

Job Training Activities and
Opportunities and Transportation
Needs and Usage Among WAGES
Participants
Part II of
Welfare Reform
Focus Group Report

Report submitted to Catholic Charities Diocese of St. Petersburg,
Florida

by

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BACKGROUND

The Catholic Charities Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, in partnership with the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI) collaborated to conduct Part II of a welfare reform study. Part I was conducted between June of 1998 and June of 1999. The study was funded by the University of South Florida Collaborative for Children, Families and Communities.

The interest for this and the previous study arose out of the Catholic Charities' desire to objectively assess the degree to which the current "safety net" of services is sufficient for families impacted by welfare reform, specifically those attempting to transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency.

Part II builds upon the initial study effort with a purpose that is two-fold:

- ?? To describe the job training opportunities available from the perspective of "Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency Act" (WAGES) Program participants and contracted providers in Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties; and
- ?? To describe participants' access to, use of, and need for transportation for all daily activities, as well as the role transportation plays in recipients' access to job training activities or ability to obtain and maintain gainful employment.

This study specifically seeks to obtain candid and in-depth information to:

- ?? Identify and describe job training opportunities in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties;
- ?? Examine the successes and continuing needs of individuals currently in job training programs as well as graduates;
- ?? Identify patterns and needs concerning participants' use of transportation;
- ?? Identify and describe any assistance received for transportation needs; and
- ?? Examine employment opportunities in the three counties to be studied.

Florida was an early adapter of welfare reform measures and therefore the proposed project has potential for statewide and national implications. Service gap analyses for these program participants may improve services, assisting participants to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The findings of the study will be used to develop recommendations for efforts to "mend the safety net" and will be submitted to the Florida Catholic Conference for analysis and possible proposal of corrective legislative actions.

This study also addresses in greater depth some of the findings in Part I, which had the broad focus of identifying existing or future "holes in the safety net" for individuals transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency. What was learned in Part II helps in some cases to confirm and illuminate the findings of Part I. In particular, it builds on the findings concerning the effective aspects of reform to-date as it pertains to job training and as identified by participants, by highlighting the valuable aspects of job training available to WAGES recipients in the Tampa Bay area. It also confirms and expands upon the obstacles individuals face in making good faith efforts to transition to self-sufficiency, as well as their needs for overcoming these obstacles.

Florida's Welfare Reform Structure and Climate

In keeping with the federal legislation, Florida enacted Chapter 414 Florida Statutes: Work and Gain Economic Self-sufficiency (WAGES) Act in 1996. The WAGES Act primarily set limits on the amount of length of time families may receive temporary assistance as prescribed in the federal act, and set October 1st 1998—an elapsed time of only two years—as the deadline for compliance. A State Board of Directors oversees operations and assists in implementing the WAGES Program. Initially the Board of Directors included: the Commissioner of Education or designee; the Secretary of Children and Family Services; the Secretary of Labor and Employment Security; the Secretary of Community Affairs; the President of the Workforce Development Board; and nine members appointed by the Governor. Transportation representation was not included in the initial legislation.

The State Program was managed by an executive director, with the Board of Directors creating and chartering local WAGES coalitions to plan and coordinate the delivery of services at the local level. There were 24 local WAGES coalitions serving the 67 Florida counties. The Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Labor and Employment Security were responsible for providing work activities, training, and other services, as appropriate, through contracts. Other services include the development of transportation resources. Each WAGES coalition has latitude to issue requests for proposals (RFPs) for transportation assistance or to contract directly with a public transportation service provider. The Florida Legislature substantially amended Chapter 414 in 1998. Changes that directly relate to transportation included the appointment of a transportation representative to the State Board and strengthening the language regarding transportation in §414.20.

In 1997, the federal government found it necessary to amend legislation to address the transportation needs of TANF recipients. The Florida Legislature also amended its welfare reform legislation the same year. As late as September 1999, however, Florida's planning guidance to the 24 WAGES local coalitions still did not contain a transportation element (Ward et al 1999:36). A 1998 study funded by the Florida Board of Regents found that only nine of the 24 coalitions had transportation representation on the local boards or had established transportation committees. All had, however, developed a transportation services component. Five of the coalitions still had not secured transportation services by March 1998 (Ward and Mathias 2000:12). During that fiscal year, the coalitions allocated more than \$4.8 million for transportation support services (Ward et al 1998). The \$4.8 million over represents the WAGES coalitions' transportation allocations. Five of the coalitions indicated that the amount given was combined with other support services.

The Hillsborough County WAGES Coalition was a stand-alone coalition, contiguous with the boundaries of the service area for the jobs and education regional board established under the Enterprise Florida Jobs and Education Partnership (JEP), known as JEP-15. Likewise, Pinellas County was a stand-alone coalition, JEP-14. Pasco and Hernando counties constitute a separate coalition, JEP-16. (The four counties, along with Citrus, however, comprise Florida Department of Transportation District 7, the entity responsible for transportation planning in the region). In 1999, the State Legislature laid down the State WAGES Board and privatized the management of its TANF Program. The jurisdictions remained consistent with JEP; however, administration was to be provided by Workforce Florida, Inc.

METHODOLOGY

Key Informants for the study included current and former recipients of WAGES sponsored job training programs, and staff from provider agencies. Eligible participants were selected based on purposeful sampling techniques, which are homogeneous and criterion based.

In total, six focus groups were conducted with WAGES recipients in three counties in the Tampa Bay area: Two each in Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco counties. One of these groups consisted of entirely Spanish speaking participants. In addition, four focus groups were conducted with staff members representing WAGES contracted job training service providers in the same three counties. A total of 65 service recipients of the WAGES Program and 30 job training service providers participated in these groups, which lasted approximately two hours.

CUTR and FMHI were responsible for study design, instrument development, focus group moderator training, and data analysis, while Catholic Charities was responsible for participant recruitment and data collection.

The final topic guide was developed by FMHI in consultation with the study team from Catholic Charities. The topic guide for the provider groups was an adaptation of the guide used in the service recipient groups, both of which addressed the same issues. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the topic guides. All participants also completed a pre-focus group survey developed by the study team, with WAGES participants being asked to take home and complete a trip diary developed by CUTR, detailing their need for and use of transportation. Please refer to Appendix B for a copy of the surveys and trip diary.

