

# **Providing Work Opportunities and Support for TANF Recipients with Disabilities**

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# Disabilities Among TANF Recipients

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- **Disabilities prevalent among TANF recipients**
- **Disabilities create difficulties with work participation and employment**
- **DRA heightened interest in work-based strategies for individuals with disabilities to increase work participation rates**

# Study Purpose

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- **To explore complexity of clients' service needs**
- **To describe efforts to identify and address disabilities and engage TANF clients in work activities**
- **To examine program experience of states and localities**

# Service Strategies

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- **Assessment, service triage, and follow up**
  - Anoka County, MN
  - Ramsey County, MN
  - New York City
- **Partnerships between TANF and state vocational rehabilitation programs**
  - Iowa
  - Vermont
- **Specialized employment programs**
  - Utah

# Utah's Supported Employment Programs

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- History of identifying and addressing mental health conditions in TANF recipients
- Regional initiatives focused on work-based programs for those with mental health conditions
- Use of various work-based service models familiar to the mental health community
  - Community inclusion
  - Clubhouse model

# Target Population

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- **TANF clients with clinical mental health conditions**
- **People who have trouble keeping a job and meeting federal work requirements**
- **People willing to participate in work and mental health treatment**

# DEO: Structured Employment

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- **In-house, entry-level jobs starting at \$6.50 per hour**
- **Clients can make mistakes without being fired**
- **Therapists recommend work hours and accommodations**
- **Incentives, raises, and promotions**

# Structured Employment (cont'd)

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- Access to job opportunities otherwise not available
- Opportunity to learn from mistakes builds confidence
- Work accommodations encourage productivity
- Positive reinforcement instills the value of work



# Connection Cottage: Community Service and Work-Focused Activities

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- **Clients begin with regularly scheduled work shifts in the cottage**
- **Clients participate in operating the cottage**
- **Gradually transition to outside internships and paid employment**

# Connection Cottage (cont'd)

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- **“Work ordered day” acclimates clients to a structured workplace**
- **Self-reflection activities encourage progress toward work**
- **Preparation for more structured work activities**

# Components of Work-Focused Program

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- **Ongoing assessments of work and mental health needs**
- **Frequent service coordination within and between agencies**
- **Extensive supports for work and mental health treatment**
- **Active monitoring and re-engagement efforts**

# Program Costs and Payment Structures

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- **TANF funds support programs**
- **Providers contracted to serve 20 clients each up to nine months**
- **Amount and structure of contracts vary**
  - **DEO: payment benchmarks**
  - **Connection Cottage: fee-for-service with performance outcomes**

# Program Successes

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- **Provides a specialized service option for TANF recipients with mental health disabilities**
- **DEO promotes increased participation and employment**
- **Clients report feeling better about themselves and about work**
- **Connection Cottage still in early implementation**

# Program Challenges

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- **Finding staff with the right skills and experience**
- **Engaging clients and sustaining participation**
- **Moving clients into permanent jobs in the community**