This is the annual report required by Section 17b-688e(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes.

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This second year of the Department of Labor's Welfare to Work program has been very successful. The focus in the second year has been on improving the quality of service. Key to that improvement has been the continued successful collaboration between the Departments of Labor, Social Services and the eight Regional Workforce Development Boards.*

During the first year, we realized that those participants most ready to achieve independence from welfare through work were doing so. The labor market was strong, and with some assistance with job readiness skills and help finding work, many became employed and left welfare. This meant that the participants remaining were generally those with more serious barriers to employment. In recognition of this, greater emphasis was placed in the second program year on individualized assessments and employment plans designed specifically to address both the need to enter the labor force as soon as possible and the particular barriers to employment experienced by the individual. Implementation of the Balanced Work First approach was critical to improving the quality of service. This new approach enabled many participants to access the additional training and education they needed to raise their families out of poverty.

This new approach could not have been fully realized without the statewide implementation of a new uniform model of case management. With each participant assigned to a specific case manager in the Jobs First Employment Services program for the duration of that individual's participation, we could individualize our services, from the initial assessment and employment plan to service referral, plan modification and follow-up. To aid the case managers, a Policy and Procedures Manual was developed which provided guidelines and instructions for employment plan development, support services, record keeping and other related program areas.

Also during the year, significant changes were under way at the federal level in the federal Welfare to Work grant program, and the workforce development system in general was undergoing substantial changes as a result of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Changes under WIA became effective July 1, 2000; next year’s annual report will reflect the impact of WIA implementation on the Welfare to Work program. As a result of these changes, it was an eventful and exciting year, full of challenges and accomplishments.

This report describes the Department of Labor’s Welfare to Work program, highlights activities for state fiscal year 2000, and describes challenges for the next year. Programmatic and financial data are also presented throughout the report.

*Effective July 1, 2000, the Regional Workforce Development Boards became Workforce Investment Boards (WIB), under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Since this report covers the period of time between July 1, 1999 and July 1, 2000, we continue to refer to these as Regional Workforce Development Boards.
“I really enjoy going to work each day. I like helping people. I’m excited and I feel secure. It feels very good to be off of public assistance. I have two daughters to raise and I’m setting a positive example for them.”

Gladys Martinez
R.M. Services, Inc.
Pictured with General Manager Candace Butterfield and Account Manager Daryl LaTorra

“Connecticut has a good system - tap into it. There are so many resources, there’s no reason to say ‘I don’t know how to do this.’ Whatever the problem is, there are alternatives.”

Maureen Robinson
Yale New Haven Hospital
The Department of Labor’s Welfare to Work program consists of Jobs First Employment Services and federal Welfare to Work employment services. The Jobs First Employment Services program serves recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA). TFA is Connecticut’s cash assistance to low-income families program, using federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding. Jobs First Employment Services is administered in partnership with the Departments of Labor and Social Services and the Regional Workforce Development Boards (RWDBs), with overall responsibility resting with the Department of Social Services. The employment services under the federal Welfare to Work grants program create additional job opportunities for the hardest to employ TANF recipients and non-custodial parents of minors who are TANF recipients, and for those no longer eligible for TANF due to the state or federal time limits.

The Welfare to Work program services are implemented throughout the state at Connecticut Works (CT Works) centers. Services are provided by Department of Labor staff and by the RWDBs, through a variety of contracted providers.

Jobs First Employment Services

Welfare families with a parent caretaker who is able to work generally have 21 months to reach independence through employment. These families are referred to as “time-limited” welfare families, and during the 21 months the parents are required to seek employment. Connecticut’s Jobs First Employment Services program serves these families.

Under the Balanced Work First approach, a range of services is provided, including preparing for a job, finding a job, skill development, vocational education, adult basic education, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and domestic violence counseling. Case managers assigned to

Goals of the Jobs First Employment Services Program

The goals of the Jobs First Employment Services Program are to become independent of welfare through employment by the end of the 21-month period, to remain independent, and to meet the federally established rates for participation of welfare recipients in employment and training activities.

welfare recipients help them access the services needed, including matching them to available jobs. Program participants are expected to go to work as soon as possible, but may also enroll in additional training or education to increase their earning potential. Services are provided by the Department of Labor, community-based organizations under contract with the RWDBs, and other agencies, educational programs and community resources. Some services are funded through TANF, others through federal Welfare to Work, and some through other sources. Additional supports include
transportation assistance while participating in employment services, a special participation allowance for short-term activities and subsidies for child care through the Department of Social Services.

*CT Works* served 21,423 welfare recipients from July 1999 through June 2000.