Catholic Charities identified professionals with group process experience to act as focus group moderators. Once identified, these individuals attended moderator training sessions conducted by Ruby Joseph, M.P.A. of FMHI's Division of TREaD in November of 2000. Catholic Charities secured the facilities for the study, recruited the participants, and hosted all groups. Recruitment of client participants was strictly voluntary and designed to engage individuals who were enrolled or had completed job training within the past calendar year and were in the process of transitioning from public assistance to employment and self-sufficiency. All participants signed an informed consent form prior to their participation the focus groups. All groups were tape-recorded.

Rationale for the Use of Focus Groups

Based on an interest in hearing from two separate groups of key stakeholders on issues pertaining to job training opportunities for WAGES recipients, focus groups were chosen as the primary data collection methodology for the study. Researchers (Hughes & DuMont, 1993) point out that when research is carried out with diverse populations, there is a need to provide insight into the range that exists in social and psychological processes both within groups and between groups. To this end, they suggest that such information may be obtained more accurately through qualitative methods such as focus groups, which merge "good science" with respect for "a group's spirit" (Hughes & DuMont 1993:776). Focus groups are also valuable in ensuring that the topic of interest is researched from the participants' perspective and not just through a set of disciplinary filters and blinders (Morgan, D.L. 1988). For this study, focus groups also offered a practical option for collecting data from a large number of stakeholders in a timely manner, at relatively low cost.

Researchers confirm that the validity obtained through focus group research is due to its emphasis on participant's perspectives. Focus groups provide the opportunity to pursue specific topics and observe both shared knowledge and behaviors among the group, as well as differences in experiences (Hughes & DuMont 1993:776). Although this method does not support hypothesis testing, its strength is that it facilitates the exploration of a range of issues and perspectives, and can lead to new ways of framing and interpreting data, thus broadening the understanding of a particular phenomenon (Hughes & DuMont 1993:776).

Research on focus group methodology suggests that it is good practice to “concentrate on those population segments that are going to provide the most meaningful information” on a topic (Axelrod, 1975b: 10, in Morgan D. L. 1988). In selecting the population to be studied, it was important to focus on hearing from those who have important first-hand knowledge of job training opportunities in the Tampa Bay area and their impact on the effort to move from welfare to work. As there are numerous stakeholders to the topic of study, it was important to create “a reasonable amount of homogeneity” (Morgan, D.L. 1988: 46) within groups in terms of background and role-based perspectives to foster discussion. This approach of categorizing participants by type also helps to eliminate the potential for conflict that can be created by mixing participants across different levels of hierarchy or status (Morgan, D.L. 1993). To that end, focus group participants were categorized as WAGES recipients and WAGES contracted job training providers.

Participant groups were selected based on their ability and interest in speaking about the topic and their willingness to discuss the topic in a group setting. Several focus groups were conducted with each stakeholding group to minimize the effect of individual group dynamics and to cross-validate emerging themes.

More than simply documenting perspective, the research hoped to provide enough data for limited content analysis based on a relatively unstructured group process, where the topics were chosen and worded for the purpose of promoting discussion. Through the reliance on a very limited number of open-ended questions, it was hoped that the discussion would be guided only insofar as the issues of interest, thereby allowing the participants’ perspectives and experiences of job training opportunities to emerge in the absence of researcher-imposed agendas.

Focus groups in this study served a dual purpose, 1) to answer questions within the specific parameters of this specific research, and 2) to assist in the exploration of issues for further study. The study sought to learn something new through direct contact with participants and give voice to those that might not otherwise be heard. Experts in the use of focus group as a social science methodology support this particular application of focus groups, indicating that while they are useful for investigating what participants think, they are particularly helpful in gaining an understanding of the reasoning behind the perspective (Morgan, D.L. 1988).

In order to focus on participants’ perspectives, topic guides were open-ended and moderator involvement in the groups was relatively low. As a result, findings are more likely to reflect what the participants, not the moderator, determined to be interesting or important. One potential advantage of this application of focus group methodology is that several different individuals moderated the groups, thereby minimizing the degree to which the perspectives or agendas of an individual moderator could impact the data. The disadvantage is that despite receiving the same training, the likelihood of differences in approach, comfort level, and style of each moderator are greater than if a single moderator conducted all groups.

Importance of Recipient Participation in Service Design and Delivery

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and other legislation has emphasized the importance of assessing social impacts when using federal funds. Concomitant to this legislation has been mandates, which call for citizen participation or public involvement in the design and delivery of public services. Jordan et al stated:

Citizen participation is an evolutionary outgrowth of the traditions of limited governmental discretion and formal public accountability. Since America rejected the unresponsive English rule, its government has gone through three evolutionary stages. From the Revolution to the 1850s, the changes revolved around universal white male suffrage and the long ballot. From the Civil War to the 1920s the principal developments involved suffrage for women, the reform of corrupt legislatures, and local government. From the 1930s to the present the evolution has been in the areas of increased suffrage for minority groups and efforts of citizens' groups to control the huge administrative bureaucracies. This last adaptation has generated the "Sunshine Laws," citizen participation, and extensive reform through litigation (1976:6; Rosenbaum 1976).

With the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, transportation analysts have increased the use of public involvement techniques to assess the impacts of transportation actions and to plan transportation services. Various techniques have been used to gather data from the public, including focus groups, surveys, and other quantitative and qualitative tools. Other providers of public services also have made extensive use of these tools to gather and disseminate information.

Focus Group Data Analysis

Data analysis was based primarily on what is typically referred to as qualitative or ethnographic summary, with a heavy reliance on direct quotation of group discussions rather than the numerical descriptions of the data that are possible with full content analysis. Given the limited time and budget for this study, actual coding and tallying of responses to provide numerical representation of content was not possible. Rather, themes were generated through qualitative summary across subgroups of participants, with specific differences or emphasis noted by subgroup where appropriate.

