

# COUNTY WORK FIRST PLAN OUTLINE FOR 2010-2011

## 2010-2011 Biennium Work First County Plans Submission Instructions

### I. Format Requirements

*Your county plan must be formatted according to the following guidelines:*

- 12 point font.
- All white paper.
- All pages one-sided.
- Single spacing for sections containing narrative or bulleted text.
- One inch margins on all sides.
- Submit 1 hard copy.
- Submit 1 electronic copy of the complete plan. The electronic version must be one complete document. Do not separate the title page, the table of contents, etc from the plan and do not submit these documents separately. Create one county plan document for electronic submission. Attachments can be submitted with the hard copy, if electronic versions are not available.
- The naming conventions of the electronic version should be county name 2010-11 plan (ex. Alamance County 2010-11 plan).
- No binders or document covers (for hard copy).
- Staple or clip your documents once, in the upper left corner (for hard copy).
- Page numbers on every page, at the top, including figures, attachments, etc.
- Include a cover sheet that has the county's name, contact person's name, mailing address, telephone number, fax number and email address.
- Table of contents with page numbers.

### II. Plan Submission

Submit one copy in electronic form as a Microsoft Word document by email to [work.first@ncmail.net](mailto:work.first@ncmail.net).

Submit one hard copy no **later than close of business on October 31, 2008** of your complete county plan to:

Sara Anderson Mims, Program Administrator  
Work First/CPS Policy Team  
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section  
NC Division of Social Services  
325 N. Salisbury St.  
2408 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2408

### III. Web sites with information to assist with the county planning process

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <a href="http://www.ncesc.com">http://www.ncesc.com</a>   | N. C. Employment Security Commission |
| <a href="http://sdc.state.nc.us/">http://sdc.state.nc.us/</a>   | State Data Center                    |
| <a href="http://ssw.unc.edu/workfirst/">http://ssw.unc.edu/workfirst/</a>                               | County data for Work First           |
| <a href="http://www.ncleg.net/Statutes/Statutes.html">http://www.ncleg.net/Statutes/Statutes.html</a>   | N.C. General Statutes                |
| <a href="http://ncdhhs.gov/dss/">http://ncdhhs.gov/dss/</a>   | State TANF Plan                      |
| <a href="http://www.census.gov/">http://www.census.gov/</a>   | U.S. Census Bureau – homepage        |
| <a href="http://www.census.gov/main/www/stat_fed.html">http://www.census.gov/main/www/stat_fed.html</a> | U.S. Census Bureau – statistics      |
| <a href="http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/gazetteer">http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/gazetteer</a>           | U.S. Census Bureau – U.S. Gazetteer  |

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County Work First Plans must include family centered policy language/practices demonstrated in the plan. Each county plan should include a specific and clear discussion on how it will integrate family centered practice in the daily involvement with families including support for child only cases. Family centered approaches empower families making them key participants in developing services and demonstrates the six (6) principles of partnerships which are:

1. Everyone desires respect;
2. Everyone needs to be heard;
3. Everyone has strengths;
4. Judgments can wait;
5. Partners share power;
6. Partnership is a process.

In addition county Work First plans must include in its plan policies and practices on compliance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as the provision of interpreter services for its citizens that require such accommodations. Provide a detailed discussion on how the county complies with ADA the request for interpreter services. Further, the county plans should include the following:

## I. Conditions within the County

**Briefly** describe the current realities for low-income families in your county and key issues addressed by the plan. What are the most pressing problems? In addition to the narrative, provide relevant supporting documentation. Include current and projected economic trends such as new businesses, plant closings, and job availability. In this section, **do not** include much raw data, instead, include analysis and cite the sources.

## II. Planning Process

### A. Planning Committee

List the members of your local planning committee. Include names and affiliations. Membership of the committee must include, but is not limited to, representatives of:

1. the county board of social services,
2. the board of the area mental health authority,
3. the local public health board,
4. the local school system(s),
5. the business community,
6. the board of county commissioners and
7. community-based organizations that are representative of the population to be served.

In addition, it is highly recommended that you include representatives of:

8. the local community transportation system,
9. faith based organizations, and
10. recipients of Work First and other types of assistance and services
11. child welfare staff

### B. Public Comment

**Your plan must include documentation of your public comment process.** Describe when and how public comments were received, the length of the comment period, and how the public was notified of the opportunity to comment.

### C. Planning Development

Describe the collaboration that led to the plan's development and the proposed process for continued collaboration and coordination to carry out the plan throughout the year. Include a discussion of the committee appointed by the county board of commissioners to identify the needs of the population to be served. How did this committee contribute to the review and development of the county block grant plan to respond to the identified needs? How was other public comment obtained and processed? How will this committee contribute to the county's implementation of the plan?

## III. Outcomes and Goals for the County

### A. Statewide Work First Goals

The NC Division of Social Services, in consultation with the county department of social services and county board of commissioners, will establish acceptable levels of performance by counties in meeting the following six Work First goals. You will receive additional information regarding county specific goals under separate cover.