### Federal Welfare to Work Employment Services

The federal Balanced Budget Act of 1997 introduced the federal Welfare to Work grants, which first became available to Connecticut in the fall of 1998. These grants were provided to states to create additional job opportunities for the hardest to employ welfare recipients. This category includes non-custodial parents of children in welfare families and those no longer eligible for welfare due to the state or federal time limits. The federal Welfare to Work program complements the services provided under Jobs First Employment Services by funding additional activities that help the hardest to employ. Additional education and training is available once the individual is connected to the workforce through employment, community service, work experience, or on-the-job training. At least 70 percent of the funds must be spent on people who have demonstrated particular difficulty gaining independence from welfare or who are impacted by TFA time limits. Up to 30 percent may be spent on those determined to have characteristics associated with or predictive of long-term welfare dependence. Most of the people served under the federal Welfare to Work program in Connecticut are recipients of Temporary Family Assistance.

At least 85 percent of the State's federal Welfare to Work funds go to the Regional Workforce Development Boards (RWDBs), and up to 15 percent may be retained by the State for projects that serve eligible individuals. The RWDBs administer the program at the local level, generally at the *CT Works* centers, by contracting with local service providers. The RWDBs or their contractors determine eligibility for federal Welfare to Work, provide the specified services, and track and monitor individual outcomes. The RWDBs are responsible for providing the Connecticut Department of Labor with both financial and programmatic data for federal reporting purposes. The Connecticut Department of Labor is responsible for monitoring the program and for financial and program reporting to the US Department of Labor. Like Jobs First Employment Services, it uses a Balanced Work First approach. During state fiscal year 2000, 5,327 people were served.

### ACTIVITIES FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2000

**July 1999 through June 2000**

Much was accomplished this year, thanks to dedication and hard work on the part of all those involved in the program. The following are highlights of activities for the year.

#### Continued Cooperation Among all Partners

A successful Welfare to Work program requires that those involved in the program work together in a constructive and cooperative manner. This was
certainly the case this year. Building upon relationships that began in the first year, the Departments of Labor and Social Services and the Regional Workforce Development Boards (RWDBs), with the case management entities and the community service providers, continued to work together to ensure program success. This occurred at both state and local levels. The Design Group (composed of representatives from the two state agencies and the RWDBs) met monthly to handle statewide issues. These issues included identifying areas of improvement and clarifying roles and responsibilities for all involved in order to assist the state in meeting the program goals. At the local level, the staff of all of the entities, including those of the new case management agencies, worked as a team to ensure the best possible coordination of participant activities.

**Jobs First Employment Services Procurements**

In addition to providing program intake and employment services directly through the *CT Works* centers, the Department of Labor contracted with several entities to provide a range of Jobs First Employment Services.

The Department of Labor allocated $13,000,000 of Jobs First Employment Services funds to the eight RWDBs to procure case management and employment, education and training services for Jobs First Employment Services participants. Individual RWDB allocations were apportioned relative to the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) population within each service delivery area.

State fiscal year 2000 saw the first statewide procurement of case management services for Jobs First Employment Services and federal Welfare to Work participants (see page 12 for a description of case management services). The contracts set the maximum caseload per case manager at

Laura Sagar, 32, is the Store Director at Hollywood Video in Ansonia. She radiates confidence and positive energy as she goes about her work. She fixes a display, helps a customer find a special video and tells another to watch his language. Sagar is clearly in charge, and she revels in it.

“I love the ambience, being part of the entertainment industry,” she says. “There’s something different happening every day.”

Sagar puts in long hours and shoulders a lot of responsibility. In coordination with her work schedule, Sagar cares for her two-year-old son, Anthony. “He is my number one responsibility, and my inspiration,” she says.

“That is what Laura Sagar’s life is like today. Just 18 months before, Sagar was living in a Bridgeport shelter.

Born in New York City, Sagar married and moved to Puerto Rico, where she lived for 12 years before divorcing and returning to the United States.

When a family connection for housing in Bridgeport fell through, the Department of Social Services sent Segar to the Brook Street Shelter for Families in Transition at the Y.M.C.A. After two months at the shelter, she took a live-in position assisting a disabled woman. Still, she needed state assistance to make ends meet.

In April of 1999, Sagar attended a mandatory orientation for Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) recipients at the Department of Labor in Ansonia. She was referred to TEAM, Inc., a social service agency teaching employment and life management skills. “I love to learn, and from what I saw on my first day, I knew I would walk out of there a better person,” Sagar says.