The topic guide served as the "practical structure for organizing the topic-by-topic analysis of the discussions" (Morgan, D.L. 1988: 66). During the focus group, the guide organizes each group's discussion around the same set of topics and in the same order. It is therefore an effective tool for organizing and comparing findings across groups during the process of analysis.

Researchers identify the group as the “fundamental unit of analysis.” (Morgan, D.L. 1988: 64), thereby supporting an approach to analysis that begins in a group-by-group progression. Initially, co-moderators identified and clarified the major themes during the groups. The initial analyses were provided to an experienced qualitative data analyst, who clustered responses by like groups of respondents and then by topic area across groups. This allowed for the emergence of broad analytic categories representing like themes. Analytic clustering of like themes allowed the analyst to identify all categories of response separately group-by-group without predicting which would emerge as being most consistent within and across subgroups.

Although focus group, survey and trip diary data were analyzed separately, they were later triangulated and combined to present a comprehensive overview of emerging themes in the Summary of Findings and Conclusions and Recommendations section of this report. The Summary of Findings presents a standard technique of combining topic driven paragraphs with quotations, with the paragraphs setting the stage for participants’ specific comments and likewise being supported by those comments. Themes emerging across groups on a given topic are represented as major findings, with any clear differences duly noted. In addition, themes unique to particular groups were reported, as they represent the depth of the data.

All focus group data analysis was completed by Janice E. Worthington, M.S. of the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute.

Trip Diary Data Analysis

During the focus group introduction period, participants were advised that they would be asked to complete a travel diary, documenting trips of five minutes or more over a one-week period. The format for the travel diaries (a sample is included as Appendix B) is based on the 2001 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), developed by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The NHTS, formerly known as the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) and the American Travel Survey (ATS), provides an inventory of daily personal travel. The surveys are conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Transportation and are used to develop national estimates of trips and miles by travel mode, purpose, and other characteristics. More than 11 percent of the 1995 NPTS sample was classified as low-income households. African American and Hispanic households were over represented among low-income households. Murakami and Young stated, “...The most critical item that affects the mobility of low income persons is access to a car. The 1995 NPTS shows 26 percent of low-income households did not have a car, compared to 4 percent of other households” (1997:2-3, 6).

Participants in this study were provided a stamped postcard, which reminded them to complete and return the travel diary. The participants were asked to address this postcard to themselves. The focus group facilitator collected these postcards and mailed them by regular post two days following the focus group. The diaries were provided to participants at the end of the focus group sessions along with an envelope addressed to a Catholic Charities representative. Catholic Charities staff collected the diaries received by U. S. mail. Diaries were provided to CUTR staff for analysis in bundles of two or more.

The purpose of this travel survey was to support the ethnographic summary provided in the group discussions. In addition, by using an instrument similar to that of the NHTS, it was anticipated that comparisons and contrasts could be made between this sample and national trends.

Data collected from the transportation trip diaries was analyzed separately by Beverly Ward, Ph.D. of CUTR, and combined with the findings from the focus groups.

Interpretation of the Summary Presentation

Emerging themes from this study constitute the type of information that might be obtained from a brainstorming activity, where participants are asked by those interested in gaining some insight into job training opportunities for WAGES participants to lend their perspective for the purpose of increasing their understanding of the relevant issues. Participants in such an activity might be asked to identify some of the things about current job training opportunities that they believe are valuable, as well as those that are needed.

Although participants did not contribute to the study as a collective in such a brainstorming activity, the questions used to guide the focus group discussions and individual interviews were open-ended and designed to promote discussion and increase understanding. Rather than attempt to brainstorm these issues in a large forum, the study methodology called for the segmentation of the two types of participants (i.e., WAGES recipients and job training providers) by shared characteristics.

Experts in focus group methodology and analysis agree that the use of a focus group methodology in qualitative data collection allows for each group of participants to maintain their own distinctive identity (Morgan, David L. 1988), while contributing to the overall knowledge of the issue across participant types. Unlike a collective brainstorming session, the use of focus groups provided an opportunity for participants to speak freely in a comfortable setting of their peers and allowed for complete anonymity.

In general, the findings of this study should be considered as an exploration to begin to understand the current job training opportunities in the Tampa Bay area, including the strengths of these programs, as well as gaps and potential barriers to the process of moving from welfare to work. There was no intention on the part of the research team to convince the reader of the truth or falsity of any one factor identified, but rather to provide some insight for those working to assist WAGES recipients to move from welfare to work. In addition, this study was not intended to be a comprehensive evaluation of job training programs and interventions currently in place for WAGES recipients.

Study Limitations

Since the presentation of the data is based on participant perception, many if not all current job training programs may not have been captured. It was beyond the scope of this study for researchers to confirm the accuracy of participants' perceptions and knowledge, rather it was important to document their level of understanding, rather than document current programs with accuracy, prove or disprove their perspectives, or extrapolate from their statements to infer other meanings.

It was also beyond the scope of this research for the analyst to confirm or refute the accuracy of participants' perspectives. Rather, it was a powerful element of the analysis and the findings that the researcher did not have direct familiarity with these job training programs and therefore could make no judgment on these perspectives. The analysts were independent, having no vested interest in the outcome of the research. Meaning, they had no knowledge of the accuracy or inaccuracy of participants' perspectives, rather perceived the responses as reflecting participants' base of knowledge, understanding, and experience with the subject matter.

Finally, this study does not offer confirmatory findings concerning the factors that correlate most highly with WAGES recipients' degree of success in completing job training programs or moving from welfare to work. Rather, it focuses on participants' perspectives of what is currently being offered, what additional programs or program features may be helpful in promoting success, and identifying other barriers to this success. In sharing their perspectives, participants may or may not have accurately identified the issues that a statistical analysis would find as most predictive of positive outcomes.

