

WAKE COUNTY

# WORK FIRST PLAN

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FFY 16-19

Wake County

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## **Vision Statement**

Wake County Human Services seeks to broaden the role of its Work First Block Grant by investing in the services that families need to move from welfare to work, remain in the workforce, and move out of poverty. Included in this vision is the commitment to assist low-income working families by providing an array of services and supports, which strengthen the family and promote child well-being.

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## INTRODUCTION

Wake County's Work First Plan outlines steps toward economic self-sufficiency for Work First families. Specifically, Wake County's Plan identifies actions to achieve the statewide Work First Goal of meeting the Federal Participation Rate and the Work First program indicators specific to Wake County. Included in this plan are identified barriers to employment and strategies for overcoming these roadblocks to employment. As a Standard County, Wake County will follow the recommended Work First County Block Grant Plan Model for FFY 2016--2019.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTY

Centrally located in the Triangle area of North Carolina, Wake County is one of the fastest growing areas in the nation and the second-most populous county in the state with approximately 1,034,069 residents. Wake County is the 44<sup>th</sup> most populous county in the nation and Raleigh is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in the state of North Carolina. The County, founded in 1771, currently encompasses about 860 square miles and is the center of the state government, with the Capitol Building, legislature, and many government offices located in Raleigh, the county seat. Wake County is a thriving community whose population has grown approximately 130% since 1990, 55% since 2000, and is forecasted to maintain substantial growth of approximately 23,000 new residents per year for the next few decades. The County's 2014 General Fund budget is \$982.8 million, and the County has approximately 3,800 employees. Wake County has a seven-year capital plan totaling \$458 million.

### GOVERNANCE – THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND COUNTY MANAGER

The County is governed by the seven-member Wake County Board of Commissioners, who are elected for four-year terms. Under their direction, a professional County Manager oversees the daily provision of services to citizens ranging from health programs and other human and social services to parks and recreational opportunities, land use planning and zoning responsibilities, law enforcement and public safety, solid waste disposal, recycling and libraries (*Wake County Web Page: <http://www.state.nc.us/Wake>*).

### MUNICIPALITIES AND TOWNSHIPS

Wake County's municipalities include the following: Apex, Cary, Fuquay Varina, Garner, Holly Springs, Knightdale, Morrisville, Raleigh, Rolesville, Wake Forest, Wendell and Zebulon. Wake County has consistently experienced rapid growth in all of its municipalities with an overall growth rate of 49.6% compared to North Carolina's rate of 22%. The growth has come from a high net in-migration rate of 35.3% and a high birth rate related to the large number of young working families in the area (*NC Office of State Planning*). Wake County's population is currently

1,034,069 and is projected to increase to 1,160,823 by the year 2020 (*NC Census Lookup*, <http://linc.state.nc.us>).

Raleigh, the state capital, is the largest city in Wake County (311,053) and has grown by 33.9% from 1990-2000. Wake County will continue to grow in disproportionate patterns depending on geographic location. The populations of Apex, Cary, Garner, Knightdale, Morrisville, and Raleigh are expected to continue to increase at higher rates.

### **Wake County Municipal Population 2010-2013- US Census Bureau**

Municipality	April 1, 2010	July 1, 2013	Growth	% Growth
Angier*	103	108	5	4.9%
Apex	37,476	42,214	4,738	12.6%
Cary*	133,812	149,513	15,701	11.7%
Fuquay-Varina	17,937	21,277	3,340	18.6%
Garner	25,745	26,722	977	4.0%
Holly Springs	24,661	28,915	4,254	17.2%
Knightdale	11,401	13,291	1,890	16.6%
Morrisville	18,576	21,932	3,356	18.1%
Raleigh*	402,825	430,630	27,805	6.9%
Rolesville	3,786	4,649	863	22.8%
Wake Forest*	29,218	33,758	4,540	15.5%
Wendell	5,845	6,135	290	5.0%
Zebulon*	4,433	4,591	158	3.6%
Unincorporated	185,175	190,504	5,329	2.9%
Wake County	900,993	974,289	73,296	8.1%

## **CONDITIONS WITHIN THE COUNTY - THE CASE FOR WAKE COUNTY'S PLAN**

The Community Assessment of Wake County as prepared by the Triangle United Way and Wake County Human Services, reports that, “although Wake County residents as a whole are financially secure, certain areas have substantial need. Pockets of poverty are scattered among the numerous suburbs of wealth located throughout the County”. The highest concentration of low-income households is in Holly Springs, Willow Springs, Zebulon, and Raleigh (Central & East). Other indicators of need in the community are the numbers of people who rely on Food & Nutritional Services and Medicaid.

### **CURRENT REALITIES FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN WAKE COUNTY**

Ranking among the top ten fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country, Wake County has seen its economic prosperity impacted by a decline in the computer networking industry to more

service industry hiring. There has been an upsurge in the economy in recent years, but the issues for low-income families still remain. The unemployment rate has decreased from 5.1% in August 2008 to 4.8% as of April 2014 (Access NC Commerce <http://accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us>).

As of September 1, 2014, the Wake County Work First Program served 1,031 households comprising 2,160 individuals. Of these cases, 653 were child-only households and 364 were Work First Benefits (WFB) households, i.e., households in which the single adult has an employment obligation. (September 1, 2014, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families website. <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/>).

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## **HIGH COST OF LIVING IN WAKE COUNTY**

The N.C. Justice and Community Development Center in Raleigh reported the 2014 North Carolina Living Income Standard for Wake County. The chart below indicates the amount of money needed to meet basic needs for a family of one adult, an infant and a preschooler:

<b>Basic Needs</b>	<b>Monthly Expenses</b>
Housing	\$878
Food	\$361
Childcare	\$1516
Transportation	\$377
Health Care	\$343
Miscellaneous	\$317
Taxes	\$660
Total monthly expenses	\$4453
Living Standard Income Wage	\$25.69

Tax burden and tax credits are included. (N.C. Justice and Community Development Center, Raleigh).

## **IDENTIFIED BARRIERS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN WAKE COUNTY**

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The greatest housing need in Wake County is for individuals and families earning less than \$31,500 a year. This includes the thousands of service workers, including Work First families, earning from \$5 to \$10 per hour. The fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in Wake

County is \$918, and for a 3-bedroom apartment it rises to \$1,189. Although the overall apartment vacancy rate in Wake County is currently 8.1%, lower than it has been in recent years, the vacancy rate for affordable apartments remain unchanged at 0-3%.

Approximately 34% of all households in Wake County are classified as renters. In order to afford a market rate apartment in Wake County, a household must earn \$36,720 annually or \$17.65 per hour for a 40-hour work week. There are limited options for those who earn less. The 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan for Wake County shows that there is a need for over 23,000 units of affordable rental housing for low and moderate-income families, those earning less than \$31,500/year (40% AMI).

The waiting list for public housing units and vouchers remains long. The waiting lists for a Wake County Section 8 Voucher, as well as, Wake County public housing are closed due to an extensive waitlist. This means no new families can be added to the list. Currently, Housing Authority of Wake County is servicing families that were placed on the waitlist in 2007. Due to the uncertainty of housing availability, an average wait time cannot be calculated.

The Raleigh Housing Authority waitlist is currently open but also reports extensive waits. Currently, 3,200 families are waiting for a public housing unit. This translates to a wait that ranges from two to four years depending on a family's size and housing availability. The Authority reports approximately 6,500 families on the waiting list for a Section 8 Voucher. This translates to an average wait of three to seven years. These examples clearly illustrate that the demand for affordable rental units exceeds the supply of affordable units.

A point-in-time count for the state of North Carolina found that 11,448 individuals were homeless on January 29, 2014. Of the 11,448 homeless counted, 2,548 were children under the age of 18. In Wake County, the point-in-time count conducted by the Wake Continuum of Care revealed 1,170 persons were homeless. According to the North Carolina Housing Coalition, the states most critical housing need is improving housing opportunities for families earning less than 30% of the median income.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The Capital Area Transit Authority (CAT buses and CAT connectors) serves the City of Raleigh and the Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) serves the greater Triangle. Over 433 private transportation providers, including shuttle services, taxicab companies and other transportation vendors such as Wake Coordinated Transportation, operate in Wake County.