She attended a 12-week customer service and computer training program and graduated at the top of her class. “There were positive reinforcements that helped me,” Sagar recalls. “The philosophy they taught me has really stayed with me. ‘If it’s to be, it’s up to me.’”

Sagar applied for many jobs and worked through the disappointments, with support from the TEAM, Inc. staff. She accepted a part-time position at Hollywood Video, and a month later was a full-time employee. Five more months and three promotions later, she was Store Director.

“She presented herself very well. She was smart, very customer-service oriented and showed a determined interest in opportunities for advancement,” says Anthony Casiano of Hollywood Video.

Sagar urges other single parents not to use the fact that they have children as an excuse to stay on state assistance. “Instead make the children your motivation to work,” she says. “The DOL or other agencies such as TEAM, Inc. are there to provide assistance in finding quality child care, or in dealing with any barrier that prevents you from working.”

Sagar feels that she is now providing a good life and a good example for her young son. ‘I couldn’t stay on welfare the rest of my life. It’s just not in me,” she says.”I need to be out in the world, making a connection.”
A New Song

Deirdre Dorn wanted to be someone with a professional identity, in the eyes of her two children and for her own sense of self-worth. Her part-time job as a waitress also meant working Sundays, which conflicted with her duties as choir director at her church.

Dorn took it upon herself to change her life by enrolling at the Opportunities Industrialization Center (O.I.C.) in New London. O.I.C. is a member of The Success Collaborative that provides case management services for the Department of Labor’s Jobs First Program in Southeastern Connecticut. The collaborative works toward the common goal of providing lasting employment and self-sufficiency for state assistance recipients.

The Southeastern Connecticut Regional Workforce Development Board oversees the collaborative. O.I.C.’s role in The Success Collaborative enabled Dorn to receive training and case management through one provider.

She attended basic, computer and clerical skills programs for seven months. The training included a concentration on medical technology and a life skills course. “The life skills course taught me how to handle adversity, how to believe in myself,” Dorn says. “I used to say, ‘I am nothing. I can’t do it.’ At O.I.C., I learned to believe that I am somebody and I can do anything I set my mind to.”

Through this new philosophy, Dorn overcame difficulties with math and typing, and learned new money management skills. She also learned how to balance the responsibility of being a single parent. “Often when something seems impossible, I look back at what I learned in the life skills class and I’m able to find the answer,” she says.

An Eastern Pequot, Dorn applied for a position as an Outreach Worker for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. “I was very nervous about the interview,” she says. “The O.I.C. staff taught me how to present myself at an interview and how not to feel intimidated. It helped me tremendously.”

After being hired by the Tribe, Dorn earned her Community Health Representative certificate and soon was promoted to Medical Office Assistant.

“Deirdre is efficient and personable,” says Carol Murray, Dorn’s supervisor. “She has a tremendous amount of responsibility. She handles all calls for the health department. We rely upon her for accuracy and her ability to prioritize messages and requests. She works really well with all of us.”

The job has made a big difference in Dorn’s self-image. “I really feel that I am something now, especially in the eyes of my children. Waitressing put food on the table, but there was no future…I have more bills to pay now,” she laughs. “But O.I.C. showed me how to budget my money.”

Dorn encourages state assistance recipients to take advantage of the education and training that is available. “Show up and talk. Get to know the people who are there to help you,” she says. “Because of my training at O.I.C. and the additional computer training and work experience I’m receiving through my job, I know that many career paths are open to me. And I’m singing at church every Sunday.”
(Services, Outreach, Assessment, and Retention) through a $1.1 million contract with the Connecticut Council of Family Services Agencies. Project S.O.A.R. used diagnostic assessment and intensive case management services to provide early intervention to assist some individuals in maintaining participation in work activities.

Implementation of Balanced Work First

This year, the Balanced Work First approach was fully implemented. This change allowed us to improve services for the remaining participants in the program, who generally have lower skills, lower education levels, less job experience and greater barriers to employment. It was a difficult transition in some respects – Regional Workforce Development Board (RWDB) planners, case managers and service providers had to adjust to a philosophy that incorporated more training and education without reducing the focus on employment as the key to economic independence. This approach required the development of highly individualized assessment and employment plans, as well as careful judgement applied on a case-by-case basis.

Part of the shift of implementing the Balanced Work First approach was to procure the right mix of services designed to meet the specific needs of participants identified in each service delivery area. In meeting the needs of individual participants, RWDBs were required to take advantage of all possible funding streams. Services and activities needed to be flexible with respect to numbers of hours, time of day and day of the week, in order to make it possible to combine them as appropriate to meet the needs of the participants and the goals of the program.