This report represents a summary of the findings from a small sample of WAGES recipients and job training providers from the represented counties. As with all qualitative research, the findings are not intended to provide conclusive data, but rather explore the depth of experience of those impacted by the legislative changes. Qualitative methodologies provide a unique opportunity to obtain information from families and lend a voice to those who may otherwise not be heard. These findings represent likely

patterns for individuals affected by welfare reform and raise new questions, which warrant further study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

- ?? Part I of this study of welfare reform revealed that the safety net for families in the Tampa Bay area receiving public assistance failed to entirely bridge the critical gap between total dependence on public assistance and complete self-sufficiency. Specifically, families lacked affordable health coverage and adequate supports and resources, such as childcare, mental health care, job training and preparation, and transportation.
- ?? The findings from Part I also pointed to WAGES recipients' need for support to become oriented to a working culture, including adapting to a demanding set of responsibilities (i.e., work, school, child care, and household management), and the practical expectations of a work environment (i.e., behavior, attire, and attitude). Part II of this study supports earlier findings that the current job training opportunities and education are helpful, yet need to reach beyond academic and vocational pursuits to recognize that many WAGES recipients are ill prepared to adjust mentally, emotionally and behaviorally to a life of independence from a cycle of dependency.
- ?? In part II of this study, researchers sought to further understand the opportunities available to WAGES recipients to make the transition from welfare to work. The study specifically focused on the job training opportunities designed to prepare these individuals for a working culture and the collateral supports necessary to facilitate their transition, specifically transportation. The findings help to describe the current opportunities and services in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties on several levels and reveal areas that require additional attention.
- ?? The findings of this study describe several key features of current job training and transportation resources in the Tampa Bay area. They are: training access, trainee assessment, training offerings, transportation, and collateral supports. Based on the current offerings and needs, recommendations are provided in the hopes of guiding policymakers and service providers to better meet the needs of WAGES recipients and assist them in overcoming the barriers they face to self-sufficiency.

Access

Findings: WAGES recipients receive information about job training opportunities, as well as the other services and resources available to them through a variety of channels. The primary resources are WAGES caseworkers and current or former training program participants, who pass the information along via word of mouth. A wide variety of agencies can also refer recipients to job training.

Despite these many channels, there is no consistency in the dissemination of information concerning the specific job training opportunities available, leaving some recipients to find out about programs haphazardly or not at all.

Recommendation: There is a need to reassess the process by which WAGES recipients obtain information about job training and other programs and resources and develop a process of dissemination that ensure that all eligible individuals are in receipt of the same information.

Trainee Assessment

Findings: Job training programs are beginning to institute a thorough assessment of program participants, taking into account their education and skill level, as well as their interests. These programs recognize the need to match trainees to training and jobs based on both skill level and interest, believing they are more likely to stay in job training and maintain employment when these factors are addressed. State contracted training programs are also testing recipients to determine their need for remediation, with those reading below a 10th grade level being required to complete remediation before enrolling in additional training.

The use of a comprehensive assessment is not consistent across contracted and independent job training programs. In addition, few programs are training enrollees specifically to meet the needs of the job market, thereby preparing them for jobs that may or may not exist.

Recommendations: There is a need for all contracted job training providers to implement a comprehensive assessment. This assessment should take into account recipients' job skills and interests, life skills, their cognitive developmental level, and any disabilities they may have that could impact successful job training and placement. The recommendation for assessing the presence of mental, emotional, and physical disabilities is prompted by the many studies suggesting that a substantial percent of welfare recipients may be persons with disabilities (Loprest 1996; Meyers 1996; Young 1997).

It may also be important to conduct further research to determine whether there is a correlation between the effort to “match” a trainee with a program or job and their likelihood of continuing or succeeding in that program or job.

Training Offerings

Findings: Job training programs offer a wide variety of training opportunities for WAGES recipients, demonstrating a clear improvement in the availability of such programs than before the advent of welfare to work.

Some of these programs are addressing the “soft skills” of employability, such as work ethic, attitude, communication, self-esteem, personal responsibility, and various other skills necessary to adjust to a working culture. Other key training includes job skills and job search/placement, the latter of which includes interview training, resume development, and on-the-job or on-site experience. In addition, some programs are beginning to utilize mentors to help guide recipients through their transition from welfare to work.

Despite the existence of programs that teach the soft skills and those that provide help with placement or mentorship, these offerings are not part of the official curriculum in most programs. Providers and recipients alike recognize the need for these features to be incorporated into all training programs. Although most programs attempt to teach the soft skills on some level, they lack the expertise and the resources to do this adequately, therefore failing to address some of the key barriers to successful transition.

Many programs are offering computer training and providing trainees with basic office skills, such as answering the phone, billing and customer service. However, in terms of computer training, there continues to be a lack of hardware available for trainees to obtain sufficient practice on the various computer programs they are attempting to learn.

Recommendations : Consideration should be given to developing and requiring a three-phase approach to job training programs for all trainees, to include: soft/life skills, job skills/education, and job search/placement. Within these three phases, efforts should be made based on the individual assessment to match trainees to their interest and skill level, as well as the job market.

As part of the Faith-Based Community Initiative, it may be important to consider the resources of churches and other faith-based organizations to provide the mentoring aspects of the transition, recognizing that in many cases these institutions have developed a trust level and prominence in the lives of their communities’ residents. This effort may be particularly beneficial for minority groups that are closely tied to their churches and communities, thereby supporting cultural networks.

There is also a need to begin to address the “digital divide” that separates those receiving welfare from those not on welfare. According to census data, the lower an individual’s income, the less access to and use of computers they have, including access to computers in schools. The impact of these technologies or lack of impact on some groups may have broad societal implications. Efforts should also be made to increase the number of computer terminals available to trainees and expand programs that provide computer equipment to WAGES recipients, focusing on providing up-to-date systems that allow trainees to utilize the resources on the Internet.

Transportation

Findings: Lack of accessible and reliable transportation emerges as a major barrier in WAGES recipients' efforts to participate in job training and maintain employment, except for recipients living in Pasco County who do not report utilizing public transportation.

Job training providers and public transportation providers have been working closely to respond to the needs of WAGES participants. As an example, the Bay Area Commuter Services (BACS) Program, a regional commuter assistance program, has worked with Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HARTline), the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Pasco County Transit Agency, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, and other agencies to improve services for WAGES recipients. The HARTline and the MPO have received federal funds from the Access to Jobs Program to increase transit operations in Hillsborough County.

