of a literate and trained workforce to the State’s economy, lawmakers apportioned \$10 million of TANF funds to further address this problem.

The Workforce Commission selected the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) as the primary service provider for this TANF Initiative because of LCTCS’ focus on providing technical and academic instruction to adult learners. The LCTCS currently encompasses seven community colleges and the Louisiana Technical College (LTC), which has 42 campuses statewide. LCTCS enrolled over 47,000 students in Fall 2001. LCTCS agreed to provide instruction and to collaborate with other agencies to provide support services and outreach to the targeted population of low-income and low-literate adults.

## Program Design and Eligibility

The TANF Initiative program has two components: tuition services, which pays participants’ tuition costs for community and technical college courses, and upgrade services, which consists of customized short-term skill upgrade programs for employed or pre-employment participants. Where possible, coursework enables completers to leave with portable credentials and industry-based certification, making participants’ skills more marketable to employers. Participant support services include initial assessment and goals planning, child care and transportation assistance, and other case management services to assist participants in successfully completing a program at a post-secondary institution.

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program participants with portable credentials that enables workers to more easily make lateral job changes within the same industry.

<sup>2</sup> A 1996 study estimated 28 percent of Louisiana’s adults are considered low-literate, compared to the 22 percent of the national adult population. Stephen Reder, “Synthetic Estimates of Adult Literacy Proficiency,” Portland State University, 1996.

Eligible participants include parents or caretaker relatives with children age 19 or younger and with earned income levels no higher than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Although all participants must meet these eligibility guidelines, tuition and upgrade components target particular populations. Tuition services are intended for adults with less than a high school diploma or GED, with a special emphasis on low-literate adults reading at less than 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. Upgrade courses are employer-focused, targeting incumbent workers at particular firms.

Outreach efforts to target populations are an explicit component of the program design. Regional and local TANF coordinators are charged with recruiting participants from target populations through collaboration with community-based and faith-based organizations and other local agencies. For upgrade services, campuses identify the workforce needs of local employers and recruit employees and pre-hire participants looking to acquire specific skills. The Workforce Commission allocated \$100,000 for outreach efforts, including development of marketing materials, advertising, and other promotion activities.

To participate in the tuition services component of the program, students must be enrolled in at least six community college course hours (or the technical college equivalent). TANF Initiative funds pay all tuition costs and mandatory fees (initially, there was a \$500 cap on tuition reimbursement) and reimburse participants for books and supplies (up to \$300 for full-time students and \$150 for part-time students). Funds are available for each college term, including summers. All students must meet a minimum literacy requirement as determined by each campus, although students below this standard may enroll in remedial classes, and sometimes in one or two technical skills courses concurrently. Many campuses refer students with low literacy scores to community literacy organizations and adult education providers for remedial literacy classes. [Vince: should this be included since this was primarily in effect for Year 2 only, although Year 1 money was used?]

Upgrade services are customized short-term job skills trainings that are designed to meet specific employer training needs and provide skilled workers in high-demand occupations. College staff conduct outreach to local employers to determine specific training needs in the existing workforce and then develop programs that provide specific technical skills training interwoven with job readiness skills. An emphasis of the skill upgrades is to provide completers with portable credentials and/or industry-based certification to enable participants to better market themselves to current or prospective employers. Colleges also provide job placement services for pre-hire participants in upgrade courses.

Regional program planning boards must approve upgrade proposals with costs of less than \$1,500 per student or \$150,000 per program. Proposals with higher dollar costs must be approved by the state TANF Initiative Oversight Team. Criteria for approving proposals include ability to meet objectives as set forth in regional plans developed by each region, demand in the occupation, inclusion of basic and work readiness skills, and documented employer needs.

Upon enrolling in either the tuition services or upgrades services components, participants are assessed for their employability and they develop training goals. Based in part on this assessment, college staff work with participants to complete an individualized Employment and Education Action Plan (EEAP) that devises a plan and action steps for each participant's tenure in the program.

Recognizing that low-income parents may have additional challenges to their success at a learning institution, support services were developed to assist both tuition and upgrades participants. For each day employed participants are in class, they are eligible for reimbursement for child care expenses at certain accredited facilities. Employed students are also allotted a transportation stipend of \$6 for each day spent in class. Unemployed participants are eligible to receive child care reimbursements and transportation stipends for up to 120 days. A one-time emergency transportation assistance payment of up to \$150 was available in Fall 2001.

## Program Funding and Organization

The TANF Initiative program received \$10 million of federal TANF funds for Year One of operation. Ten percent or \$1 million was set aside for administrative costs. Of the remaining \$9 million, \$6.3 million, or 70 percent, was budgeted for tuition and upgrade services costs, \$1.8 million, or 20 percent, for child care assistance, and \$900,000, or 10 percent, for transportation stipends. Exhibit 3.1 provides additional detail on budgeted and actual program expenditures. Year One expenditures totaled \$7,429,644, or about three-quarters of budgeted funds.<sup>3</sup> Planned expenditures fell short by 66 percent for child care assistance funds, 49 percent for transportation assistance funds, and 14 percent for instruction costs.

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<sup>3</sup> Program expenditure numbers were provided by the Workforce Commission. These amounts represent expenditures invoiced as of September 30, 2002.

**Exhibit 3.1**  
**Program Expenditures in Year One**

	Budgeted Expenditures (\$)	Actual Expenditures (\$)
Administrative Costs (10% of total funding)		
Workforce Commission	50,000	47,356
LCTCS, regional, campus admin. and outreach costs	<u>950,000</u>	<u>891,889</u>
Total Administrative Costs	1,000,000	939,245
Program Costs		
Instruction (tuition, supplies, and EEAP)	6,300,000	3,094,143
Workplace Literacy enhancement grants	--	2,317,109
Child Care Support	1,800,000	213,318
Child Care capacity grants	--	404,444
Transportation	<u>900,000</u>	<u>461,385</u>
Total Program Costs	9,000,000	6,490,399

Source : Workforce Commission

Administrators originally earmarked 60 percent of the program services money for upgrade programs and 40 percent for tuition services. Due to higher demand for tuition services and fewer than expected upgrades, expenditures for tuition services exceeded that for upgrades. Funding for tuition services was allocated across the eight LCTCS regions according to a formula that was based on each region's population, the proportion of the population receiving cash assistance, and the region's number of and proportion of the adult population without a high school diploma or equivalent. Campuses within each region were initially allocated slots based on current campus enrollment, and unused tuition slots were reallocated in March of 2002.

Of the \$1 million budgeted for administrative expenses, \$50,000 was allocated to the Workforce Commission for oversight-related activities, and \$150,000 was allocated to

LCTCS offices for accounting, database development, and oversight-related activities. As noted above, \$100,000 was earmarked for outreach activities, some of which was expended directly by the regions. The remaining \$700,000 was allocated for region and campus-level administrative activities: \$320,000 (\$40,000 per region) was directed to support regional coordinators; and \$380,000 was distributed directly to campuses to cover administrative costs and program staff costs associated with running the tuition services and upgrades services programs. Administrative funds to campuses were allocated based on the number of tuition students served. For upgrade programs, up to five percent of total costs were allowable for administration. The Initiative spent \$939,000 of the administrative funds.

Corresponding to the LCTCS regions, organization and planning for the TANF Initiative programs is divided into eight regions. Each region convened a Regional Planning Team in Fall 2001 to strategize about the regional labor market needs and to coordinate and leverage resources from other local and regional agencies and organizations. The Workforce Commission mandated participation from CBOs, DSS, Department of Labor representatives, adult education officials, and community and technical college officials.

The Workforce Commission funded a regional coordinator function in each region. Only two regions used this funding to hire a full-time coordinator. Other regions designated an existing staff person at a lead college in the region to take on regional coordination duties. Coordinators are responsible for convening the regional Planning Teams, conducting outreach to employers to further define regional employment needs, and facilitating communication between campuses and state officials. Regional Coordinators are typically current employees of one of the region's colleges and had other responsibilities at this college.

Each college identified a Campus Contact for the TANF Initiative program. Staff generally is involved in either tuition or upgrade services. Tasks include completing EEAPs with students, conducting outreach to potential participants and employers, developing upgrade proposals, and offering an array of supportive services for students, as well as handling paperwork associated with these responsibilities. Campus personnel that handle TANF Initiative duties typically have had experience or are simultaneously involved with workforce development and financial aid programs at their schools.

**Exhibit 3.2**  
**Students Served by Program Component**

<u>Program Component</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Percent of Target</u>
Total enrollment	2,800	3,540	126 %
Tuition benefits	840	2,415	288
Upgrade training	1,260	907	72
Child Care Stipend	1,400	495	35
Transportation Stipend	1,134	2,584	228

Source: Workforce Commission

Note: Students served through tuition and upgrade services total less than total participants served due to a small number of students that received stipends for child care, transportation, and/or supplies but had tuition costs paid for by other government funds.

## Implementation Status: Accomplishments

### Rapid Roll-Out of Services

The program exceeded overall participation benchmarks set for Year One. All LCTCS campuses participated in at least one of the two components of the TANF Initiatives program. In the program's first year, 3,540 participants were served through tuition, upgrade, and support services (see Exhibit 3.2). This included 2,415 adults who received tuition benefits, more than double the target student enrollment. Year One TANF Initiative funds have been available for four college terms: Fall 2001 and Spring, Summer, and Fall 2002. Participation has increased in each term through the Fall 2002 term.

In Year One, 907 adults participated in upgrade training, below planned enrollment of about 1,260 participants. Under-enrollment resulted in part from a late start to upgrade programs. Initial start-up time needed by the Regional Teams for board formation and completion of a needs assessment for each region's labor market delayed approval of upgrade proposals until January. Most upgrade programs also served smaller numbers of students than program planners expected, contributing to low overall enrollment.

More than 70 percent of participants utilized transportation assistance, more than was projected. Although child care assistance was also available to participants, relatively few used it. Initially, half of all tuition and upgrade participants were expected to use child care benefits, but only 495 of the 3,540 program participants (14 percent) used the child care reimbursements.

### **Services Reached Needy Populations**

Campus staff reported that many participating tuition students would not have enrolled at the college at all or in as many courses without involvement in the TANF Initiative program. The program has helped students who are motivated and believe that this is their last chance to obtain the skills needed to get a better-paying job but who otherwise lack the financial resources to enroll.

Reimbursement of tuition course costs and related fees was a significant attraction for many students. Policy changes regarding college costs paid for by TANF fees also resulted in increased utilization of tuition services. During the year, administrators eliminated a cap on tuition and fees reimbursement since the original limit of \$500 did not fully fund a twelve hour course load at community colleges. Beginning in the fall 2002 term, the TANF program began paying all mandatory student fees at all campuses (this occurred sporadically in summer 2002 as campuses realized limitations the cap had on student enrollment). The policy change seemed to remove an important barrier to student enrollment; at one college, notice of this policy change led to 50 new student enrollments within two weeks.

Campus coordinators indicated that tuition services provided assistance to many students, particularly during the summer semester, who had previously received financial aid through the federal Pell Grant program. Because summer term tuition costs are not covered by Pell Grants, these students usually cannot afford to attend classes during the summer term. Participating in the TANF tuition services program allowed students to continue coursework during the summer and prevented them from losing priority enrollment status that occurs with breaks in student enrollment. TANF tuition services also funded Pell-eligible students with fluctuating incomes. Pell Grant eligibility is based on participants' income from the previous year, so students with lower current incomes than in previous years could enroll in courses through the TANF program without waiting a year to meet Pell's income requirements.



**Exhibit 3.3**  
**Employment and Education Background of Tuition Services Participants**

Entry Employment Status:	Employed	17.5%
	Unemployed	82.5
Level of Education Completed:	Less than high school	14.8%
	High school diploma or GED	57.6
	Post-secondary education	27.6

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Source: BPA staff calculations based on Workforce Commission data files.

Data from a sample of tuition services students suggest that many participants have similar backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> Ninety-two percent of tuition participants were female, and more than 80 percent headed single family households. As shown in Exhibit 3.3, 83 percent were unemployed when entering the TANF Initiative program. Of those who were employed, campus respondents reported that students typically earned between minimum wage and \$8 per hour. Tuition services students were interested in occupations including nursing, office jobs, cosmetology, and early childhood care.

These students were not necessarily low-literate students that the program initially aimed to serve, however. As shown in Exhibit 3.3, 85 percent of participants had at least a high school degree or the equivalent. While education level does not exactly reflect students' literacy level, it is likely that most of the participants that completed high school had literacy levels higher than the low literacy adults that the Initiative was designed to target. This finding is consistent with respondents' reports that many TANF participants also received Pell funds, for which a higher literacy level is required.

Nevertheless, campus respondents reported that many tuition students had low reading skills and enrolled in remedial courses. Many students were not successful in school in the past and returned after a prolonged absence. Students were motivated by the need to support their families or the belief that they should return to school to increase their skills and thereby improve their employment opportunities.

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<sup>4</sup> Student demographic data as of October 30, 2002 are taken from the program's web-based data tracking system that has been operational since September 1, 2002. Data were not available for all campuses. Because the data were incomplete, it may not be representative of all tuition services students.

**Exhibit 3.4**  
**Types of Upgrades**

<u>Upgrade Subject</u>	<u>Number of Programs</u>	<u>Student Enrollment</u>
Nursing/Medical Assistant	32	677
Vocational	5	95
Child Care	4	74
Customer Service	3	360
Computer Skills	3	130
Other	3	120

Source: Workforce Commission

Note: Other upgrades include training at local United Way organization, substitute teacher training, and an unclassified upgrade.

**Innovation in Service Provision**

The TANF Initiative has led to innovative service provision responsive to local employers' needs through the upgrades services program developed by campuses. Upgrade programs offered career training in nursing and other medical technician positions; customer service jobs; child care; computer skills; and vocational jobs such as plumbing, welding, and carpentry (see Exhibit 3.4). Medical technician trainings, particularly upgrades leading to certified nursing assistant (CNA) certification, were the most popular offering. Of the 50 upgrade trainings, 32 focused on CNA, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), or other medical technician training. Costs per participant range from less than \$500 per student for a Child Development training focusing on infant and toddler care to more than \$4,400 per student for a Patient Care Technician course. Contact hours range from approximately 20 hours for a customer service upgrade to more than 300 hours for CNA classes.

Staff at one college provide an example of the extent to which upgrade programs can help address needs among area residents and employers. Staff conducted extensive outreach to neighboring businesses and organizations that serve TANF Initiative-eligible populations. The school formed a unique partnership with a local United Way organization serving

low-income women. Using TANF Initiative funds, computer and job skills training were expanded, job development services were added, and other college staff met onsite with participants. The college plans other community partnerships with a neighborhood improvement agency and a residential addiction rehabilitation center that serve significant number of adults eligible for TANF Initiative programs.

At some campuses, the TANF Initiative program has prompted colleges to examine how they can better meet the needs of all low-income students, beyond those that qualify for the TANF program. Colleges have discussed adding additional academic help, peer tutoring, and other supportive services for traditionally enrolled students. Several campus respondents reported interest in offering a “living skills” course, beyond job readiness, to equip TANF program participants with a range of household and people management skills.

### **Effective Agency Partnership**

Both Workforce Commission and LCTCS view the partnership between the two organizations as a major success. Local and state-level respondents were very positive in their assessments of program oversight. They report that the LCTCS and the Workforce Commission have been flexible in laying out guidelines and have not dictated confining policies, instead letting campuses adapt the program to their local communities and student bodies. The program has also been responsive to suggestions for improvement from local and regional personnel, who report that they are being listened to by state administrators.

### **Flexible Redeployment of Funds to Support Long-Term Capacity Building**

Program administrators moved quickly to redeploy unexpended funds budgeted for child care assistance and upgrades programs to projects that supported long term capacity building consistent with overall program goals. As noted previously, only about one-third of allocated funding for child care assistance was expended in Year One. A contributing factor to low utilization of child care stipends was a lack of available onsite child care at the campuses. To address this problem, state administrators awarded money to campuses to build program capacity to provide child care onsite. Eight campuses were awarded a total of \$624,000 (\$404,000 of which was expended) to enhance existing onsite child care programs or establish new programs. Campus administrators will build capacity by training more child care providers and providing child care spots for students onsite. One

constraint on service delivery that program funding cannot address is a shortage of facility space on many campuses for onsite child care. TANF funds cannot be used to build structures, and this prohibition has prevented some colleges from establishing or expanding onsite child care.

TANF Initiative funds are also being used to improve campuses' capacity to meet the literacy education and job training needs of the low-literate population. Approximately \$2.3 million from the upgrade services budget has been reallocated to campuses through Workplace Literacy Grants. These funds are allowing each campus in the LCTCS to purchase and implement the Work Keys job skills assessment instrument and a compatible workplace literacy assessment tool for low-literate individuals who are not at the literacy level required to benefit from Work Keys. From Year One TANF Initiative funding, approximately \$2.3 million was used to purchase software, computers, and other instructional materials related to Work Keys and associated assessments for all colleges. Campuses began offering these services October 1, 2002. Continuation funds in Year Two will support the hiring and training of qualified literacy specialists to deliver assessment services and workplace literacy instruction.

The anticipated outcome of this funding is that campuses will be better able to assess the training needs of students and, in particular, be better prepared to address the skill and occupational training needs of low-literate individuals. Planners believe enhanced capacity to address workplace literacy will enable campuses to integrate services for low-literate students with courses and services for traditionally enrolled students. Incorporating the Work Keys assessment provides students with an employer-recognized portable credential and more closely links student assessment with tuition and upgrade services.

## Implementation Status: Challenges

### **Outreach and Delivery of Services to Targeted Populations**

As utilization data indicate, the TANF Initiative program successfully served a large number of students. However, campus respondents indicate that the program enrolled a population that did not closely correspond to the low-literate group originally targeted by Initiative planners. As mentioned above, both state and campus officials believe that the large enrollment in tuition services that occurred during the Summer 2002 term was primarily due to Pell Grant students utilizing TANF payments to fund summer classes.

However, Pell Grant-eligible students are students who have previously been enrolled at the college and, by definition, have relatively high literacy levels because they have met the Pell Grant “Ability to Benefit” standards. As reported above, 85 percent of tuition participants had at least a high school education, another indication that a large number of program participants do not have low literacy levels targeted by the Initiative.

A major reason tuition and upgrade services have not served their target populations is that colleges have conducted only limited outreach to these groups. Campus staff is unaccustomed to conducting outreach for potential students, and most schools and regions exhibited wariness regarding contracting with outside organizations to do this work, despite an expedited subcontracting process the Division of Administration instituted to encourage use of these partnerships. Many campus staff also attributed lack of outreach to having too many other responsibilities associated with administering the program. Regional coordinators too often balanced regional coordination with existing duties at campuses, limiting the time they could spend conducting outreach. In one region with a full-time coordinator who could spend more time conducting outreach to employers and working to develop campus TANF programs, enrollment outcomes more closely matched program goals. Campuses in this region implemented 16 of the program’s 50 upgrades overall, and all but one of the nine regional campuses met or exceeded tuition services targets.

High tuition enrollment lessened the need for administrators to recruit students to meet performance targets. Enrollment from students already at the colleges (particularly Pell students) and through word of mouth was high enough that most schools met or exceeded performance targets. In Year One, 39 of 49 schools met or exceeded tuition slots. In effect, at many campuses, tuition services were often viewed by staff as another form of financial aid available to existing or potential students.