Guidelines for the case managers were developed to assist them in applying the Balanced Work First approach on a case-by-case basis. All services and activities were to be assigned and the individual referred to services needed to meet the goal of lasting independence through employment. For some participants, further education and training would be appropriate in order to enhance their earning potential. If the participant was assessed as not capable with current skills and experience to raise his or her family out of poverty through employment, additional education or training could be included in the plan, as available. Whenever possible, these activities were to be combined with work so that experience in the labor market was also gained. Under this model, activities to resolve barriers to employment were included as appropriate and supported with child care and transportation assistance. The ultimate result of this approach was not only independence, but lasting independence from welfare.

Balanced Work First

Connecticut’s Jobs First Employment Services is a “Balanced Work First” program. This means that if welfare recipients are capable of going to work, they are expected to work. It also means that if welfare recipients are capable of working, but need education or training to improve earnings to better support their families, they will be expected to work while receiving that training.

In some cases, work follows upon completion of intensive, short-term training or education. All participants receive assistance preparing for and entering employment, as well as assistance with transportation costs and child care payments to support participation in employment-related activities.
The information presented here is for people in families receiving time-limited Temporary Family Assistance (TFA). These are families subject to the 21-month time limit because there is an adult or minor parent in the family able to work (minor parents who are in school are exempt from the time limit). There are other families receiving TFA, such as those with adults who are unable to work due to incapacity, or families with children living with an adult who is not their parent and not receiving TFA. As of June 2000, there were 26,253 families receiving TFA; of these, 12,906 were families subject to time limit.

Most welfare families are headed by a single female, have either one or two children, and are evenly divided by race or ethnicity between those who are Hispanic, Caucasian and African American. More than one-half have completed high school.

**Type of Household**

- **One Parent 85%**
- **Two Parent 15%**

**Gender of Participants**

- **August '97:** N/A  N/A
- **June '98:** 91%  9%
- **June '99:** 90%  10%
- **June '00:** 89%  11%

**Education of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Aug '97</th>
<th>June '98</th>
<th>June '99</th>
<th>June '00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th Grade or Below</td>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher than 12th Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Race/Ethnicity**

- **August '97:** 37% Hispanic, 30% African American, 32% Caucasian, 1% Other
- **June '98:** 37% Hispanic, 32% African American, 30% Caucasian, 1% Other
- **June '99:** 38% Hispanic, 32% African American, 29% Caucasian, 1% Other
- **June '00:** 39% Hispanic, 31% African American, 29% Caucasian, 1% Other
JOBS FIRST EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Distribution of Activities for the Year

- Job Search 69.5%
- Vocational Education 14.3%
- Community Service 2.3%
- Basic Education 12.6%
- Subsidized Employment 1.3%

Types of Jobs Welfare Recipients are Entering

- Miscellaneous 6%
- Structural Work 1%
- Machine Trades 1%
- Benchwork 3%
- Processing 1%
- Agriculture/Fishing 1%
- Management/Technical/Professional 8%
- Clerical 39%
- 40% Services

Total job entries
July ‘99 through June ‘00
(all families):
21,402

Average number of welfare recipients entering employment each month for last 12 months
(all families):
1,783

Average percentage of families working for the year:
60.7%

Average wage:
$6.72

Regional Workforce Development Boards Benchmark Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Percent of Goal Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Unemployed Participants who Entered Employment</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of All Employed Participants, the Number with Earnings above the TFA Payment Standard</td>
<td>134%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of All Employed Participants, the Number with Earnings above the Federal Poverty Level</td>
<td>147%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants Still Employed at 13 Weeks</td>
<td>105%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants Still Employed at 6 Months</td>
<td>141%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Families Meeting the Federal Participation Rate</td>
<td>172%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Families in Activities per Month</td>
<td>119%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes employment retention as of 6/30/00. Data on retention beyond 6/30/00 are unavailable at the time of this report.
**JOBS FIRST EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

Cumulative Total of Participants Served by Region

- **Northeast**: 859
- **Bridgeport**: 4,117
- **New Haven**: 3,430
- **Hartford**: 5,796
- **Mid-Connecticut**: 3,045
- **Waterbury**: 2,037
- **New London**: 1,512
- **Danbury**: 627

Cumulative total: 21,423

**FEDERAL WELFARE TO WORK**

Percentage of Expenditures by Service Category

- **Job Search/Readiness**: 40.4%
- **Intake, Assessment, Case Management**: 28.3%
- **Community Service**: 2.9%
- **Work Experience**: 0.6%
- **Job Placement**: 9.8%
- **On-the-Job Training**: 2.7%
- **Post Employment Services**: 4.9%
- **Employment Wages Subsidies**: 2.1%
- **Intake, Assessment, Case Management**: 28.3%