BACS is also working to ensure that WAGES participants are part of their ride matching database. Registration with BACS provides participants access to regional public transportation information, ridesharing opportunities—carpools, vanpools, and other forms of mass transit. In addition, registrants are eligible for the Guaranteed Ride Home Program, which provides participants access to a taxi ride in case of an emergency or the need to work overtime when the ridesharing vehicle may not be available.

While these agencies are moving in the right direction, it is likely to be especially difficult to meet the needs of WAGES recipients participating in this study through traditional bus services, due to the types of trips they tend to make. These type of trips can be referred to as tripchaining, i.e., chained trips where the individual drops off a family member or completes an errand before reaching the final destination. The composition and needs of WAGES households create the demand for the number of trips. That is, the age of the children, the need for childcare, job training, or employment of the adults, generate two or more outgoing trips each workday and an equal number of return trips. The travel diaries suggest that each of these trips is longer than five minutes. Combined, the number of trips and travel times compound transportation problems.

WAGES is also offering a variety of services and supports to those relying on public and private transportation, including bus passes, gas vouchers, payment of insurance, and vehicle repairs. However, not all recipients are aware of these services, are unable to access these supports when needed (e.g., needing to travel to WAGES to obtain gas vouchers or bus passes), or find them too restrictive to be helpful (e.g., limitations in the funds available for vehicle repair). Dissemination of information concerning these service offerings is also not consistent.

Recommendations: There is a need to continue and amplify efforts to address the public transportation needs of those who are most in the position of relying on these services to maintain gainful employment and access services and supports. This should include improving the dissemination of information concerning the transportation services and supports offered through WAGES, allowing all recipients to have equal knowledge of these opportunities.

Just as many WAGES services centers served as “one-stop” facilities for initial program needs, transportation problems may be reduced if the number of trips and travel times could be reduced. Co-location of daycare centers with training and job sites is suggested. This practice also has been shown to reduce absenteeism and tardiness (Center for Urban Transportation Research 1996:38).

While increased private automobile ownership may appear to be an obvious solution to the transportation problem, the cost of reliable private transportation may be prohibitive for WAGES recipients. The average annual cost of owning and operating a 1991 vehicle over a 12-year period was estimated at \$3,560 (Jack Faucett Associates 1991) and the 1995 study by the U.S. Department of Transportation found that where welfare recipients owned vehicles, the cars tended to be older, with the average value of these vehicles being \$691. In addition, WAGES transportation subsidies, such as gas vouchers, vehicle maintenance, and insurance generally terminate after the first 90 days of employment. A \$3,560 annual operating cost would consume a very large share of the household’s income, with WAGES recipients’ hourly earnings in 1997 calculated to be \$5.82. Some consideration should also be given to reassessing the current restrictions on the services designed to support the reliability of privately owned vehicles.

Overall, Hank Dittmar best spoke to the issues related to the travel needs of welfare recipients transitioning to work:

The spatial mismatch between those who need jobs and job locations has been well documented. Not so well documented are the travel patterns of welfare recipients, particularly female heads of household, and the way their household's travel needs affect their ability to seek and get to work. These issues may mitigate against reverse commute programs and toward place based strategies. Transit's adequacy in serving this market also needs to be assessed in more than an anecdotal way (1996:671).

Collateral Services and Supports

Findings: One of the most valued service and supports offered by WAGES, according to WAGES recipients, are those that assists them in obtaining and affording childcare. WAGES not only offers childcare vouchers for those currently receiving benefits and supplemented childcare for individuals who have obtained employment, it ensures the existence of certified caregivers and facilities.

Despite these services and supports, access to affordable childcare consistently emerges as a barrier to recipients' efforts to move from welfare to work. They identify a need for additional facilities, evening hours of operation, and better access to certified facilities in terms of location and the corresponding availability of public transportation. In addition, the cost of supplemental childcare often exceeds a reasonable percentage of the total earnings of newly employed individuals. This can cause financial hardship or result in mothers choosing out of desperation to leave their children unattended.

Lack of health insurance coverage for children also emerges as a barrier to sustained employment, with individuals who obtain employment being unable to afford family coverage through their employers when it is offered. These individuals also seem to be unaware of other health insurance programs available to the children of the working poor.

While WAGES recipients with mental health problems have access to mental health services, there appears to be insufficient resources to meet the need, with many of those seeking help being placed on long waiting lists.

Recommendations: There is a clear need to increase access to affordable childcare that meets the needs of a variety of training and employment work schedules. Clearly there are not enough certified individuals or facilities to meet the demand. There also should be some consideration of the geographic distribution of childcare facilities, with an effort to work within the current parameters of the public transportation system. Consideration should also be given to reducing the cost of certification for childcare providers, possibly to include a sliding fee scale to make this affordable for a larger number of individuals.

There is a clear need to expand the capacity of mental health service centers, in an effort to meet the needs of those on waiting lists and those who have yet to seek services.

Consistent efforts should be made to disseminate information concerning the services available and the length of time they are available for, such as healthcare coverage for children. This includes informing working individuals of the availability of coverage for children of the working poor.

Research Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study and others dealing with welfare reform, there appears to be a need to identify the best practices in all aspects of WAGES programming and contracted services, including case management, childcare, job training, transportation, and the wide variety of other services and supports available to WAGES recipients.

What is not clear from the current body of research is what is working well in facilitating WAGES recipients' move from welfare to work. As a result, there is no opportunity to create a cohesive system of service delivery and supports that will ensure success for the majority of these individuals. Even where programs and services appear to be highly effective, there is no documentation supporting this perception or providing guidance for other programs to replicate the effort. In addition, there appears to be little, if any, exchange of information among service providers. As it specifically relates to job training, there is a need to correlate the type of job training being provided with the desired result, to determine the degree of success these programs are achieving in the goal of moving their trainees from welfare to work.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

Focus group participants completed a brief survey prior to the group, providing demographic information, as well as information addressing their job training experiences and current needs. Refer to Appendix B for a copy of the survey.

WAGES Recipient Demographics

COUNTY REPRESENTATION (n=65)	
Pinellas County	45%
Hillsborough County	36%
Pasco County	20%

?? Forty-five percent (45%) of recipients represent Pinellas County, while more than one-third (36%) represent Hillsborough County, and 19% represent Pasco County.