1. Employment. Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First clients.
2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates. Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment. **All counties will need to provide their work participation rates for the 12 calendar months prior to the month of submission of the new county plan.**
3. Providing Employment Services. Active participation in intensive employment services for all families is necessary in order to meet the participation rate and to ensure families are served adequately before the end of five years. One measure of success in Work First is the percentage of families who are subject to the work requirement that counties are assisting with job preparation and job placement.
4. Staying Off Welfare. Efforts to reduce welfare rolls, help adults find jobs, and increase self-sufficiency are undermined when families return to welfare. Families leaving Work First because of a job are tracked to determine if they return to cash assistance.
5. Job Retention. Families who leave Work First for employment and continue to be employed 6 to 12 months after leaving the program show evidence of keeping their income and increased job stability, which impacts a family's well being. This measure will be based on the number of responsible adults that leave Work First Family Assistance for employment who are still employed at 6 and 12 month intervals following termination.
6. Benefit Diversion. The most successful outcome possible for an applicant for public assistance is to avoid the need to become a recipient. This is also recognized in the federal law, which specifies diversion from public assistance as a desired outcome. Use of Work First Diversion Assistance for a specified percentage or number of Work First applications will be established as a goal for each county

### B. County Developed Outcome Goals

Electing Counties: County boards of commissioners are responsible for establishing county outcome and performance goals (N.C.G.S.§108A.27.3)]. For Electing Counties, describe how you will document your progress toward these goals.

Standard Counties: County departments of social services, in consultation with NC DHHS and the county board of commissioners are responsible for establishing county outcome and performance goals (N.C.G.S.§108A-27.6)]. Describe how your county will measure the outcomes for each goal.

## IV. Plans to Achieve the Outcomes and Goals

### A. Activities

Describe the activities that will be available to participants to enable your program to meet the goals listed above. What agencies or organizations in your community will provide these activities, and where will they take place? Include both public and private resources. How will these activities contribute to meeting the goals? If your county will

operate a work supplementation program, describe the program. **All counties will need to provide discussion of their strategies for increasing their work participation rate while ensuring that family centered services are provided to Work First applicants and recipients.**

**B. Supportive Services**

Describe the supportive services that will enable individuals to participate in the activities described above. What services will be provided? Who will carry them out? Where will they take place?

**V. Administration**

**A. Authority**

Will authority for administration of the Work First Program be delegated to an entity or agency other than the board of county commissioners [Electing Counties] or the county department of social services [Standard Counties]? If so, name and describe that entity or agency. (Notwithstanding any delegation of duty, the county board of commissioners shall remain accountable for its duties under the Work First Program.)

**B. Organization**

Describe your agency's organization for the purposes listed below. Describe any collaborative arrangements (such as co-location of staff) you have with other agencies, such as ESC, WIA, JobLink Centers, etc.

1. Intake
2. Emergency assistance
3. Employability assessment
4. Employment services
5. Other supportive services
6. Eligibility determination

Are you consolidating functions such as employment services and eligibility?

**C. First Stop**

Describe the arrangement between your agency and your local ESC regarding First Stop registration. Describe any services for which you are contracting or will contract with ESC to provide.

Your plan must include a copy of your current memorandum of understanding with ESC concerning First Stop registration.

**D. Child Care**

Describe how your county will prioritize its subsidized child care services.

**E. Transportation**

Describe in detail how the transportation needs of Work First participants will be met through local coordination and collaboration. What arrangements do you have with your local transportation system? What private transportation resources have you developed? Will your agency continue to support the transportation needs of former Work First recipients who are working and no longer Work First eligible? Give an estimate of the amount of funds from your Work First Block Grant that will be allocated for transportation services.

**F. Substance Abuse Services**

Describe in detail your collaboration with the area authority for mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services to provide assessments and treatment.

**Include a copy of the local Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the LME.**

**G. Family Violence Option**

Describe your arrangements for providing Family Violence Option waivers (See Work First Manual Section 104D) and your plans for coordinating with domestic violence service agencies in your area to provide services to victims of domestic violence.

**H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**

List the activities, staff, and services that will be funded using Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds. **It is expected that each county will spend MOE timely throughout the year to avoid last minute MOE expenditures. Counties that fail to meet its MOE may be subject to a corrective action plan (N.C.G.S. § 108A-27.12). Further, the Department may use the county's block grant to secure needed services for families in that county or reduce block grant allocations to counties that fail to meet MOE requirements.**

**I. Child Welfare Services**

Give an estimate of how much of your Work First Block Grant you will devote to Child Welfare Services.

**VI. Emergency Assistance**

Describe your Emergency Assistance policies and procedures. For requirements, see Work First Manual Section 003, VIII. **Each county must list the amount of your Work First Block declared for Emergency Assistance.**

**VII. Services to Low Income Families (under 200% of poverty).**

Describe your policies and procedures for these services, as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003, IX. As a reminder, providing 200% services is no longer optional. **Each county must list the amount of your Work First Block declared for low income families under 200% of the poverty level threshold.**

**VIII. Services to Non-Custodial Parents.**

Describe your policies and procedures for these services, as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003, X. If you choose not to provide these optional services, include a statement to that effect.

**IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement**

Describe your county policy regarding exempting single custodial parents of children under age one from the work requirement. See Work First Manual Section 003, XI. If you do not specify a policy in your plan, there will be no exemption in your county.

**Optional Plan Elements**

The following are optional sections that counties may want to include:

**X. Innovative County Strategies**

Describe activities or initiatives in your county that are innovative in meeting the goals of the Work First Program. These activities or initiatives may have already been described elsewhere in the plan; however, this is a place to showcase your innovations. **This may include a discussion on your demonstration grant project. If so, be specific in identifying this as a demonstration grant project.**

For example: Does your county have an innovative way to address domestic violence or literacy issues? What approach do you find successful in working with long-term recipient families? What is your strategy for serving adults with disabilities?

**XI. Special Issues**

Describe any special issues or conditions in your county that could affect operation of the Work First Program.

## Required For Electing Counties

In addition to the items outlined above, Electing County plans must include the following:

### **XII. Eligibility Criteria**

See Work First Manual Section 003, VII. for the limitations that federal and state law place on eligibility criteria.

Describe in detail the eligibility criteria that will be used in your county. Include all terms and conditions for receiving Work First Program assistance and services, including, at a minimum:

- age limits for children;
- definition of relationships;
- who can apply/be included in the payment;
- payment levels;
- benefit calculation;
- countable income;
- sanctions;
- resource requirements (limit and countable items);
- time limits and extensions;
- rewards, exemptions, and exceptions to requirements;
- Benefit Diversion requirements;
- **Citizenship/Identity requirements.**

If you plan to follow the state's standard policy for any of these items, include a statement to that effect. (If you become an Electing County, you may accept or reject any standard policy changes that are made during the period covered by the plan unless such changes are required to comply with federal or state law or regulation.)

If there is any change to eligibility that would exclude individuals currently eligible, please explain.

If your county proposes to change eligibility requirements or benefit levels, describe the reasons for these changes.

Attach a copy of a sample MRA to be used in your county.

### **XIII. Community Service Programs**

Electing counties may choose to require parents or caretakers receiving assistance to participate in community service employment if, after receiving assistance for two months, they are not participating in federally countable activities for enough hours to count toward the participation rate. (The State has opted out of this provision for the Standard Work First Program.)

If you plan to require community service employment, provide a list of the community service programs that will be offered to Work First participants.

### **XIV. Appeals Process**

Describe your appeals process. This must substantially comply with N.C.G.S. §108A-79. Second level appeal hearings must be held in the county rather than by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Board of County Commissioners is ultimately responsible for this process but may delegate it to another entity as provided for in this section of your plan.

### **XV. Review Prior To Expiration of Time Limits**

State Law [N.C.G.S. §108A-27.4(e)(7)] requires Electing county plans to include the process by which the county will review all Work First caseloads no later than three months prior to expiration of time limitations for receiving cash assistance to:

- A.** Ensure that time limitations on assistance have been computed correctly;
- B.** Ensure that the family is informed in writing about public assistance benefits, including child care, Medicaid, and Food and Nutrition Services, for which the family is eligible even while cash assistance is no longer available;

- C. Provide for an extension of cash assistance benefits if the family qualifies for an extension; and
- D. Review family status and assist the family in identifying resources and support the family's needs to maintain employment and family stability.

The Standard procedures for meeting this requirement are described in the Work First Manual, Section 105, III. and Section 105A, IV. Electing plans must include a description of the proposed Electing County procedures or a statement that the county will follow the standard procedures.

**XVI. Funding Requirements**

Estimate the amount of your county block grant that you will spend for Benefit Diversion, Work First Family Assistance, Work First Services, and your Maintenance of Effort contribution.

Will your county reduce its maintenance of effort to below 100% of 1996-97 budgeted amounts? If so, what is your maintenance of effort (cannot be lower than 90%), and how do you intend to use the savings from the maintenance of effort reduction?

**REQUIRED FOR ALL COUNTIES**

**XVII. Certification**

Your County Block Grant Plan must include certification, signed by the Chairman, that it was approved by the County Board of Commissioners.

## Work First Block Grant

### Planning Timeline

| <b>Activity/Task</b>  | <b>Date</b>               |
|---|---------------------------|
| Counties notified of planning requirements.   | May 2008                  |
| <b>Counties notify State of desired electing or standard planning status.</b>                               | <b>September 26, 2008</b> |
| Acknowledgement of planning status mailed to counties.  | Upon receipt              |
| Counties develop plans and receive public comments.   | July-Oct. 2008            |
| County comments sought for new State Plan changes.  | Fall 2008/Spring 2009     |
| <b>County plans for the 2010-2011 Biennium due to State DSS.</b>  | <b>October 31, 2008</b>   |
| County plans reviewed by State staff.   | Nov-Dec. 2008             |
| Recommendation of electing counties submitted to General Assembly.  | January 2009              |
| Draft State Plan scheduled to go out for public comment.  | February 2009             |
| Draft State Plan revised to incorporate public comments, county comments, and private sector organizations. | March 2009                |
| State Plan submitted to General Assembly for approval.  | April 2009                |