Upgrade programs require outreach to employers to determine training needs. Campuses must recruit participants from employers and non-working eligible participants. While tuition programs often enrolled students that were already in the school, upgrade programs were a new, unique program and did not have a similar existing pool of students from which to draw participants.

State TANF Initiative administrators indicated that the program has been impacted by limited participant and employer outreach. Administrators encouraged campuses to partner with organizations to conduct outreach and set aside one percent of the total

Initiative budget to fund student outreach and recruitment. In the coming year, program administrators plan to work more closely with Field Coordinators to emphasize regional and local outreach.

Program eligibility requirements have also hindered enrollment by adults targeted for upgrade services. The upgrade trainings were initially targeted to serve incumbent workers looking to add a specific skills set that would enable them to climb wage and career ladders. The eligibility stipulation that participants must be parents has limited wider use of upgrade training programs by employers, since many otherwise eligible workers are not parents. Campus contacts also reported that the majority of upgrade participants to date have not been employed.

### **Limited Capacity of Campuses to Meet the Needs of Low-Literate Students**

Community and technical colleges have not traditionally served low-literate students. Procedures introduced with the TANF Initiative program to incorporate low-literate learners within the college system have not always proven effective in maintaining these students' interest and involvement. Remedial classes in which students with low literacy scores must enroll often frustrate students and discourage them from continuing. Remedial classes are also usually non-credit, so that such coursework does not count towards credits needed for a degree. Colleges that referred out students with low literacy test scores to CBOs found that the transition to other organizations and the agencies' emphasis only on literacy instruction (and not job skills) caused many participants to lose interest in the program.

Lack of an appropriate assessment tool may also limit student enrollment by constraining staff's ability to link students with suitable career fields. Most assessments rate students' academic skills. A work-based assessment is also essential to meet the program goal to link literacy education with skills training to improve students' employment opportunities. One campus TANF contact reported that prospective upgrade students did not complete an assessment test because it required literacy at levels much above the prospective students' reading levels and did not appear relevant to their job skills interests. Without a literacy skills assessment, however, interested adults could not enroll in upgrade courses. Actual work tasks and clinical phases of upgrades reportedly led to greater attendance drop-offs among students than academic difficulties did at some colleges. Implementing Work Keys and related tests at every campus, made possible with workplace literacy enhancement

grants, will be an important step in more accurately assessing students participating in the TANF Initiative.

### **Inadequate Staff Time and Resources**

All campuses identified campus TANF coordinators, but their involvement in the program varied greatly. Some coordinators spent half or less time on the TANF program, while others have multiple, full-time staff involved. Variation in staffing patterns across campuses led to variation in the implementation of various program elements, including participant recruitment, partnerships with CBOs and employers, assessment, and the EEAP process.

Upgrades and tuition services required significant staff time and resources. Tuition services generally served a greater number of students than schools' upgrade services did, meaning more time from campus tuition staff was needed to meet with students. Some college staff voiced concern about the risk associated with developing upgrade trainings since significant administrative effort planning courses would not necessarily yield sufficient student enrollment. Since the upgrades are not traditional semester courses, it is difficult to recruit non-TANF program students to replace TANF participants that do not materialize.

Unfamiliarity with TANF requirements, forms, and administrative processes also increased the burdens on staff time. For example, child care assistance reimbursement is a multi-step process, and receipts are necessary for reimbursement of school-related supplies and fees. These requirements are generally more onerous than those attached to other student financial assistance programs. Some college staff indicated they needed more training on use of the range of TANF eligibility forms and requirements they had to adhere to.

Delays related to literacy testing of potential students sometimes resulted in students choosing not to participate in tuition and upgrade services. At some schools, students interested in enrolling in classes must wait a month to take a test to assess their literacy levels. This is a hardship when testing occurs after the semester begins, forcing students to postpone coursework for as much as a semester. Campus contacts mentioned that this delay caused many potential participants to lose interest.

Communication between state administrators and campuses has been also a challenge. State TANF program officials communicated with local campuses primarily through e-mail messages and postings on the LCTCS website. Some local staff found it difficult to receive information or guidelines in this manner since some do not have access to email every day and often had no knowledge of policy changes. Communication to the campus sites from the state program administrators was also to have occurred through the Regional Coordinators, but Coordinators' time was not as focused on coordination as anticipated.

Nearly all campuses, regardless of current staffing levels, report needing additional staff to serve their TANF students and to handle accounting duties. Many respondents reported difficulty completing the administrative responsibilities expected of them. Campus contacts believe allocated administrative funds are inadequate for the amount of time staff is expected to spend with students and suggest that staff time to complete some of these responsibilities should be classified as program rather than administrative costs. However, because local campuses were given full control over the administrative funds they received for the program, it is difficult to assess whether or how much additional funding is needed for administrative functions. Many campuses assigned administrative responsibilities associated with the tuition services and upgrades programs to existing staff with full-time responsibilities in other areas. Because TANF Initiatives funding was viewed as temporary, campuses were reluctant to dedicate new staff positions to the program.

Generally, schools that prioritized the TANF Initiative, often by leveraging other resources that allowed more staff time to be devoted to providing program services, had more developed tuition services and upgrades programs. This was reflected in terms of courses offered, support given to students, and numbers of students served. For example, one small campus employed three staff members to coordinate upgrade and tuition services for that school. These staff conducted extensive outreach to community groups and developed innovative partnerships with local CBOs serving similar populations to provide comprehensive training to these adults. However, coordinators with many responsibilities at their schools often had difficulty spending sufficient time with students and building collaborative relationships with employers and other agencies.



## Unexpended Program Funds

Several factors led to lower than anticipated program expenditures, including delayed program start-up, fewer than expected upgrade programs, and under-utilization of child care supports. To enable greater use of Year One funds, all Initiatives were granted a spending extension for Year One funding through September 2002. Capacity building grants for on-site child care and workplace literacy were made available in part to fully utilize appropriated funds and accounted for \$2.7 million of total program expenses.

Year One TANF funds were available July 2001. Negotiating the MOU, communicating to campuses and potential participants, setting up state and campus organizational structures, and other initial planning delayed spending money on training and support services until the end of October 2001. Schools could retroactively pay for eligible participants' tuition retroactive to August 2001; however, uncertainty that the TANF program would be established resulted in limited utilization of TANF money in Fall 2001. Thus, program expenditures were only minimal in Fall 2001.

Total expenditures were also lower than anticipated because of higher than expected enrollment in tuition services and lower than expected enrollment in upgrades. Upgrade services have higher costs per participant than tuition services. Most cost more than \$1,000 per participant, compared to tuition costs of \$625 per full-time student at community colleges and even lower costs at LTC campuses.

Restrictions on child care stipends limited participants' use of these reimbursements. Campuses report that parents were frustrated by lack of slots at eligible providers. Slots are particularly limited during the summer term, at night, and in rural areas, leading to reduced utilization of these child care reimbursements. Eligible child care providers were not always accessible to campus, and lengthy commutes between home, an approved provider, and campus reportedly dissuaded students from accessing stipends. Many upgrade participants did not want to transfer their children from their existing child care arrangement for fear of losing their existing spots after they completed the upgrade. Other participants received Child Care Assistance Payments or WIA child care, making them ineligible for TANF-funded child care stipends.

## Relationships with Other TANF Programs

The TANF Initiative trainings had only a few links with FITP/FIND Work and other TANF Initiatives. A few schools had existing relationships with FIND Work offices to place students in training, but few or no direct connections between TANF Initiative programs and OFS offices exist. Respondents at one school reported that a few students were FITAP participants, and people sanctioned off FITAP were sometimes referred from DSS to upgrade and tuition programs. Schools also had difficulty meeting work hours requirement of FITAP participants, so most campuses focused their efforts on serving clients that had been sanctioned off FITAP.

## Conclusion

The Workforce Commission and the LCTCS have taken steps to strengthen the program's ability to meet its goals in Year Two. Workplace literacy enhancement grants available in Year One allowed all campuses to purchase WorkKeys assessment software, computers, and instructional materials to improve campuses' ability to serve students at low literacy levels. These assessment services began in October 2002, and workplace literacy continuation grants are planned for Year Two that will fund literacy specialist positions at every school. To improve regional coordination and offer greater support to campuses, program administrators refined and strengthened the position of Regional Coordinator. In Year Two, four full-time Field Coordinators will each have responsibility for coordinating TANF program at campuses in two LCTCS regions, a change that will allow Coordinators to devote all of their time to TANF program coordination duties. Finally, child care capacity grants awarded in Year One have allowed some campuses to expand hours and capacity at onsite child care facilities and to establish relationships with nearby providers. These grants attempt to address both a shortage of eligible providers located on or near campuses and severe under-utilization of the program's child care assistance benefits. Major remaining challenges for the program are to improve campuses' outreach and enrollment of low-literate adults targeted by the Initiative and to continue to strengthen program offerings for low-literate participants.

## Recommendations

- The Workforce Commission and state LCTCS staff should continue to articulate to local community and technical college staff the importance of outreach to the low-literate population that the program was designed to serve. State officials should make use of the redefined position of Field Coordinator to further this goal. Each Field Coordinator should develop a plan to ensure that campuses conduct targeted outreach to local community and faith-based organizations, FIND Work participants, and businesses that employ members of the program's target population. In addition, the Workforce Commission should track the number of tuition and upgrade slots filled by low-literate learners as determined by initial assessment tests, and report these numbers as program performance measures.
- The Workforce Commission and state LCTCS staff should continue to work with community and technical college staff to develop specific courses of study to better serve low-literate students. In particular, college staff should be encouraged to develop on-site capacity for workplace literacy assessment and instruction, as provided for by the workplace literacy enhancement grants, rather than referring students out to literacy providers. In Year One, participants referred to partner organizations often lost interest in further skills training. Colleges should pay particular attention to developing a course of study for low-literate learners that incorporates concurrent training in job skills and literacy-related education.
- The Workforce Commission and state LCTCS staff should begin discussions with the Department of Social Services to develop stronger links between campus tuition services and upgrades programs and the FIND Work program. Since all FIND Work clients are eligible for the TANF Initiative program, colleges and DSS Offices should work together to recruit and refer FIND Work participants for the upgrade training and tuition programs. Staff should consider developing courses of study that allow FIND Work participants to meet their required work activity hours as part of their participation in the TANF Initiative program.
- The Workforce Commission and state LCTCS staff should review whether additional policies need to be developed to insure that adequate campus staff

resources are available to effectively implement the tuition services and upgrades programs. Issues that should be assessed include: 1) whether reimbursement for staff costs to create student Employment and Education Action Plans (EEAPs) and for other case management services is adequate; 2) whether additional guidelines need to be developed to insure that campuses use allocated administrative funds to provide adequate staff resources for administration; and 3) whether additional funds are needed to increase staff resources at the campus level.

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## Chapter 4

### Central City Economic Opportunity Corporation and Monroe Housing Authority Housing Services

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#### Key Findings

- The housing-focused TANF Initiatives at both the Monroe Housing Authority (MHA) and the Central City Economic Opportunity Corporation (CCEOC) brought added value to their respective communities by expanding and enhancing existing housing services and addressing a previously unmet need.
- MHA's goal was to serve 600 families in their Renters Program during the one-year grant period. During the program year, they had served 931 families.
- CCEOC met the goal of serving 100 families for its Homebuyers Program. During the program year, CCEOC had assisted a total of 102 families, with 81 of them having completed the purchase of a home.
- Delays in the start-up process and in modifying their cost-reimbursement contract affected CCEOC's Renters Program. Partly because of the initial delays, the original goal of assisting 650 families through the Renters Program was not met. During the program year, CCEOC had provided financial assistance to 499 families through the Renters Program.
- MHA's subcontract with an outside agency to provide services was challenging because MHA and the subcontractor held differing expectations and conflicting goals regarding the services to be provided.

- The planned Emergency Assistance Programs were never fully implemented at CCEOC or MHA, albeit for different reasons at each agency.

## Program Overview

Monroe Housing Authority (MHA) and Central City Economic Opportunity Corporation (CCEOC) both received \$1 million in TANF Initiatives funds to provide transitional and emergency housing services in support of TANF Goals #1 and #2: to provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their homes or in the homes of relatives, and to end dependence on welfare by needy families by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

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### TANF Initiatives Program Summary Housing Services in Ouachita Parish

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Monroe Housing Authority
<b>Initiatives Grant Amount:</b>	\$1,000,000 (for 10/01 to 9/02)
<b>Expenditures to Date:</b>	\$ 990,500.20 (as of 9/02)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	TANF Initiatives funds were used to expand existing housing services for low-income families through a Renters Program that provides a one-time payment of financial assistance for short-term, transitional, or emergency housing services for those in need.
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	Monroe Housing Authority contracted with the Northeast Louisiana Legal Assistance Corporation to process applications and verify applicant eligibility.
<b>Initiatives Locations:</b>	Monroe, serving Ouachita Parish
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Families with children under age 19 and income less than 200 percent of federal poverty level.
<b>Total Number of Families Served:</b>	931 families served (from 10/01 to 9/02)

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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Housing Services in Orleans Parish

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Central City Economic Opportunity Corporation
<b>Initiatives Grant Amount:</b>	\$1,000,000 (for 10/01 to 9/02)
<b>Expenditures to Date:</b>	\$ 994,524.50 (as of 9/02)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	The grantee, the Central City Economic Opportunity Corporation, is the umbrella organization for a number of community-based service organizations, including the program operator for the TANF Initiative, the Central City Housing Development Corporation. TANF funds were used to expand existing housing services for low-income families through a Renters Program that provides financial assistance for short-term, transitional, or emergency housing services for those in need. Central City Housing Development Corporation also operated a Homebuyers Program that utilized TANF Initiatives funds to assist low-income families in the first-time purchase of a home.
<b>Initiatives Locations:</b>	New Orleans, serving Orleans Parish
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Families with children under age 19 and income less than 200 percent of federal poverty level.
<b>Total Number of Families Served:</b>	580 families (from 10/01 to 8/02)

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### Program History and Background

MHA is the local public housing authority for the City of Monroe and adjacent areas in Ouachita Parish. MHA serves low-income, elderly, and disabled tenants in its public housing properties and in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 subsidized rental housing. MHA owns and manages more than 1,500 rental units for low-income families, as well as 230 units for the elderly and disabled. In addition, MHA manages, with the Ouachita Council on Aging, nonprofit housing complexes that provide more than 300 units of housing for the elderly.



CCEOC is a multi-service nonprofit organization located in New Orleans. CCEOC is the umbrella organization for a wide variety of community-based services, including Central City Housing Development Corporation (HDC), which provides housing for low-income families primarily by acquiring properties and developing housing for affordable rentals or first-time home purchases. CCEOC is the grantee for the TANF Initiative; HDC operates the program.

The TANF Initiatives at both MHA and CCEOC came about as the result of last-minute redirection of funds in the aftermath of the September 11th incident. There was concern that the State's urban areas, where the local economy heavily relied upon the tourism industry, would be adversely affected in the following months. In order to address such concern, a quick decision was made in September to obligate TANF Initiatives funds to enhance housing services targeted at the urban areas. Both organizations were selected due to the relevant program elements they already had in place and their experience in implementing housing programs.

### **Program Design**

Both MHA and CCEOC staff indicated that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DSS was "intentionally generic" to allow for maximum program flexibility. According to this MOU, both MHA and CCEOC were to create a pilot program for low-income families in need of short-term, one-time, or transitional rental services. CCEOC was also charged with providing education and financial assistance for prospective homeowners. Exhibit 4.1 shows the services that were planned and provided by these two TANF Initiatives.

MHA's Renters Program was designed to provide eligible low-income families with financial assistance on a one-time basis. MHA subcontracted with Northeast Louisiana Legal Assistance Corporation (NLLAC) to screen applicants for financial assistance, verify eligibility, and submit completed applications to MHA for payment directly to the family (by check). A family could receive assistance for one or more types of rental service up to the program limit of \$1,500. MHA instituted a four-month limit on the rent payment assistance that a family could receive. This meant that a family could not receive more than four months' rent from the program, even if the four-month total of rental assistance fell below the \$1,500 limit.

In Orleans Parish, the service design for CCEOC’s Renters Program—as operated by Central City Housing Development Corporation (HDC)—was similar to that of MHA’s, but did not subcontract with an outside organization. Under CCEOC’s Renters Program, a family could receive assistance for one or more types of rental service for up to four months. Except for rent payment assistance, which could not exceed two months’ rent, there was no limit on the amount of financial assistance a family could receive. Payment amounts were at the discretion of HDC staff. Families were not paid directly; rather, a check from CCEOC was sent to the landlord, housing development, moving company, etc.

Service	Monroe Housing Authority	Central City Economic Opportunity Corporation
RENTERS PROGRAM	X	X
Relocation Assistance	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assistance with relocating to better housing, moving from subsidized to unsubsidized housing, etc.</li> <li>▪ Payment of moving costs</li> <li>▪ Payment of deposit and/or first month’s rent</li> </ul>		
Rent Payment Assistance	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Payment of rent where hardship exists, or in order to stop eviction or loss of existing housing arrangements</li> <li>▪ Short-term continuation of Section 8 housing vouchers (where subsidy has declined due to increased earnings)</li> </ul>		
Housing Counseling/Household Budgeting	X	X
<b>EMERGENCY HOUSING ASSISTANCE</b>		
Aid to the Working Homeless or to Families Displaced by Fire, Domestic Violence, etc.	Planned but not implemented	Planned but not implemented
<b>HOMEBUYERS PROGRAM</b>		
Homebuyer Education		X
Pre-Purchase Counseling		X
Down Payment/Closing Costs Assistance		X
Housing Counseling/Household Budgeting		X
Post-Purchase Counseling		X

Central City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) also operated CCEOC's Homebuyers Program. The service design was as follows: A new client who was ready to purchase a home would, with the assistance of HDC's housing counselor, complete a mortgage application in order to prequalify for the purchase price of a home. Next, the client would attend a 12-hour homebuyers class that included topics such as preparing for homeownership, shopping for a home, obtaining a mortgage, closing a loan, preparing a budget, and maintaining one's home and other responsibilities of homeownership. Upon completion of the homebuyers class, the client received counseling and, if necessary, was referred to a real estate agent. At the time of home purchase, the Homebuyers Program provided \$2,500 toward down-payment and closing costs. Clients who were not ready to purchase a home at the time of application, but who could, with some assistance, become ready within six months, joined the Homebuyer's Club, which helped with credit repair, financial planning, establishment of a savings plan, etc. Once ready to purchase a home, these clients would take the homebuyers class and, upon completion, begin the purchase process.

The MHA and CCEOC TANF Initiatives were targeted at the working poor. To be eligible for these programs, applicants had to verifiably:

- be employed and/or enrolled in a self-sufficiency program leading to employment in the short-term;
- have income of no more than 200 percent of the poverty level (and no higher than 80 percent of the area median income);
- have at least one minor child not older than 19 years old in the home *and* have legal guardianship of the child; and
- be a resident of the parish in which the program operated.

## Status of Program Implementation

### Target Indicators and Progress in Achieving Desired Outcomes

The primary target indicator for both MHA and CCEOC was the number of families served. MHA considerably exceeded the target indicator for its program. Its goal was to serve 600 people age 18 and older in their Renters Program during the one-year grant period. By the end of September 2002, they had served 931 families.

CCEOC exceeded the target indicator for one of the two programs offered under its TANF Initiatives grant, the Homebuyers Program. The goal of the Homebuyers Program was to serve 100 families, taking a total of 50 of these families through the entire home-buying process to the completed purchase of a home. By the end of August 2002, CCEOC had assisted a total of 102 families, with 81 of them having completed the purchase of a home. The remaining 21 families were participating in the Homebuyer's Club, preparing for their purchase of a home.