The geographical distance between residential communities and employment opportunities exacerbates the transportation problems of Work First families. Additional problems include accessibility to reliable transportation and the high costs associated with transportation.



## CHILDCARE

Childcare is a concern for all working families in Wake County. Working families put a large amount of money back into the local economy and tax system through their employment, earnings, and purchase of child care. Parents with stable child care arrangements are more focused on the job and make better employees. Receiving child care subsidy services offers children a chance to receive an early childhood education which leads to increased success in school and less costs to the community and state in terms of remedial services. (NC DHHS DCDEE 2014)

The Wake County Child Care Subsidy Program reports that there are 332 licensed daycare centers and 217 registered family childcare home facilities with possible spaces in Wake County. There are 549 regulated day care facilities in Wake County. (NC DHHS DCDEE, JUNE 2015)

Lack of affordable childcare is a primary barrier to employment for many families. This problem stems from several factors:

- Wake County's rapid growth has outstripped the capacity of the childcare system to provide quality daycare slots that are available to low-income families.
- Childcare costs in Wake County are exorbitant. The average rate for child daycare subsidy is \$576.89 per month, based on the combined monthly averages of childcare centers and family childcare homes in Wake County (WCHS Child Day Care Unit Monthly Report May 2015). Additionally, parents pay a co-payment based on 10% of their income.

Preschool childcare needs are very apparent, but childcare for school-age children is also an area of need due to teacher workdays, holidays, summer school vacation and the need for sick care. As many of the elementary schools and middle schools transition to year round schedules, there is a growing need for track out care for students. It is also a challenge to find drop-in childcare services, respite care for children with special needs, and childcare for parents working second, third or weekend shifts. Wake County Human Services (WCHS) disseminates information regarding city Parks and Recreations within municipalities, Boys and Girls Club, Wake County Public Schools, Child Care Services Association and 4-H to provide parents with additional information regarding track-out programs and childcare programs to help meet the family's needs.

In Wake County, 4,472 children received subsidized childcare thus far in the fiscal year 2014-2015. (WCHS Child Day Care Unit Monthly Report May 2015). Of these, 9% were part of the Work First All Family caseload.

Income eligible families receiving subsidized child daycare in Wake County are families that fall into the 200% of federal poverty income levels (for children ages 0-5 and all children with special needs and 133% of the federal poverty level for children ages 6-12 without special needs. All children served are enrolled in licensed facilities.

Due to demand and available funding, WCHS Child Care Subsidy Program has a waiting list. At the time of this report there are 2876 children on the list. With current budget restraints, it is believed that the waiting time for child care subsidy will continue, unless additional funding can be obtained.

### **LACK OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

A review of the literature suggests a significant link exists between family income and education. Those individuals without a sufficient level of education or training often find it difficult to earn livable wages based on the types of jobs for which they qualify. While over 85% of Wake County's adults over the age of 25 have a high school education or GED, only 20% of Work First custodial parents under the age of 24 have a high school education or are continuing high school studies.

### **SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL ILLNESS**

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research estimates 1.37 million people are in need of mental health, developmental disability, and/or substance use (MH/DD/SUD) services – almost 14 percent of the state population. Substance use disorders are costing North Carolina and its consumers substantially in health care cost, premature deaths, reduced productivity, criminal justice, motor vehicle crashes etc. The 2013 Wake County Community Health Assessment Community Forum Data reports “Individuals with poor mental health may have difficulties with interpersonal relationships, productivity in school or the workplace, and overall sense of well-being while substance use and abuse are major contributors to death and disability in North Carolina.”

Substance use and mental illness are significant issues for Work First families. The Work First Program includes a full time Mental Health Clinician, two full-time Qualified Substance Abuse Professionals and one part-time Psychiatrist. These staff personnel assist the Work First participants in mental health and substance use disorders. Staff assists participants in obtaining treatment for mental health and substance use disorders, promoting client well-being and increasing job readiness and employability

The level of substance use and mental illness among Work First families are historically under-reported. It is suspected that substance use problems and mental health problems are disproportionately higher than the general population and point to depth of the problems.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

As with substance use and mental illness, domestic violence disrupts the Work First families' abilities to stabilize and become self-sufficient. Nationally, 1 in 3 women will be a victim of domestic or sexual violence at some point in her lifetime. National studies conducted over the last twenty years have consistently shown that between 25-30% of households in this country report having experienced an incident of domestic violence. InterAct is Wake County's only provider of comprehensive domestic violence and sexual assault services, each year reaching more than 45,000 residents - nearly 9,000 of whom were direct victims - by saving lives, rebuilding lives, and securing safer futures.

National studies show that upwards of 59% of recipients reported that their partner discouraged or prevented them from working. For survivors who work, 85% reported being late, leaving early, or missing work completely as a result of abuse; 60% reported being reprimanded at work for behaviors related to their abuse; and 52% reported losing their job as a result of the abuse.

Victims and survivors of domestic violence in Wake County, including Wake County Work First participants, face great challenges in finding and maintaining employment and need help filling an essential void in helping victims create sustainable and violence-free lives. These life-changing services allow victims of domestic violence who have no other work experience move beyond low-wage, low-entry jobs to in-demand careers where they can be truly self-sufficient and support their families.

## **CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

Wake County has experienced a decrease in its unemployment rate. The current rate as of April 2014, is 4.8% with 24,628 individuals reporting unemployment (Access NC Commerce). The median income for families in Wake County is \$65,826, which is 41.7% greater than North Carolina's average (Access NC Commerce).

Wake County and parts of the Research Triangle Region have been recognized as one of the top ten metropolitan areas in the nation for economic growth. The NC Department of Commerce reported for 2014 there were businesses that reported 19 permanent layoffs, 38 permanent closures and a total of 8,686 individuals were impacted.

## **PROJECTED ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

Wake County features a diverse employment base with the largest sectors being: services, trade, government, manufacturing, and construction. It is projected that the service and retail trade industries will continue to experience the greatest growth over the next 10 to 15 years. The 2019 projected median household income is \$73,753 (Access NC Commerce). Wake County is leading

North Carolina in job growth and labor force growth and is consistently a national job growth leader with the lowest unemployment rate among North Carolina's metropolitan regions. Projections for the next two decades show that Wake County will continue to grow and prosper.

<b>Wake County Major Employers</b>	<b># Employees</b>
State of North Carolina	24,083
Wake County Public School System	18,554
IBM Corporation	10,000
WakeMed Health & Hospitals	8,422
North Carolina State University	7,876
Cisco Systems, Inc.	5,500
Rex Healthcare	5,300
SAS Institute, Inc.	5,232
GlaxoSmithKline	4,950
N.C. DHHS	3,800
Duke Energy	3,700
Wake County Government	3,692
City of Raleigh	3,673
Fidelity Investments	2,900
Wake Technical Community College	2,547
RTI International	2,200
Lenovo	2,100
Wells Fargo	2,100
Verizon Business	2,000

Source: <http://www.raleigh-wake.org/page/major-employers>

## PLANNING PROCESS

As with the planning process for Wake County's initial Work First Plan, Wake County views the development of its Biennial Work First Plan as part of an ongoing, inclusive process. The planning process for this plan involved the Work First Steering Committee which involves community leaders, professional service providers, advocates, the business community, and community-based organizations with experience in serving low-income families.

In September 2008, the Wake County Board of Commissioners voted to administer the Wake County Work First Program as a "Standard" county. Wake County remains a standard county, as such, the eligibility criteria and payment methodology of Work First Family Assistance has been established by the North Carolina Department of Health And Human Services (DHHS). The Human Services agency will continue to involve the Wake County Work First Steering Committee in revising, updating, and implementing the local plan after the plan is submitted to DHHS.

### WORK FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE

The Wake County Work First Steering Committee was formed as the result of being a designated focus area of the 1998 Wide-A-Wake Community Forum. This committee meets monthly and is charged with reviewing the strategies for the Wake County Work First Plan. The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from the Faith Community, Business Community, Legal Services, Educational Community, For-profit and Non-profit Service Agencies, as well as private citizens.

## OUTCOMES AND GOALS FOR THE COUNTY

There are two goals by which county departments of social services will be measured. The other measurements are referred to as Work First Performance Measures.