HOUSING SITUATION				
	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=13)	Total Combined (n=65)
Rent	83%	72%	92%	80%
Own	17%	24%	8% (n=1)	19%
No answer	--	3% (n=1)	--	1% (n=1)

*Percentages may not add to 100% due to the effects of rounding.

?? The average age of participating WAGES recipients was 32 years, with the vast majority (80%) reporting that they were renting their home and 19% being homeowners. The highest percentage of participants owning their own home were in the Pinellas County groups (24%), with the greatest contrast existing between Pinellas and Pasco Counties (24% vs. 8%, respectively).

MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE			
Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=13)	Overall Mean (n=65)
2.8	1.3	2.1	2.2

?? Respondents are currently caring for an average of 2.2 children, with those in Hillsborough caring for slightly more (mean = 2.8) and those in Pinellas slightly less (mean = 1.3).

ETHNIC REPRESENTATION				
Participant Ethnicity	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=11)*	Total Combined (n=63)
African-American	52%	45%	27%	44%
Caucasian	9% (n=2)	48%	45%	33%
Hispanic	35%	3% (n=1)	18% (n=2)	17%
Asian	4% (n=1)	--	--	<2% (n=1)
Native American	--	--	--	--
Multi-racial “African American, Native American, Hispanic, Canadian”	--	--	9% (n=1)	<2% (n=1)
Biracial – “black/white”	--	3% (n=1)	--	<2% (n=1)

*Missing ethnicity information on two participants in Pasco County. Percentages may not add to 100% due to the effects of rounding.

?? The focus groups were somewhat ethnically diverse, with 44% of respondents being African-American, followed by Caucasian (33%), and Hispanic (17%). Less than two percent (2%) each were Asian, multi-racial or biracial. Native Americans were not represented in this sample.

?? More than one-half (52%) of respondents in Hillsborough County were African-American, in contrast with only 27% in Pasco County. In addition, nearly one-half (48%) of respondents in Pinellas County and Pasco County (45%) were Caucasian, in contrast with the Hillsborough County groups where 9% of respondents were Caucasian. Hillsborough County provided the largest representation of Hispanic participants (35%; including one Spanish speaking focus group), followed by Pasco (18%) and Pinellas (3%) counties.

HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED				
Grade Level	Hillsborough* # of mentions (n=17)	Pinellas* # of mentions (n=17)	Pasco # of mentions (n=13)	Total* #/% (n=47)
12th grade	18%	53%	23%	32%
11th grade	41%	12% (n=2)	15% (n=2)	23%
GED	18%	24%	--	15%
10th grade	6% (n=1)	--	23%	9%
Some college	6% (n=1)	12% (n=2)	--	6%
8th grade	6% (n=1)	--	8% (n=1)	4% (n=2)
6th grade	--	--	8% (n=1)	2% (n=1)
No answer	6% (n=1)	--	23%	9%

*This data was unavailable for one group each in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties.

?? Nearly one-third (32%) of participants reported completing a 12th grade education, with 23% completing the 11th grade, and 15% earning their GED. Another 9% of participants completed the 10th grade, while 6% have taken some college coursework, 4% have completed the 8th grade, and 2% the 6th grade. Nine (9%) percent of respondents did not answer this question.

?? More of the respondents in the Pinellas focus groups reported completing the 12th grade in comparison with those in Hillsborough, where the majority reported completing through the 11th grade.

WELFARE STATUS				
	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=13)	Total Combined (n=65)
Yes	13%	48%	69%	40%
No	87%	52%	31%	60%

?? Sixty percent (60%) of participants were not receiving welfare checks at the time of the focus groups, while the other 40% were receiving these benefits. In contrast to the 87% of respondents in Hillsborough County who were not receiving welfare checks, more than two-thirds (69%) of those in Pasco County were receiving checks. The percentages are fairly equal among Pinellas County respondents.

?? The length of time respondents had been on welfare or were on welfare ranged from as briefly as one month to up to 10 years on and off. Of those who had been on it consistently in recent months and years, the average length of time reported was 12 months. Those in Hillsborough County reported being on welfare for an average of 15 months, followed by Pinellas (12 months) and Pasco (6 months) counties.

JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS ATTENDED		
Hillsborough County (n=23)*	Pinellas County (n=29)	Pasco County (n=13)
Centre for Women (n=6) Wages (n=5) Share program Immigration Service Hispanic Needs Council Florida One Stop Center S.H.I.P. EST class – James Har Building DACCO – welfare to work ACTS Job training DCF – University Leaney Technical Center – Customer Service Academy No answer (n=2)	Ultimate Medical Academy (n=11) “Wages Program” (n=8) WIA (n=3) Advantage Training Systems (n=2) “My own” One stop Center Voc rehab Pinellas Works – Lockheed Program for senior citizens	Career Central (n=6) No answer (n=3) Wages (n=2) J.T.P.A. (n=2)

*Two respondents gave multiple answers.

?? Table 1 details the various job training programs participants reported attending and the frequency of those responses.

JOB TRAINING PROGRAM STATUS				
	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=13)	Total Combined (n=65)
Yes	43%	72%	69%	62%
No	26%	17%	--	17%
No Answer	30%	10%	15% (n=2)	19%
Currently Attending	--	--	15% (n=2)	3% (n=2)

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to the effects of rounding

?? Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents reported completing their training program, while 17% did not. More respondents in Pinellas (72%) and Pasco (69%) counties reported completing their programs than in Hillsborough (43%). Those who did not complete their program indicated attending the training for as few as three days to as long as six months.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=13)	Total Combined (n=65)
Yes	39%	24%	8% (n=1)	26%
No	61%	76%	92%	74%

?? Nearly three-fourths (74%) of respondents were unemployed at the time of the focus groups. The vast majority (92%) of those in Pasco County were unemployed, followed by Pinellas (76%), and Hillsborough (61%) counties. This finding may be due in part to differences in recruiting methods in each of the three counties, with more respondents in Pasco and Pinellas being current training program participants than Hillsborough County.