In the Renters Program, however, CCEOC's initial goal of assisting 650 families was not yet met. By the end of August 2002, CCEOC's Renters Program had provided financial assistance to 499 families. Delays in the start-up process, and the need to modify the cost-reimbursement arrangements in their MOU, shortened the amount of time CCEOC and Central City Housing Development Corporation had to meet its target indicator for the Renters Program.

The one target population that both MHA and CCEOC had difficulty serving was individuals in need of Emergency Assistance Services. Both organizations struggled to serve this population, but for very different reasons. In MHA's case, the target population—employed homeless people—turned out to be very small. The largely rural Ouachita Parish has few homeless individuals, working or not. In contrast, CCEOC had little trouble finding employed homeless individuals or other people in need of emergency services in urban Orleans Parish. However, CCEOC found it difficult to meet the financial needs of these individuals in a timely fashion because, under the cost-reimbursement contract, CCEOC could not access the TANF Initiatives funds immediately and had little other cash available. When families applied that were in dire need for assistance, CCEOC could offer referrals and emergency counseling, but no financial assistance.

### **Program Expenditures**

Each of the housing-focused TANF Initiatives received a total of \$1 million from the State. Both programs remained on track in spending out funds on schedule.

As of September 30, 2002, MHA had served 931 families at a total cost of \$990,500, for an average program cost of \$1,068 per family.<sup>1</sup> Figures for the average direct payment received by each family are not available. Because the funds budgeted for Emergency Assistance were not spent due to lack of demand, MHA received approval from DSS to move funds from Emergency Assistance into Rent Payment Assistance.

During the program year, CCEOC had spent a total of \$994,524 on the Renters Program and the Homebuyers Program combined.<sup>2</sup> Of this amount, \$683,880 (69 percent) was directly paid to participating families. Specifically, a total \$509,187 was expended in direct payments to families on the Renters Program, with an average rental assistance payment of \$1,020 per family. A total of \$174,693 was spent in direct payments to families on the Homebuyers Program; we estimated families served in this program received an average homeownership assistance payment of \$2,157 per family.<sup>3</sup>

## Accomplishments and Challenges

### Start-Up Process

The first challenge faced by both housing-focused TANF Initiatives was to start up quickly. Staff at both MHA and CCEOC quickly put together programs, relying on their years of experience in providing housing assistance and housing counseling, as well as on their ability to utilize community input and resources effectively. However, both programs later experienced challenges in program implementation as a result of this abbreviated planning and start-up process.

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<sup>1</sup> The expenditure data are provided by MHA. Of \$990,500, \$478,587 (48 percent) was spent for rental assistance, \$204,000 (21 percent) for moving allowance, \$97,955 (10 percent) for initial rent and deposit assistance, \$71,744 (7 percent) for housing budgeting and counseling programs, \$27,045 (3 percent) for utility deposit, and \$10,000 (1 percent) in emergency assistance. The rest of \$101,169 (10 percent) were spent on administrative and other costs.

<sup>2</sup> The expenditure numbers are provided by CCEOC. Of 994,524 total expenditures, \$683,880 (69 percent) were spent on direct payments for rental and homeownership assistance, \$192,186 (19 percent) on programmatic operational costs, and \$118,458 (12 percent) for administrative and other costs.

<sup>3</sup> We estimated per-family spending by assuming that of 102 families served in the Homebuyers Program, 81 families who completed the purchase, have received payments.

In Ouachita Parish, MHA did not receive authorization to start its Renters Program until November 6, 2001. Consequently, MHA did not begin to advertise the program or solicit referrals until the second week in November, out of concern that families in need would be disappointed if the advertised program did not actually materialize. MHA ultimately embarked on an intensive marketing effort, but it took a while for awareness of the program to build, and MHA initially feared that client demand for the program might not really be there.

In Orleans Parish, DSS had asked CCEOC at the last minute to replace the New Orleans Housing Authority as the grantee for this TANF Initiative. CCEOC therefore had little time for program planning, hiring new staff, or putting new program procedures into place. CCEOC's program kickoff was not held until December 7, 2001, and the program's services did not actually begin until after the holidays.

CCEOC also initially faced difficulty with its financial arrangement with DSS. As a nonprofit organization with a chronically tight budget, CCEOC could not easily "front" the money for start-up expenses and ongoing program costs. Thus, CCEOC found it necessary to request major modifications to its cost-reimbursement contract with DSS/DOA before proceeding with program implementation. Both DSS and DOA were amenable to addressing the problem, and they agreed to the following: CCEOC was provided with a cash advance of \$83,000 in December 2001; the State made payments to CCEOC by direct deposit (making the cash available sooner); and CCEOC could request reimbursement twice a month instead of monthly. Still, delays in reimbursements continued to be a problem for CCEOC throughout the TANF Initiatives grant period.

Another initial challenge facing both housing-focused TANF Initiatives was how to staff the new programs. The two organizations selected different strategies: MHA decided to subcontract with Northeast Louisiana Legal Assistance Corporation (NLLAC) for operation of the program, based on NLLAC's long history of working with low-income persons on housing issues as well as NLLAC's HUD certification in housing counseling. CCEOC, on the other hand, chose to hire new in-house staff, a process that took several months and further delayed start-up of the program.

### **Outreach and Recruitment**

In Ouachita Parish, MHA found it challenging to develop a client base for its Renters Program. Many families in the target population earned too much to qualify for subsidized

housing, and therefore were outside of MHA's "community network" of public housing residents, Section 8 recipients, and landlords. Start-up of the Renters Program was very slow until word got out; it took several months for potential applicants to become aware of the program and learn how to access it. However, following MHA's "advertising blitz," the pent-up demand for the Renters Program resulted in very high demand by January 2002 as well as for the duration of the program.

Compared with MHA, HDC (the implementing agency within CCEOC) was not as worried about potential lack of demand in Orleans Parish. Nonetheless, HDC invested tremendous effort in outreach activities to generate demand. HDC reported that the following outreach techniques were effective (these same techniques also were used by MHA): making presentations at community functions; contacting local community groups and faith centers to let them know of the program; holding press conferences; canvassing communities whose residents might be eligible for housing assistance; placing newspaper advertisements; appearing on local cable TV; and ensuring that all agency staff alerted their own personal networks about the program. Ultimately, the ability of MHA and HDC to involve all staff in informally and formally promoting the program to the community was one of the major strengths and accomplishments of these organizations.

### **Intake, Assessment, and Service Delivery**

At both MHA and HDC, the success of the outreach campaigns created a problem: how, after starting with just a few applicants, to meet a sudden increase in demand. Both organizations responded by streamlining their application and intake processes.

At first, both MHA and HDC implemented a process whereby they accepted appointments from interested parties with little or no prescreening for eligibility; NLLAC, MHA's subcontractor, even permitted walk-ins. Because of the lack of prescreening, clients who were not eligible for assistance might not discover this fact until meeting with the housing counselor. Also, people who *were* eligible very often arrived for their meetings with the counselor without all of the necessary documentation, and had to return a second and third time.

To address these problems, both housing-focused TANF Initiatives changed their intake procedures so that program staff scheduled all appointments in advance, prescreened callers for eligibility, and informed applicants of the necessary documentation prior to the appointment. MHA modified its intake form to clarify the eligibility requirements.

CCEOC also hired additional staff. There were initially three HDC staff members working with participants in the TANF-funded programs. These staff members were responsible for everything: intake, application verification, and counseling. CCEOC later added support staff to assist in eligibility verification and scheduling of appointments.

### **Working Relationship between MHA and Its Subcontractor**

The primary challenge that MHA faced in implementing its TANF Initiatives was managing its subcontract with NLLAC. First, NLLAC had difficulty meeting the demand for services, largely because the agency did not have enough qualified staff to assign to this program. Second, NLLAC had a service philosophy of serving all indigent people regardless of whether they met eligibility requirements, and therefore found the TANF Initiatives eligibility criteria to be unduly restrictive. There were conflicts with MHA over NLLAC's efforts to serve people not eligible for Renters Program services—for example, people working in Ouachita Parish who resided outside parish boundaries, or people who did not have guardianship of the minor child in their home. Although MHA and NLLAC, with the involvement of DSS and DOA, were ultimately able to clarify the eligibility criteria and resolve their differences in approach, MHA has decided that any future TANF Initiatives services will be provided by in-house staff.

### **Cooperation with FITAP/FIND Work**

Neither MHA nor CCEOC had a formal relationship with FITAP/FIND Work caseworkers or the Office of Family Services. However, informal referrals were made between the FITAP/FIND Work caseworkers and the two housing-focused TANF Initiatives.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Staff at HDC indicated that they wished they had received more technical assistance in maintaining and reporting the required data. Ultimately, HDC staff ended up creating a simple spreadsheet system to collect data and track client services. However, staff bemoaned the inability of their system to truly capture the unique elements of the programs, such as the multiple stages of the Homebuyers Program. Also, staff desired software that would enable them to collect better data on referral sources and client demographics.



## **Strengths and Program Accomplishments**

As noted earlier, MHA served far more families than their original goal in their Renters Program. CCEOC was also able to meet their goal for its Homebuyers Program despite the slow start of the program. These accomplishments can be attributed in part to organizational strengths. Both MHA and CCEOC were committed to serving their constituents efficiently, in particular by working to develop effective systems that ensure timely payments.

At MHA, one strength of the TANF Initiatives was the staff's ability to serve as informal outreach workers for the program in the community. MHA's TANF Initiatives had the support of the entire MHA staff, which was briefed on the program and was encouraged to tell neighbors and friends about the available housing assistance. The ability of MHA and NLLAC to communicate the availability of funding to a wide community in a relatively short period of time was another reason MHA met their target ahead of schedule.

MHA was also able to identify housing needs in their community through a vast network of professional relationships and communications, thanks to the integrated role they play in the community. MHA's TANF Initiatives program thus benefited from the extensive community network that surrounded it.

CCEOC's TANF Initiatives program benefited from the organization's status as a well-established, centrally located multi-service community center. CCEOC's constituents live in close proximity to the center, allowing program staff to readily identify and address community needs. In addition, the nearby public transportation lines and health clinics made CCEOC accessible and familiar to potential applicants.

A second strength of CCEOC was the requirement that staff always be conscious of ways to improve the program. Senior staff, who provided years of experience and leadership to the newly hired staff, required that staff meet every week in an "in-service training" to improve their performance. The quick hiring of motivated staff was a significant accomplishment, and the ability to maintain the staff's commitment and dedication was one of CCEOC's strengths.

There was unanimous agreement among respondents from both MHA and CCEOC that the housing-focused TANF Initiatives addressed a previously unmet need in Ouachita and Orleans Parishes. Housing counselors reported receiving "thank-you" notes and other

tokens of appreciation from clients they had counseled during the program year. Implementing an effective \$1 million housing services program in both of these communities made a tremendous difference. As one staff member stated: “The program has been enormously beneficial to the community; lots of goodwill has been created.” The TANF Initiatives funds were able to reach a population that is not typically served through public housing programs, and the programs added tremendous value to the communities.

## Recommendations

- We recommend that the State provide technical assistance with data collection and reporting. Due to the types of data that the State requires of the programs, there is a tremendous need for an effective data-collection method that can capture the most useful data elements. Staff at both housing-focused TANF Initiatives expressed an interest in collecting specific data elements that would capture the unique aspects of their programs. There are specialized software programs from HUD and Fannie Mae that could be provided to organizations involved in future housing-focused TANF Initiatives. Or, a centralized data collection system could be developed, implemented, and supported by the department responsible for overseeing such initiatives.
- We recommend that the housing programs develop collaborative relationships with organizations involved in issues that lead to the need for housing services, as well as with organizations involved in meeting those needs. For example, housing programs might request that when the Sheriff’s Department serves an eviction notice, evictees receive information on the program services. MHA made effective use of its landlord community for outreach and for assistance in locating available housing.
- We recommend that the housing programs develop a marketing plan, not only for performing outreach, but also for managing the demand for services. The housing-focused TANF Initiatives in both parishes had “a drought, then a flood” of applications, and could have benefited from better management of the flow of applications.
- We recommend that the housing programs continue to streamline service processes to direct as much funding as possible into direct services. Programs

funded through TANF Initiatives should strive to create service-provision systems with maximum efficiency. Making the available funds go further can help meet high demand for services.

## Chapter 5

### Department of Public Safety and Corrections Pre-Release Programs

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#### Key Findings

- A total of \$2 million in TANF Initiatives funds was allocated to three pre-release programs: the Job Skills Program (four sites), Project Metamorphosis (three sites), and the Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program.
- The Job Skills Program provided inmates with a self-paced computer-based curriculum focusing on job and basic skills. The Job Skills Program at Work Training Facility/North (WTF/N), which we visited, operated at capacity, serving 60 participants in its first two class cycles. Reports from across sites indicate that the Job Skills Program had an attendance rate of over 90 percent and a program completion rate of over 90 percent.
- The Jobs Skills Program got a late start on implementation, which was part of the reason that the program only spent approximately \$434,559 of its \$1.4 million allocation. Estimated per-participant program cost—based on data from the WTF/N site—was \$1,500.
- Project Metamorphosis provided inmates nearing release with basic education, life-skills training, career counseling, and job-placement services, with the goal of linking inmates released from prison with training, jobs, and support services in their home communities. At the Dixon Correctional Institute (DCI), which we visited, Project Metamorphosis served 57 individuals through July 2002. Reports from all three sites indicate that the program met the target goal of having 90 percent of participants attending classes.

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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Pre-Release Programs

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPS&C)
<b>Subcontractor:</b>	Concordia Parish Sheriff's Office (for Concordia Component)
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Job Skills Program: \$1,400,000</li><li>Project Metamorphosis: \$400,000</li><li>Concordia Parish Sheriff's Office: \$200,000</li></ul>
<b>Expenditures to Date:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Job Skills Program: \$434,559</li><li>Project Metamorphosis: \$200,279</li><li>Concordia Parish Sheriff's Office: \$149,995</li></ul>
<b>Services Provided:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Job Skills Program provides a self-paced computer-based curriculum focusing on job and basic skills related to specific occupations.</li><li>Project Metamorphosis provides basic education, life-skills training, career counseling, and job-placement services.</li><li>Concordia Corrections Life Skills Program provides vocational education services, GED preparatory classes and testing, and counseling services.</li></ul>
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Job Skills Program: C. Paul Phelps Correctional Center, DeQuincy; Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola; Work Training Facility/North, Pineville; David Wade Correctional Center, Homer</li><li>Project Metamorphosis: David Wade Correctional Center/Forcht-Wade, Keithville; Dixon Correctional Institute, Jackson; Washington Correctional Institute, Angie</li><li>Concordia Parish Sheriff's Office: Concordia Parish Detention Facility, Ferriday</li></ul>
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Prisoners who are parents of minor children
<b>Total Number of Families Served :</b>	As of 7/29/02 Job Skills Program at WTF/N: 40 graduates; as of 7/29/02 Project Metamorphosis at Dixon Correctional Institute: 57 participants, 18 of the 22 released employed; Concordia Parish Sheriff's Office: 120 participants.

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- Project Metamorphosis spent about half (\$200,279) of its \$400,000 TANF Initiatives grant for SFY 2002, the result of a slow start to the program. The estimated per-participant program cost was \$1,200.
- The Concordia Corrections Life Skills Program included three main program components: vocational education, GED preparatory classes and testing, and counseling services. The program served a total of 125 inmates: 45 took part in vocational education, 80 inmates took part in GED preparation classes, and all 125 participated in counseling services.
- The Life Skills Program spent \$149,995 of \$200,000 TANF Initiatives grant for SFY 2002. Estimated program cost for the Life Skills Program was about \$1,200 per participant.
- Performance measures for the Job Skills Program and Project Metamorphosis were not identified initially and evolved during the first grant year through consultation with DOA and DSS. This contributed to a lack of clarity regarding performance goals at the Job Skills Program at WTF/N and at the Project Metamorphosis program at DCI. This also resulted in a lack of consistent information on how the programs progressed.
- Certain pre-release programs experienced significant difficulties during the start-up phase. For example, staff at the WTF/N Job Skills Program and at the DCI Project Metamorphosis site reported confusion and inefficiencies around program planning and coordination.

## Program Overview

The Department of Public Safety and Corrections (PS&C) signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Department of Social Services (DSS) in September of 2001 to implement three distinct pre-release programs under the TANF Initiatives. These programs—Job Skills Program, Project Metamorphosis, Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program—are all targeted at fathers imprisoned at state and parish prisons and jails and are implemented, taken together, at eight state and parish prison sites. DSS allocated \$2 million in TANF Initiatives funds to these pre-release programs: \$1.4 million to the Job

Skills Program, \$400,000 to Project Metamorphosis, and \$200,000 to Concordia Parish Life Skills Program. The TANF Initiatives funding period for these programs was ended in July 2002.

Approximately 15,000 adult inmates are released from Louisiana DPS&C state and local facilities each year.<sup>1</sup> Upon release, many former offenders face difficulties finding employment that allows them to become economically self-sufficient, a fact that contributes to recidivism. According to DPS&C, 55 percent of all inmates released in Louisiana during 1997 were returned to custody for a new offense or a technical violation of their release. Pre-release programs, such as those supported by TANF Initiatives funds, are designed to address self-sufficiency issues prior to release, so that former inmates are better prepared to succeed in their families and communities upon their return. Prior to DPS&C receipt of TANF Initiatives funds, approximately 22 percent of inmates participated in some type of educational programming while incarcerated.<sup>2</sup> TANF Initiatives funds allowed DPS&C to expand pre-release educational programs to prisons that had not previously offered these services.

The three pre-release programs funded by TANF Initiatives were designed to contribute to TANF Goal #4: encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families among individuals who are parents and who are currently incarcerated. The specific objective of the Job Skills Program was to provide inmates 12 to 18 months from release with a self-paced, computer-based curriculum focusing on job skills and basic skills necessary for success in specific occupational areas. Project Metamorphosis aimed to provide inmates 12 to 18 months from release with basic education, life-skills training, career counseling, and job-placement services, with the goal of linking inmates released from prison to training, jobs, and support services in their home communities. The goal of the Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program offered by the Concordia Sheriff's Office was to provide vocational education, GED, and life-skills training to inmates nearing release. The primary goal of all pre-release programs was to provide inmates with the tools and support needed to avoid recidivism and find employment upon release.

The TANF Initiatives pre-release programs—except that offered by the Life Skills Program operated at the Concordia Parish Sheriff's Office—took place at several locations. Specifically, the Job Skills Program was implemented in four sites: Work

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<sup>1</sup> DPS&C, Proposer's Conference Meeting Minutes, July 2002..

<sup>2</sup> DPS&C. *Time in Prison: the Adult Institutions*.

<http://www.corrections.state.la.us/PDFs/TimeInPrison.pdf> (10/02).

Training Facility/North (WTF/N) in Pineville; C. Paul Phelps Correctional Center (PCC) in DeQuincy; Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP) in Angola; and David Wade Correctional Center (DWCC) in Homer. Project Metamorphosis was implemented at Dixon Correctional Institute (DCI), Jackson; David Wade Correctional Center/Forcht-Wade (FWCC), Keithville; and Washington Correctional Institute (WCI), Angie. TANF Initiatives funding for all pre-release programs ended two months before the September 2002 date identified in the original MOUs, when the Louisiana State Legislature transferred the responsibility for pre-release programs from DPS&C to the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). The State has allocated \$3 million in TANF Initiative funds to LCTCS to implement pre-release program for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2003. At the time of writing this report (September 2002), WTF/N was the only site still operating the Job Skills Program, as the prison had absorbed the cost of the program into their prison budget. All Project Metamorphosis programs funded under the TANF Initiatives had been closed and the Concordia Correctional Program was also in the process of closing.