### WORK FIRST GOALS

- 1. MEETING FEDERAL WORK FIRST PARTICIPATION RATES FOR ALL FAMILIES** Counties must ensure that at least 50% of all work eligible individuals complete the required number of hours of federally countable work activities.
- 2. MEETING FEDERAL WORK PARTICIPATION RATES FOR TWO-PARENT FAMILIES** Counties must ensure that at least 90% of all two-parent families with work eligible individuals will complete the required number of hours of federally countable work activities.

## **Goal 1: Meet the “All Family” Participation Rate of 50%**

**Principles:** Active participation in employment services and activities will lead to full-time employment.

### **Performance Measures:**

- Within 12 weeks of approval for Work First Family Assistance, adults with an employment obligation will be employed or in short-term training leading to employment.
- After 12 weeks, new mothers will receive intensive employment services to encourage employment or short-term training to support their family.
- Families who have been identified as having used twelve months on their 24-month time clock or 36 months on their 60-month time clock will be designated as priority for intensive employment services.

This outcome will be achieved by placing adults in countable activities from the date of application and/or having employment as soon as they are job ready.

## **Goal 2: Meeting the “Two Parent” Participation Rate of 90%**

**Principles:** Active participation in employment services and activities will lead to full-time employment. Two-parent households will be promoted.

### **Performance Measures:**

- 90% of the adults in the two-parent families will either be employed or in short-term training leading to employment.
- 90% of all participants placed on the job will maintain employment for at least 6 months.

These outcomes will be achieved through the promotion of employment job retention, diversion and intensive work activities.

## **WORK FIRST PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

1. **DIVERSION ASSISTANCE APPROVALS** This measure represents the number of approvals for the county during each report month. These individuals are not

included in the calculations for any other measures and they are not counted in the Participation Rate.

2. **PARTICIPANTS WITH SCHEDULED HOURS** This measure represents the number of adults in the Work First Caseload who are actively receiving employment services as indicated by having hours scheduled for them in the report month.
3. **PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETED 75% OF SCHEDULED HOURS** This measures the number of participants who completed at least 75% of the hours that were scheduled.
4. **ADULTS ENTERING EMPLOYMENT** This measure calculates the number of adults who entered employment during the report month. Individuals are only counted once in the year-to-date total.
5. **REMAINING OFF WORK FIRST FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR 12 MONTHS** If the individual has not returned to Work First in any of the 12 previous months after leaving Work First for employment, the individual will be counted in this total. This is checked each month.

### **Performance Measurement 1: Benefit Diversion - Diversion Assistance Approvals**

**Principles:** Benefit Diversion Assistance helps the family obtain and/or maintain employment and avoid the risk of losing their employment. Early intervention can promote family stability and assist families coping with emergencies and financial crises. Eligible families may receive up to three months of Cash Assistance, Medical Assistance, and Food Assistance.

#### **Performance Measures:**

Increase the provision of Work First support services to eliminate or alleviate crises.

### **Performance Measurement 2: Providing Employment Services**

**Principles:** Providing intense employment services for families helps to stabilize the family situation and leads to early employment and conservation of time on both the 24 Month and 60 Month Time Clocks. The families progress toward economic self-sufficiency is enhanced by providing services such as a complete family assessment, mental health counseling, short term training, supportive employment, day care and transportation services to list a few of the services available to families.

#### **Performance Measures:**

- Increase the number of Two-Parent families receiving employment services to 100%
- Continue to increase the All-Parent families to 100% of all able-bodied families.

- Assist families with disabilities to get approval for SSI or other disability payments and work with Vocational Rehabilitation and client's doctor to assess and identify what client is capable of doing within their limitations, when not SSI eligible.

### **Performance Measurement 3: Participants Who Completed 75% of Scheduled Hours.**

**Principles:** Focus on determining why significant differences exist between the number of participants with scheduled hours and the number that are completing the scheduled hours. Efforts will be based on providing more upfront services to engage clients in activities at intake. More emphasis will be placed on providing supportive services to increase participant's abilities to successfully complete scheduled hours.

#### **Performance Measures:**

- Increase the number of participants with scheduled hours to 100% of the participants identified as work eligible.
- Increase the number of participants completing 75% of scheduled hours to 100%

### **Performance Measurement 4: Employment - Putting Adults to Work**

**Principles:** Focus service delivery on obtaining and maintaining employment. Priorities for intensive services are single parents with less than 12 months remaining on their benefit's time clock and families with two parents. The employment efforts will be based on the collaboration of Wake County Human Services, services agencies and the business and faith communities.

#### **Performance Measures:**

- The progress toward this goal is measured through the state's reporting and management system.

### **Performance Measurement 5: Retention - Staying off Welfare After Going to Work**

90% of Wake County's Work First participants who enter employment will stay off welfare for 12 months after going to work.

**Principles:** The longer a family remains off welfare after leaving for work, the more likely it is that they will remain off welfare. In some cases, job retention services or follow-up services may be needed to maintain employment. Employment activities will emphasize employment options which pay a living wage and career advancement opportunities whenever possible.



**Performance Measures:**

- Continue to provide supportive services that will enable families to continue employment.
- Increase the frequency of follow-up contacts to prevent job loss.
- Encourage continued training and education to improve wage earnings and progression.

**WAKE COUNTY WORK FIRST GOALS**

In addition to meeting the Work First goals established by the NC Division of Social Services, the Wake County Work First Program has established the following goals:

**Goal 1: Child Well-Being**

Ensure home stability for child placement – (Child-Only family assessments)

Prevent and reduce unwanted and/or out-of-wedlock pregnancies (TANF GOAL)

**Principles:** Work First Policy requires the assessment of child placement with regard to home stability. Child-Only assessments strengthen families, prevent child abuse and protect children who are at risk or in a crisis situation.

**Performance Measures:**

- All Child-Only Work First families will be measured for “risk levels” for abuse, neglect, and/or
- Alternative residential placement through the standardized Family Risk Assessment Tool.
- To ensure the safety of children who reside in kinship care arrangements, Work First case managers refer all Work First Child-Only relative cases to the Family Support Team for assessment.
- The Family Support Specialist evaluates the child’s living situation to determine if the home is a safe and healthy environment for the child’s overall successful development.
- An initial assessment will occur within the first six months of eligibility and annually thereafter.
- The Family Support Specialist notifies the Work First Case Manager of the completion of the assessment and of any relevant eligibility information obtained.
- When concerns in the family are identified, the Family Support Specialist alone or in consultation with Work First Staff will arrange for supportive services to stabilize the situation. The Family Support Specialist continues to monitor the situation and provides support as needed. In situations where the child’s safety is a concern and cannot be stabilized, intervention by Child Protective Services may occur.

## **Goal 2: Continue to Provide an Array of Training Options, Job Placement, and Support Services for Work First Families.**

Work First participants will develop skills that allow them to become and remain employed, increase wage earnings, and become economically self-sufficient through employment.

**Principles:** Assist Work First participants to become self-sufficient through employment. Ongoing job development and job referrals via the NCWorks Online Statewide job matching system. NCWorks Online registration and orientation is an expectation for all potential and current Work First participants.

### **Performance Measures:**

- 100% of “All Family” Work First (mandatory) participants will have a Mutual Responsibility Agreement
- Assess the needs of Work First families and make referrals based on assessment
- Referrals to community service providers will be tracked monthly

## **Goal 3: Develop Partnerships with Businesses and Community Resources**

Initiate and develop partnerships with Wake County businesses and community resources that will assist Work First participants in obtaining and maintaining employment.

**Principles:** The business community is the primary resource for reducing the number of people on the Work First caseload. Ongoing job development and the sharing of job contacts is a performance expectation for all employees within Vocational Services.

### **Performance Measures:**

- Track the number of referrals made for jobs with employers through the partnership monthly.
- Track the number of interviews that resulted from the referrals monthly.
- Track the employment offers that were made from the interviews monthly.

## **Goal 4: Promote the Development of Affordable Housing and Related Support Services**

Work First families will obtain and maintain affordable housing, which contributes to their economic self-sufficiency.

**Principles:** The availability of affordable housing to working families enhances their opportunities to be economically self-sufficient.

