DPHHS TANF Reform

Overview of the TANF Strategic Plan and Next steps: Consolidated Funding for Integrated Service Delivery

Why did we create a strategic plan?

- 2 years ago was the first meeting of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee
- The 5-7 year strategic plan
  - Creating a framework to assure projects funded with TANF $ were complementary, integrated, interdependent and designed to achieve purposes of TANF more directly
  - Transparent and informed by stakeholders including clients, service providers, tribes, legislature, and others
  - Address how the carryover can continue to support TANF efforts long range
  - Evidence based as well as able to derive outcomes at the individual level as well as the programmatic level

Key findings from the needs assessment

- Participants experience significant barriers and struggle to meet basic needs
- The TANF Cash support program is less structured to address basic needs
- Participants access work supports at a higher rate but are less likely to be employed
- Depending on the program, some were perceived to better support clients than others
- The State TANF Program does not work well for American Indians on reservations or transitioning off reservations

Carry Over
Application & Assessment
Data Collection & Evaluation
TANF Strategic Plan Framework
Cash Benefit Policies
Youth Programming & Childcare
Service Delivery
TANF Services for American Indians
Localization

TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations

TANF Administration

- Prioritize TANF programming, supports and opportunities toward families who are low income, so that they can attain economic security
- Create an ongoing committee to advise the TANF program, including but not limited to, current and former TANF participants, contractors, advocates and representatives from tribal communities
- Simplify the overall program, reviewing and reducing the number of contracts, and creating stability in programming and funding structures, including multi-year contracts
- Utilize a transparent, structured process when setting programmatic direction that prioritizes services that prove to be effective while maintaining federal work participation rates
- Evaluate the TANF transfer dollars and work to streamline and better connect TANF eligible families to the programs receiving TANF transfer funds
- * Consider piloting and implementing promising service delivery re-design models that support clients
- * Develop an ongoing training system for TANF staff and contractors covering, but not limited to, customer service, treating all clients with respect and dignity, understanding and addressing cultural bias and racism, poverty awareness, domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse
- As new service delivery models are adopted, develop uniform rules and policies, providing training to TANF staff and contractors to ensure consistent policy implementation and service provision throughout the state

Highlighted Bullets
Red - Not started
Yellow - In progress
Green - Complete

TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations

Application & Assessment

- Streamline the TANF application process and the amount of required paperwork
- Align the TANF application with other safety net programs so that clients applying for TANF are co-enrolled in other needed services without filling out additional paperwork
- Ensure that clients are receiving consistent, robust information about all available services in their area when they apply for TANF, not just the cash benefit, so that they can select the services that best meet their individual needs
- Require repeat assessment and screening throughout the process
- Update the screening and referral process for victims of domestic violence to follow best practices

Cash Benefit Policies

- Increase eligibility levels to 40% FPL for cash assistance
- ✶ Increase benefit levels to 40% FPL for cash assistance
- Adopt policies that help families and improve the work participation rate including:
  - ✶ Funding two parent families using Excess MOE-State Funds, removing two parent families from the federally funded program
  - ✶ Modifying two-parent birth of baby rules
  - ✶ Extending the post-employment program using MOE-State Funds
  - Expanding earnings disregards
  - Eliminating the asset test for TANF eligibility
  - Providing subsidized employment programs to TANF cash participants, prioritizing those that are nearly employable
- Adopt policies that support and smooth the transition for families going off the cash benefit, such as continuing childcare co-pays at $10 during post employment TANF months and researching ways to prevent post employment TANF from counting towards SNAP benefits eligibility
- Adopt policies that, when appropriate, eliminate TANF work requirements prior to receiving TANF assistance, ensuring that families immediate needs and barriers are met before instituting work requirements
  - Allow presumptive eligibility so families in crisis can receive TANF support immediately
  - When appropriate, extend the assessment period, allowing more time for barrier identification and reduction before requiring work activities

TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations

Cash Benefit Policies Continued

- Expand permissible work activities to address barriers to employment, including but not limited to:
  - Education and training;
  - Life training skills;
  - Family strengthening;
  - Community based education and training related to budgeting, parenting, nutrition, and stress reduction;
  - Domestic violence;
  - Mental health and substance abuse; and
  - Home visiting
- Provide short-term benefits to assist participants who are experiencing an emergency by:
  - Providing one-time payments to applicants who have immediate, pressing needs but do not require a continual TANF cash grant
  - Allowing easier access to TANF funds for emergency items such as diapers, clothing, bedding, etc., especially for caretaker relatives
  - ✶ Allowing the use of TANF funds to meet direct housing needs (e.g. payments for short term transitional housing or rapid rehousing and supplemental housing allowances for high risk populations like teen mothers living in group or residential settings)
  - ✶ Expanding the use of TANF funds to address transportation barriers
- Review and incorporate best practice recommendations for use of TANF funds for caretaker relatives, such as:
  - ✶ Providing a supplemental TANF child-only grant for caretakers relatives who have more than one child
  - Reducing or eliminating work requirements for older caretaker relatives who have TANF family grants
- Review sanction policies, considering policies that positively re-enforce participation rates for cash clients and reducing the sanction period

TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations

Service Delivery

- Redesign the TANF service delivery system using a client advocate model that emphasizes self-direction
- Allow client advocates greater flexibility to assess client needs and identify and broker services and supports
- Design the Service Delivery Model to:
  - Provide support to reduce barriers to work
  - Be strength-based, goal-driven, and solution-focused
  - Meet families where they are and consider the needs and goals of the entire family
  - Present TANF cash grants as one potential service for eligible clients but also give families the choice to access other, more appropriate services to meet their individual needs such as unemployment benefits, Pell Grants, Social Security Income Benefits, Emergency Assistance, budget support, child care or mentoring programs, and other supports
- Design work support and training programs to:
  - Link clients to training opportunities and support for high wage jobs
  - Provide targeted subsidized employment opportunities
  - Expand access to educational opportunities for TANF families while helping clients maximize use of other educational supports such as Pell Grants to meet their educational goals

Localization

- Allow local TANF programs to tailor services to meet specific client needs in their communities, such as allowing more flexibility in the use of supportive services for transportation needs in rural and frontier communities where public transit services are not available
- Research options to allow flexibility in program criteria in areas without a robust social service infrastructure or with extremely limited access to employment opportunities, childcare or affordable housing
- Permit clients living on county borders and in rural areas to receive TANF services at the nearest offices, even if the office or contractor is outside of their county of residence
- Require that professionals working with TANF clients have extensive knowledge of and established relationships with the local community service providers that might benefit clients

TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations

TANF Services for American Indians

- ✶ Increase communication with tribes by creating opportunities to meet regularly to strengthen the state-tribal relationship and seek their input and advice
- Research, and implement if possible, a federal waiver to adopt policies that more closely align with those that Tribal TANF programs use to accommodate clients, such as allowing innovative and specific cultural activities to count as approved work activities
- Acknowledge high unemployment, lack of employment opportunities and tribal specific holidays in reservation communities and modify programmatic requirements accordingly where possible
- ✶ Implement a policy change to allow Tribal NEW programs to administer supportive services themselves instead of through the state office

Youth Programming & Childcare

- Design the Best Beginnings and TANF application processes to allow co-enrollment in both program simultaneously
- Increase eligibility limits for the Best Beginnings Program childcare subsidies to 200% of FPL
- Allow child care benefits to follow the child instead of being dependent on the parent's compliance with work participation activities to create greater stability for children in TANF families
- Redesign youth contracts and funding structures to more closely link service provision to the direct needs of TANF families
- ✶ Support programming for youth education, training and employment such as the summer youth employment program

TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations

Data Collection & Evaluation

- Develop a small number of meaningful metrics and outcome measures to track consistently over time, in addition to the metrics that meet federal requirements
- Utilize existing infrastructure to identify data that is already collected that could be better utilized to track TANF outcomes (e.g. collaborating with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry to track data on employment and earnings of TANF participants after they leave the TANF program)
- Identify data needed to improve services to clients and consider developing a way to capture it (e.g. conducting regular client satisfaction surveys or focus groups)
- Evaluate contractors and programs regularly to determine if services are effective
- *Regularly generate and publish reports with TANF program data
- Utilize data for programmatic decision making

Carry Over

- Reduce the TANF carry over amount by investing in services that directly benefit TANF participants

Youth Programming and Child Care Recommendations

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Moving Forward

Consolidated Funding for Integrated Service Delivery

Consolidated Funding for Integrated Service Delivery

- Continue to fund summer youth employment
- Consolidate remaining available funds into a new service delivery model
- DPHHS issued an RFP for integrated service delivery, still in scoring process
- crafting policies, system changes, and other necessary supports to implement the new model.