We were informed by DPS&C that many of those programs were already closed by the time of our site visits in summer 2002. Findings presented in this chapter are primarily based on our field visits with sites that were still operating—the Job Skills Program at WTF/N in Pineville and Project Metamorphosis at DCI in Jackson—as well as phone interviews with staff at Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program in Ferriday and staff at the DPS&C state office in Baton Rouge. Because we were not able to obtain enough information from all of sites, this chapter does not discuss the TANF Initiatives' pre-release programs as a whole, but focuses on the achievements and challenges at the program sites for which we conducted interviews.

## Program Design

### **Eligibility Requirements under TANF Initiatives**

All pre-release programs supported by the TANF Initiatives funds targeted inmates with minor children who were expected to be released in the near future. In order to participate in the TANF-Initiatives-funded pre-release program, participants were required to sign a form verifying their parental status and eligibility for the program. DSS originally required the DPS&C TANF Initiatives programs to obtain the children's birth certificates or child support documents in order to verify parental status. However, DPS&C was



concerned that incarcerated individuals are often unable to produce their own documentation such as driver's licenses and social security cards, much less documentation for their children. DPS&C and DSS negotiated an arrangement whereby parental status verification could be based on inmates signing an affidavit declaring they were parents.

In addition to instituting a parenthood requirement, most the TANF Initiatives pre-release programs required inmates to be within a certain number of months of their scheduled release date. The maximum period prior to the release date varied by the site and program. For example, the Project Metamorphosis program at DCI required that participants be within 12 months of discharge, while the Job Skills Program generally required that participants be within 18 months of discharge.

### **Program Design of Job Skills Program**

The TANF Initiatives-funded Job Skills Program was modeled after the Job Skills Education Program (JSEP), a large-scale computer-based curriculum originally developed by Florida State University for the U.S. Army. Prior to TANF Initiatives funding, all Louisiana state prisons except the four facilities targeted had already adopted a JSEP program. The Louisiana State Legislature had previously expressed interest in supporting DPS&C's efforts to expand the JSEP program, finding that it assists inmates in obtaining and keeping employment upon release, thereby reducing recidivism and—in turn—incarceration costs.<sup>3</sup> The TANF-funded Job Skills Program, though modeled after JSEP, did not exactly replicate the JSEP curriculum; the JSEP software had been discontinued, and the license agreement could not be extended to new locations. In developing the Job Skills Program, DPS&C looked for a program with a similar curriculum and oversaw the process of choosing the new software package.

The Job Skills Program at WTF/N in Pineville included: access to a self-paced computer-aided curriculum focusing on the job skills and basic skills necessary for success in specific occupational areas; lectures on topics such as resume building, advertising, small-business development, and professional conduct; in-class and homework assignments; guest lectures from local professionals; and in-class discussions of current events. The Job Skills Program at WTF/N had their own dedicated classroom complete with 15 student

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<sup>3</sup> In March 2001, the Final Report from the Louisiana House Select Committee on Fiscal Affairs indicated that federal TANF or State MOE funds could be utilized to pay for nonrecurring expenses, specifically the acquisition of supplies and computers, to assist DPS&C in their efforts to expand the JSEP program.

computers, a small library of career related material, an instructors' desk and a chalk board. One instructor taught two classes Monday through Friday, in the afternoon and evening, allowing flexibility in start time in accordance with inmates' work schedules.

The Job Skills Program at WTF/N targeted inmates who have children, are 12 to 18 months from release, and have at least a sixth-grade reading level. Parental status, release date, and educational background are verified against the inmates' DPS&C master record.<sup>4</sup> Most potential participants did not undergo a formal educational assessment at WTF/N to determine if they would benefit from the Job Skills Program. However, the director of classification, the program instructor, and the GED instructor (funded by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System [LCTCS]) worked together to identify participants, using available information from the inmate's master file, assessments from GED classes, and informal reading evaluations administered by the Job Skills Program instructor.<sup>5</sup>

### **Program Design of Project Metamorphosis**

The Project Metamorphosis curriculum was developed for DPS&C and was first administered with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), which funded a three-year (1997 to 2000) pilot at Elayn Hunt and Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women. TANF Initiatives funding of Project Metamorphosis represented efforts by DPS&C to expand the program to new sites.

Project Metamorphosis is designed to provide inmates nearing release with basic education, life-skills training, career counseling, and job-placement services, and to link inmates released from prison to training, jobs, and support services in their home communities. Project Metamorphosis staff assist inmates in creating and executing an Individual Transition Plan (ITP), which helps inmates identify steps needed in making transition back to civilian life. All participants exit with an individualized skills portfolio

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<sup>4</sup> Most adult inmates entering the state correctional system in Louisiana are first remanded to an Adult Reception and Diagnostic Center (ARDC) at one of two facilities: Elayn Hunt Correctional Center or David Wade Correctional Center Forcht-Wade. The ARDC assessment includes an educational functioning evaluation (utilizing the Test of Adult Basic Education) and mental and physical health screenings. This information is compiled into the inmates' "master file" which is used to track prisoners' progress through the correctional system.

<sup>5</sup> When reading level is unclear, potential participants are sometimes asked to read aloud from a newspaper in order to determine whether their reading level is high enough that they could benefit from the Job Skills Program.

documenting work skills attained, vocational training, and cognitive-skills training. If necessary, participants can receive instruction on where to obtain Adult Basic Education (ABE) or GED preparation.

The life skills program model adopted at DCI in Jackson did not strictly follow the existing Project Metamorphosis curriculum. The original eight-volume curriculum was modified by trial and error during the initial months of TANF Initiatives funding to fit the needs of DCI participants. The version of Project Metamorphosis at DCI consisted of three components.

The first component was a life-skills training class. The class, taught by a life-skills instructor, was for three hours a day and lasted over an approximately 10-week period, for a total of 36 days. The life-skills class took place in a traditional classroom setting that included student and instructor desks, a podium, and a small library of life skills and job-related books. The class had a strong emphasis on attitude-change among participants as part of preparation for employment. We observed that “positive attitude” slogans were posted in the classroom, and heard both the instructor and students mention attitude change as one of keys to success.

The second component was an individualized career development counseling program. In this component, inmates worked individually with the life-skills coordinator, who provided career-counseling services that included help with identifying employment skills and interests, resume development, employment applications, interview role playing, and coaching on how to discuss one’s criminal justice history with a potential employer.

The third component was a job placement service. For this component, a job development specialist worked with a group in the classroom and with individuals on work readiness. The job development specialist also spent significant time in the community, developing relationships with potential employers and attending job fairs. Upon an inmate’s release, the job development specialist made phone calls and home visits to meet with former inmates and their families, assisted former inmates in scheduling interviews, and tried to make sure they were connected with appropriate social and community services, such as halfway houses and substance abuse support groups.

Between 15 to 20 participants were enrolled for each cycle of the first component. While the life-skills class ended after 10 weeks or so, the career development and job placement components continued at least until the participants were released. As noted above, the job

development specialist also contacted the participants for follow-up after they were released.

### **Project Design of Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program**

Concordia Parish Sheriff's Office (CPSO) has a history of providing rehabilitative programs at the Concordia Parish Detention Facility (CPDF) with the assistance of outside funding sources. In SFY 2001, CPSO received funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), to support a substance abuse treatment program for offenders. Other programs that CPDF has provided in the past to incarcerated individuals included, among others, GED, work-release, anger management, and sex offenders programs. TANF Initiatives funding provided support for pre-release programs that CPSO had provided in the past at CPDF through outside funding sources.

The Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program was built upon the programs that were already ongoing prior to TANF Initiatives funding. The program included three main program components: vocational education, GED preparatory classes and testing, and counseling services. This vocational education component included instruction in welding, refrigeration, and small-engine repair, with 1,200 hours of instruction in each area. These vocational education services were contracted out to the LCTCS regional office. The GED component provided preparatory instruction two nights per week for 30 weeks. CPDF hired three teachers to provide GED preparation courses. Program participants were assigned to vocational education or GED classes based on their needs and interests. Additionally, all participants in the vocational education and GED preparatory classes participate in two-hour counseling sessions provided by CPDF's contract counselors three nights per week for 50 weeks.

### **Status of Pre-Release Program Implementation**

In our site visit to WTF/N, we found that Job Skills Program implementation at that site went very well, despite the fact that the program did not actually start until January 2002, halfway through SFY 2002. At the time of interview, the Job Skills Program at WTF/N operated at full capacity—two classes, each with 15 participants—and was in its third program cycle (each program cycle lasts about 12 weeks). Program staff reported that the class had been operating at full capacity from the very start. About 60 people were enrolled during the first two program cycles funded under the TANF Initiatives. Of those,

40 participants completed the program. This completion rate of about 67 percent fell short of the 90 percent target. However, program staff reported that most incompletes resulted from transfers for disciplinary reasons or from early release; few were due to drop-outs from the class. The program did meet the internally established goal of enrolling 30 students per program cycle. Program staff indicated that there were far more applicants than the program could accommodate and that the waiting list had grown to about 100 people.

The site visit to Project Metamorphosis at DCI revealed that the program experienced a slow and rather rocky start (discussed later in this chapter), but that the implementation went more smoothly in the last few months of SFY 2002. The first two cycles of the program (a January entry group and an April entry group) served a total of 40 participants (20 in each group). The third cycle of the program started in June and had 17 active participants at the time of our visit in July 2002. Of the 40 participants in the first two groups, 20 had been released from DCI. Of those released, 18 (or 90 percent) were employed. Although another goal outlined in the MOU was achieving higher post-release wage rates, programs were not required to collect wage rate data.

Unlike Job Skills Program or Project Metamorphosis, the Life Skills Program at Concordia Parish Detention Facility (CPDF) was not a new program started by the TANF Initiatives Program. Partly because of this background, all services of the Concordia program promptly began in October 2001. In May, CPDF respondents indicated receiving notification from DPS&C that TANF Initiatives funding would come to an end in July 2002. In response to this, the GED and counseling components of the program were ended in June 2002. CPDF absorbed the costs associated with the summer session for vocational education so that participants could complete the curriculum and receive certification. Staff at CPDF reported serving 15 inmates in the each of three vocational education components with a total of 45 participants. Eighty inmates participated in the GED preparation classes and all 125 participants from the vocational education and GED components participated in counseling services.

## Program Expenditures

As noted earlier, \$1.4 million of TANF Initiative funds were allocated to the four sites of Job Skills Program; \$400,000 to the three sites of Project Metamorphosis; and \$200,000 to the Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program.

Of the \$1.4 million allocated, the Job Skills Program expended a total of \$434,559 on the four sites through July 2002.<sup>6</sup> Sixty-five percent of their expenditure were spent on equipment such as computers (\$282,567). Other expenditures included: 26 percent (\$113,851) for contract-associated costs such as salaries and 9 percent (\$38,140) for supplies and travel combined.<sup>7</sup> The large discrepancy between the allocated and expended amounts is most likely due to the program's late start, noted earlier.

Individual Job Skills Program sites spent varying amounts on program implementation, ranging from a low of \$93,814 at WTF/N to a high of \$126,399 at Louisiana State Penitentiary. The available data suggests a program cost of about \$1,500 per participant for the WTF/N site, including nonrecurrent spending on items such as equipment.

Project Metamorphosis programs expended \$200,279 of the \$400,000 allocated for all three sites. Ninety-three percent of these funds went toward the provision of contract-related services including program staff salaries. The remaining 7 percent was spent on supplies, travel, and equipment. Like the Job Skills Program, Project Metamorphosis underspent the allocated funds by a large margin. The lower-than-projected spending was believed to be partly due to a slow start of the programs.

Project Metamorphosis program expenditures varied little by location; all three sites spent approximately one-third of the total expenditures.<sup>8</sup> We estimate that the program cost for Project Metamorphosis at DCI during SFY 2002 was about \$1,200 per participant, including nonrecurrent costs.

The TANF Initiatives funds allocated for the Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program were primarily used to expand pre-release services and incorporate vocational education and GED services to the existing JSEP and counseling services. According to DSS estimates, the Life Skills Program expended \$149,995 of the allocated amount (\$200,000) on the program activities through July 2002. We estimate that the program cost for the Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program was about \$1,200 per participant.

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<sup>6</sup> Total expenditures on each program are the Department of Social Service's estimates based on records through October 28, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Estimates on line-item expenditures are based on DPS&C records.

<sup>8</sup> The preliminary data provided by DPS&C shows that DCI spent \$66,128; FWCC, \$65,390; and WCI, \$68,763. (Note that a total of these numbers do not exactly round up to the DSS total expenditure estimates of \$200,279.)

As noted earlier, the State has allocated a total of \$3 million to LCTCS for the coming year. The Job Skills Program at WTF/N, Project Metamorphosis program at DCI and the Concordia Correctional Life Skills Program have all applied for TANF Initiatives pre-release funding from LCTCS. LCTCS has not yet made decisions regarding pre-release TANF Initiatives funds for the coming year.

## Progress Towards Performance Measures

The specific performance measures for the Job Skills Program were not identified in the MOU, and evolved over the course of the year. The first TANF Initiatives reporting form indicated as performance measures the size of monthly enrollment, the percentage of participants moving to the next level of the program, and the job-placement rate. This reporting form specified that the target for monthly enrollment be a total of 65 across all four program sites, the target share of participants moving to the next program level be 60 percent, and the target job-placement rate be 50 percent. However, subsequent reporting forms specified an attendance rate and a program completion rate as the performance measures, and set the targets for both at 90 percent.

While the experience in WTF/N may not be representative of the Job Skills Program's experience at other three sites, reporting forms suggest that the Job Skills Program in all four sites progressed toward their performance targets adequately. By the third reporting period, ending in March 2002, all sites reported that they had exceeded the attendance-rate target of 90 percent. By the fifth reporting period, ending July 2002, two sites reported they had exceeded their program-completion target of 90 percent.

As was the case with the Job Skills Program, the original MOUs for Project Metamorphosis did not provide guidance on specific performance measures and goals. However, the first reporting form indicated a monthly enrollment target of 60 across all three programs. Subsequent forms changed the targets to a 90 percent completion rate and an 80 percent job-placement rate.

The TANF Initiatives reporting forms from Project Metamorphosis indicated that by the third reporting period (ending March 8, 2002), the Project Metamorphosis sites had exceeded the targeted goal by having 95 percent of program participants attending classes. The final TANF Initiatives reporting form for FWCC indicated that 94 percent of participants who completed Project Metamorphosis were working upon release.

Respondents from Project Metamorphosis at DCI indicated that 82 percent of participants released were employed at the time of our interviews.

The contract for the Life Skills Program stipulated that the measure of performance would be the number of offenders served and the number completing the program. The goal was that approximately 170 inmates at the CPDF would receive services. However, there were no program completion goals established in the contract. Additionally, the Life Skills Program had six other target goals included in the TANF Initiatives reporting forms.<sup>9</sup>

The Life Skills Program progressed toward its target goals during the contract year. Interviews revealed that 45 inmates participated in the vocational education component and that 80 inmates participated in the GED preparation classes. Additionally, all 125 participants from the vocational education and GED components participated in counseling services. The Life Skills Program also progressed in the goals outlined in the TANF Initiative reporting forms. By the third reporting period (ending March 2002), the program was achieving its goal of having 90 percent of participants in the GED program in attendance. By the fifth reporting period (ending July), the Life Skills Program exceeded its participation goals for that reporting period for all three components. However, due to a late start up and difficulty maintaining participants in the program, the Life Skills Program did not attain the goal of serving 170 inmates as outlined in the contract with DPS&C.

## Accomplishments and Challenges

### Pre-Release Program Reporting Requirements

Overall, our analysis revealed concerns about how performance measures were understood and utilized at the program level. For the most part, performance measures for pre-release programs were not identified in the MOUs and evolved during the first grant year through consultation with DOA and DSS. This contributed to a lack of clarity regarding performance goals at the Job Skills Program at WTF/N and at the Project

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<sup>9</sup> Targets included: having 85 percent of vocational education participants attending; having 90 percent of eligible vocational education participants completing this component; having 90 percent of GED participants attending this component; having 85 percent of GED participants completing this component; having 65 percent of participants of vocational education and GED participants attending counseling; and having 85 percent of counseling participants completing the counseling component.



Metamorphosis program at DCI. For instance, Project Metamorphosis staff at DCI were not aware of any participation target set by DPS&C, and without any formal direction, program staff set, achieved, and monitored their own participation and graduation goals. In addition, Project Metamorphosis staff at DCI set the goal of having at least 50 participants complete the program in the first year. Program staff at DCI also developed a pre- and post-test to measure the level of mastery of the Project Metamorphosis curriculum among program completers. While these are significant accomplishments given program staff's lack of information on the intended performance targets set by DPS&C and DOA, they point to a lack of instruction on program monitoring, and resulted in a lack of consistent information on how all the programs progressed.

### **High Attendance of Pre-Release Programs**

Two pre-release program sites we visited—the Job Skills Program at WTF/N and Project Metamorphosis at DCI—were successful in recruiting participants. Initially, both programs circulated flyers among the inmate population to inform inmates of the availability of a new program. Both programs became popular among inmates immediately and had to place applicants on a waiting list. These programs now rely only on word-of-mouth referrals for recruitment. The programs also enjoyed relatively high attendance rates. Participants rarely dropped out of these programs.

The success of the Job Skills Program at WTF/N and Project Metamorphosis at DCI in recruiting and retaining participants in a pre-release program is not surprising in the prison context. For a number of reasons, prisons provide an environment where education and training programs can succeed. The relatively small size of the prison community is conducive to disseminating information on the program quickly and effectively. Further, pre-release programs are treated as a “reward” and privilege for well-behaved inmates, for whom program participation is a preferable alternative to other prison activities. Furthermore, the lack of alternative opportunities for job- or life-skills training make the programs particularly desirable for those facing the release in the near future. Finally, strict penalties for no-shows without reason or for misconduct in the class help motivate inmates to stay in the program as well. Thus, attendance or completion records alone may not allow us to gauge how well the programs are implemented.

## **Use of TANF Initiatives Funds to Expand Inmates' Learning Options**

TANF Initiatives funds were used to start or expand pre-release programs at eight different correctional facilities. For example, WTF/N staff appreciated that the new Job Skills Program made possible by TANF Initiatives funds complemented existing education programs, such as GED preparation and a literacy class. Whereas the focus of all other educational programs at WTF/N were academic, Job Skills Program helped participants to understand the concrete connection between education and the ability to participate in the workforce.

At DCI, Project Metamorphosis added to the existing array of educational programs by offering inmates nearing release hands-on life-skills training that would otherwise have been unavailable. For instance, the program used role playing to teach practical skills (such as how to discuss past criminal justice involvement with potential employers) and to teach the interpersonal skills needed for workplace success. The program also provided inmates with interpersonal skills related to self-esteem, such as strategies for building healthy relationships and changing unhealthy behavior patterns. Additionally, Project Metamorphosis at DCI offered one-to-one career counseling and provided personalized leads to assist with finding employment.