**Performance Measures:**

- Maintain an occupancy rate of 100% in the Work First Set-Aside housing units at all times.
- Track the number of participants that are identified as homeless and track referrals to resources to alleviate the crisis by finding affordable housing arrangements for the family.

**GOAL 5: Develop and Use Measures to Determine the Success of the Program**

Develop and implement systems of measurement and data collection for the Wake County Work First Program. The Work First Program uses NC FAST for data collection and program measurement. The County utilizes its own Service Registration system for further collection of data and improvement of customer service and efficiency.

**Principles:** Systematic and on-going feedback on current performance works to improve future performance. System information promotes service integration and efficient operations. Online policy and procedural manuals has been a major time saver and have improved the agency's overall accuracy rate along with the introduction of an electronic document management system. Work First staff developed a family assessment tool that provides information to aid staff in providing employment-focused support services that meet the needs of the family.

**Performance Measures:**

The standardized systems utilized by the Work First Program to collect, analyze data and to measure the quality of performance are:

- NC FAST
- Service Information System (SIS)
- Data Warehouse
- Internal Quarterly Quality Assurance Reviews
- Team Leader Second Party Reviews
- State MPR Quality Assurance
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of contracted service providers

The Work First Program also uses the following techniques to measure customer service:

- Customer Service Surveys
- Employee and Customer Suggestion Boxes
- Program Manager surveys
- WCHS Customer Service Desk

## ACHIEVING OUTCOMES AND GOALS

### MEETING FEDERAL PARTICIPATION RATES

**Strategies and Responsible Agencies:** The All Family and Two-Parent caseloads, with a work eligible adult, are receiving case management services through the partnership of an employment counselor and case manager. Two-parent households will be identified as a service priority for intensive employment services. To meet the participation rate and ensure the success of the family, the Work First participant is frequently assessed to identify their strengths and needs. Referrals are made to employment resources based on the needs of the family. The Work First participant must be actively involved in employment services or vocational training that will lead to full-time employment. Intensive employment services are individualized and focus on family assessments, vocational assessments, and job development.

### BENEFIT DIVERSION

**Strategies and Responsible Agencies:** Wake County Human Services will continue to apply Benefit Diversion when applicable. All Work First applicants are assessed for Benefit Diversion by the Intake Team (Screener and Case Manager) to determine whether diversion is the most successful plan for the family. The need for supportive services will be evaluated and provided as needed to maintain employment and support the diversion plan.

### PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

#### **Strategies and Responsible Agencies:**

- Wake County Human Services will use the Work First staff and other agency resources and staff to achieve this goal but will also work with community partners and contract agencies to provide family assessment, training, job search, counseling, transportation and child care services as needed. In partnership with the Family Community Network, community partners, and the Human Capital Development program, Work First Employment Services staff will continue to provide supportive services to families participating in work-related activities.
- **Education** Continue partnerships with Wake Technical Community College and other private vendors to provide an array of educational and vocational training options. These options will vary from vocational evaluation to occupational specific training and job placement. Education is an investment in human capital that pays off in terms of higher productivity.
- **Financial Literacy** Continue to increase enrollment in Wake County's Middle Class Express program to help low-income Wake County residents make progress towards economic and social

self-sufficiency. Continue to work with vendors to promote the utilization of financial management, and Earned Income Tax Credits through educational workshops.

- **Substance Use, Domestic Violence, and Mental Health** Continue to offer Supportive Employment services to Work First participants with substance use issues, domestic violence issues, and/or mental health issues. Work First staff will follow policy on substance use to refer applicants/recipients with suspected substance use issues, will provide access to domestic violence screenings with the aid of on-site staff from InterAct, and refer participants for mental health screens with a Work First mental health counselor. These partnerships are an effort to provide supportive services in accordance with the Work First Program Substance Use and Mental Health Initiative.
- **Child Care** Child care services will be afforded to Work First participants who are actively participating in a work activity. Employment services staff will continue to have access to the NC Health and Human Services child care database with the ability to help participants locate child care providers in their area that meet their needs. Work First applicants in need of child care will be serviced through 200% services.
- **Transportation** Wake County has been able to meet most transportation needs of Work First participants through the use of TANF and Department of Transportation funds. Funds will continue to be used to purchase bus passes, provide shuttle services to and from work, pay for vehicle repairs for cars owned by participants who have gone to work and need car repairs to continue their employment. It is anticipated that Wake County will continue to use its transportation funds to make transportation more accessible for Work First participants, especially to those who are employed and who no longer receive cash assistance.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Strategies and Responsible Agencies:**

#### **Job Development**

- Continue to utilize existing resources in assisting Work First participants to obtain employment (e.g. NC Department of Commerce, Vocational Rehabilitation, NCWorks Career Center and the Wake Business Advisory Council). Work First participants with special needs, such as homelessness, domestic violence, mental illness, or substance use issues will be referred to the appropriate resources to address their needs.
- NCWorks Career Center – Utilize the on-line employment database called NC Works Online which is a user-friendly listing of job leads that can be accessed via the Internet

by employers (to post their job openings) and job-seekers. Wake Area Business Advisory Council members regularly post their job vacancies through this free service. Promote the utilization of NC Works Online for rapid dissemination of job leads.

- Work closely with the Wake County Area Business Advisory Council, the Capital Area Work Force Development Board, and the Raleigh/Wake County Human Resource Management Association. Continue affiliation with the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce to expand employment networks, strengthen the Wake Area Business Advisory Council, and increase employment opportunities for Work First participants that pay a “living wage” with health benefits.
- In cooperation with the NCWorks Career Center - Swinburne, continue to participate in scheduled Business Days, which will allow employers to interview Work First participants on-site. Participate in Job-seeking Skills Workshops hosted by the center. and other community job fairs and expos.
- Work First Employment Counselors and the Job Developers along with a new Employment Counselor position that will be housed in the NCWorks Career Center, will continue to provide individualized career counseling, skills training, vocational testing, job development and placement, and short-term follow-along with participants and employers on an as needed basis.

The role of the Work First employment counselor will also include long-term follow-along and the development of natural supports to assist in job retention.

- Provide intensive job placement services for prioritized Work First participants:
  - Two parent households
  - One parent households with 12 months or more on their Work First time clock with special focus on those Work First families who have been identified as participants for “Success for Work First Families at Risk”

### **Job Training, Job Retention Services and other Support Services for Work First Participants**

- Continue partnerships with Wake Technical Community College, Community Workforce Solutions and other private vendors to provide an array of educational and vocational training options. These options will vary from vocational evaluation to occupational specific training and job placement
- Continue to offer an array of transportation assistance to Work First participants via funding support through the Work First Block Grant, NCDOT Work First Employment,

and/or Elderly & Disabled Transportation Assistance Program (EDTAP) Provide referrals to Wheels for Hope to secure private vehicles for qualified families.

- During Work First orientation, the Earned Income Tax credit (EITC) is reviewed and discussed with each Work First participant.

## **RETENTION**

### **Strategies and Responsible Agencies:**

Wake County will seek to continue to reduce recidivism by helping individuals maintain employment.

Wake County recognizes that this will be a significant challenge and will need to develop a service system which supports Work First Participants as they move toward self-sufficiency. Some of the strategies that will be utilized to forge this effort are:

- Providing workshops and other training opportunities that focus on financial literacy. Such training focuses on setting financial goals and priorities, examining personal/family spending habits, establishing and maintaining good credit and identifying resources in their community.
- Explore establishing a collaborative partnership with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), in which an IRS Representative will provide on-going informational workshops regarding use of the Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax incentive programs.
- The case manager/employment worker will refer, when needed, families to the child welfare-family support staff to help the family unit remain together and to develop adaptive skills for parenting and will staff existing cases with child welfare through the use of family team meetings.
- Employment retention strategies will include mental health services and domestic violence counseling if needed. Additional retention strategies involve opportunities for mentoring support (i.e. NC Vocational Rehabilitation Services/Vista Mentoring Project).
- Promote the integration of the NCWorks Career Center - Swinburne for possible career advancement opportunities.
- Promote the utilization of 200% of Poverty Services, Transitional Benefits, Emergency Assistance and Crisis Services (CIP, TANF-EA) services that would enhance job retention by providing services that will reduce the likelihood of job loss due to crisis situations.
- Information and referral; assistance with adapting to the workplace; child care subsidies; transportation assistance; clothing purchases and specialized training in a technical or community college are all examples of job retention services.