**Federal Welfare to Work Employment Services**

Clients Served October 1, 1999 Through June 2000

- **Total Served**: 5,327
- **70% Eligibility Category**: 3,001
- **30% Eligibility Category**: 2,326

**RWDBs**

- **Capital**: $3,882,040.00
- **Dan-Torr**: 392,637.88
- **New Haven**: 2,239,994.40
- **Northeast**: 536,508.88
- **Southeast**: 907,947.04
- **Waterbury**: 1,339,214.00
- **Workplace**: 2,523,157.00
- **Mid-Conn**: 1,656,220.35

**RWDBs**

- **Capital**: $2,705,674.00
- **Dan-Torr**: 259,439.00
- **New Haven**: 1,833,543.00
- **Northeast**: 361,662.00
- **Southeast**: 600,398.00
- **Waterbury**: 851,427.00
- **Workplace**: 1,693,149.00
- **Mid-Conn**: 1,444,708.00

**RWDBs**

- **Capital**: $2,581,779.00
- **Dan-Torr**: 0.00*
- **New Haven**: 2,000,716.00
- **Northeast**: 125,068.00
- **Southeast**: 206,119.00
- **Waterbury**: 833,341.00
- **Workplace**: 1,663,909.00
- **Mid-Conn**: 924,623.49

**Total**: $8,335,555.49
fiscal data

Jobs First Employment Services
SFY ‘00

Budget
Appropriation $15,992,693.00
Carry Forward 7,482,399.00
Total $23,475,092.00

Expenditures
RWDBs $13,477,719.55
SOAR 1,100,000.00
CETO 588,000.00
Special Benefits 672,654.50
CMIS 1,121,164.02
CTDOL 4,776,468.29
Other 15,030.16
Total $21,751,036.52

Jobs First Employment Services
SFY ‘01

Budget
Appropriation $14,377,547.00
Carry Forward 1,724,055.00
Total $16,101,602.00

Allocation
RWDBs $9,750,000.00
SOAR 500,000.00
CWEALF 30,000.00
Special Benefits 750,000.00
CMIS 671,259.00
CTDOL 4,400,343.00
Total $16,101,602.00

Federal Welfare to Work SFY ‘00

Available SFY ‘00

RWDBs $16,171,544.82
Thames River 43,422.00
Wtby Youth Svcs 76,487.00
Tech Colleges 275,891.00
CBIA 63,520.15
State Admin 249,451.03
Total $16,880,316.00

Expenditures ‘00

RWDBs $7,835,989.33
Thames River 43,422.00
Wtby Youth Svcs 39,536.00
Tech Colleges 126,255.81
CBIA 37,004.73
State Admin 193,490.64
Total $8,275,698.51

RWDBs
Capital $2,769,023.00
Dan-Torr 223,183.00
New Haven 1,700,000.00
Northeast 253,232.00
Southeast 250,455.00
Waterbury 706,200.00
Workplace 1,220,654.82
Mid-Conn 713,241.51
Total $7,835,989.33

Federal Welfare to Work SFY ‘01

Available SFY ‘01

RWDBs $8,335,555.49
Thames River 0.00*
Wtby Youth Svcs 36,951.00
Tech Colleges 149,635.19
CBIA 26,515.42
State Admin 55,960.39
Total $8,604,617.49

*Used entire allocation by June 30, 2000
This more individualized, balanced approach will improve the chances for success in reaching higher levels of independence, which will result in a better outcome for both the participants and the program.

Implementation of Case Management

During this program year, a uniform model of case management of Jobs First Employment Services and federal Welfare to Work participants was implemented statewide. Based on an agreement of the Design Group, the Regional Workforce Development Boards (RWDBs) contracted with community-based organizations to provide case management, subject to guidelines developed by the Design Group and issued by the Department of Labor.

The implementation of case management ensured that participants were engaged in activities to help them become and remain independent of assistance and to ensure they stayed active in the program.

The statewide implementation of case management began in the summer of 1999 and was completed by the spring of 2000. Through RWDB contracts with 12 separate agencies, approximately 110 case managers were hired statewide. During this time, new processes incorporating the case management component were developed and all participants were assigned to the new case managers. Case managers received training from the RWDBs and their agencies and participated in a two-day training session on the Jobs First Employment Services program. This training, provided jointly by the Departments of Labor and Social Services, covered topics including program goals, the Balanced Work First approach, program requirements and employment plan development. Additionally, monthly meetings were held with all case manager supervisors to continue to review policy and procedures, address new issues and obtain feedback on program implementation.