## **Challenges at the Start-Up Process**

Respondents at DPS&C, WTF/N Job Skills Program and DCI's Project Metamorphosis reported that there had been difficulties with regard to the start-up process as well as a lack of direction in the early phases of the program. Many of these difficulties were related to beginning operations on entirely new programs and the complexity of working with multiple agencies and program locations. For instance, the start-up process for the Job Skills Program took several months. Delays were primarily attributed to difficulties with ordering, delivering, installing and training new staff on computer hardware and software.<sup>10</sup> Because of the delays, classes at WTF/N did not begin until late January 2002.

The Project Metamorphosis program at DCI also reported start-up difficulties. Staff indicated that vocational education staff did not receive notice regarding Project Metamorphosis prior to Project Metamorphosis's staff arriving in the prison. This created

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<sup>10</sup> The purchase of software for the Job Skills Programs was delayed because it required approval for the Procurements Support Team (PST), an oversight body governing DPS&C purchases.

some initial friction between these two groups, who were supposed to work together on recruitment, outreach, and service coordination. Additionally, respondents at DCI indicated a lack of upfront instruction in how the program was to be administered, reporting that they had to obtain the Project Metamorphosis curriculum on their own. There was additional confusion surrounding the use of the ITP form, a critical part of the program. The program staff indicated that they only began to use the ITP form in June 2002 after they were alerted to its existence during a site visit by DPS&C staff. Also, respondents expressed the mistaken belief that Project Metamorphosis had been a three-year program in its previous iterations at other prisons, and that the curriculum thus had to be condensed so that participants could complete the program prior to release.<sup>11</sup> It has also taken several months before the program was able to find a permanent office space for its instructors and install computers. Taken together, these various areas of confusion suggest a lack of guidance for the Project Metamorphosis program at DCI from the start and at all levels of operation, especially during the first several months.

### **Staff Training, Qualifications, and Recruitment**

Job Skills Program staff at WTF/N and Project Metamorphosis staff at DCI reported initial difficulty in hiring qualified program staff willing to accept a position that was securely funded for only one year. This difficulty was mitigated at WTF/N and DCI by advertising the position among local job candidates familiar with the prison. For instance, two of the three staff at DCI's Project Metamorphosis program had previous experience working for DPS&C: one was a classification and parole officer, and the other worked at a residential substance treatment center associated with DCI.

DPS&C did not set specific qualifications for program staff, in order to afford the prison administrations flexibility in hiring. This resulted in differences across pre-release programs in the educational background of instructors. For instance, the Job Skills Program instructor at WTF/N held a bachelor's degree but had little experience working in a prison setting. The instructor at the Project Metamorphosis program at DCI was working toward a bachelor's degree, but had three years experience working in a residential substance abuse treatment center for adults. Still, the flexibility around staff qualifications facilitated the hiring of enthusiastic and engaged staff for these positions.

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<sup>11</sup> Project Metamorphosis always planned to serve inmates 12 to 18 months from release. Respondents confused the fact that the original grant from OVAE was a three-year grant to mean that individuals participated in the program for three years. Information available at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/OCE/currentls.html>.

## Chapter 6

### Department of Public Safety and Corrections Post-Release Program

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#### Key Findings

- During SFY 2002, \$3 million in TANF Initiatives funds was allocated to the Department of Public Safety & Corrections (DPS&C) to provide post-release services through DPS&C's contractor Project Return to former inmates who were parents of minor children. These funds were intended to enhance existing services at New Orleans and to expand services to Lafayette and Shreveport.
- Project Return enhanced services at New Orleans and created a site at Lafayette. The Shreveport site, however, did not begin services by the April 2002 target date.
- Despite not opening a Shreveport site as had been planned, Project Return still served a total of 288 individuals at its two locations, exceeding the target goal of 175 individuals. In addition, both the New Orleans and Lafayette locations exceeded additional performance targets on the percentage of participants receiving substance abuse education and counseling; life-skills and family-values counseling; academic enhancement services; and employability training.
- The actual expenditures to date totaled \$3 million. The estimated per-participant cost in SFY 2002 was \$9,000, including nonrecurrent costs.
- Project Return staff reported that TANF Initiatives eligibility standards changed several times over the course of the year and, moreover, were not well understood or consistently applied by program administrators. Staff felt that inadequate information on eligibility standards was provided to them up front.

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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Post-Release Programs

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Department of Public Safety and Corrections
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	Project Return of Louisiana, Inc., a private non-profit post-release services provider.
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$3,000,000 (for 7/1/01-6/30/02)
<b>Expenditures to Date:</b>	\$3,000,000
<b>Background:</b>	TANF Initiatives funds were allocated to upgrade the Project Return program in New Orleans and to plan and implement expansion of the program to the Lafayette and Shreveport areas.
<b>Services:</b>	A 12-week intensive program including addiction education; educational services such as GED preparation; job-related services such as job-skills training, job development and placement; community-building and conflict-resolution instruction; individual and group counseling; and life-skills training.
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	New Orleans, Lafayette and Shreveport (Shreveport was planned but not implemented)
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Former offenders who are parents of minor children.
<b>Total Number of Families Served:</b>	288 participants

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## Overview

The Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPS&C) was allocated \$3 million in TANF Initiatives funds to provide post-release services. DPS&C signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Social Services (DSS) in September 2001 and a contract with Project Return, Inc. in November 2001 with the specific

objective of providing counseling, job-readiness services, problem-solving assistance, and other related services to parents released from prison. Project Return TANF Initiatives funds were intended to meet TANF Goal #4: to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families among individuals who are parents and have a history of incarceration in the state and parish prison and jail system. TANF Initiatives funds were to upgrade Project Return services in New Orleans and to expand services into the Shreveport and Lafayette areas. Findings presented here are based on site visits and telephone interviews with staff at Project Return in New Orleans and Lafayette.

### **Program History and Background**

Project Return is a private, nonprofit organization established in New Orleans in 1993. In 1994, Project Return became associated with the Tulane University School of Public Health, which oversaw program administration.<sup>1</sup> In 1996, the Corrections Branch of the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Administration (BJA) awarded a demonstration grant of \$766,633 to Tulane University to continue operating Project Return. The program also received BJA funding in 1997, 1999, and 2000. In SFY 1999 and 2000, the Louisiana State Legislature allocated \$400,000 each year to Project Return through the DPS&C budget. In both years, a primary goal of the funding was to reduce the waiting list for the New Orleans program. In 2000, this funding was also meant to help Project Return expand to other areas in the state. TANF Initiatives funding replaced the BJA demonstration grant, which ended in July 2001. Program staff felt that TANF Initiatives funding was a good fit for Project Return, as the program was already providing services to low-income clients.

The contract between Project Return and DPS&C covered a period between July 2001 and June 2002, but was not officially signed until November 2001. Project Return staff attributed this time lag to negotiations between DSS and the Department of Administration (DOA) concerning program objectives and goals. Project Return applied for a second year of TANF Initiatives funding through DPS&C and was awarded \$1.6 million for SFY 2003.

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed information about Project Return can be found at <http://www.projectreturn.com>.

## Target Population

In order to be eligible for post-release services at Project Return, individuals must have been released from the prison or jail system and must have a felony conviction or a record of repeated incarceration. Potential participants must supply written documentation of conviction or incarceration history. In addition, TANF Initiatives funding required that the individuals be parents of minor children. To meet this requirement, participants needed to submit signed documentation verifying they were the parent of a minor child. The TANF Initiatives eligibility requirement, which limited services to adult parents of minors, thus forced Project Return to shift its focus away from youth and young men without children, a group that Project Return had regularly served in the past. Project Return staff reported that later in the grant period the program was granted exemption from the parenthood requirement so that the program could provide services to former offenders without minor children in up to 20 percent of its cases.<sup>2</sup> DPS&C and DOA, however, reported that they did not have a record of this, and believed that such an exemption had not been granted.

Project Return specifically targets those who appeared to be at high risk for recidivism—for example, those who were recently released, had a longer incarceration history, or had a violent criminal history. Priority was given to enrolling those at the highest risk. However, the program did have a specific risk assessment tool used to quantify risk for each applicant on clear standardized screening measures. Program staff indicated that the majority of clients had been out of prison for approximately one year.

## Program Design

Project Return offers a 12-week intensive post-release program that integrates addiction education; educational services such as GED preparation; job-related services such as computer skills lab, individualized computer-based job-skills training, job development and placement, and employability-skills training; community-building and conflict-resolution instruction; individual, group, and family counseling; and life-skills training. The computer skills lab teaches participants computer basics, including Microsoft Word and Excel, keyboarding, and writing business letters and resumes. Six weeks into the program, the group participates in two days of community building to assist participants in

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<sup>2</sup> Project Return staff indicated that permission to provide to nonparents was granted because former offenders are likely to have children within a few years of release. According to Project Return, the permission was verbally communicated in November 2001.

developing trust and building relationships. Exhibit 6.1 provides an example of the daily activities for participants. The program also makes referrals to outside inpatient and outpatient substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation programs if appropriate. Project Return is structured like a full-time job, and participants receive a stipend of \$5 per hour for each verified hour they participate in the program, enabling them to gross up to \$187.50 per week for a full 37.5-hour week.

**Exhibit 6.1**  
**Example of Weekly Class Schedule**

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
AM	Addictions Education (75 minutes)	Creative Expression (30 minutes)	Conflict Resolution (90 minutes)	Creative Expression (30 minutes)	Job Retention (90 minutes)
	Adult Education (60 minutes)	Plato Lab (60 minutes)	Job Retention (105 minutes)	Life Skills Training (60 minutes)	Addictions Education (105 minutes)
	Plato Lab (60 minutes)	Community Building (90 minutes)		Addictions Education (90 minutes)	
PM	Addictions Education (60 minutes)	Job Search and Appointments (210 minutes)	Twelve Step Meeting (75 minutes)	Adult Education (75 minutes)	Computer Skills Lab (90 minutes)
	Job Retention (105 minutes)		Computer Skills Lab (105 minutes)	Plato Lab (105 minutes)	Adult Education (60 minutes)
					Weekend Survival Skills (30 minutes)

Source: Project Return of Louisiana, Inc. July -September 2002 Class Schedule.



## Status of Post-Release Program Implementation

According to the contract between Project Return and DPS&C, TANF Initiatives funding was to be utilized to upgrade services at Project Return's New Orleans location and to expand services to the Lafayette and Shreveport areas. The contract also stated that performance measures were to be the number of offenders served and the number of offenders completing the program. The initial target indicator was a total of 175 former offenders served across the three locations during the contract year.

In New Orleans, the program was expanded to include more work with participants' families, more formalized aftercare services, and newer versions of the educational software. The New Orleans site also used TANF Initiatives funds to shorten the waiting list and hire additional staff.

Services were expanded to the Lafayette area with classes beginning on March 4, 2002. The Lafayette site was launched in cooperation with the local Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department provided program space (in a former elementary-school building) as well as staff with experience in providing training programs at local jails. Two staff members from the Sheriff's Department were assigned part-time to the Lafayette Project Return staff. Project Return's partnership with the local Sheriff's Department was successful in that the department supported Project Return's goals and helped recruit participants.

Although preparatory work to open the Shreveport location was underway, the services were still not in operation at the Shreveport location by the target date of April 2002.<sup>3</sup> According to DOA, TANF Initiatives funding for Shreveport was withdrawn in May 2002, one month before the end of the contract, due to concern about the late start of the site. At the time of our site visit, Project Return had identified a location for the Shreveport site, hired staff, identified potential participants and was using local funds to maintain four full-time staff until September 30, 2002, in anticipation of securing additional or alternative resources for the coming year for this site.

Program staff and the TANF Initiatives reporting forms indicated that Project Return served a total of 288 individuals at the New Orleans and Lafayette locations, thereby

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<sup>3</sup> The target date of April was specified in the implementation plan submitted by DPS&C to DOA.

exceeding the goal of serving 175 individuals. Sixty percent of these participants graduated from the program. During the first grant year, the number of individuals served and the graduation rate both represented substantial improvements over the years prior to TANF Initiatives funding. For example, in SFY 2001, Project Return served 160 participants at their New Orleans location, of whom approximately 40 percent graduated. Program staff attributed drop-outs to two primary issues faced by participants: a need for inpatient substance abuse treatment and a need to earn more than the Project Return stipend. Both the New Orleans and Lafayette locations consistently exceeded additional performance targets concerning the percentage of participants receiving substance abuse education and counseling; life-skills and family-values counseling; academic enhancement services; and employability training.

### **Program Expenditures**

As noted earlier, the TANF Initiatives MOU between DPS&C and DSS allocated up to \$3 million in TANF funds for implementing post-release programs. The most recent estimate from DSS show that the program has expended the entire \$3 million to date.

According to actual spending broken down by location,<sup>4</sup> both New Orleans and Lafayette spent more than the entire planned budget for the year. At both New Orleans and Lafayette sites, nonsalary expenditures (equipment and supplies/other) exceeded the originally planned budget for these categories. Despite the fact that the Shreveport site never opened or provided services to clients, Project Return spent nearly all of the TANF Initiatives funding originally allocated due to expenditures at the New Orleans and Lafayette site exceeding the total original planned budget. We estimate that the program cost per participant during SFY 2002 was over \$9,000, including nonrecurrent costs.

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<sup>4</sup> The expenditures statement for SFY 2002 (ending June, 30 2002) made available at the time of this writing does not detail expenditures by major line-item or by locations. The TANF Initiatives invoice submitted to DSS in May 2002 was used to approximate expenditure breakdowns.

## Post-Release Program Implementation Issues

### **Eligibility and Reporting Requirements and Verification**

According to Project Return staff, confusion regarding eligibility requirements and verification under TANF Initiatives was one of the key challenges facing the program during the first grant year. The confusion is linked to a lack of specificity in the MOU and the contract regarding implementing eligibility verification. For instance, the MOU specifies only that staff should obtain signed documentation from participants verifying they are the parent of a minor child. Project Return staff reported they were later asked to obtain copies of children's birth certificates or other documents to establish TANF eligibility. Program staff also described that they did not learn of the requirement limiting TANF Initiatives funding to families with incomes of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level until halfway through the funding year. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there also appears to be misunderstanding about a parenthood requirement exemption.

### **Case Closure and Follow-Up**

While there was no requirement for Project Return to provide more formalized aftercare services, this is a goal the program has been working toward for some time. Project Return found that providing more formalized aftercare services was challenging to implement. Staff began promoting the availability of post-completion assistance about three weeks before graduation. However, aftercare services were a voluntary part of the program, and participation in aftercare, although substantial immediately following graduation, decreased dramatically over time. The aftercare program at Project Return fell under the purview of the job development specialist, who was also responsible for working on employment issues with program clients. Aftercare services focused on any issue with which the former client wanted help, but usually centered on education- or employment-related assistance.

Project Return had no clear, uniform policy on implementation of the aftercare component. Not surprisingly, therefore, program staff held widely varying views on the implementation and success of the aftercare program. For example, one respondent indicated that most graduates under his/her care remained in touch throughout the aftercare process, while another noted the difficulty of keeping graduates involved. At the time of our interview, Project Return was planning to review and revise the aftercare program for the upcoming year. Suggested changes included establishing a minimum of

semi-monthly phone contacts with former participants for nine months following graduation.

## Recommendation for Post-Release Program

We recommend that Project Return identify a set of key program indicators that can be used to internally examine program progress at regular intervals, and set appropriate short-term and long-term goals for each identified indicator. The indicators should focus on program outcomes such as participation numbers and rates of graduation, job placement, and recidivism (e.g., rate of arrest or conviction after leaving the program). The program should also develop a results-oriented operational plan for achieving these goals based on an internal review of the program in past years. Such a plan should address strategies for meeting the set goals including, for example, modifications in the curriculum, changes in the role and tasks of staff, reallocation of resources to targeted activities, specific provisions of aftercare and changes in the incentives structure for participants. The plan should also clearly identify the responsibilities at each level of staff in executing the plans and lay out a clear time line. Finally, Project Return should implement the operational plan and monitor the outcomes regularly. Depending on the progress and changes in circumstances, the plan as well as the goals can be modified. Development of a set of program indicators and a concrete plan for improving program outcomes will help Project Return develop a more effective internal monitoring capacity.

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## Chapter 7

### Louisiana Supreme Court Drug Court Program

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#### Key Findings

- Participation in drug courts increased substantially during the first year in which TANF Initiatives funding was provided. There had been 1,647 active cases in the Drug Court Program at the end of SFY 2001. By the end of SFY 2002, that number had increased to 2,023, representing a 22 percent increase in the number of Drug Court Program participants over one year.
- The courts we visited took a highly collaborative approach to service provision, involving family members as well as other service providers. This integrated program design afforded participants a broad base of support and also helped address underlying issues that contributed to crime and substance abuse.
- Adult and juvenile drug courts had very similar spending patterns in terms of expenditure categories. However, TANF Initiatives funds accounted for a larger proportion of juvenile drug court spending (76 percent) than of adult drug court spending (58 percent).
- TANF Initiatives funding alleviated some concerns among drug court staff with regard to the stability of the program funding. In addition, TANF Initiatives funding has enabled local drug court staff to conduct additional community outreach, receive additional training, and receive an increased level of clinical consultation.

- While the drug courts we visited were well versed in current procedures for determining TANF eligibility, staff indicated there was initial lack of clarity regarding how to use the TANF eligibility checklists created by the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug Court Office (SCDCO).

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### TANF Initiatives Program Summary Louisiana Supreme Court Drug Court Program

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Louisiana Supreme Court, Office of the Judicial Administrator, Supreme Court Drug Court Office (SCDCO)
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$ 5,000,000 (for 10/01–9/02)
<b>Expenditures to Date:</b>	\$ 5,024,642 (as of 9/02, SCDCO estimate)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	The drug courts integrate substance abuse treatment, sanctions, and incentives with case processing to place low-level, nonviolent drug-involved defendants in community-based, judicially supervised habilitation programs. The program aims to help these families understand the health risks associated with substance abuse and to assist them in becoming better able to successfully function in the family setting.
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	35 juvenile and adult drug courts in Louisiana under contract with SCDCO, providing services in rural and urban areas across the state
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	As of July 2002: Orleans Parish Adult Criminal Court, the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> , 21 <sup>st</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 24 <sup>th</sup> , 26 <sup>th</sup> , 27 <sup>th</sup> , 29 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup> , and 40 <sup>th</sup> Judicial District Courts, as well as the city courts in Breaux Bridge, Hammond, and Slidell
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Children under age 18 or parents with a minor child. Adults must be nonviolent defendants and court-authorized to participate.
<b>Total Number of Families Served:</b>	As of June 2002, there were 2,023 clients being served in juvenile and adult drug courts across the state.

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## Program Overview

The Louisiana Supreme Court, Office of the Judicial Administrator (LASC/JAO) was awarded \$5 million in TANF Initiatives funds in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2002 to provide Drug Court Program services. Under the jurisdiction of JAO, the Supreme Court Drug Court Office (SCDCO) manages drug courts across the state. There are two components to the SCDCO TANF Initiative:

- Juvenile Drug Courts; and
- Adult Drug Courts.

SCDCO is charged with overall administration of the 35 juvenile and adult drug courts across Louisiana and is responsible for disseminating funds, providing technical assistance on programmatic and fiscal issues, and documenting and evaluating the Drug Court Program on a statewide basis. Drug courts are located throughout the state, in small rural and large urban court settings.