?? Participants in Hillsborough County who were employed reported holding job titles of various natures, including ship laborers and supermarket employees. Those in Pinellas were holding a variety of medical assistant positions, including x-ray technician, home health aide, and Certified Nurses Aide (CNA), with one being a cook and another a “family support worker.”

TRANSPORTATION AS A BARRIER				
	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=12)*	Total Combined (n=64)*
Yes	61%	48%	58%	55%
No	39%	52%	42%	45%

*Missing one respondents for Pasco County

?? Transportation was reported to pose a problem for more than half (55%) of participants in their efforts to find and keep a job. Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents in Hillsborough County reported that transportation was a problem, followed by 58% in Pasco County and 48% in Pinellas County.

TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE				
	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=13)	Overall (n=65)
Personal vehicle (car or motorcycle)	57%	55%	54%	55%
Bus	43%	41%	--	34%
Getting rides from friends/neighbors/family	17%	37%	46%	32%
Friend's/relative's vehicle (car or motorcycle)	17%	31%	38%	28%
Taxi	--	10%	15% (n=2)	8%
Bicycle or other non-motorized transportation	4% (n=1)	--	23%	6%

Note: multiple responses are allowed.

?? More than half (55%) of participants reported relying on a personal vehicle for transportation, with 34% relying on the bus, 32% on rides from friends, neighbors or family, and 28% using a friend's or relative's vehicle. Fewer reported using taxis (8%) or non-motorized transportation (6%).

BARRIERS TO MOVING FROM WELFARE TO WORK				
	Hillsborough (n=23)	Pinellas (n=29)	Pasco (n=13)	Overall (n=65)
Lack of reliable transportation	30%	52%	54%	45%
Lack of job skills	17%	21%	31%	22%
Physical disability	9% (n=2)	14%	15% (n=2)	12%
Caring for a child or children with special needs	9% (n=2)	10%	15% (n=2)	11%
Emotional or mental health disability	4% (n=1)	7% (n=2)	--	5%
Caring for an elderly parent	--	3% (n=1)	--	2% (n=1)
Other:	26%	14%	15% (n=2)	19%

Note: multiple responses were allowed.

?? Lack of reliable transportation was mentioned most frequently by respondents as making the process of moving from welfare to work more difficult (45%), followed by lack of job skills 22%. Twelve percent (12%) of respondents reported that a physical disability was making the process more difficult, while 11% were caring for a child or children with special needs.

?? Of the 12 respondents who identified “other” barriers, five reported having problems with daycare including the expense and the hours of availability. Two respondents reported having felony conviction on their record as a barrier to finding employment. Others cited not having a GED, feeling that their appearance was a hindrance, or needing a job that was a “match” with their interests. Another respondent was struggling due to pregnancy.

Provider Demographics

Provider Distribution by County	
County	% of Providers by County (n=30)
Pasco County	40%
Hillsborough County	30%
Pinellas County	30%

?? A total of 30 providers participated in the focus groups in the three counties, with 40% representing job training providers in Pasco County, and 30% each representing providers in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties.

?? A wide variety of specific agencies were represented by participating job training providers. Several in Pinellas County represented Worknet, while concurrently representing other programs. In addition, job training providers from the Centre for Women in Hillsborough participated, as did a wide variety of individuals indicating they represented “welfare to work” contractually. Career Central in Pasco County was specifically identified as a contractual job training provider under the Workforce Investment Act/Welfare to Work.

?? The majority of providers (n=19) reported holding either a bachelors or master degree, although not necessarily in a field directly relating to job training. Many providers reported multiple areas of study, most frequently having a business or social science emphasis. A few indicated focusing on education or health education.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM PHASE I

Phase I Findings Pertaining to Job Training

PHASE I FINDINGS (1999)			
Factors	Percent Responding Yes	Percent Responding No	Percent Responding Don't Know or N/A
Possess the Skills to Secure a Job Which Meets Financial Needs	47%	47%	6% (n=2)
Adequate Child Care*	56%	28%	11%
Adequate Transportation	58%	42%	--
Need for Other Services Not Provided by WAGES Program*	56%	36%	--

*Not all participants responded to these items, therefore not all totals add to 100%

?? In 1999, the Welfare Reform Focus Group Report representing the Phase I findings of the current study, pointed to a need to further examine the job training opportunities in the Tampa Bay area for individuals moving from welfare to work. As seen in the table above, the data revealed that 46% of these individuals reported needing to increase their skills to obtain financially secure employment, with 28% needing adequate child care and 42% adequate transportation. More than one-third (36%) indicated a general need for other services not provided by the WAGES Program.

?? When asked to indicate what, if anything, was preventing them from transitioning into self-sufficiency, participants in 1999 mentioned employment experience, transportation, basic job hunting and interviewing skills, self-esteem, health problems (i.e., pregnancy, disability, etc.), substance abuse, lack of reading ability and communication skills, need for education, and extensive family responsibilities, (e.g., caring for children or grandchildren). A few also indicated that a job would not provide enough money to pay for their household expenses and cover childcare.

?? However, many participants viewed welfare reform as an opportunity to improve their life situation, with some of those who reported an improved self-esteem crediting job training opportunities and the support extended to them during the two-week training program.

?? These and other findings prompted further examination of the job training opportunities available to WAGES recipients in the Tampa Bay area, including an examination of issues concerning access and eligibility, trainee needs, job training offerings, and any elements that may be missing or not fully addressed in the current programs. Phase II of the study also sought to pursue further information concerning the barriers these individuals face to obtaining and maintaining gainful employment, with a particular emphasis on transportation issues.

RELEVANCE OF FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS FROM PHASE II

Access to and Eligibility for Job Training

?? According to participating WAGES recipients, the sources of information about job training programs vary, with direct referrals from WAGES case workers being the most consistent source, followed by word of mouth. Providers reported that individuals participating in job training programs can be referred to these programs from a wide variety of agencies, including Worknet, the Area Agency on Aging, “One-Stop” centers, WAGES, and other community-based service organizations. Like WAGES recipients, providers identify word of mouth as a common method of reaching potential trainees, with those who have already been through the program sharing the information with their friends and family members.