- Job Developer will work closely with Employment Counselors to receive Work First Participant referrals and to be updated on the issues and concerns the Work First Participant may be experiencing.
- Job Developer will provide an exit interview for those transitioning to employment
- Employment Counselors will provide participants with an information packet that will include a list of all their ongoing Case Managers names and number as well as a list of community resources and supportive services available to them
- Conduct monthly follow-up phone contacts to Work First Participants for reassurance, encouragement and referral assistance if needed
- Build relationships with employers and complete quarterly site visits to check on progress, issues and needs to resolve conflict before job loss.
- Maintain and cultivate partnerships with Wake Tech Community College, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Capital Area NCWORKS, Dress for Success, Step Up Ministry, WIOA, Family Support, Family Community Network and Human Capital Development and other non-profit and community agencies to provide an array of educational and vocational training options.

## **Child Well-Being**

### **Strategies and Responsible Agencies:**

- Work First family assessments are to be completed on all applicants and families seeking employment or short-term training. The assessment provides information for planning and referrals to further stabilize the family structure. Depending on service demand and/or funding availability, Work County seeks to serve families at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty standard who meet eligibility requirements and have a non-employment related need
- All Work First applicants are screened for mental health and substance use at the time of application. The substance use screenings are conducted according to state policy. All positive mental health screenings will be referred to the Mental Health Clinician for assessment and treatment
- Family Support Services of WCHS will provide “Child-Only” family assessments at the residence of the family. Families with a history of Child Protective Services involvement will be targeted for “Child-Only” assessments. The families of those children deemed at risk will receive supportive services that promote positive parenting and a stable home environment



- In order to establish healthcare coverage for children, Work First families and former Work First recipients will be encouraged to apply for medical assistance through the marketplace, if not eligible for Medicaid.
- Direct communication between social workers in Child Welfare and Work First.
- Child Welfare and Work First will collaborate to ensure that child safety plan and Mutual Responsibility Agreements are compatible and in the best interest of the family
- Work First will participate in Family Team meetings as appropriate for families served by Child Welfare

**Continue to Provide an Array of Training Options, Job Placement, and Support Services for Work First Families.**

**Strategies and Responsible Agencies:** These strategies are complimentary to those used to achieve the State goals noted above.

- As part of the Work First intake process, continue to screen and assess for substance use problems and/or mental illness and issues relating to domestic violence.
- The Work First assessment procedure includes work registration in the NCWorks System.. During this process, work skills are assessed and the applicant is given an overview of existing work opportunities in the interest of helping the individual avoid becoming a Work First recipient. As part of the assessment process the financial benefits associated with employment such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will be highlighted and compared to the income generated by Work First cash benefits alone
- Continue to partner with Wake Technical Community College and other private vendors to provide an array of vocational training options which vary from basic education to occupation-specific training
- Wake County Human Services continues to hosts four NCWorks Career Centers with locations at Swinburne, Eastern Regional Center (ERC), Northern Regional Center (NRC) and Southern Regional Center (SRC). Participants are also encouraged to utilize services at the main campus located at Tillery Place. The NCWorks Career Center Swinburne includes the following service agencies together at one location:
  - AmeriCorps (Capital Area Workforce Development Board program administrator for Capital Area Access NCWorks AmeriCorps), Job Corps (US Department of

Labor's program operator Women Empowered Network), NC Department of Commerce - Division of Workforce Solutions, NC Division of Services for the Blind (NCDSB), NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NCDVR), Senior Community Service Employment Program (US Department of Labor's program operator National Caucus and Center for Black Aging), StepUp Ministry (Employment & Life Skills Programs), Wake County Division of Social Services, including: WCHS Employment Services (non-Work First) and Work First, Wake Technical Community College, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2015 (US Department of Labor program operator Arbor E&T, LLC dba ResCare Workforce Services authorized by Capital Area Workforce Development Board).

- Partner staff members provide NCWorks registration, job referrals, career assessments, information and referrals to agency and community agencies. The Work First application process includes registration in the NCWorks Career Center and access to additional one-on-one assistance from the Work First Employment Counselor serving as a member of the Career Center's core staff.
- In addition to the NCWorks Career Center, Wake County will seek to increase referrals to community resources such as:
  - STEPS/HRD classes and basic education workshops sponsored by Wake Technical Community College (on-site).
  - As a voluntary option, mentoring support is available through community faith groups. Additional mentoring support opportunities may include NC Vocational Rehabilitation/Vista Project and Step Up Ministry.
  - Explore additional opportunities to contract for employment and other related support services.

## **Develop Partnerships with Businesses and Community Resources**

### **Strategies and Responsible Agencies:**

- Continue the development and expansion of the Wake County Area Business Advisory Council to promote workforce development and provide employment opportunities for Work First participants
- Continue the expansion of the Work First Steering Committee for the purpose of promoting collaborative planning, community involvement and advocacy for the Wake County Work First Program
- Include Work First representation on Wake County's Economic Development Commission

- Develop partnerships with fellow public agency employers, including municipalities, county, state, and federal offices, to promote employment opportunities for Work First participants.

## **Development of Affordable Housing and Related Support Services**

### **Strategies and Responsible Agencies:**

- WCHS' Supported Housing Team combines support services with scattered-site housing. The program is designed to prevent homelessness and actively help clients maintain stable, affordable housing through individual case management and service coordination. All Supported Housing Program clients work closely with case managers to receive services and achieve individual goals. Client services may include:

- Assistance with budgeting and credit restoration
- Daily living skills training, e.g., housekeeping, developing support networks and socialization
- Coordination of medical and health services when necessary
- Counseling and support in achieving self-identified goals
- Assistance in meeting lease obligations
- Referrals to other services or programs
- Conflict resolution training

The Supported Housing Team also provides housing information through a housing seminar held daily and coordinates the Ready to Rent Homebuyer and Credit Restoration classes.

- The Work First Housing Specialist will work with Supported Housing to become trained as a service provider for the Rental Assistance/ Shelter Plus Care program to provide case management services and housing to Work First recipients that are literally homeless, experiencing chronic disease and require extensive, ongoing services.
- Wake County Human Services will continue partnering with other community agencies that promote affordable housing for low-income families.
- The Housing Authority of the County of Wake (WCHA) will continue to make affordable housing accessible to Work First families. WCHA has Public Housing units located in Apex, Zebulon, Wake Forest, Garner, Wendell and Fuquay-Varina.
- The Raleigh Housing Authority (RHA) will continue to make affordable housing accessible to Work First and Work First-eligible families. The wait list remains open and applicants are encouraged to apply.
- Wake County Human Services will support Work First families who are living in homeless shelters or transitional housing programs as they look for and move into permanent housing. It will work with the shelter and transitional housing providers as

they assist the families as well. Among the providers in Wake County are Triangle Family Services, Urban Ministries' Helen Wright Center for Women, Salvation Army, Raleigh Rescue Mission, Passage Home, PLM Families Together, and The Caring Place.

- Work First families and those families who meet 200% of the federal poverty guidelines will continue to receive supportive housing services in support of their obtaining and maintaining employment, which strengthens families and supports self-sufficiency. Supportive services provided to families who meet 200% of the federal poverty guidelines will continue to be short-term, designed to alleviate a specific non-reoccurring crisis, and not to exceed four months. Some of the supportive services are for: rent, rental deposits, utilities, transportation, work-related expenses, on-the-job training and education.
- Work First will continue to offer set-aside units at designated properties in Wake County to those Work First families that are working at least 35 hours per week, earning at least \$7.75 per hour. Work First families must also pass credit, criminal and rental history checks.

