

1.1 Overview

Revised on: September 20XX, 2021

This WorkFirst Handbook (WFHB) section *Engaging Parents in WorkFirst Overview* section includes:

- 1.1.1 How do we introduce ~~participants~~ parents to WorkFirst?
- 1.1.2 What brought you here?
- 1.1.3 What is the very first step?
- 1.1.4 What are the next steps?
- 1.1.5 What are the WorkFirst principles?

1.1.1 How do we introduce participanents to WorkFirst?

How do you introduce participantsents to the WorkFirst program? You get them engaged, right from the start and begin to develop a trusting relationship. Tell them that WorkFirst offers many supports and services to help them through their temporary situation, but they must do their part by taking advantage of program opportunities to help them find and keep a job. They need to know that:

- All mandatory WorkFirst participants must complete a WorkFirst Orientation;
- WorkFirst can help connect ~~parents~~ participants to different opportunities, including employment-;
- There are people and resources available to provide support as we help them build a plan for their family; and
- If they choose not to participate, they risk losing their cash grant.

1.1.2 What brought you here?

This is a very simple question that you should ask every applicant when they ~~first~~ apply for WorkFirst. Their answer can give us important clues about how to get them off to a good start in the WorkFirst program.

Begin by building a rapport and a partnership with the participant. Then focus on how they need to do their part and take advantage of WorkFirst supports and services to better their lives and become self-sufficient.

Perhaps this is their first time on public assistance and they only came in because they faced an unexpected crisis, like illness, divorce, or job loss. Emphasize all the services WorkFirst offers, get the participant connected to the right programs, and help guide them down the path to ~~self-sufficiency~~ economic stability.

For returning families, start off talking about how they managed to leave WorkFirst before, what happened while they were off, and what made them reapply. Knowing what worked for them in the past can help you figure out where to start in getting them back on track.

1.1.3 What is the very first step?

First you deal with the immediate financial crisis. You:

- Review every other resource available to the participant such as child care, unemployment compensation, social security benefits, labor and industries compensation, or other local resources.
- Explore if diversion benefits (Diversion Cash Assistance [DCA]) would stabilize their family's situation~~Find out if \$1,250 in diversion benefits (, Diversion Cash Assistance [(DCA)]) is all the cash aid the parent(s) need to stabilize their family's situation.~~
If they chose DCA:
 - Determine eligibility for Basic Food, and
 - Remind the parentparticipant that if they go on WorkFirst cash assistance within one year, this will be a loan that they will have to repay.
- If the participant declines DCA, determine eligibility and authorize benefits for TANF cash assistance and Basic Food.
- Provide information for resources (like Health Benefits Exchange, food banks or emergency housing) to maintain the family until their public assistance benefits are approved .
- Get information about the noncustodial parent(s) and make a referral to the Division of Child Support to get child ~~and medical~~ support collections started.

1.1.4 What are the next steps?

The next step is to tell the parentparticipant about the WorkFirst program, it's message, "A job, a better job, a better life" and how they can earn a living for their family. Be sure to explain that TANF is a temporary program and they are responsible to participate in the WorkFirst ~~program~~. They may not remember everything you are telling them, particularly if they are in crisis mode the first time you meet. This makes it very important to continue WorkFirst engagement throughout a person's stay on assistance.

The following sections of this chapter describe the other important "first steps" you take with newly approved WorkFirst families: setting appropriate participation requirements, making referrals and orienting them to the program. The chart below shows theis initial work you do to help families become engaged as quickly as possible.

<i>Triage the case for required...</i>	
<u>AccountabilityEngagement</u>	Explain program participation requirements and the <u>participant</u> 's responsibility to participate. Let them know that if they choose not to participate, they risk losing TANF benefits.
Participation	Determine what the family's WorkFirst participation requirements will be. Is someone in the family:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exempt from participation? • A dependent teen (16-19 years old) • Pregnant (third trimester) or parenting an infant? • A <u>pregnant or parenting</u> minor <u>parent</u> (unmarried and under the age of 18)? • In need of stabilization or issue resolution? • Able to participate in work or work activities?
Up-front referrals	All families must get family planning and family violence information and be offered referrals for more in-depth follow-up.
Orientation	Reach out to all adult members of the family; tell them what is available, what you expect from them and what you can do for them.
Comprehensive eEvaluation	Let the family know that they will receive a comprehensive evaluation to help get them into appropriate WorkFirst activities as quickly as possible.

1.1.5 What are the WorkFirst Principles?

Telling people the WorkFirst message is the best way to set the stage for a successful WorkFirst experience. Look at the program through their eyes and talk about it the way most people would. These participants want to earn a living for their family. Build on that.

A job, a better job, a better life. Eight words sum up the common goal of the many pieces that make up Washington WorkFirst.

~~**A job, a better job, a better life.**~~ ~~A job... Work is still first.~~ Paid work offers the best opportunity for families to escape poverty. ~~A Work is better than welfare. Work pays more than welfare. A job—any job—~~ is the best place to start. ~~Employment is still at the center of WorkFirst.~~

A better job... ~~TBut the~~ ~~hat~~ first job may be is likely to be entry level or part-time. ~~for people who have spotty work histories or other barriers to overcome.~~ Once participants go to work—even if they earn enough to leave assistance—WorkFirst continues to support them. WorkFirst parent participants can take advantage of training opportunities, job referrals, Basic Food benefits and help with child care, transportation and medical coverage. Even help managing the chaos of balancing work and home.

A better life... WorkFirst helps connect families to services that include: child care and early learning, ~~;~~ treatment for drug/alcohol addiction, English language training, reliable transportation support, ~~domestic violence services, education, and education and traini~~ training programs (including, English language training), treatment for drug/alcohol addiction, and domestic violence services. ~~;~~ All these things are offered to help people become more employable, but they also improve people's and improve quality of life for the entire family. lives in general. Increased self-esteem. Better role models. Healthier kids.

A job, a better job, a better life. ~~E-While~~ every story is different and every traveler takes his or her own unique journey, ~~the destination is clear. Work hard, improve yourself and take care of your family.~~ WorkFirst is there to help.

Resources

Related WorkFirst Handbook Sections

- [1.4 WorkFirst Orientation](#)
- [3.2.1 Comprehensive Evaluation](#)
- [3.2.2 ~~Initial Comprehensive Evaluation~~ Personal Pathway](#)
- [3.2.3 ~~Comprehensive Evaluation Updates~~ Pathway Development Tool](#)
- [2.1 Supports - Overview](#)

Other Resources

- [WorkFirst Principles](#)
- [EA-Z Manual, Diversion Cash Assistance](#)