



# NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY WORKERS ASSOCIATION: PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATED THROUGH HUMAN SERVICES

PO Box 371 Paw Creek, NC 28130-0371

Dear NEW PATHS Chapter President:

You may remember, NEW: PATHS was recently awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to collect information for a best practices handbook that will contain the most effective service delivery guidelines for front line workers. The handbook will consist of innovative strategies and guidelines that best support HHS' strategic goals and objectives for TANF (e.g., supporting healthy marriages, child support collection, employment, children's education, etc.).

We are forming a focus group of up to fifteen NEW: PATHS members who currently work with TANF applicants/recipients. Members of the focus group will work directly with the External Relations Committee, Facilitator, and Handbook Writer contracted for this project.

We are accepting applications for focus group membership. Successful candidates must meet the following criteria:

1. Works with applicants/recipients of the TANF program. (Official job titles vary by state.)
2. Is a member of NEW: PATHS (i.e., dues paid) by June 1, 2007.
3. Has significant knowledge in at least two of the five areas to be included in the handbook (see attached).
4. Is willing to participate and commit to the process; will be required to be a contributing and productive member and to report on their activities.
5. Has agency support to attend the focus group meetings and to participate in conference calls during working hours.
6. Is energetic, enthusiastic and committed to NEW: PATH's purpose of improving the knowledge, skills and overall professionalism of its members.

The focus group meeting will be in Detroit, Michigan in conjunction with our Annual Training Conference in August 2007. Focus group members' travel expenses will be paid by the OFA grant. Covered expenses include transportation, hotel, per diem and NEW: PATHS conference registration. Travel dates for this will be Sunday, August 19 – Friday, August 24, 2007.

The Focus Group application is attached. Applications must be complete to be considered for selection, deadline for submitting this form is June 4, 2007. The Grant Committee will select Focus Group members at our planning committee meeting June 18 with the goal of assembling a group with diverse experiences. Notification of selection will be sent to all applicants shortly after this meeting with travel plans made within the next week.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact JoLynn Cagle via email at [JLCagle@alaska.com](mailto:JLCagle@alaska.com) or by telephone at 1-907-269-7862. You may also contact Trina Henderson at NEW:PATHS toll free number (1-888-283-6392).

Sincerely,

JoLynn Cagle  
External Relations/Grant Committee Chair

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# Handbook Best Practices Areas

## I. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND STABILITY

The handbook will contain states' efforts to encourage healthy marriages and responsible fatherhood as these are key ingredients to positive self-sufficiency outcomes. The handbook will include a discussion of:

- Developing innovative approaches to support healthy marriages;
- Creating effective marriage education opportunities;
- Providing marriage skills training;
- Developing High School education modules on the value of marriage;
- Creating marriage mentoring programs;
- Providing equitable treatment of two-parent married families;
- Identifying access and safe visitation practices that encourage non-custodial parents to be more involved in their children's lives;
- Increasing the number of children in a state living in married couple families.

## II. CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The handbook will contain states' efforts to enhance integration of TANF and child support program strategies while recognizing child support is not a replacement for a client's own engagement in income producing work efforts. Successful outcomes for many TANF families include the establishment and enforcement of child support orders. The handbook will include a discussion of:

- Utilizing Federal Parent Locator Services;
- States' best child support collection practices; and
- Increasing the percentage of paternity establishments for children born out of wedlock.

## III. CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Since the inception of major welfare reform in 1996, childcare program funding has become and remains a major part of many, if not most, successful client self-sufficiency outcomes. The handbook will include strategies to:

- Ensure parents have child care service choices that allow them to enter/remain in the workforce.
- Assist parents in finding child care that best fits their child's needs;
- Provide education in how to find child care,
- Assist parents in finding child care that provides a safe environment.

## IV. EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The handbook will detail the ways in which the TANF employment services program components are performed; having a direct relationship to meeting TANF policy goals. The major policy issues addressed will include:

- Providing effective Job Readiness assistance,
- Creating constructive activities that lead to self-sufficiency,
- Determining which services best help families obtain/maintain employment (which enhances child/family well-being),
- Universal Engagement Strategies
- Case Management Priorities
- Basic Skill Development Programs
- The Need for an Individual Focus on Clients
- Monitoring Client Employment Plans and Outcomes
- Increasing Participation Rates
- Identifying and addressing client barriers to employment within overall self-sufficiency plans. Major barriers include, but are not limited to:
  - Mental Health Issues
  - Chemical Dependency Issues
  - Housing
  - Immigration Status
  - Language and Cultural Issues
  - Health Issues and Disabilities of Family Members
  - Motivation and Self Esteem

## V. CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The handbook will detail strategies to deliver high quality education programs and services to all children in the most effective, efficient and cost-effective manner practicable. Employed parents are role models for children which help to facilitate children's education. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Language and early literacy services;
- Professional development and training of early child care and education teachers;
- Employing/training parents of Head Start children – encouraging them to volunteer in their child's classroom;
- Intergenerational activities
- Increased enrollment into Head Start
- Improving children's health development and school readiness
- Increase the average percent gain in word knowledge and letter identification for children in the Head Start program.
- Increase the percentage of parents who report reading to children three times per week or more.