TANF Initiatives funding of the Supreme Court’s Drug Court Program supports TANF Goals #3 and 4: to reduce out-of-wedlock births, and to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families, respectively. The specific objective of the Drug Court Program is to provide monitoring, treatment, and counseling to “TANF-eligible” clients so that they may support their dependent children, understand the health risks associated with substance abuse and related antisocial behaviors, and become better able to successfully function in the family setting.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of TANF Initiatives funding of the Drug Court Program. Our analysis is based on site visits and phone interviews conducted with: Louisiana’s Office of Addictive Disorders (OAD), SCDCO, Jefferson Parish Juvenile and Adult Drug Courts, and St. Mary Parish Juvenile and Adult Drug Courts.

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<sup>1</sup>“TANF eligibility” signifies that the costs associated with a particular Drug Court Program client are reimbursable with TANF monies. Drug Court Program participants are determined to be “TANF-eligible” if they have verification of being the custodial parent of a minor child or if they show verification of paying child support.



## Program History and Background

Drug courts emerged in the late 1980s as a community-level response to the increasing number of drug and drug-related offenses moving through the criminal justice system. Communities nationwide longed for criminal-justice processing that would inhibit the abuse of alcohol and other drugs and any related criminal activity. Like their counterparts across the U.S., drug courts in Louisiana arose from local communities, and thus, each drug court has different origins and different community members involved in planning and implementation.

The first drug court in Louisiana was established in the early 1990s. Originally administered by Louisiana's Office for Addictive Disorders (OAD), the State's Drug Court Program was transferred to SCDCO in July 2001. This recent transfer of administrative oversight from the substance abuse service system to the judicial system brings Louisiana in line with other most other states. Respondents reported that the switch in administration resulted from a judicial complaint that the administrative branch should not oversee a function of the judicial branch. Drug Court Program judges wanted more control over treatment providers, which had previously been limited to OAD-approved providers. Additionally, one respondent suggested that the transfer of drug court administration was a response to the need for a fiscally responsible administrator as well as for increased state-level documentation and oversight. Respondents indicated that Louisiana is one of few states with a state-level Drug Court Program.

Louisiana is reported to be ahead of other states in terms of dedicating state funds for its Drug Court Program, and anecdotal evidence from SCDCO suggests that other states are now moving in the direction of increased state funding to drug courts. TANF Initiatives funding was allocated to the Drug Court Program by the Louisiana State Legislature. The Drug Court Program was fully operational before receiving TANF Initiatives funds. In July 2001, SCDCO served 30 drug courts throughout Louisiana. Since the beginning of SFY 2002, five additional drug courts have entered into contracts with SCDCO resulting in 35 juvenile and adult drug courts in the Drug Court Program.<sup>2</sup>

Drug Court Program staff expect the program to be allocated TANF Initiatives funds for SFY 2003, although respondents were unsure at what level the Drug Court Program would be funded.

## Program Design

According to state legislation, drug courts are a type of probation program serving nonviolent defendants without prior violent felony convictions.<sup>3</sup> The district attorney is responsible for suggesting to local courts that defendants be screened for eligibility if the following criteria are satisfied:

- Individual is charged with a state statute violation relating to the use or possession of any narcotic drugs, or a violation where there is a significant relationship between the use of alcohol or drugs and the crime.
- District attorney has reason to believe that the charged individual suffers from alcohol or drug addiction.
- It is in the community's and justice's best interest to provide the defendant with treatment rather than with incarceration or other sanctions.

If these criteria are met, the court advises defendants that they may be eligible to enroll in a court-authorized treatment program through the probation division. Defendants are further advised that, if accepted into the treatment program, they must:

- waive their right to a trial;
- enter a guilty plea with the stipulation that sentencing be deferred or suspended;
- be placed on a supervised probation under the usual conditions of probation; and
- participate in an alcohol and drug testing program at their own expense.

If the defendant completes all phases of the Drug Court Program and successfully completes all other requirements of the court-ordered probation, the conviction may be set aside and the prosecution dismissed.

Managed by a supervising judge, drug courts are designed to reduce crime and drug use by integrating substance abuse treatment, sanctions, and incentives with case processing to place low-level, nonviolent drug-involved defendants in judicially supervised habilitation programs. Judges receive feedback from a team of drug court professionals including: a district attorney, Indigent Defense Board (IDB) representatives, a team of treatment providers, and probation officers. Drug Court Programs include the following key activities:

- Alcohol and other drug treatment services are integrated with judicial case processing.
- Prosecution and defense counsel work as a team to promote public safety and protect participants' due-process rights.
- Participants are identified early and are promptly placed in the Drug Court Program.
- Program provides access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, and related services.
- Abstinence and compliance are monitored by frequent alcohol and drug testing.
- Participants are required to interact with judicial system on a regular basis.
- Interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court operations.
- Drug courts work in coalition with public agencies and community-based organizations to generate local support and to better coordinate services.

The Drug Court Program presents an alternative to traditional judicial case processing for individuals charged with non-violent drug-related offenses and, moreover, provides a collaborative intervention to underlying substance abuse issues that resulted in the crime.

There are some overall differences between juvenile and adult courts in the drug courts that we visited. (As noted earlier, we conducted site visits to juvenile and adult drug courts in Jefferson and St. Mary Parishes.) The primary objectives of adult drug courts are changing individuals' behavior patterns and improving their coping mechanisms. Juvenile drug courts, on the other hand, have a broader focus of improving family dynamics so as to reduce the instances of future criminal behavior. For this reason, the juvenile drug courts we visited require parental consent and participation during all phases of the program. Adult drug courts cases average 18 months, whereas juvenile cases generally last a year. Respondents indicated that this difference is the result of adults' typically needing more time to change unhealthy behaviors.

The adult drug courts we visited require that program participants be employed or be engaged in work-related educational or training programs. Juvenile drug courts require regular school attendance by participants. The difference in the program design between adult and juvenile drug courts in the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District (serving St. Mary Parish) is illustrated in Exhibit 7.1.

**Exhibit 7.1**  
**Drug Court Program Design, 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**

	<u>Juvenile Drug Court</u>	<u>Adult Drug Court</u>
Average Program Length	1 year	18 months
Phase I	Average 1 month. Weekly services: 3-5 random drug screens, one court hearing, parent group, recreational session, educational group, family and individual counseling, and two home-based counseling sessions.	Average 2 months. Weekly services: 3 random drug screens and one court hearing. Psychosocial and physical assessment, development of treatment plan, entrance to NA/AA, preparation of drug/alcohol history, job and educational assessment.
Phase II	Average 3 months. Weekly services: 3-4 random drug screens, parent group, recreational session, family counseling, educational group, two home-based counseling sessions. Other services: bi-weekly status hearings and individual counseling.	Average 4-6 months. Weekly services: 3 random drug screens, 3 NA/AA meetings, group therapy and individual counseling. Other services: bi-weekly court hearings.
Phase III	Average 2 months. Weekly services: 3 random drug screens, home-based counseling, recreation, and parent groups. Other services: individual or family counseling as needed.	Average 3-6 months. Weekly services: 3 random drug screens, 3 NA/AA meetings, group and individual therapy. Other services: monthly court hearings.
Phase IV	Average 6 months. Weekly services: 2 random drug screens. Monthly services: home-based counseling, 2 compliance officer visits. Individual or family counseling as needed and case manager monitoring of school/employment.	Average 6 months. Random drug screens and court appearances as needed, continued NA/AA involvement, monthly individual counseling, monitoring of community, educational and vocational activities.

**Eligibility Criteria**

Only individuals who have been arrested and placed on probation are eligible for adult drug courts. However, juvenile drug courts are more flexible in their eligibility requirements. For instance, the Jefferson Parish Juvenile Drug Court, which is located in

an urban area and serves as the “last resort” before incarceration, restricts eligibility to postadjudicate, nonviolent offenders. However, the 16<sup>th</sup> District Juvenile Drug Court takes referrals from Families in Need of Services (FINS), a state-administered delinquency prevention program with the goal of stopping the escalation of behavioral problems. This degree of flexibility allows individual drug courts to respond to and benefit from the expertise in their communities.

In addition to meeting program eligibility requirements, participants in adult courts must present proof that they have a minor child in order for their case to be eligible for reimbursement from TANF Initiative funds. On the other hand, all juvenile drug court participants are categorically eligible for TANF Initiatives funds provided they are age 18 or younger. To illustrate the differences in program and TANF eligibility requirements between adult and juvenile courts, Exhibit 7.2 shows the requirements for the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

**Exhibit 7.2**  
**Juvenile and Adult Drug Court Program Eligibility Requirements,**  
**16<sup>th</sup>Judicial District**

	<u>Juvenile Drug Court</u>	<u>Adult Drug Court</u>
Parental Consent Required	Yes	No
Must be arrested	Not in all cases	Yes
Must be on probation	Not in all cases	Yes
Program takes status offenders	Yes	No
Must enter guilty plea	Yes	Yes
Violent Offenses	No	No
TANF reimbursable	Yes, unless charged as an adult or near age 18.	Must provide proof of parental status and sign verification that they are parent of minor child
Participate in alcohol or drug testing at own expense	Yes	Yes

## Status of Program Implementation

At the end of SFY 2001 there were 1,647 active cases in the Drug Court Program.<sup>4</sup> By the end of SFY 2002, that number had increased to 2,023, representing a 22 percent increase in the number of Drug Court Program participants over one year.<sup>2</sup> Implementation of drug courts statewide is thus going well with regard to the number of cases served. TANF Initiatives reporting forms also indicate that TANF-funded drug court programs met eligibility requirements and provided planned services overall.

As noted earlier, all participants must be referred to drug courts, so there is no *direct* outreach to potential participants. However, drug courts can increase referrals by making their services known to judges, probation officers, police, and other community members. Since each drug court is set up in a unique way—often to reflect the court’s range of services as well as the needs and interests of the community—referral mechanisms and outreach strategies vary across sites. For instance, staff from the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Drug Court participate in community meetings both to ensure that potential participants are referred to the program and to regularly interact with local courts, probation officials, and law enforcement officers who might help identify potential participants. Additionally, on an ad hoc basis—as time permits—16<sup>th</sup> District staff provide educational outreach to schools, community centers, and local courts. Respondents indicated that TANF Initiatives funds enabled 16<sup>th</sup> District staff to expand its community outreach and education efforts.

In the local Drug Court Programs we visited, program implementation was characterized by a high level of collaboration with a team of professionals across different agencies and—in juvenile cases—by intensive efforts to involve family members in all stages of the drug court process. Compared with traditional approaches such as probation or incarceration, this multi-agency collaboration appears to be more effective in helping clients address underlying substance abuse and addiction issues. In juvenile cases, the goals of family involvement are to improve family functioning and to coach families to manage their child’s behavior without needing the drug court’s assistance in the future. Judge and drug court teams typically meet with families to assess—and assist with managing—how the youth functions within the family system.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on SDCO Monthly Programmatic Report ending June 2002. This includes 1,769 adults and 254 juveniles.

In the Jefferson Parish Juvenile Drug Court, for example, the program utilizes Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), an intensive family- and community-based treatment that addresses the multiple determinants of antisocial behavior in juvenile offenders. MST is provided using a home-based model of service delivery. This model allows the treatment team to work with the family in their usual environment, thereby enhancing the maintenance of treatment gains. MST is used in conjunction with an Individualized Treatment Plan (ITP), which provides present-focused, action-oriented weekly assignments for the youth and family, random drug testing, and ongoing monitoring from the drug court team, including the probation officer, judge, school liaison and treatment therapist.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Juvenile Drug Court also uses a family-focused model, which includes home-based family therapy in combination with regular random drug testing, group work, individual counseling, educational groups, and ongoing monitoring by the drug court team. The level of collaboration between the 16<sup>th</sup> District Juvenile Drug Court is especially significant given the rural nature of the community. In addition to working in partnership with the established drug court team associates, the 16<sup>th</sup> District Juvenile Drug Court works closely with community-based organizations and local law enforcement to provide an unparalleled degree of partnership despite the lack of other available resources in the community.

### **Program Expenditures**

As shown in Exhibit 7.3, SCDCO reported that the TANF Initiatives portion of Drug Court Program expenditures totaled \$5.0 million through September 2002, thus expending the entire original allocation. Major spending categories included: \$2.4 million (49 percent) for treatment; \$1.4 million (28 percent) for program personnel; \$0.4 million (8 percent) on office expenses; and \$0.3 million (5 percent) for testing and laboratory costs. Depending on the parish, treatment costs included those associated with drug and alcohol testing, as well as all counseling, education and treatment compliance services. Program personnel costs included personnel expenses for case managers, probation officers, drug court coordinators, and others who were directly involved in service delivery but were not providing treatment. All SCDCO administrative personnel costs were funded by non-TANF sources, in order to maintain TANF Initiative administrative costs for the Drug Court Program under the 10 percent maximum. Adult and juvenile drug courts had very similar spending patterns with regard to the categorical breakdown.

**Exhibit 7.3**  
**Total Drug Courts Expenditures Related to TANF-Clients**  
 Adult and Juvenile Courts Combined, through Sept. 2002

	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Percentage Distribution</u>
Treatment	\$ 2,449,066	48.7 %
Program Personnel	1,381,098	27.5
Office Expense	401,215	8.0
Testing and Laboratory	253,408	5.0
Other Services	185,727	3.7
Equipment	160,227	3.2
Travel and Training	154,896	3.1
Other	39,005	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,024,642</b>	<b>100.0</b>

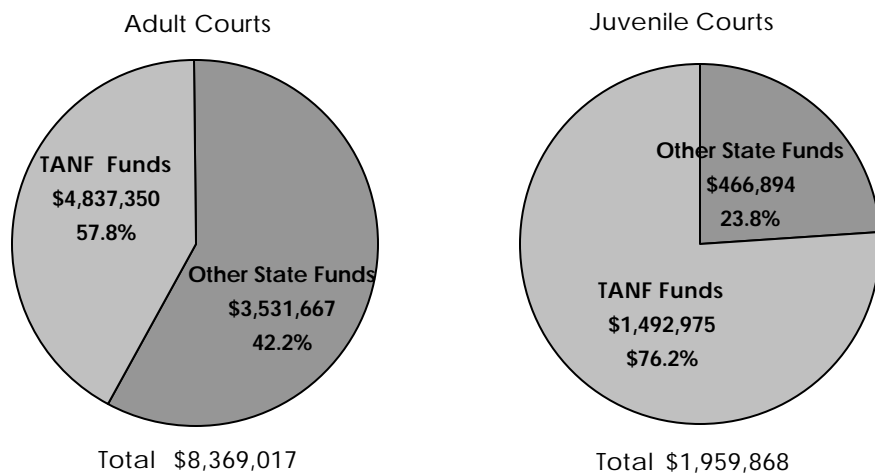
Source: BPA staff calculations based on expenditure reports provided by Supreme Court Drug Court Office. These numbers reflect a total of monthly spending regarded as billable to TANF funds from the program year 2001/2002 (through Sept. 2002).

While the majority of TANF Initiatives funds were spent on the adult drug courts through September 2002 (\$8.4 million for adult courts vs. \$2.0 million for juvenile courts), the relative contribution of TANF funds was significantly larger for juvenile drug courts than for adult courts. Exhibit 7.4 illustrates TANF Initiatives expenditures as a proportion of total spending for adult and juvenile drug courts during SFY 2002. As shown, the TANF Initiatives grant accounted for 76 percent of the total spending for juvenile courts, compared with only 58 percent of the total spending for adult drug courts. This difference in proportion is the result of juvenile courts having broader eligibility requirements regarding TANF Initiatives funds. As mentioned earlier, for juvenile drug courts, all participants were considered eligible to receive TANF Initiatives funds; on the other hand, for adult drug courts, participants must have minor children and meet income requirements to qualify for TANF Initiative funds.



**Exhibit 7.4**  
**Use of TANF Initiatives Funds and Other State Funds**  
**Adult Drug Courts vs. Juvenile Drug Courts**  
Program Year 2002 (through September 2002)

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Source: BPA staff calculations based on expenditure reports provided by Supreme Court Drug Court Office.

## Accomplishments, and Challenges

### Added Value of TANF Initiative Funds

Two primary challenges Louisiana drug courts have faced over the years are (a) instability in program funding and (b) a work environment that is rather conducive to burnout. Nearly all respondents who had been working at a Drug Court Program for more than one year reported a history of financial instability during the period in which the programs were under OAD administration. TANF Initiatives funding significantly increased the funds available for the drug courts. In SFY 2001 the Drug Court Program was allocated \$3.3 million.<sup>7</sup> In SFY 2002—the first year in which the program had TANF Initiatives funds—its budget more than tripled to \$10.8 million.

The addition of TANF Initiatives funds have, in turn, helped increase program outreach, expand training opportunities, and generally improve staff morale. One respondent indicated that while the program was never officially threatened with closure, the addition of TANF funds has allowed more staff time to be devoted to outreach to inform community members about the availability of services. In addition, respondents indicated that improved financial stability has enabled programs to increase the hours of consultants, such as psychiatrists and social workers, to provide clinical consultations on clients as well as group trainings for Drug Court Program staff. Clinical support and training opportunities are reported to have increased staff morale while helping to decrease turnover at the direct-service level. At the state level, TANF Initiatives funding allowed for the development and testing of a Drug Court Information Management System (DCMIS) that will provide improved systems for case management, output, and outcome evaluation. Additionally, SCDCO has developed a monitoring plan that will provide technical assistance, consultation, and monitoring of all drug courts receiving TANF Initiatives funding. Finally, TANF Initiative funding has afforded SCDCO the opportunity to expand Drug Court Program services to jurisdictions where there are no comparable programs already in place.

### **Upgrading Reporting Requirements**

The current data collection system requires that each month Drug Court Programs provide SCDCO with information detailing the number of clients, graduates, re-offenses, withdrawals, and terminations, as well as the number of TANF-eligible clients. Additionally, the fiscal report requires that staff detail TANF-eligible and non-TANF-eligible expenditures by major line item. Currently, all data are collected manually by the local drug courts, with SCDCO aggregating the information. SCDCO plans to develop a Web-based DCMIS system to automate data collection across the state.

An important challenge faced by the Drug Court Program is determining how to utilize the DCMIS system to monitor program performance. Although SCDCO is working to develop Drug Court Program performance indicators, respondents noted the difficulty in developing targets that will be mutually acceptable to SCDCO and the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Division of Administration (DOA). Over the past year, there have been discussions about establishing increased Drug Court Program enrollment or completion rates as the performance targets. However, SCDCO staff have expressed significant concern that enrollment is not a valid measure of Drug Court Program performance.

## **Interagency Communication**

Our site visits found that communication between JAO and DSS/DOA as well as between SCDCO and local drug court programs was not always effective during the contract year. JAO staff reported experiencing difficulty in effectively communicating with DSS and DOA, especially during the early months of TANF Initiatives funding. Staff felt that there could have been better communication concerning TANF Initiatives monitoring and reporting requirements (discussed below) and the reimbursement process. Some of these communication concerns were attributed to staff turnover and general reorganization at DSS, which resulted in a lack of continuity in staff responsible for TANF Initiatives. This concern was alleviated in spring 2002 when the position responsible for overseeing TANF Initiatives, which had previously been a contract-processing position, was restructured to focus on program development and on providing a central point of contact concerning TANF Initiatives funding. Following this change, there was marked improvement in their ability to communicate with appropriate staff.

The ineffective communication between SCDCO and DSS/DOA during the early period of the TANF Initiatives funding apparently created substantial confusion as to which drug court costs were TANF reimbursable. In an effort to clarify TANF eligibility requirements, SCDCO created several versions of the TANF eligibility checklist for use by adult and juvenile court staff. However, local program staff we interviewed indicated that they were often not clear about how to use those TANF eligibility forms. This suggests that even as SCDCO was working to clarify eligibility rules with DSS, SCDCO was not communicating requirement information clearly to local drug court staff.