Case management services included assessing employability, developing employment plans, arranging for services, and monitoring and documenting participant progress. All participants were assigned a case manager who was responsible for all aspects of the clients’ participation in the Jobs First Employment Services and federal Welfare to Work programs for as long as they remained in these programs. The implementation of case management ensured that participants were engaged in activities to help them become and remain independent of assistance and to ensure they stayed active in the program.

Case managers did not provide direct counseling or intensive retention services themselves. When intensive services, including counseling and retention services, were required, a referral was made to an appropriate agency.

Policy and Procedures Manual

During the summer and fall of 1999, the Department of Labor created guidelines for field staff to follow for implementing the Jobs First Employment Services program. As a result, a manual was written to provide guidance in areas such as employment plan development, support services, record keeping and other important programmatic areas. These policies and procedures incorporated the new Balanced Work First approach and the three program goals. With input from the Department of Social Services, operating principles were also developed and included in the manual.
These operating principles assisted case managers in creating individualized employment plans based on the participants’ unique assessments.


The Jobs First Employment Services Policy and Procedures Manual was issued and distributed in November 1999. Updates have been issued and distributed as necessary. The Jobs First Employment Services Policy and Procedures manual is available on the Internet at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/weltowrk/wtowork.htm.

The Sanctioning Process

During state fiscal year 2000, the Design Group formed a workgroup to develop statewide, uniform procedures for sanctioning in the Jobs First Employment Services program. The sanctioning process was used when a participant failed to comply with program requirements. This workgroup – with representatives from the Departments of Labor and Social Services, the RWDBs and service providers – developed an improved process that all parties agreed to follow. This process outlined specific procedures and timeframes for every agency involved and included a new form to make referrals for sanction.

To ensure that the new sanctioning process procedures would be followed and applied uniformly, training was provided to everyone in the process. These new procedures were issued and distributed to all holders of the Jobs First Employment Services Policy and Procedures Manual.

CMIS Development

Throughout the year the Department of Labor continued the process of developing the Case Management and Information System (CMIS), which was required by Connecticut law. Responses to a Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure a vendor to design, develop and implement the system were evaluated and a vendor, Softscape, Inc. of Wayland, Massachusetts, was selected. A contract was awarded in January 2000 and development started in February. Requirements were defined and the basic system was developed. Hardware (servers, PCs and other equipment) was procured and installed and communications issues were resolved. The most important communications issue was secure access via the Internet, which guarantees confidentiality of participant information. The training for users was scheduled to start in July, with a late summer implementation targeted.*

Federal Welfare to Work

In the fall of 1999, new federal legislation was passed which made several significant changes to the federal Welfare to Work program.

Changes were made in program eligibility that more accurately targeted resources toward the long-term welfare recipients experiencing the greatest difficulty gaining independence. At the same time, the eligibility criteria were broadened to help address certain family support issues. Particular emphasis was placed on serving the non-custodial parents of low-income children. The intent of this provision was to help parents experiencing difficulty meeting child

*CMIS was implemented in August 2000. The implementation will be described in next year’s report.
support obligations to enter the workforce and to make a permanent economic and emotional commitment to their children.

In addition, the original work first requirement was modified, resulting in an approach more consistent with the Balanced Work First model of the Jobs First Employment Services program. Under the new rules, individuals may participate in certain training opportunities before enrolling in a work activity. This change recognizes that vocational education can enhance an individual’s long-term workforce opportunities.

These amendments mean that the federal Welfare to Work program can serve more participants with a broader range of services that are more responsive to local requirements. The changes went into effect on July 1, 2000.

New Collaborative to Help Hard to Serve

In the fall of 1999, a new collaborative of state agencies and other organizations was formed to address the need to help participants with serious barriers to employment. It was apparent that those participants remaining in the program were increasingly harder to serve. Such service difficulties could be attributed to various difficulties in the participants’ lives. A higher percentage than before lacked a high school degree and there was a higher incidence of serious family problems such as substance abuse and domestic violence. Participants generally had less positive job experience and lower basic skills. Many times a participant was dealing with several major problems at one time. It was necessary to develop strategies to address these

New Attitude

Tammy Scott has had a make over. Not the Hollywood type, although she has lost 45 pounds, quit smoking, bought new dentures, highlighted her hair and started to wear makeup. Scott transformed herself with hard work, determination and the help of some new friends she’s made along the way. “The first thing I had to change was my attitude,” she says.