FamiliesStable

AbleToWork

FinanciallySecure

Vision/Concept

Presumptive Eligibility Pre-TANF	TANF Intensive/Supported	Continued success
Complete eligibility Assessment Barrier reduction	Barrier reduction Case management Client advocacy Employment and Training Support Budgeting	Financial Security Post Employment Transitional

Key Service Delivery Provisions

- Client Advocacy and Case Management
- Barrier Reduction
- Maximizing community services and reducing duplication of services in local communities
- Brokering of existing services
- Local Design within set frameworks
- Employment and Training Services and Supports
- Financial budgeting and literacy through a coaching model and other programs/services

Montana's TANF Framework

Families are stable, able to work, and financially secure

- Bridge Model serves as an overarching framework and is intended to be general*
- Informs key performance indicators and progress tracking at the individual and program level
- Informs screening/assessment strategy for client and client advocates
- Informs goal setting and supports needed to help family meet goals

Barrier Rating Scale	Family Stability								Employability					Financial Security	
	Food	Housing	Safety	Transportation	Physical and Mental Health	Child Education & Child Care	Child Health & Development	Social Supports	Legal	Education	Training	Employment Skills & Experience	Employment Status	Income	Financial Knowledge & Skills
absent/ minimal = 0	consistent access to nutritious food of choice without assistance	stable, safe, affordable, unsubsidized housing	no safety concerns for self and/or family	reliable transportation of own	health concerns or disabilities do not disrupt or limit employment; no health concerns	unsubsidized, quality child and out of school time care; progress in academics	children's physical, social, emotional, and behavioral needs are met	effective, healthy support system	legal issues do not limit or disrupt employment; no legal issues	obtained an AA degree or higher	obtained technical diploma or licensure	successfully using work experience and employment skills	permanent, stable employment with sufficient pay and benefits	stable income, has some spending money	able to manage complex personal finances
mild = 1	food purchase possible with SNAP and other resources	safe, affordable housing	limited safety concerns; effective safety plan	reliable transportation from others; public transportation	health concerns or disabilities occasionally disrupt employment	quality child and out of school time care; children attending school regularly	children engaged in age appropriate health and/or developmental supports	limited social supports	legal issues occasionally disrupt employment	obtained high school diploma or equivalent	obtained certificate or credential	gaining work experience and employment skills	employed; sufficient pay	income covers basic living expenses	able to manage basic personal budget
moderate = 2	completely dependent on free or low-cost food	temporary, transitional, or unaffordable housing	possible threats to safety; connected to community resources	unreliable and/or unaffordable transportation options	health concerns or disabilities limit and/or often disrupt employment	unsatisfactory child care; children not attending school regularly	connected to health and/or developmental resources	unreliable social supports	legal issues limit and/or often disrupt employment	attending high school or equivalent	attending certificate program or industry credential	limited work experience; basic employment skills	underemployed; insufficient pay	income does not cover basic living expenses	understands basic budgeting
high = 3	no access to purchase and/or prepare food	no housing; unsafe housing; threatened with eviction	unpredictable and/or unsafe conditions for self and/or family	no access to transportation	health concerns or disabilities prevent employment	children not enrolled in child care and/or school	unaddressed health and/or development concerns	no or unhealthy social supports	legal issues prevent employment	no high school diploma or equivalent	no training, certificate, or credential	no or negative work experience; no employment skills	unemployed	no income	personal budgeting difficulties; debts in excess of ability to pay
TANF Stability Threshold	food needs are met	housing is safe and affordable	family is safe	reliable transportation	health concerns stable	child and out of school time care available	children's health and development are supported	family is socially supported	legal issues not a barrier to employment	education supports employability	training supports employability	experience and skills support employability	employed with sufficient pay	income covers living expenses	basic financial understanding and management

Barrier Rating Scale assists client advocates and clients to identify and discuss concerns the family may have and build a plan around the concerns

