

TANF/JOBS Program Re-Engagement Review – March 2008

Summary of Re-Engagement

On October 1, 2007 the department implemented rule and policy changes creating the re-engagement process to help ensure consistent, appropriate, and strength based services are provided across the state.

The “re-engagement” review process is performed to ensure the following:

- Individual case plans were created in partnership with clients
- Activities on the case plan were appropriate
- Clients are aware of their rights and responsibilities
- Screenings and possible evaluations for barriers have been offered/completed and documented
- A team review of the family’s situation before potential sanction - which includes a discussion of child safety issues – was conducted.

The goal of these efforts, in conjunction with more effective up front processes, is to identify early potential barriers to client success in the program and ensure necessary steps are taken to address those barriers.

Prior to implementing the re-engagement process on October 1, 2007, the department reviewed all actively sanctioned cases in July, August, and September. The review found 34 percent of the sanctions were conducted with all the necessary steps included and correctly documented.

Legislation passed in 2007 requires the department to review the re-engagement process and report to the Family Services Review Commission twice per year. The following is a summary of the first review under the new program design.

Review of Cases with Sanctions – March 2008

A statewide review of all cases with an active sanction was conducted in March 2008. Field offices were provided lists of cases with an active sanction on March 1, 2008. Statewide, this list included 92 clients.

Districts were given guidance regarding the review process including who would conduct the reviews. Case managers were not part of the review teams but were included during the local debriefing.

District review teams included:

- Line Managers
- Lead Workers
- Community Resource Coordinators
- Program Analysts
- Community Partners such as mental health providers

Results & Analysis

During the review, when part or multiple parts of the re-engagement process were missing the reviewer recommended one or more disqualifications be removed. Staff were informed these recommendations would be final unless evidence was provided to overturn the recommendations.

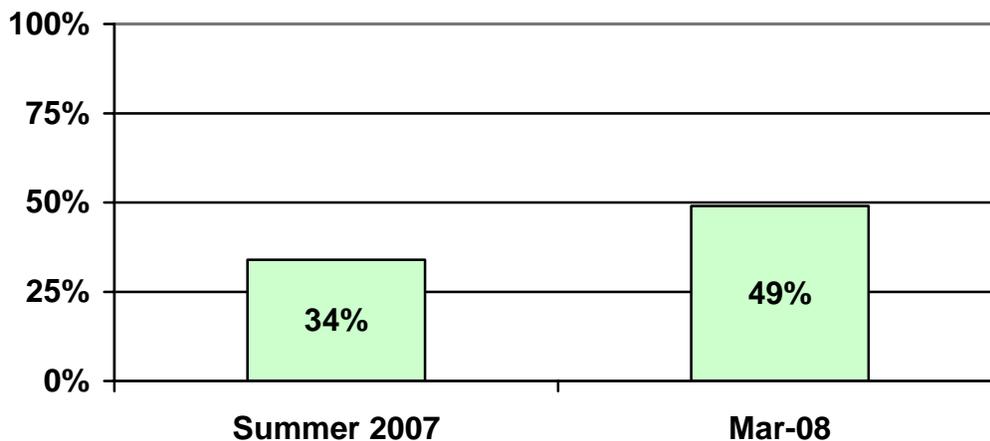
In some instances the removal of one or more sanction resulted in an under payment or under issuance of benefits to the family. In these instances, supplements were issued. The total amount of supplements issued was \$11,347.

The results of the March 2008 review saw improvement in the number of cases where all steps in the re-engagement process were completed. The percent of cases where all steps were completed correctly increased from 34 percent to 49 percent between the summer 2007 review and the current review under the new program structure.

While the improvement is significant, staff has identified multiple issues with the new process, primarily with respect to ensuring all steps are completed within the allotted timeframes. It is proving to be quite difficult. The department is in the

process of establishing a work team to help develop recommendations for improvements or modifications to the process. The department continues to be committed to ensuring the process is utilized as intended and helps enable staff to effectively work with clients.

Percent of cases with Correct Process



For the cases where a sanction was lifted, there were a number of reasons for removal. The table below displays the types of errors that may have resulted in removing a sanction and the percent of each particular error. A single case may have had multiple reasons for removal however any single reason would have resulted in the sanction being removed.

A cautionary note; while the reasons stated caused the sanction to be removed, in many cases, the issue was more related to documentation of the issue.

