



Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System
Policy Committee
9:30 – 11:30 AM, July 18, 2019
Labor, 1100 N. Eutaw Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Attendees: Lauren Gilwee, Jen Horton, Carrie Durham, Charles Hunt, Erin Inman, Jacqueline "Tina" Turner, Kenneth Lemberg, Lloyd Day, Matthew Bernardy, Shamekka Kuykendall, Bruce England, Francine Trout, Mary Sloat, Wanet Tyson, Douglas Weimer, and Natalie Clements

Handouts: Agenda, Transitional Support Services PowerPoint, and Data and Dashboard Committee Long Term Recommendations

Minutes

I. TANF Transitional Support Services Initiative: Alleviating the Benefits Cliff

- The benefits cliff topics was ranked highly on the Policy Committee's priority list.
- The *Benchmarks of Success* are around increasing the earning capacity of Marylanders. One piece is through access to jobs. Abating the benefits cliff helps individuals transition to gainful employment, reducing barriers to employment. Eliminating the benefits cliff may help with employee retention. The transition period between benefits and gainful employment connects to the goal of maximizing access to and use of life management skills.
- Carrie Durham, Director of the Office of Policy and Training at DHS, presented on the Transitional Support Services (TSS) initiative to alleviate the TANF/TCA benefits cliff.
- The TSS initiative is a new DHS program that originated from the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission's 2018 Final Report. The program's purpose is to assist families with their transition from welfare to work as it lessens the effect of the benefit cliff immediately upon obtaining employment. The program started July 1, 2019 and is currently in phase I of implementation.
- TSS is federally funded.
- The TSS benefit provides financial assistance to customers whose TCA case is closed due to over scale earned income or a combination of earned and unearned income. Eligible customers will receive three consecutive months of TSS benefits, which is equivalent to the last TCA payment received. The future modernized system may allow for DHS to give different amounts for the three months on TSS, i.e. the recipient would receive the same overall funds, but the amount would decrease each time to transition their budget.
- The first TSS payment will be issued in August 1, 2019. TSS eligibility requirements include: the case closure must take place on or after July 1, 2019; the household must receive TCA for at least two consecutive months prior to the TCA case closing; and the

household's TCA case must have closed due to over-scale income, at least a portion of which was earned or self-employment income.

- TSS will appear just as TCA appears on the EBT card. There is no difference for the recipient. The movement from TCA to TSS is automatic. The recipient does not have to apply for TSS or provide any extra verification documentation.
- The three months of TSS benefits does not count towards the TCA 60 month time limit.
- TSS recipients will not be part of the Work Participation Rate (WPR) at this time because of the legacy system. They may be counted in the future with the modernized system.
- The customer will continue to receive Transitional SNAP at the closure of TCA automatically. TSS benefits are not counted toward SNAP benefits. After the system modernization, then Transitional SNAP will begin after TSS, not concurrently.
- There is no lifetime limit on the number of times a customer can receive TSS as long as no more than three months' worth of benefits are received consecutively, and all of the eligibility requirements are met for each new instance of TSS.
- Recipients are still eligible for the same medical benefits under TSS as TCA.
- There is room for more education about the program, for recipients, partner staff, businesses, etc. Recipients would benefit from financial literacy education during that transitional time. Workforce staff should know the basics of what the program is, eligibility, the purpose, and the importance of the financial literacy piece. LDSS may not always be as equipped to provide financial training at the Local Workforce Development Areas and American Job Centers.
- The CASH Campaign of Maryland has been conducting regional train the trainer financial literacy trainings for American Job Center staff. This training is funded through the Department of Disability's Promise grant. Natalie Clements and Lloyd Day will provide the Policy Committee with a list of what American Job Centers are offering financial literacy training.
- Carrie Durham will provide the Policy Committee with DHS' research on what other states have done to abate the TANF benefits cliff and their outcomes. Maryland is one of the few states that are providing the full benefit amount in the transition period.
- The Policy Committee makes the following recommendations on benefits cliffs, for inclusion in the 2019 Policy Recommendations Report:
 - TSS training for partner staff;
 - Investigation into how transitional support works in different places across different benefits;
 - Creation of a fact sheet on TSS for customers and American Job Centers;
 - Connections between LDSS and Local Workforce Development Areas to offer financial literacy training for TSS recipients;
 - Identify geographic gaps in financial literacy training offered; and
 - Two generational financial literacy training.

II. Report-Out of the Data and Dashboard Committee

- The Data and Dashboard Committee is tasked with measuring where the Maryland workforce system is now in terms of the *Benchmarks of Success*. The committee has finalized the Program Year 2017 data but cannot start identifying trends until they get the Program Year 2018 data.

- The Data and Dashboard Committee has challenges with different data systems that do not connect with each other, different partner definitions for terms, different reporting schedules, and general data system limitations (e.g. optional data fields are often not completed, creating a negative bias in the data).
- The Data and Dashboard Committee posed the following recommendations and questions to the WIOA Alignment Group:
 - Synchronize date reporting schedules in order to better combine partner data. Change the reporting schedule to allow for full year reporting, not just wage information based off of one or two quarters as a proxy for the year.
 - Use a data warehouse or data match in order to avoid self-reporting and duplication.
 - Create a definition of “businesses formally engaged” for the workforce system, not just those with this term in their databases. Decision point: what is included here (e.g. OJT, subsidized employment, participation in a career fair, etc.)? The WIOA Alignment Group asked the Governor’s Workforce Development Board to define this term for the *Benchmarks of Success*. The final definition will be shared back with the committees.
 - Concerning benchmark 3.2, “Increase the annual % of Maryland’s workforce system customers who demonstrate essential workplace skills from X% to Y% by date,” what does it mean to “demonstrate” essential workplace skills? The committee is unsure of how to capture this in data. The WIOA Alignment Group decided to change benchmark 3.2 to read “Increase the annual % of Maryland’s workforce system customers who complete essential workplace skills training from X% to Y% by date.”
 - Decision point: Should “industry-recognized credential” be defined? The WIOA regulations define the term broadly to allow for innovation; however, they do not count certificates of completion or attendance unless they are for a Registered Apprenticeship program. The WIOA Alignment Group asked the Data and Dashboard Committee to keep the definition as broad as the data systems would allow.

III. Good of the Order

- Baltimore County re-submitted their Local Plan yesterday.
- The job post for the Chief Learning Officer position has closed. There was a lot of interest in this position, and interviews will be starting soon. The interview panel will be made up of representatives from partner agencies in the workforce system.
- The next Policy Committee meeting will be 1:30 to 3:30 PM on Thursday, August 15th. The committee will be joined by Judy Mortrude, Senior Technical Advisor & LINCS PD Center Director at World Education, to discuss Measurable Skill Gains.