TANF Stability Threshold

At a minimum, participants who are supported in the TANF Program should be able to reach the stability threshold

Barrier Rating Scale
absent/ minimal = 0
mild = 1
moderate = 2
high = 3

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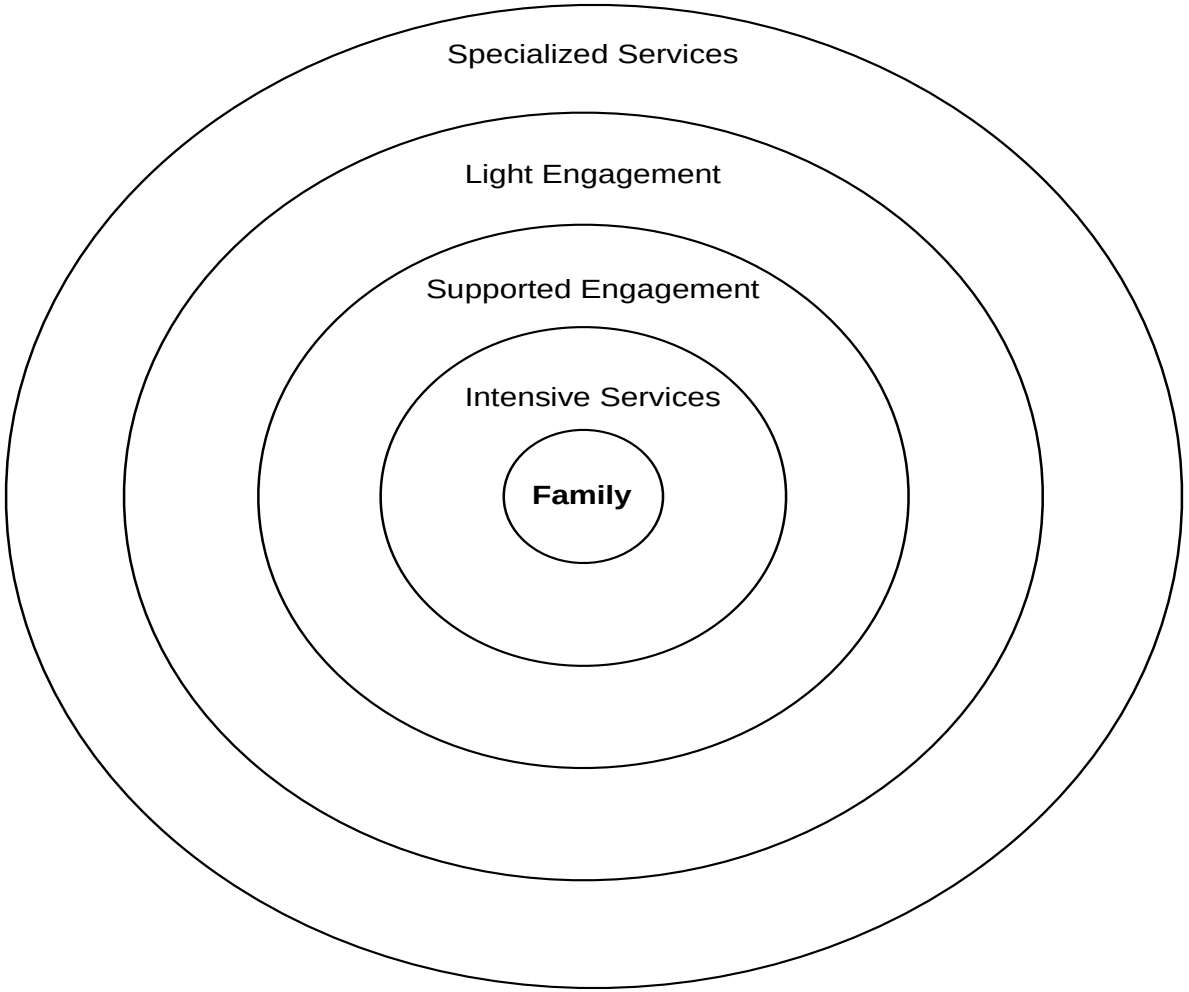
TANF Service Delivery Engagement Pathways



Questions/Reactions

Jamie Palagi

jpalagi@mt.gov