Types of errors that may have resulted in a sanction removal	* Percent of errors
No record of disability issues being considered	28%
No re-engagement staffing on continuing non-cooperation	21%
No record of required screenings	17%
No Child Safety review	17%
No record of re-engagement review team	11%
Client rights and responsibilities form (7819) not located	11%
No record of accommodation(s) being offered	9%
No record of domestic violence being considered	9%
Required notices not sent	4%
TANF closed prior to sanction	2%
No record of required evaluation being offered	0%
No record of DQ4 requirement met	0%

The March 2008 review showed improvement in several areas over the July-September 2007 review.

- Screenings were being offered at a higher percentage to people facing a sanction
- Staff are doing a better job of documenting the re-engagement process
- Required notices are being sent in a timely manner
- Requirements prior to DQ4 are being met, including a discussion of family resources and an attempted home visit
- Needed evaluations are being offered – there were no instances where a needed evaluation was not offered
- The percentage of cases with errors has dropped from 66 to 51 percent.

The March review also indicates a need for further training, coaching, and follow-up with respect to the following:

- Focus on disability issues - including providing accommodations - and how these issues present themselves in the population served and how they impact the client's ability to meet program requirements

- Better documenting the department's efforts to engage families in the TANF program when an individual in the family is moving from one level of sanctions to the next
- Better connection with Child Welfare partners in order to review the impacts to the children should a sanction be imposed
- Involving domestic violence service providers in order to identify and act upon potential domestic violence, which could be impacting the individual's ability to meet program requirements.
- Need for rule, policy, process and system changes to better support the re-engagement process. The timeline when applying a sanction for continuing non-compliance is less than 30 days. In some situations the required steps are not met due to time constraints. There may be a need to lengthen the timeline (past 30 days) and give the process a chance to function with less pressure due to system input time requirements.

Overall the number of individuals with an active sanction in any given month has dropped significantly. This can be attributed to several possibilities, which include:

- Better identification of potential barriers during Pre-TANF
- Lessons learned from the Summer 2007 review helped to solve problems before they became errors
- Increased documentation requirements may have resulted in:
 - Fewer individuals facing re-engagement due to a better understanding of the families being served
 - Fewer individuals facing re-engagement due to workload issues. A substantial number of program changes occurred on October 1, 2007. The impact of all of these changes may have had a direct relationship to workload prioritization in regards to re-engagement.

Lessons Learned

Allowing local personnel to engage in the review process afforded them an opportunity to discover first hand where the process was working well and where attention would be needed.

- **Documentation:** Field staff documentation has improved as seen in some of the areas of the re-engagement review. However, there remains a need to

continue the learning process regarding the importance of documenting the case, to include using and streamlining computer and system tools.

- **Accessing the Information:** The improvements in identification through up front screenings for issues such as disabilities, accommodations and domestic violence, resulted in a greater amount of information, which is being stored on the department's computer system and in the client's case files. Once that information is stored we need to ensure we are accessing and utilizing the information when conducting case planning and re-engagement.
- **Workload:** These new procedures have resulted in increased workload and unanticipated results associated with the re-engagement process as well as the documentation.
- **Consultation:** When disability, domestic violence, and other barriers are present we must do a better job of consulting with experts such as mental health professionals, domestic violence providers, community health nurses, intensive case consultants, etc. Allowing these qualified and appropriate professionals to provide guidance and recommendations in decision-making, good cause determinations, next steps, etc, in regards to the family will make for better outcomes. It is important for staff to utilize these valuable local resources.
- **Local Process:** Those involved in this review, have had the opportunity to look closely at the local procedures surrounding the re-engagement process. This information will prove critical in making decisions and allocating resources to provide appropriate services to Oregon families.

Next Steps – Feedback and Training

The current re-engagement process was implemented in October 2007. Certain aspects of the process are going well, while other aspects need attention. Analysts will continue to work directly with local offices to provide input and guidance.

The March 2008 review is providing insight into continued training needs along with workload impacts. Some needs are statewide in nature, while others are limited to local areas. Managers, analysts and training specialists will work with

Districts to determine strategies for providing appropriate levels of training for staff.

The TANF/JOBS program is currently reviewing all processes which resulted from the passage of HB 2469. A committee including central office, field staff, and client advocates will be involved in evaluating the process and working to identify improvements.

The department will also be incorporating identified workload issues into future workload staffing model adjustments.

Monitoring and Future Reviews

Local and central office analysts will be continually monitoring the re-engagement process. Through local and state level monitoring we will be able to assess progress in moving the re-engagement process to an effective strength based and client-focused process.

As laid out in HB 2469, the TANF/JOBS program will continue to review cases that have been sanctioned. The department will conduct statewide reviews every six months and report to the Family Services Review Commission. The next report will be submitted at the November 2008 meeting.