## **Develop and Use Measures to Determine the Success of the Program**

### **Strategies and Responsible Agencies:**

- Wake County's Work First Program will continue to set challenging and obtainable performance standards
- Ensure accurate and timely entry of service data into the NC FAST system (to assure that the agency's efforts are properly reflected in the reports to the State). This strategy applies to most of the state and county goals
- Each WCHS Work First team is evaluated monthly on the following performance measures:
  - Number Employed
  - Number of Employment Related Terminations
  - All-Family Participation Rates
  - Two-Parent Family Participation Rates
  - Number of Benefit Diversions
  - Number of Referrals to Community Service Providers
  - Number of Work First Applications Processed Timely

Provide monthly feedback to Work First Teams and individual staff members on their performance. Wake County's Work First program seeks to reward and recognize staff and program performance improvements

## ADMINISTRATION

### AGENCY ORGANIZATION

In the 1998 Wake County Report for the People, Mr. Greg Patterson, Chair of the Wake County Human Services Board noted that:

“In December 1996, Wake County merged the Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, and Social Services into one agency – Wake County Human Services. By doing so, Wake County became the first county in North Carolina, and possibly in the country, to consolidate its multiple agencies into one, streamlined organization.

“Not only have we changed the organizational structure, we’ve changed the way we measure the effects of efforts in Wake County. The emphasis is no longer on how many transactions are completed but on the results of our services.

“Human Services strives to look at the entire needs of the citizens we serve as opposed to offering assistance in only one area that ignores other needs and problems.”

The 2000 Report to the NC General Assembly on the *Delivery of Human Services in Wake County* cited improved services and increased effectiveness while enumerating efficiencies that resulted from combining the fiscal, administrative, physical and programmatic components of the formerly separate departments of health, mental health, and social services.

In 1999, Wake County Human Services further consolidated its programs and administration into two groups, Services and Operations, to improve communication and to integrate services delivery.

In July 2000, a report entitled, *The Delivery of Human Services in Wake County – An Update on the Consolidation of Human Services in Wake County Pursuant to GS 153A – 77B* was submitted to the NC General Assembly describing the Organizational Outcomes, Changing Service Delivery System and a revised Organizational Structure.

This report described Wake County Human Services functioning within Wake County Government:

“The Wake County Board of Commissioners and the County Manager previously frustrated by the often separate demands of the mental health, health, and social services agencies – better appreciate and respect the coordinated efforts of Wake

County Human Services. Concerns about coordination or duplication of effort and worry of unfounded mandates have been replaced by the routine approval of budget adjustments and program initiatives.

“The Agency Director reports directly to the County Manager. Senior Management Staff participate fully in the County Manager’s Management Team. The Human Services Board functions in a policy, advocacy and advisory role.”

## **SOCIAL SERVICES (WCHS)**

The Wake County Work First Program operates under the auspices of Social Services. In addition to including Work First, the Social Services Division is comprised of the following programs: Child Support Enforcement, Adult Services, Family & Children’s Medicaid, Adult Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services, Crisis Assistance, Career Center and Employment & Training Services for non-Work First programs.

The Work First Program Manager reports to the Director of Social Services and participates as a member of the Division’s Management Team within Wake County Human Services.

The Wake County Work First Program is composed of Work First Teams comprised of Supervisors, Employment Counselors, Case Managers and includes staff stationed in the Career Center as well as Housing Specialist, Job Developer, Mental Health Clinician and on-site supervision of the Qualified Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence Counselors. Work First services are also provided at the Eastern, Northern and Southern Regional Centers. The Work First Supervisors report directly to the Work First Program Manager and meet every two weeks as a management team. The Work First Program of Wake County is committed to:

- Achieving Outcomes
- Flexible and Responsive Services
- Continuous Improvement
- Quality Customer Services and Positive Experiences

Wake County’s Work First Program continues to forge internal links and expanded external partnerships with the business and faith communities to support the overall goals of the county’s Work First Plan.

## **DIVISION OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Training staff and coordinating information are crucial to the success of the County’s Work First Program. The Program and Staff Development Team provides program training for new and seasoned staff. This team assists in interpretation of policy and case record review for application of policy and quality of services aid the Work First Program in its attempt to

continually improve the quality of service. The team also functions as a clearinghouse to ensure that information related to policy changes or updates are disseminated in a timely fashion.

Wake County's Work First staff is encouraged to attend training & workshops which promote knowledge, skills, and abilities related to areas of employment. Life skill development, cultural diversity, developing natural supports, and accessing community resources are a focus of this training.

Wake County's Work First staff work closely with the State's program representative with regard to staff development and training. In addition, the State's representative provides training, direction and policy interpretation for Work First staff. The program representative monitors goal achievement and the overall progress of Wake County's Work First Program.

## **ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION**

Wake County follows State procedures on determining eligibility. However, Wake County is committed to making further improvements in the eligibility determination process, including streamlining and automating the process. The Work First program utilizes the services of Senior Case Managers for Screening and income evaluation along with Universal Intake Case Managers trained to take economic service applications in all program Areas, Work First, Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid and well as the Refugee programs.

## **NCWORKS CAREER CENTER AND CO-LOCATION OF SERVICES**

The NCWorks Career Center-Swinburne provides a variety of employment and training services for job/training seekers and employers from a single location as part of the North Carolina's NCWorks Initiative.

- Governor Pat McCrory has a dedicated plan for workforce success. Throughout this year the Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions, the North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development, the North Carolina Community College System and hundreds of dedicated employees will partner to make NCWorks.
- The focus is on one goal: connecting North Carolina jobs with North Carolina people through the efficient use of resources, streamlined customer service for citizens and businesses, alignment of programs and a consistent, cohesive strategy all under one name NCWorks.

The division offers programs for adults, veterans, youth, and more. It also helps employers find the qualified talent they need to make their businesses thrive. The division assists job seekers with learning a new industry through NCWorks Apprenticeships and operates NCWorks Online, the state's official job-search portal that is helping connect talented individuals with employers.

The current location of the NCWorks Career Center ---in the WCHS Swinburne Human Services Center---was chosen in 1996 because of its ready pool of job-seekers. Job-seekers accessing other services in the building such as Work First find the accessibility of the site very appealing.

**PARTNERS:**

- Division of Workforce Solutions-Employment Services (DWS-ES)
- Job Corp
- Johnston Community College (JCC)
- Johnston County Department of Social Services (JCDSS)
- Johnston/Lee/Harnett Community Action (JLHCA)
- National Caucus & Center on Black Aged, Inc. (NCCBA)
- NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB)
- NC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Wake County Human Services (WCHS)
- Wake Technical Community College (WTCC)

In addition, the NCWorks Career Center at Swinburne also partners with:

- Capital Area Access NCWorks AmeriCorps Program
- Step Up Ministry
- Wake Area Business Advisory Council
- WCHS Customer Service Training Initiative
- WCHS Family Community Network
- WCHS Human Capital Development Initiatives
- WCHS Work First Program

North Carolina's Workforce Center System was established to provide improved performance, more coordinated access to services, and accountability of workforce development service delivery in North Carolina. The new vision for the One-Stop System is that all customers of the system will be served by staff organized by function, rather than by program or funding source, through a customer-focused, skill-based, integrated service delivery strategy.

North Carolina's Workforce Centers will provide integrated services to better serve customers – individuals and employers. This system will feature an integrated customer flow that proactively responds to customer need(s), fulfilled by cross-trained teams, with functional and formal leadership funded by Wagner-Peyser, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, and other partners, as appropriate.

Other partners in the center will provide "Product Box" services. The Product Box serves as added value or specialized workforce services for customers and includes all of the



services that help job seekers develop skills to get jobs, employers to get skilled talent and also serves as added value for specialized services such as Vocational Rehabilitation or Veteran's services.

As a resource center, the NCWorks Career Center is equipped with self-assessment instruments, automated job listings, labor market information and access to computers and other office equipment. The NCWorks Career Center has a positive impact in assisting Work First participants as well as the general population in making informed choices regarding their careers and providing direct linkage to employers.

Many of the NCWorks Career Center customers are Work First or former Work First participants who are seeking additional career information and assistance. The NCWorks Career Center manager will work closely with the program.

## **PRIORIZATION OF CHILDCARE FUNDS**

Priority is given to Child Protective Services, Foster Care, Work First, and active military families. Smart Start designated funding allows the subsidy program to serve preschool children of families residing in a homeless shelter and who have been referred by a shelter case manager. All other applicants must be put on the waiting list. The priorities for Work First families are:

- Work First Family Assistance Recipients who are employed (TANF)
- Families participating in Work First employment services (short-term, work-related activities)
- Employed Work First families whose cash assistance (WFFA payment) is ending and childcare is needed to continue employment and then move toward self-sufficiency.