As a single mother and Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) recipient, Scott was referred by the Northeast Regional Workforce Development Board to the EASTCONN Regional Education and Training Center in Danielson. Her initial attitude was very negative. “Tammy sat there at first with her arms crossed and told us she didn’t know why she was here and that we weren’t going to get her to do anything. She said she would soon be getting Social Security for her medical problems and would then be off of state assistance,” recalls Program Director Suzanne Cimochowski.

The program, called ‘Roads to Success,’ focuses on personal issues and barriers, general education courses, and computer and clerical training. ‘We slowly watched Tammy transform into an enthusiastic participant, eager to learn and try new things,’ said Cimochowski.

A number of things brought about this change in Scott. “The anger management class and the daily practice of writing a ‘gratitude journal’ helped to turn my attitude around,” she says.

Scott advanced quickly. She joined the clerical team at EASTCONN, which provides in-house support to faculty and staff as well as various nonprofit agencies.

“The classes there opened my eyes to my abilities and the volunteer work gave me on-the-job experience. I found out that people really would give me a chance,” Scott says. “My self-esteem increased. I realized that I couldn’t count on Social Security and that I needed to go out and get a job.”

A local temporary employment agency was so impressed that they put her to work in their own office. Later, she started as a “temp-to-hire” with the Nutmeg Container Corporation in Putnam. Within two months, she was a full-time employee.

“Tammy shows qualities that are often hard to find these days,” says Charles Pious, president. ‘She is mature and reliable. She has an eye for quality and is very conscientious… Tammy sets the pace on a project and takes a lot of pride in her work. She is an extremely valuable member of the staff here. In addition, my company is eligible for tax credits when I hire state assistance recipients. It’s certainly a ‘win-win’ situation.”

Scott advises others who are out of work to get an education. “I’m still going every Tuesday night to get my GED,” she says. “Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Working and seeing other people work gives me a real boost.

“Getting a paycheck every week is so much better than just getting that one check every month. Going in the supermarket and paying with cash instead of food stamps is such a great feeling,” Scott says with pride.

“It’s a good feeling to take care of yourself.”
issues in order to continue our success with helping families to gain independence.

The new collaborative consisted of several state agencies – the Departments of Labor, Social Services (including the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services), Mental Health and Addiction Services and Children and Families – as well as representatives from Legal Services and the CT Council of Family Service Agencies. The decision was made to focus on five serious barriers to employment: substance abuse and addiction; mental health problems; learning problems, including low literacy and learning disabilities; family violence and physical health problems. The first step was to review our various service delivery systems and to work on a better understanding of how our systems work together.

As a second step, the collaborative developed a screening tool to be incorporated into the service needs assessment. This tool would help identify the presence of serious barriers that preclude full participation in employment and training activities or retention of employment. This tool was designed to be used by the Department of Social Services worker at initial assessment and later by the Jobs First Employment Services case manager to update the assessment as circumstances change. The collaborative also developed a script for the workers to use when speaking with participants about these issues. The script addressed issues of confidentiality, as well as the reason for asking these types of questions.

The collaborative will continue to meet, with the goals of improving identification of serious barriers and coordinating services to address them.

Cost Effectiveness

In the Jobs First Employment Services program, 21,423 people were served at an average cost of $767 per person. In the federal Welfare to Work program, 5,327 were served at an average of $1,553 per person. It is important to note that these figures should be evaluated based on a number of considerations. First, the amount of services participants needed varied. For example, one participant may have been able to find work with minimal services, whereas another might need extensive services to become employed. Second, they are figures for the year covered only by the report, yet some participants received services in more than one year. Third, many participants received services from other funding sources, including adult education and JTPA (after July 1, this became WIA Title I-B). Finally, some received services from both the Jobs First Employment Services and the federal Welfare to Work programs.
CHALLENGES FOR NEXT YEAR
Nancy Wiggett, Director
Welfare to Work

In this second year of program operation, great headway was made in resolving issues identified in the first year and improving the quality of our service delivery. We all redoubled efforts to respond to the significant operational changes needed to make the program more successful and to address the individual needs of each participant. The participants themselves deserve congratulations and respect for their perseverance and success, despite what at times may have seemed like overwhelming obstacles. We who plan and develop the programs should never forget that it is one thing to talk about the road to independence, and quite another to travel that road.

The participants themselves deserve congratulations and respect for their perseverance and success, despite what at times may have seemed like overwhelming obstacles.

We can be proud of the improvements that have been accomplished, our continued collaborative efforts, the numbers of participants served and the percentage who found and retained employment. However, there is more work to do.

Last year, we responded to the need to shift the focus from moving large numbers of people into a new service delivery model to the quality of the model itself. We addressed the need for one-on-one individualized service, standardized procedures and the packaging of a mix of services to achieve lasting independence. In the coming year, we will focus on streamlining our processes and improving participant access to appropriate services.