However, evidence suggests that SCDCO has taken great steps to assure that all 35 drug courts statewide are in compliance with requirements to determine if costs associated with each individual participant are TANF reimbursable. For instance, each drug court has a staff member responsible for keeping a “TANF eligibility” binder that includes a client data form and the TANF checklist used at intake to determine whether services rendered for that client are TANF reimbursable. The drug courts we visited were well versed in procedures for determining TANF eligibility, and indications are that the Drug Court Program staff in general are more settled in this process.

## Monitoring of the Program

Program monitoring was a challenge that SCDCO and DSS/DOA faced in the past year. Throughout the year, they worked toward agreement on statewide target indicators. SCDCO's Memorandum of Understanding with DSS did not outline specific targets or monitorable indicators for the Drug Court Program. During the past year, SCDCO reported on various *implementation* indicators such as whether local drug courts documented eligibility requirements and whether drug court clients received services. However, SCDCO did not report measures related to the number of participants or program completion rates.

In our interviews, SCDCO staff voiced concern about being held accountable to explicit outcome targets. They argued that because local district attorneys have the ultimate discretion over the operations of drug courts, there is little SCDCO can do to affect enrollment or completion rates. Additionally, SCDCO was concerned that if meeting target indicators meant pushing local courts to increase enrollment or completion rates, this could result in an increase in the number of inappropriate cases being accepted into and graduated from the drug courts. There are other measures that SCDCO staff felt would be problematic if used as indicators. One example was the rate of positive toxicity screens. Although a high rate of positive toxicity screens might be interpreted to mean that the program was failing to prevent participants' substance use, it could also mean that the program was in fact monitoring participants well.

In short, SCDCO's hesitancy to establish drug-court performance indicators has run counter to DSS/DOA's intention to monitor progress of TANF Initiatives through concrete, monitorable indicators. Thus, the issue was not completely resolved during the past year. In the meantime, SCDCO is interested in introducing statewide performance standards to provide a framework in which each local drug court would operate. They are in the process of developing this framework as well as an internal monitoring and evaluation system that includes a centralized administrative data system linking all local drug courts to SCDCO.

## Forming New Partnerships

While there were no formal expectations that the Drug Court Program would form new working relationships with FITAP/FIND WORK or other TANF Initiative programs,

developing new partnerships may be beneficial to the program. Staff we interviewed view TANF as a funding source and exhibit little knowledge about public assistance programs outside of the Food Stamp Program and Medicaid.<sup>8</sup> Further, many respondents in the drug courts we visited reported that the majority of their clients are low-income. However, there is no method in place to ensure that low-income participants—even those who appear to be income eligible for cash assistance—are referred to FITAP. Additionally, many staff in the rural drug courts we visited noted the lack of referral programs as a challenge to their programs, yet were unaware of referral opportunities available either through FITAP or through federal employment assistance such as Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and welfare-to-work programs.

At the state level, SCDCO is forging new relationships with DSS staff. For example, Drug Court Program project coordinators have met with FITAP staff to discuss TANF assistance that might be relevant to drug court participants. However, there are significant barriers to this type of program coordination. Chief among these is the fact that drug court participants are in treatment under coercive conditions, a situation that makes it difficult to motivate participants to partake in other programs. In order to successfully engage drug court participants, FITAP staff will need to stress to these individuals that TANF represents an opportunity for assistance, rather than just another set of program requirements.

### **Drug Court Staff: Training, Qualifications, and Recruitment**

Drug Court Program administrators reported difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Respondents at the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Drug Court cited many reasons for this, including: a relatively low pay scale; a lack of educational institutions in the area, resulting in young people leaving to attend college and not returning; general lack of amenities in the area; and the considerable distances staff must drive to work.<sup>9</sup> The challenge of finding qualified drug court staff in rural areas result in there being different job qualifications in rural area than in urban areas. For instance, substance abuse treatment staff at Jefferson Parish Juvenile Drug Court must hold a master's degree in a social science field, whereas substance abuse treatment staff at the 16<sup>th</sup> District Drug Court must hold a bachelor's degree in a social science field and be working toward Board Certified Substance Abuse Counselor (BCSAC) certification.<sup>10</sup>

## Recommendation

We recommend that the Drug Court Program assess the opportunities for increasing cooperation—at both the state and local levels—with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and other agencies which provide services that may be relevant to drug court participants and their families. In particular, we recommend that the drug courts, in cooperation with DSS, develop a more integrated referral system to link eligible drug court participants to FITAP/FIND Work programs. Such a referral system could be very beneficial, especially for low-income, unstable families with children in the juvenile drug court system. For these families, cash assistance, employment, or supportive services available from DSS could have a significant impact on stabilizing family situations, which could in turn lead to positive program outcomes for the Drug Court Program. In addition, some adult drug court participants with children may also be eligible for FITAP, provided they did not have a prior nonviolent felony conviction.

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## Chapter 8

### Office for Addictive Disorder

# Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment

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## Key Findings

### Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program

- The Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program of the Office for Addictive Disorders (OAD) improved access to substance abuse treatment for FITAP-eligible individuals by making treatment services more available to them and by creating an improved method of identifying their need for such services.
- During the first year of the TANF Initiatives program, 2,686 FITAP clients and other FITAP-eligible individuals were provided with non-intensive outpatient treatment, intensive outpatient treatment, or short-term inpatient treatment to help address their substance abuse problems.
- The TANF Initiatives Program gave OAD the opportunity to test the effectiveness of a new, computer-based approach to screening for substance abuse. While the current system identifies only about 1 - 2 percent of FITAP applicants as being in need of referral to OAD for further assessment and treatment for substance abuse, the new method flags 13 percent of the FITAP applicants for further review, which results in 8 percent of the FITAP applicants being identified by an OAD professional as needing further assessment and treatment for substance abuse.
- The greatly improved referral rate for the new approach to substance abuse screening can be attributed primarily to the development of a more effective tool (an interactive computer system vs. a short paper-and-pencil questionnaire) and to its administration by qualified substance abuse clinicians in a supportive setting.



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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Office for Addictive Disorders (OAD)
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$1,012,000 (for 11/01–9/02)
<b>Expenditures to Date:</b>	\$1,430,618 (as of 9/02) Note: Funds were re-allocated to this program from the OAD Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	<p>The Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program was created to ensure that FITAP applicants who are in need of the substance abuse treatment services offered by OAD are identified and provided with such services. Elements of this program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ provision of OAD substance abuse treatment services to FITAP applicants;</li><li>▪ an improved screening and assessment process for identifying FITAP applicants who are in need of substance abuse treatment services; and</li><li>▪ collaboration between OAD and DSS-OFS, to include stationing OAD staff at local OFS offices.</li></ul>
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	None—services provided by OAD staff
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	<p>Substance abuse treatment services are provided at OAD facilities statewide</p> <p>The new substance abuse screening and assessment process is being tested at 10 pilot sites at OFS offices in the Parishes of Baton Rouge (North); Caddo; Calcasieu; Orleans (Uptown); Ouachita; Rapides; St. Landry; Tangipahoa; Terrebonne; and West Jefferson</p>
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Mandatory screening and substance abuse treatment program for FITAP/KCSP applicants
<b>Total Number of Families Served :</b>	During the first TANF Initiative program year, 2,686 FITAP clients and FITAP-eligible individuals received substance abuse treatment services from OAD through the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program.

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- Co-location of OAD and Office of Family Support (OFS) staff in 10 pilot sites facilitated the provision of OAD services to individuals applying for FITAP and collaboration between OAD and OFS.

### **Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children**

- The Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children affords previously underserved families—women with substance abuse problems who have a need for residential treatment services where the family can remain together—the opportunity to obtain needed substance abuse treatment services.
- During the first year of the TANF Initiatives program, 529 women and children received residential substance abuse treatment services through OAD’s TANF Initiatives program. Without the availability of these funds, many of these families would not have received appropriate substance abuse treatment services.
- The program was credited with helping families in need of substance abuse treatment services not only to receive them, but, in many cases, use them to full advantage in their move toward drug- and alcohol-free self-sufficiency. Success stories crediting the program were many.

## **Program Overview**

The Office for Addictive Disorders (OAD), in the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, is the state authority for the treatment and prevention of substance abuse disorders. OAD provides inpatient, outpatient, community-based, residential, and detoxification treatment services through state-run and privately operated facilities throughout the state.<sup>1</sup> OAD also operates a variety of awareness and prevention programs.

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2002, OAD was awarded \$4 million in TANF Initiatives funds to provide the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, for FITAP applicants

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<sup>1</sup> OAD’s facilities include 13 inpatient centers, 51 outpatient care facilities, 12 detoxification units, and 16 halfway houses.

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## TANF Initiatives Program Summary Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children

<b>Contract Agency:</b>	Office for Addictive Disorders (OAD)
<b>Initiative Grant Amount:</b>	\$2,988,000 (for 11/01 to 9/02)
<b>Expenditures to Date:</b>	\$2,511,366 (as of 9/02)
<b>Program Background and Services:</b>	The Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children provides residential substance abuse treatment services, job training, and self-sufficiency skills to mothers with dependent children. Services are provided in treatment facilities operated by service providers under contract to OAD.
<b>Subcontractors:</b>	Odyssey House; Grace House; Infinity Network; Claire House; Family House; Reality House; Family Success Institute
<b>Initiative Locations:</b>	New Orleans (Odyssey House, Grace House, Infinity Network); Bayou Vista (Claire House); Harvey (Family House); Baton Rouge (Reality House); Shreveport (Family Success Institute)
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Women with dependent children who are in a family in which any member receives FITAP/KCSP, Food Stamps, Medicaid, LaChip, SSI, or Free or Reduced School Lunch
<b>Total Number of Families Served :</b>	529 women and children received residential substance abuse treatment services

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and FITAP-eligible individuals, and the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children, for members of needy families, whether or not they are involved with FITAP.

This chapter provides an analysis of the TANF Initiatives programs operated by OAD. Findings presented here are based on site visits and telephone interviews with OAD state office staff and regional administrative staff; a site visit to the Orleans-Uptown office of the Department of Social Services, Office of Family Support (OFS), where OAD TANF Initiatives program staff are co-located; and site visits to Odyssey House and Infinity House, two residential substance abuse treatment facilities in New Orleans that provide services under the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children.

## Program Objectives

OAD's TANF Initiatives are intended to meet TANF Goal #2, to end dependence on welfare and other government benefits for the needy by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage. The specific objective of OAD's Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program is to provide drug screening, assessment, referral, and treatment to FITAP recipients and FITAP-eligible individuals in order to assist them in achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency, employment, and family stability. The specific objective of OAD's Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children is to address the needs of women who require intensive residential substance abuse treatment and who have dependent children.

## Program History and Background

Effectively screening for and treating substance abuse is one of the major challenges facing health and social service agencies throughout the country. Of particular concern is the large number of welfare recipients who confront substance abuse problems or addiction.<sup>2</sup> Many studies have shown substance abuse to be a major barrier in moving from welfare to work.

In recent years, the State of Louisiana has recognized the great importance both of identifying FITAP recipients in need of substance abuse treatment services and supporting the provision of such services. In 1998, the State instituted mandatory drug screening for all FITAP applicants. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was established between OAD and the Department of Social Services (DSS) in order to make drug screening and assessment part of the FITAP application process. Under this agreement, Office of Family Support (OFS) FITAP analysts screen applicants for drug abuse using the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-20), a commonly used paper-and-pencil tool consisting of 20 questions about a person's drug use in the preceding year. Based on the results of this screening, the applicant is referred to OAD for further drug testing, evaluation, and, if needed, treatment.

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<sup>2</sup> In 1999, Research Triangle Institute did a needs assessment for substance abuse treatment services among all Louisiana households, and arrived at a conservative estimate that 9.4 percent of the adult population were in need of treatment for substance abuse. Nationally, it is estimated that between 15 and 25 percent of the TANF population is in need of services related to drug or alcohol abuse (Department of Health and Human Services, *Ancillary Services to Support Welfare to Work*, 2001).

In SFY 2001, use of the DAST-20 resulted in only 1 to 2 percent of FITAP applicants being referred to OAD for further assessment and treatment services. This low rate of referral caused program staff to question the effectiveness of this screening tool. Both DSS and OAD have been working, usually in collaboration with each other, to improve their methods of identifying individuals in need of substance abuse treatment services and to increase the number of referrals to OAD for treatment. During the past several years, OAD has been especially interested in investigating more effective screening instruments and assessment procedures. Chief among these has been the Addiction Severity Index-Multimedia Version (ASI-MV), an interactive, computer-based assessment instrument on CD-ROM.

When OAD's TANF Initiatives began in October 2001, the MOU between DSS and OAD for FITAP drug screening was amended to allow the use of TANF Initiatives funds to test the effectiveness of the ASI-MV in identifying FITAP clients in need of substance abuse treatment and to provide treatment services to those who need them. The OAD Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program was created to test the ASI-MV on-site at 10 OFS offices and to provide, in all parishes, the following OAD assessment and treatment services to FITAP clients or FITAP-eligible individuals:

- Additional assessment, including urine drug tests;
- Non-intensive outpatient treatment, such as group therapy or client education;
- Intensive outpatient treatment, including aftercare and ongoing assessment; and
- Short-term inpatient treatment.

Recruiting and hiring of Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program staff (10 program assistants, to administer the ASI-MV, and 20 caseworker assistants) began in November 2001. The program assistants were all hired by the end of January 2002, and the program was operational in all 10 pilot sites by February 2002. The program is ongoing, and will continue with TANF Initiatives funding through September 2003.

A second MOU between DSS and OAD was established to meet the needs of women who have dependent children and who require intensive residential treatment for substance abuse. The Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children is open to needy families in which any member receives FITAP/KCSP, Food Stamps, Medicaid, LaChip,

SSI, or Free or Reduced School Lunch.<sup>3</sup> According to this MOU, TANF Initiatives funds were to be used to provide residential services that included: assessment; individualized treatment planning for the women and their children; intensive case management; group, individual, and family therapy; training in parenting and life skills; job-skills training; assistance with child care; and assistance with family reunification.

The Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children also began in November 2001, with the modification of OAD's existing contracts with seven treatment facilities providing residential substance abuse treatment. For the Residential Treatment Program, OAD agreed to fund a specified number of "beds" (that is, individual residential treatment slots) at each of these facilities to ensure the provision of needed treatment to low-income women and their children.<sup>4</sup> Statewide, 161 beds were funded with TANF Initiatives funds. The Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children became operational in six of the seven participating treatment facilities upon completion of the contract modifications in December 2001.<sup>5</sup> Like the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, this program will continue with TANF Initiatives funding through September 2003.

### **Design of the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program**

The goal of the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program was to ensure that substance abuse treatment services were provided to FITAP clients and FITAP-eligible individuals who needed them. The design for this program had two major components:

- The provision of OAD substance abuse treatment services to FITAP clients and FITAP-eligible individuals; and
- A test of a new approach to identifying the FITAP clients who are in need of such services, in combination with the mandatory drug screening of FITAP applicants.

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<sup>3</sup> In the MOU for the second year of TANF Initiatives funding, both programs now use the broader eligibility criteria of the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children. This is because OAD would like to reach more needy families with its Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, regardless of whether they have applied for FITAP or not. OAD plans to do this by offering ASI-MV substance abuse screening to all eligible clients at their OAD-operated clinics.

<sup>4</sup> Under its standard service provider and facility contracts, OAD pays a per-diem rate for each person at the facility whose treatment is funded by the agency. It should be noted that the seven facilities that are participating in the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children also receive non-OAD funds such as private payment, insurance, or Medicaid.

### Design of Treatment Component

In the first component, TANF Initiatives funds were to be used to pay for substance abuse treatment services that OAD provided to individuals who were eligible for this program, particularly individuals identified during the FITAP application process as needing help with a substance abuse problem. OAD offered its regular substance abuse treatment services: outpatient services, which are provided by OAD staff professionals, or short-term inpatient services, which are provided by treatment facilities under contract to OAD.<sup>6</sup>

OAD outpatient services include assessment, individual counseling, group therapy, family counseling, evaluation and referral for detoxification, psychiatric evaluation, and on-site 12-Step group meetings. The outpatient treatment provided by OAD can be non-intensive (weekly sessions, up to 52 sessions in a year) or intensive (a minimum of 9 hours per week in a daytime setting). Inpatient services are similar services, but in a live-in setting.

### Design of Screening Component

The second component of the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program was a test of a new approach OAD had developed for determining whether an individual had a substance abuse problem and was in need of treatment services. This new approach could be used as well to improve the mandatory screening of FITAP applicants for drug abuse.. The design for the test of this new approach included:

- Use of the ASI-MV in 10 pilot site OFS offices across the state<sup>7</sup> to identify FITAP applicants in need of treatment services for substance abuse. This comprehensive, computer-based, interactive assessment instrument screens for *any* substance abuse, including alcohol abuse, in addition to assessing an individual's social, psychiatric, family, employment, legal, and medical situation.

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<sup>5</sup> The seventh facility, the Family Success Institute in Shreveport, did not become fully operational until spring 2002.

<sup>6</sup> However, the TANF Initiatives funds were specifically *not* to be used for OAD's medical substance abuse treatment services, or for detoxification.

<sup>7</sup> The OFS offices selected as pilot sites for the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program are: Baton Rouge-North; Caddo; Calcasieu; Orleans-Uptown; Ouachita; Rapides; St. Landry; Tangipahoa; Terrebonne; and West Jefferson. These 10 offices were chosen because they had the highest number of TANF caseloads, which OAD felt would maximize client exposure to the ASI-MV.

- Administration of the ASI-MV at the 10 pilot sites by a trained substance abuse professional.<sup>8</sup> OAD learned when investigating other states' experiences with the ASI-MV that it was important to have a trained clinician administer this screening tool. After the FITAP applicant completes the ASI-MV, the OAD program assistant, who is a Board-certified substance abuse counselor, administers a follow-up screening checklist, reviews the results of the test, and administers any necessary additional assessments. If the FITAP applicant is shown to be in need of treatment services, the OAD program assistant will make a referral to OAD outpatient or inpatient services as needed.
- In the non-pilot site OFS offices, continued use of the DAST-20 questionnaire by the FITAP analyst. As noted earlier, the DAST-20 is a commonly used assessment tool consisting of 20 questions about the individual's drug use in the preceding year. Based on the results of this screening, the applicant is referred to OAD for further drug testing, evaluation, and, if needed, treatment.
- Collaboration between OAD and DSS, including the stationing of OAD staff in local OFS offices., in order to facilitate the provision of OAD's substance abuse screening services to FITAP applicants and to enable staff from OAD and OFS to work together smoothly.

In designing the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, OAD recognized that this new approach required a major training effort to maximize the effectiveness of the ASI-MV screening procedures and to ensure that staff at the two agencies worked in true collaboration. OAD thus set aside some of the TANF Initiatives funds to train both OAD and DSS staff in the use of the ASI-MV assessment tool and in working together to provide services to FITAP applicants.

### **Design of the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children**

The Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children was designed to provide non-medical residential treatment services to low-income women with dependent children.

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<sup>8</sup> The original design for the program was simply to switch to the ASI-MV screening tool in a number of OFS offices and continue to have the FITAP analyst administer it. Once OAD learned of the critical importance of having a trained professional administer the instrument, the design was changed to one in which OAD substance abuse professionals are responsible for administering the ASI-MV.