Wake County Human Services has streamlined the childcare application process for families receiving Work First. Employment Counselors refer Work First participants to the Childcare Unit for assistance. The Childcare Case Manager processes the application for subsidized childcare without regard to a waiting list.

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES**

Mental health services are a part of the same agency, which plans and administers the Work First Program. A full-time Clinician and a part-time, contracted Psychiatrist are available to provide comprehensive assessments and outpatient treatment. Referrals are made when more intensive services are warranted.

Substance Use Counselors are contracted and are located on site to provide substance use counseling for the Work First Program. Access to additional substance use services are

facilitated by the on-site counselors. The functions are integrated where appropriate and access to services is facilitated by the organization of the agency.

## **NC CASAWORKS PROGRAM**

NC CASA WORKS is a federally and state funded program which provides residential substance use treatment and mental health services for Work First families. State-wide, there are only eight programs in existence. Wake County has operated NC CASAWORKS program since 2001. The program is dedicated to women only and focuses on sustained abstinence from substance use and self-sufficiency through employment. Services include primary and preventative healthcare, parenting support, developmental services for children, job readiness training and comprehensive case management directed towards each participant's unique needs. Children ages 11 and under also participate in the program with their mother and receive services and referrals to address each child's needs. Wake County and partner agencies provide holistic services to help families achieve greater self-sufficiency through residential substance use treatment and Work First employment services.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Wake County's Work First Program utilizes THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION CENTER, INC. (DBA INTERACT SERVICES) to address domestic violence issues at the time of initial family assessment and throughout the family's involvement with Wake County Human Services.

In 1998, the Wake County Work First program established a contractual partnership with Interact to provide educational workshops on domestic violence and individual counseling services for Work First participants on-site at the Wake County Human Services Center.

Work First participants receiving domestic violence services may request a waiver to suspend the 24-month time clock for the time period necessary to ensure family safety. The waiver is not limited to the 24-month time clock but may be applied to any and all Work First requirements.

The General Assembly continues to appropriate TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) funds to provide domestic violence services to families receiving Work First services. These funds are used to provide domestic violence counseling, support services, and emergency services that ensure family safety,

## **USE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESOURCES**

In order to carry out the strategies identified in its Work First Plan, Wake County Human Services and its Work First Program provide direct services, purchase specialized services, and coordinate referrals to community service providers. Wake County Human Services will continue to refine the use of MOE (Maintenance of Effort) and TANF funds to make full use of

these resources and to make sure that their use reflects the goals of Wake County's Work First Plan and the priorities of Wake County Human Services.

## **EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (EA)**

### **HOW WAKE COUNTY WILL ADDRESS THE EMERGENCY NEEDS OF FAMILIES**

#### **TANF/EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (EA)**

The WCHS Energy Assistance Unit will administer TANF-EA funds in response to non-recurring emergency needs of families who meet at least one of the following criteria: (Please note that families served must have income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level).

- Current recipient of Work First Cash Assistance (must have a signed Mutual Responsibility Agreement)
- Current recipient of Transitional Medicaid
- Currently being served by Child Protective Services, Family Support At Risk Cases or Child Welfare (IV-E eligible)
- Current working families whose total gross income is at or below 200% of poverty level

In addition, the following requirements apply:

- The family must have a child (less than 18 years of age) who lives with a relative as defined for Work First cash assistance
- Family members must meet the same citizenship requirements as for Work First cash assistance
- Assistance may not be provided for any medical care, regardless of whether the participant is covered by Medicaid. (This restriction applies to Federal TANF funds only.)
- For those families whose total gross income is at or below 200% of poverty, TANF-EA assistance will be limited to \$300 per family and family household resources must not exceed \$3,000. This assistance is limited to only one nonrecurring emergency episode of employment-related need within a thirty-day period during the fiscal year. Families receiving TANF-EA assistance are required to develop alternative strategies to address economic emergencies in the future

TANF-EA funds may be used to address the following emergency related needs:

- Rent deposit to locate affordable housing or rent/mortgage assistance to prevent eviction or relocation assistance within the county in order to obtain or maintain employment
- Replacement or repair of heating/cooling systems to allow families to continue to live in the home (e.g., furnace repair).
- Any funds used must be enough to alleviate the crisis and if there are additional funds needed they must be paid by the customer or pledged from another agency/program before use of EA funds can be approved.

**200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2015 – (Monthly Amounts)**

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
200%%	1961.67	2655.00	3348.33	4041.67	4735.00	5428.33	6121.67	6815.00

*\*\* For each additional family member, add \$600.*

The Energy Assistance Sharepoint Applicant Tracking System for WCHS will track services provided to families who receive TANF-EA assistance. Documentation and records will be maintained in the PRIME system (electronic document management system).

**SERVICES FOR FAMILIES WITH INCOME AT OR BELOW  
200% of Poverty**

Wake County Human Services will continue to provide short-term employment related services to those families whose total gross income is at or below 200% of poverty. Staff are available to assess applicants' situation and eligibility for this service by walk-ins or appointment to accommodate work schedules. Services provided will include services and support needed to maintain employment such as child care for Work First Applicants, short term training (not to exceed 4 months), uniforms, transportation (i.e. fuel, registration, insurance, tires, car repairs, public transportation passes). Additional service needs will be evaluated and approved by the supervisor.

**200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2014 – (Monthly Amounts)**

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
200%%	1961.67	2655.00	3348.33	4041.67	4735.00	5428.33	6121.67	6815.00

*\*\* For each additional family member, add \$600.*

## **SERVICES FOR NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS OF WORK FIRST RECIPIENT CHILDREN**

Wake County has elected to not provide services for non-custodial parents of children receiving Work First services. Wake County will continue to collaborate with the child support enforcement section to assist families with obtaining support for minor children. A partnership with Fathers Forever will be utilized to provide non-custodial parents with support and resources to assist them with providing for the needs of their children.

## **EXEMPTIONS FROM THE WORK REQUIREMENT**

The “S” code provision allows the mother of a child under the age 1 to be exempt from the 24-month time clock for 1 year to stay at home with her child. While this is a once in a life - time exemption, it is a year when the time continues to click off the 60-month life time clock. During the year the payee would not receive employment or training services to prepare for the long - term outcome of economic self-sufficiency for her family.

Wake County’s policy allows a 12-week “S” code exemption. This brings the policy more in line with maternity leave provided to the general working public. Two exceptions to this policy are if the County cannot provide adequate day care or the child’s health necessitates the mother being at home. If either of these two situations occur, the “S” code exemption will continue until adequate day care can be provided or the child’s health improves.

The limit of 12 weeks allows the mother to pursue employment or short - term training leading to employment. Work First staff provides intense employment services for the family including but not limited to training, budget counseling, mental health services, domestic violence counseling, substance abuse counseling and treatment, day care, transportation and vocational testing.

## **FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**

Wake County Human Services will continue to refine the use of MOE (Maintenance of Effort) and TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) funds to make full use of these resources and to make that use reflect the goals of the Wake County Work First Plan in conjunction with the priorities established for Wake County Human Services.

## INNOVATIVE COUNTY STRATEGIES

### EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

#### EXPANSION OF THE JOB SEARCH CLUB

Wake County purchased laptop computers to allow for morning training, resume writing as well motivational activities and afternoon job search using the Work First van. The Work First Demonstration Grant made those purchases possible.

#### FORMAL VOCATIONAL EVALUATIONS – COMMUNITY WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

The Wake County Work First Program contracts with Community Workforce Solutions to provide vocational evaluations and situational assessments for Work First participants who do not have an identified employment objective.

### HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2008, the Wake County Board of Commissioners identified building human capital as one of ten high priority goals. This priority was defined as “Building Human Capital: Develop and implement a plan to deliver human services that will enable citizens to achieve and/or maintain middle class status, ultimately reducing dependence on governmental support. This includes life coaching, connection to opportunities and specific economic goals for individuals.” The Human Services Department mobilized around this goal, seeking to become an agency that not only provided safety net services to the county’s most vulnerable citizens, but also intentionally engaged those citizens in opportunities to develop their human capital. Key strategies included:

- **Building internal capacity** through mandatory staff training, integrating strategies consistent with human capital development into existing programs, and piloting human capital development projects.
- **Creating a measurement system** to track outcomes across programs over time.
- **Developing external capacity** by providing training in human capital development and life coaching to community partners, and connecting partners to one another and to consumers in order to maximize impact.

#### HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

A strengths-based approach for engaging individuals and families in their own development in eight core areas, called tracks, which are the key to sustainable success. The eight HCD tracks are:

- Employment
- Financial Literacy & Entrepreneurship
- Formal Education
- Training & Skill Sets
- Attitude & Mindset
- Access & Utilization of Resources

- Healthy Lifestyle
- Family, Community & Civic Engagement

#### **HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES:**

- Attainment or maintenance of **stable employment** for a period of 12 months or longer
- Experience or sustained increase in **earned income** for a period of 12 months or greater
- Attainment or maintenance of **stable housing** over a 12 month period or longer
- Increased participation in **preventative health care** practices (to include: health screenings, annual physicals, pap smears, mammograms, improvement in BMI, achieve ATOD reduction/cessation).
- Increased **educational attainment** (completion of degree or certificate by accredited institution)

#### **DEVELOPING EXTERNAL CAPACITY: SUPPORTING CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS**

A host of community partners have been engaged to address gaps in opportunities for consumers and access related to each of the eight tracks to success. Partnerships have formed at multiple levels—agencies receiving training on human capital development and life coaching in order to implement their own HCD projects or practices; organizations providing education, priority access, and resources to individuals involved in Human Services HCD projects; groups participating in resource and information fairs; and large community collaboratives and collective impact initiatives seeking connection to this work to create synergy and minimize duplication of effort.

In 2014, a partnership inventory was completed. That inventory will be monitored and updated as more partners are identified and engaged. In March of 2015, the Wake County Human Services Board hosted a Human Capital Development Summit with the theme of “Get Connected”. The Summit was an opportunity for Board members to connect with HCD partners, and partners to connect with one another. Over 100 people participated in this event, with 89% reporting that the summit gave them a “better understanding of the definition of human capital”, and 91% responding that it “helped me to connect to other organizations and/or receive resources that I may be able to work with in the future.”

#### **PARTNERSHIP TO END HOMELESSNESS**

##### **RALEIGH/WAKE COUNTY PARTNERSHIP TO END AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

In February 2005, after a year of planning involving the entire community, the Raleigh/Wake County 10-Year Action Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness was unveiled and work on its implementation began. The Raleigh/Wake Partnership is a part of the short and long term solution to addressing the issues and needs that surround being homeless in our local area and community. This initiative is led by the Leadership Council (11 prominent citizens from a variety of sectors in the community, a Wake County Commissioner, and a member of the Raleigh City

Council) and the Oversight Team (six representatives of Wake County, City of Raleigh, Triangle United Way, and the Wake Continuum of Care); it is carried out by a myriad of volunteers working on 8 strategy groups in the areas of prevention, outreach/engagement, housing/support services, and education/employment. Its purpose is to *end and prevent* homeless in our community rather than to continue to merely *manage* it.

The Partnership plays a key role in developing and leading community initiatives and programs that directly address barriers the homeless population faces to receiving medical care, housing, employment, and many other needs. We work with community partnering agencies, individuals, and businesses to develop strategic goals and solutions- right here in Raleigh and Wake County.

### **PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS**

StepUp Ministry

The Salvation Army

Wake County Public Schools

Raleigh Rescue Mission

Alliance Behavioral Health

Wake Interfaith Hospitality Network

City of Raleigh Government

Church In The Woods

Wake County Government

Urban Ministries

Haven House

Hope Center at Pullen

Passage Home

The Healing Place of Wake County

PLM Families Together

Southlight

CASA

Raleigh Catholic Charities

The Caring Place

Wake County Women's Center

Interact



## CHILD WELFARE

In September 2000, WCHS restructured Child Welfare Services to include Child Mental Health. The Child Welfare Division includes the following:

- Child Protective Services Intake/Investigations
- Child Protective Treatment (in-home & community based)
- Foster Care and Adoption
- Child Mental Health
- Child Placement (emergency residential services)

Related to overall child welfare, WCHS established a division named “Family Support Services.” This service component integrates school-based programming, child service coordination, maternal/women’s health, child daycare, intensive family support services, early intervention (DD) services and the nutritional program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

Wake County’s Work First Program and Child Welfare Services continue to jointly staff CPS/WF cases to support child well-being and the family unit. Work First families and potential Work First families will have a more family centered service delivery system.

### FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

The Family Support Services (FSS) Program of Wake County Human Services plays an integral role in providing services for Work First (WF) Families. To ensure Family Well-being, FSS works with WF Families on their goals of self-sufficiency, healthy living, and creating a nurturing environment for their children. Relating to Family Well-being, FSS incorporated the “Family Community Network” model into their practice to provide WF Families the opportunity to connect to a network of information and resources.

The Staff of the FSS and WF Programs continue to jointly staff shared cases to support family well-being. FSS has designated a partnering Senior Practitioner (Social Worker) for each of the geographic zones in the county and each regional center. FSS has also assigned a liaison to work closely with the leadership team of the WF Program. WF Families can access the FSS program through self-referral or be referred by a WF Program Representative.

#### FSS WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES FOR WF FAMILIES:

- **Child Only Annual Assessments & Service Delivery:** Child Only Applicants/family members who have assumed care of relative children. Services will be targeted to assure a safe and nurturing environment; to assess and strengthen relative placements; and to reunify children with the parent, if appropriate. Outcome information will be reported back to WF Program to ensure compliance with Child Only Regulations.
- **Work First Families with 12-15 months remaining on their 24 month time clock:** Families with documented needs, actively seeking employment and/or short-term training with multiple

barriers impeding employment such as mental and physical health, substance abuse and family violence. The nature of the barriers should be such that with the provision of intensive Family Support Services this family would be more likely to reach self-sufficiency within 12-months.

- **At-Risk Families:** Families in need of short-term services to resolve a crisis and to prevent involvement with CPS and/or family deterioration.

## NEW SERVICE STRATEGIES

- **Family Community Network (FCN):** In 2013, Wake County Human Services launched the Family Community Network (FCN), a platform for engaging Human Service clients and sharing information with them about opportunities and services that may be appropriate for their families. Designated FCN staff provide information about a wide variety of resources, including HCD project and activities, and encourage individuals to complete a self-assessment that identifies their needs and interests. This assessment was designed to be aligned with HCD outcomes. WF Families will have the opportunity to “join” the network and receive ongoing information relating to Housing, Education, Employment, Finances, and Health. The FCN will increase in service and resource accessibility for WF Families.
- **Family Support Services Academy:** The FSS Academy targets WCHS consumers/staff and the Wake County community for the purpose of educating and building the human capital of each individual. WF Families will have the opportunity to attend Educational & Training Classes and Support Groups to learn new skills, develop support systems, and while developing strong systems of support.

## EMERGING ISSUES

Special issues have been identified throughout the Wake County Work First Plan:

- The waiting list for childcare and the potential impact on children’s safety and parents ability to work or engage in training leading to employment.
- Issues related to affordable housing, and transportation have been identified as significant barriers in Wake County.
- The effect of a lack of a high school diploma or GED on the family’s ability to gain meaningful employment.
- The current economic crisis with the unemployment rate will continue to have an adverse impact on the working poor.

## **CONCLUSION**

Wake County has consistently achieved many of its Work First performance objectives; most notably, helping Work First participants obtain employment and stay off welfare (cash) assistance. Wake County has broadened its approach by providing family-centered services to eligible working families. Wake County has sought to include preventative measures to assist families with reducing manageable crisis situations. In addition, Wake County's Work First program has established several successful community partnerships. Despite these successes, many challenges still remain.

## **CERTIFICATIONS**

### **WAKE COUNTY WORK FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE**

The County's Work First Plan was reviewed by the Wake County Work First Steering Committee on June 24, 2015.