CMIS Implementation

A major challenge for the coming year is the implementation of the Case Management and Information System (CMIS). The system will serve more than 700 users in over 50 locations. Users require training and user access to the system will be established and tested. The software will have to be tested and moved into a production environment, and entities at the local level will have to coordinate the implementation. As with the start of any new system, there will be a learning curve and identified problems will need to be corrected. More importantly, there will be a period of transition during which users must adjust to the data available under the new system. Once fully implemented, CMIS will significantly streamline the processes involved in the administration of the Jobs First Employment Services and federal Welfare to Work programs. Data will be recorded in one place and instantly accessible by all users of the system without having to exchange paper. Referrals from one entity to another will be accomplished using the system rather than paper. Communication among entities will be streamlined by using the system and by having access to data in the system. Statewide data will be instantly available rather than needing to be collected laboriously.
Federal Welfare to Work Funding Ending

Under the federal Welfare to Work program, two grants were made to states. Unless Congress reauthorizes the program, no additional funding beyond these grants will be provided. Connecticut received grants in 1998 and 1999 of $12,005,943 and $10,626,704, respectively. These federal grants were each intended by Congress to be spent over a three-year period. As of June 30, 2000, $14,028,030 of the total amount had been expended. We expect to expend 75 percent to 85 percent of the remainder by June 30, 2001. That will leave us with approximately $1.7 million for the following year.

This funding was established specifically to address the needs of the harder to serve. It promotes combining work with further education and training for the purpose of increasing wages and the level of self-sufficiency. It is targeted for individuals who have either experienced long-term dependency on welfare or who face barriers to employment.

Although there may be federal legislation to extend the time period to use the current funding, there is currently no plan on the federal level to provide additional funding. As Connecticut has relied upon this funding to assist the harder to serve in particular, it will be a challenge to continue to meet the needs of this population with the expiration of this special source of funding.

Access to Appropriate Services

Although the welfare caseload continues to decline, the rate of that decline has slowed considerably. Some families leave welfare with earnings above the federal poverty level; more leave at the end of 21 months with income over the welfare payment level (about 50 percent of the poverty level). In spite of good faiths efforts, others have not been successful at replacing their welfare benefits with income from employment. These families continue to receive welfare in the form of extensions, which are renewable every six months. Others have succeeded in becoming independent, only to lose employment and return to the welfare system. Many of these families are also receiving extended welfare benefits.

As mentioned earlier, the characteristics of those remaining in the program are somewhat different than those who experienced more success in achieving lasting independence. The challenge facing us next year is to respond to the changing needs of the participants. This means greater access to services that address lower skill levels, more serious barriers and difficulties with keeping employment.

The challenge facing us next year is to respond to the changing needs of the participants. This means greater access to services that address lower skill levels, more serious barriers and difficulties with keeping employment. Responding to these needs can be done through a combination of direct procurement and improved coordination with other systems offering needed services. We must accomplish this without losing the employment focus. These services must be offered within the context of the goals of the program – to become and remain independent of welfare.
**TANF Reauthorization**

In the midst of our own plans for continuous improvement, discussions will be taking place between states in anticipation of the reauthorization of federal TANF law. This is the federal law governing the Jobs First program in general, including cash assistance and employment services. The current TANF law will expire September 30, 2002. Although the expectation is that it will be reauthorized, significant changes may be made, including changes in the level of funding, the program structure and the calculation of the participation rates.

**Integration with Service Delivery in the One-Stops**

Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, federal law governing job training programs, adult education and vocational rehabilitation was re-written. The core of the legislation set up a new workforce investment system and established a new, more comprehensive One-Stop delivery system in each local workforce investment area. Connecticut is uniquely situated to respond to this challenge due to our previous experience designing and implementing one-stop centers.

With direction from the Governor’s Office for Workforce Competitiveness and the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, the Regional Workforce Development Boards and many state agencies that provide training and education programs, including the Department of Labor, worked very hard to plan for the implementation of this new law. The legislation called for more integration of access to various employment, training and education programs at One-Stop Centers. These WIA One-Stop Centers became operational on July 1, 2000.

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Since access to both the Jobs First Employment Services and federal Welfare to Work programs is obtained through the One-Stop Centers, it is crucial to ensure effective integration of these programs with the new, more comprehensive service delivery system. Although initial steps toward effective integration were accomplished, more can be done to reduce unnecessary duplication and ensure access to all appropriate services available through the One-Stop system for the welfare to work population. We will be working with our One-Stop partners next year to accomplish this.