The program, conducted at seven residential treatment facilities under contract to OAD,<sup>9</sup> ensures that these women and their children are able to obtain the services they need. Incorporated into the design of the Residential Treatment Program are the lessons from a federal demonstration of specialized services for women and their children that was conducted at Claire House, a residential facility in Bayou Vista that is one of the providers for the TANF Initiatives program. The service design for the programs that are delivered through the contracts with the residential facilities includes the following services:

- Individualized treatment planning for women and children (treatment plans for both women and children are revised every 30 days until discharge);
- Assessments of child development and school progress;
- Supported employment;
- Educational sessions—provided by both facility staff and collaborating outside agencies—on addiction, codependency, HIV and STDs, drug prevention and awareness, relapse prevention, 12-step programs, parenting, financial planning, life skills (such as cooking, meal planning, and housekeeping), goal-setting, and workforce preparation; and
- Follow-up and continuing care (such as counseling or additional assistance during independent living).

Each facility's program includes a case management component designed to prepare clients for transition into society, which accounts for 20 to 30 percent of the services that are provided. Case management services include job training, job preparation, training in budgeting and money management, and educational training, such as GED preparation.

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<sup>9</sup> The seven residential treatment facilities that have been funded to provide services through the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children are Odyssey House, Grace House, and Infinity Network in New Orleans; Claire House in Bayou Vista; Family House in Harvey; Reality House in Baton Rouge; and Family Success Institute in Shreveport.

**Exhibit 8.1**  
**Performance Indicators for Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program**

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Target</u>
Percentage of individuals successfully completing treatment (a)	61%	37%
Recidivism rate (b)	18% - 22%	22%
Percentage of positive responses on client satisfaction survey	100%	94%

Source: OAD estimates based on the FFY 2002 program year through September 2002.  
(a) Based on the 70 individuals who were discharged from treatment as of September 30, 2002  
(b) cumulative rate not available

## Implementation of Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program

### Implementation of Treatment Component

The number of individuals who were placed in treatment built rather slowly, as OAD staff learned how to improve the referral rates for FITAP clients and how to identify FITAP-eligible clients at OAD facilities who qualified for services under the TANF Initiatives program. The numbers began to climb in later months, especially after the June 2002 implementation of the new Extended Eligibility Program, and by the end of the program year, 2,686 FITAP clients and FITAP-eligible individuals had received substance abuse treatment from OAD under the TANF Initiatives program.

Exhibit 8.1 shows OAD's performance on the indicators for the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program for the program year ending September 30, 2002. OAD's performance was reported for the 118 individuals who were placed in substance abuse treatment following screening using the ASI-MV. Of the 70 individuals in this group who were eligible to be discharged from treatment as of September 30, 61 percent successfully completed their treatment. This result exceeds the target goal of 37 percent. Additional

performance indicators for the rate of recidivism and the percentage of positive responses on the client satisfaction survey were also exceeded.

### Implementation of Screening Component

As noted earlier, an important goal of the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program was to test the effectiveness of the ASI-MV in identifying FITAP applicants in need of substance abuse treatment services, as compared to the DAST-20 drug screening and assessment system currently in use by OFS. Thus, significant performance measures for this program are the number of FITAP applicants referred for further assessment and treatment services using the ASI-MV screening instrument, and the referral rate obtained by the ASI-MV compared to that of the DAST-20.

Of the 4,722 FITAP applicants who were screened for substance abuse using the ASI-MV as of September 30, 2002, 393 (8.3 percent) were identified by the OAD program assistant as being in need of further assessment and treatment. Approximately one-third of these individuals (118 people) were subsequently placed in outpatient or short-term inpatient treatment. OAD is now in the process of comparing the performance of the ASI-MV with the performance of the DAST-20 in the non-pilot sites. Up-to-date comparative figures are not yet available; however, preliminary data on the ASI-MV have been analyzed by Inflexxion, ASI-MV specialists in Newton, MA, with the following results:

- Between January 2002 (the program's beginning) and May 2002, the ASI-MV was administered to 2,074 FITAP applicants statewide.
- The rate at which the ASI-MV flagged individuals for further review by the OAD clinician to identify *any* substance abuse was 13.6 percent (282 people).<sup>10</sup>
- The rate at which the ASI-MV flagged individuals for further review by the OAD clinician to identify *drug* abuse was 9.7 percent (201 people).

These results compare favorably with the results of the DAST-20 drug screening during approximately the same time period:

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<sup>10</sup> The ASI-MV program registers the responses of the person taking the assessment on the computer, and generates a score that flags individuals in possible need of treatment services, broken down by drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and other addictive disorders. Using the follow-up screening checklist in a meeting with the FITAP applicant, the OAD program assistant interprets the machine-generated score, and makes the final decision with regard to referral to treatment.

- In SFY 2002, the DAST-20 was administered by FITAP analysts to 2,307 FITAP applicants across the state.
- The rate at which use of the DAST-20, referred individuals to OAD for further assessment and treatment for drug abuse was 2.3 percent (53 people).<sup>11</sup>

## Implementation of Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children

For the most part, implementation of the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children involved establishing the needed modifications to the OAD contracts with the seven treatment facilities participating in the program, and making payment arrangements for services that were already in place. In addition, OAD and the participating treatment facilities needed to develop intake forms, reporting forms, etc, that were specific to the Residential Treatment Program. These implementation tasks were accomplished as planned and on schedule. As of September 30, 2002, 529 women and children had received residential substance abuse treatment services through OAD's TANF Initiatives program. Without the availability of these funds, many of these families would not have received appropriate substance abuse treatment services—or any treatment services at all.

As shown in Exhibit 8.2, of the 137 women who were discharged from treatment as of September 30, 2002, 43 percent successfully completed their treatment program, exceeding the target goal of 34 percent. The benefits to these women of having received treatment for their substance abuse problems are apparent when one sees that 27 percent became employed and/or enrolled in school following discharge from the program, and that 47 percent had maintained sobriety at three- and six-month follow-ups.<sup>12</sup>

The children of these women also appeared to benefit from the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children. Of the 336 children in the program, 230 had been given developmental assessments, 62 percent of these children's developmental assessments improved following their admission into the program (compared to a target

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<sup>11</sup> Since the mandatory drug screening for FITAP applicants began in 1998, the DAST-20 has been administered to 143,734 FITAP applicants statewide. The rate at which the FITAP analysts, using the DAST-20, made referrals to OAD for further assessment and treatment is 1.7 percent (2,478 people).

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that, for both indicators, more than half of the women who were discharged from the residential treatment program could not be reached for follow-up, and thus it could not be determined whether they were employed and/or enrolled in school or maintaining sobriety.

**Exhibit 8.2  
 Performance Indicators for the Residential Treatment Program for  
 Women and Children**

<u>INDICATORS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Goal</u>
Number of women served	193	--
Number of children served	336	--
Percentage of women who successfully completed treatment program (a)	43%	34%
Percentage of women who became employed and/or enrolled in school following discharge from the program	27%	17%
Percentage of women who maintained sobriety at three- and six -month follow -ups	47%	69%
Percentage of children whose developmental assessments improved following admission into the program (b)	62%	61%
Percentage of children whose school performance improved following admission into the Residential Treatment Program (c)	64%	81%

Source: OAD estimates based on the FFY 2002 program year through September 2002.  
 (a) Based on 137 women who were discharged from treatment as of September 30, 2002.  
 (b) Based on 230 children on whom developmental assessments were done.  
 (c) Based on 163 children in school.

goal of 61 percent). However, the school performance indicator proved troublesome—primarily due to the difficulties in coordinating the schools’ reporting cycles with those of the treatment programs and to erratic school attendance on the part of some of the children—and the percentage of children whose school performance improved following admission into the Residential Treatment Program was only 64 percent, compared to the goal of 81 percent. As will be discussed in a later section, OAD recognized the difficulties with the performance indicators for both TANF Initiatives program, and has worked to develop new, more appropriate indicators for the next program year.

## Program Expenditures

OAD was awarded \$4 million in SFY 2002 to provide its two TANF Initiatives programs. As shown in Exhibit 8.3, \$1,012,000 of the \$4 million was allocated to the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program. These funds were used for salaries of the OAD staff

**Exhibit 8.3**  
**Expenditures for OAD TANF Initiatives Programs**  
 Program Year FFY 2002

	Budgeted Amount	Total Expenditures (as of 9/02)
Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program	\$1,012,000	\$1,430,618
Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children	\$2,988,000	\$2,511,366
TOTAL	\$4,000,000	\$3,941,984

Source: OAD estimates.

based at the OFS pilot offices, equipment and supplies (including laptop computers, printers, and individual ASI-MV CD-ROMs) and the direct services provided by OAD to the FITAP clients and FITAP-eligible individuals who were provided with substance abuse assessment and treatment services. Over the course of the program, funds were re-allocated to this budget from that of the Residential Treatment Program (see below) and the final cost of this program for SFY 2002 was \$1,430,618.<sup>13</sup> The original budget for the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children was \$2,988,000, to reimburse the seven residential facilities participating in the program through a fee-for-service arrangement; as of September 30, 2002, OAD had expended \$2,511,366 on this program. The two TANF Initiatives programs together had an estimated final cost of \$3.9 million.

For the 2,686 persons who received substance abuse assessment and treatment services under the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, the fee-for-service costs were \$780,292, or \$291 per person. The entire amount expended for the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children (\$2,511,366) was spent on fee-for-service treatment services for the 529 individuals (193 women and 336 children) in that program, for a per-person cost of \$4,493.

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<sup>13</sup> Data on expenditures were provided by OAD.

OAD has worked with DSS and DOA over the course of the TANF Initiatives program to address fiscal issues as they have arisen and to make revisions to the budget as new needs were recognized. Originally, OAD had budgeted the larger portion of its TANF Initiatives funding for the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children, based on the fact that residential substance abuse treatment is the most costly of the services OAD provides. However, their actual costs were less than had been expected for this program, primarily because the start of the program was delayed due to the complicated modifications that needed to be made to the contracts with the treatment facilities. Most of the revisions that were made to the budget for the TANF Initiatives program involved re-allocating funds from the Residential Treatment Program to other purposes.

The budget revisions made by OAD, with DOA and DSS, included re-allocating a portion of the amount budgeted (\$210,982) for the Residential Treatment Program to provide training for OAD and DSS-OFS staff across the state on the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program. The revising of the TANF Initiatives program budgets also provided OAD with the opportunity to develop more appropriate performance indicators for both TANF Initiatives, and OAD was given approval to contract with a university-based consultant to help develop new performance measures. This contract concluded on September 30, 2002.

In addition, in June 2002, OAD received permission to proceed immediately with the Expanded Eligibility program (to do ASI-MV substance abuse screening at OAD clinic with non-FITAP applicants) being proposed for the second year of TANF Initiatives funding; since June, this program has been underway, funded from the allocation for the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children.

## Implementation Issues, Accomplishments, and Challenges

### Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program

The key implementation challenges for the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program concern ensuring that FITAP applicants comply with the required drug screening and cooperate with any recommended substance abuse assessment and treatment. One important issue is that of FITAP applicants failing to show up for their OAD screening appointment (“no-shows”). Unlike the DAST-20, which is administered by the FITAP

analyst during the meeting(s) at which an individual first applies for FITAP, the ASI-MV is administered in a separate meeting with the OAD clinician, often on another day.

Although FITAP applicants have a huge incentive to cooperate with OAD substance abuse screening (applicants refusing to take the assessment or refusing to follow through with referrals for further assessment and treatment are subject to FITAP sanctions), they may face a number of barriers to showing up for the scheduled appointment, including lack of transportation (especially in rural areas), lack of child care, lack of family support, health problems, and domestic violence or abuse issues.

Among many FITAP applicants, a particular “barrier” to cooperating with the OAD screening is lack of motivation to participate in a procedure designed to detect if one has substance abuse problems. In addition, the substance abuse screening is seen by many clients as threatening, as they believe that if they “fail the test,” they will be unable to receive FITAP benefits. Many incorrectly believe that they will have to submit to a urine test right on the spot. OAD staff report that this cause of no-shows is difficult to address, as “the client always has the right to refuse to cooperate.”

OAD continues to address the issue of no-shows in a variety of ways. For example, program staff have taken advantage of the fact that most OFS offices will provide—or assist with—transportation to the OAD appointment. As another example, OAD staff in Terrebonne Parish developed a letter entitled “What’s the Next Step?,” which explains to FITAP analysts how the substance abuse screening process works. OAD reports that the no-show rate in this office decreased significantly as a result of this letter. At the New Orleans pilot site, OAD staff recognized that many parents were not able to keep their appointments if their children were not allowed to accompany them to the assessment. In response, OAD hired an additional caseworker assistant to help supervise the children who accompany the parent to the assessment. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this has reduced the number of no-shows in this region.

The Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program also has benefited from the OAD substance abuse professionals’ familiarity with established techniques for working with individuals to ensure their participation in substance abuse assessment and treatment. OAD staff have the experience and specialized training to know of proven methods for addressing the problem of no-shows. When the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program started, OAD staff had little or no communication with FITAP applicants prior to the meeting at which the ASI-MV was administered. Now, OAD confirms all



appointments with FITAP applicants ahead of time, by both phone and letter. In addition, applicants receive a clear explanation of the ASI-MV process prior to undergoing the assessment. An important technique OAD staff use to ensure that FITAP applicants complete the assessment is “motivational interviewing.” In the past 10 years, motivational interviewing has become an essential technique in the field of substance abuse counseling for helping motivate individuals to seek treatment and participate in recommended activities. As another approach, OAD program assistants in some cases have written directly to FITAP applicants who were referred for services with an OAD clinic and who did not comply with their assessment appointment and/or treatment recommendations. OFS and OAD staff continue to collaborate on finding solutions to the problem of no-shows. A recent recommendation made by OAD program staff is to notify the client prior to the appointment that it will not be necessary to take a urine drug screening.

Such collaboration is key to the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, which, by design, is closely linked with the FITAP/FIND Work Program. Still, in implementing this collaboration between OAD and OFS, the program has faced challenges in:

- working out logistical arrangements and establishing OAD work and storage areas in the OFS offices;
- developing methods of handling the movement of clients across the two agencies;
- developing procedures for service delivery, data collection, reporting, etc., that “work” for both OAD and DSS/OFS;
- providing training; and
- communicating to FITAP applicants what to expect with the ASI-MV.

In addressing these challenges, OAD has engaged in careful planning and has involved relevant staff at both agencies in planning and program development. At all stages of the program, OAD and OFS staff at all levels have jointly participated in meetings, discussion groups, teleconferences, and other activities to discuss the goals of the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program and to determine how to provide services in a way that would “ensure the delivery of a seamless system of care.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In one particularly important effort, OAD in March 2002 requested technical assistance from the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families. At this meeting, OAD and DSS staff met with representatives of a similar program in North Carolina to discuss—in a structured, facilitated forum—what works and what doesn’t work in each of the two programs.

Extensive communication and collaboration takes place at the level of the OFS office. When the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program first began, OAD staff made a point of introducing themselves and the program to all workers at the pilot OFS offices. Currently, OAD program assistants attend general staff meetings at the OFS offices, which provide opportunities to exchange ideas and discuss issues and problems. A number of proposals by the OAD program staff have been implemented at the OFS offices and have improved services to FITAP clients. For instance, OAD program staff suggested showing films on drug abuse awareness and prevention to FITAP clients as they await services in the lobby area. In another instance, OAD staff in St. Landry Parish are providing all FITAP clients with drug and alcohol prevention education, regardless of whether they were referred for further OAD assessment and treatment services.

From the beginning of the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, OAD has emphasized the training of both its own staff and OFS staff, not only in the use of the new ASI-MV assessment tool, but also in how staff at the two agencies can work together, what their respective roles and responsibilities are, and how they can communicate effectively with each other. The training provided to the OAD staff when they were hired included a focus on the staff roles for OAD program assistants and OFS analysts and on how to manage client flow and reporting across the two agencies.<sup>15</sup> In recent months, cross-training on the substance abuse screening and assessment process was provided statewide to all OAD and OFS staff. OAD has recently started a Train-the-Trainer Program for university professors across the state, who will in turn train the OAD and OFS workers. A significant accomplishment of OAD's TANF Initiative is the tremendous amount of training that OAD has provided that is inclusive of both OAD and FITAP/FIND Work staff.

### **Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children**

The Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children has faced few serious implementation challenges. The Residential Treatment Program has not involved much modification of the services that the residential treatment facilities provide under contract to OAD. Still, treatment facility staff have raised some concerns that requesting TANF Initiatives funds for a client might somehow compromise the client's eligibility for other

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<sup>15</sup> This two-day training on using the ASI-MV was conducted by Inflexxion, an ASI-MV training provider from Newton, Massachusetts.

funds. Also, staff at some of the facilities have expressed their fear that identifying a client as “needy” might violate confidentiality agreements that are in place under other programs. Thus far, OAD has been successful in working with its Residential Treatment Program providers to identify and resolve any valid concerns they may have (and also to assuage any unsubstantiated fears).

According to narrative information provided by the treatment facilities and from OAD, the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children is working well in that families in—often desperate—need of substance abuse treatment services have not only received them, but, in many cases, also have used them to full advantage in their move toward drug- and alcohol-free self-sufficiency. Although the numbers are small, the success stories are many. One of the women who completed the program at Infinity House in New Orleans has become something of a celebrity due to media coverage of the personal and employment success she has achieved and the inspirational nature of her life story, all of which led to an invitation from President Bush to travel to Washington, D.C. and meet with him at the White House. However, reports from the treatment facilities and from OAD indicate that hers is certainly not the only story of against-the-odds achievement and growth that can be credited—in part—to receiving needed residential treatment services through the Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children.

## Recommendations

### **Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program**

- OAD should complete the planned comparative evaluation of the two substance abuse screening instruments, the ASI-MV and the DAST-20. A major strength of the design of the Screening and Substance Abuse Treatment Program is that it was established as a formal test of the relative effectiveness of the two screening instruments—and their method of administration—in referring FITAP applicants for further substance abuse assessment and treatment. This evaluation should examine not only the number of FITAP referrals, but also the treatment outcomes and employment outcomes for individuals receiving substance abuse treatment services, if such information is available.
- OAD should build on its successes and create additional user-friendly materials that describe the substance abuse screening process for the FITAP applicant,

especially emphasizing the “services” and “benefits” that the applicant receives by participating in the program. As a means of increasing participation and reducing no-shows, these materials should be provided during the application process to communicate information about the assessment and allay any fears about participating in substance abuse screening. OAD should consider renaming the program in order to avoid the negative associations many people have with “drug screening” and “testing.” OAD also should consider creating interactive multimedia materials.

### **Residential Treatment Program for Women and Children**

- OAD should continue working to improve interagency collaboration with OFS and other service agencies to make sure that the entire range of post-treatment supportive services (housing, child care, transportation, etc.) are available to OAD clients. The experience of OAD’s TANF Initiative thus far has shown the great value of interagency collaboration. The Residential Treatment Program can better serve clients by creating new linkages that reflect the broad range of needs and challenges faced by women following inpatient treatment.
- OAD should complete the work on formalizing the performance indicators for the program so as to better measure the program’s progress and successes. Consistent tracking of performance indicators can help improve service delivery and identify areas in which program design might be altered. In addition, data on performance indicators might ultimately be useful to OAD in advocating for increased program funding in the future.

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## Chapter 9

Department of Educaiton

# After School Programs

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[TO BE ADDED]