“I had been working for like 7 years on the job and I lost my job, so I needed some kind of assistance and I went to the welfare and they referred me to welfare to work.” (Recipient)

“Just being on welfare automatically gets us in. You have to go. If you want the childcare, you have to go through WAGES to get the training.” (Recipient)

“If you don’t qualify for cash benefits, you can’t get into the program. Even if you don’t want the cash, you still have to apply for the cash if you want the training to get the job.” (Recipient)

“We all get people from Worknet. It used to be Pinellas Works.” (Provider)

“A lot of my referrals come through graduates or past clients.” (Provider)

“Once they apply for TANF, then they’re referred directly to the WAGES program. At that time we determine as a case manager whether they can just go

out and work or whether they need training to go back to school, starting from GED up.” (Provider)

Working Solutions is WAGES. It’s just a name change. So they [recipients] come in and apply for public assistance and while they’re waiting for their case to be opened, we assist them by sending them to the EST [Employment Skills Trainer]. So they’re in a class where they’re learning basic skills, interpersonal skills, as basic as: at what point are you late if you’re hours are 8 to 5. And once their...case becomes active, the training progresses from there.” (Provider)

“Folks are and always have been referred to us through any number of avenues. We work with several community service organizations, human service agencies throughout the county and they refer to us.” (Provider)

?? For most programs, providers described the criteria for eligibility for job training as receipt of cash assistance and/or low to moderate income, which individual programs defined somewhat differently depending on their affiliation or sponsorship. In addition, some programs require a 10th grade reading level to participate, with the ability to offer remedial reading classes for those who do not qualify initially. This appears to be a specific requirement of state funded programs and the Junior Colleges, while not necessarily being unique to those programs. Some programs are also testing potential trainees to determine their skill level and determine their interests in an effort to match the trainee with relevant and interesting job training and/or education.

“It [eligibility requirement] used to be 150% of the poverty level, but it was recently raised to 200%. If they make less than \$10.36 an hour, they can qualify for the funds either through WIA or WTW, Welfare to Work dollars.” (Provider)

“You have to have the skills level, you have to have a 10th grade reading level. The state sets the standards. Give the people the option of remediation while they’re doing skills training in order to get their certificate. Unfortunately, nearly 50% of people are never going to get there and it’s not worth it for them.” (Provider)

“80% of the people who take our placement tests [Jr. College] have to take remedial math and 60% have to take remedial reading.” (Provider)

“Testing is brand new. It’s just literally starting with St. Pete Junior College. We were doing the RAT before, which is just to narrow down what you’re interests are and once you start talking to a client...we try to help them with their goals and make them manageable and reachable.” (Provider)

“We have a lot of vendors in the county that we can send them to. They have a long list to pick from that they want to do. We do testing. We’re starting to do more testing to see if we can get a better placement now. One we evaluate them, we set them up with the funding for school.” (Provider)

?? Due to the changes in the political climate and restructuring of WAGES, eligibility decisions have apparently become the purview of the individual workforce boards. These boards can devise a plan for job training, including rules for access and eligibility, usually based on need and funding availability. Other programs are independent of WAGES funding and therefore set their own eligibility criteria. In addition, some providers have contacts with employers who are willing to take workers without any previous training, instead offering to provide training on-the-job.

“Each workforce board can now pretty much make their own policies and procedures. They get the federal dollars that come to the state and they say what’s your plan. The other piece of that is there are also federal dollars depending on a hierarchy of priorities/needs for people who need technology training or need additional training to increase or keep their income.” (Provider)

“We do get referrals from WAGES, but...we do not work with them as a WAGES recipient, we work with them as a resident of the city or the county because we’re funded through community development block grant money. It’s specific either to the city of St. Pete – they have to be a resident of the City of St. Pete for the St. Pete funding, they have to be low to moderate income and then the county picks up those individuals that live in the unincorporated areas.” (Provider)

“The employers are dying for people right now and they will do on the job training.” (Provider)

Expectations of Job Training

?? The interest of WAGES recipients in pursuing job training reportedly arose out of a variety of individual motivators, including the need to be retrained after suffering a debilitating injury, an interest in a specific career path, or simply the need for benefits to continue. These participants generally expected to learn a new trade, gain the skills to have a career, and work in a job where they could earn more money and have vacation and health insurance benefits.

“Before I joined the program, we were told that we were in high demand [x-ray technicians]. Now that I’m done with my clinicals, I can’t find a job. You look in the paper and you show me where they have x-ray jobs in there. Unless you have two years experience, they don’t want you.” (Recipient)

“The GED, you know, those skills, computers, typing, filing.” (Recipient)

“I’m hoping to learn how to get the best job that’s for me. How to walk into a job where I feel as though this job is too qualified, but I want to work into a job that I’m not qualified for and still be able to get that job, even though I don’t have the skills to get that job...I want to be able to interview with that much confidence to know that I’m going to get this job even though I know I’m not qualified for it.” (Recipient)

Job Training Needs

?? The findings concerning the needs of individuals moving from welfare to work in Phase II mirror those reported in Phase I of the study. In both instances, individuals were identified as needing remedial education, with WAGES recipients having limited math and reading skills, and therefore failing to qualify for some training programs and being limited in their ability to obtain gainful employment. Providers in Phase II perceived job training enrollees as needing basic or remedial education in reading and grammar, and training in the use of computers and the discharge of basic office duties, such as answering phones, typing, and customer service.

“The original legislation mandated work first before training that came out in 1996. WAGES was designed to be a ‘work first’ program, but the trend is changing now so that people have more options. Because not everyone is necessarily prepared to enter the workforce getting a job that’s going to pay them - they can get it a job, it’s not that they can’t get a job, it’s whether or not the job that they are skilled to do will pay them a living wage. More often than not they need to increase their education or skills training in order to get a job that’s paying more than minimum wage.” (Provider)

“We train these people short-term and they need a longer time to find themselves.” (Provider)

?? Providers also recognized that most trainees lacked work experience and were therefore unprepared for a work culture. As a result, they were in need of the “soft skills” relating to employability, such as work ethic, attitude, communication, and personal hygiene. In addition, trainees lacked the knowledge and ability to implement a job search, complete an application, prepare a resume, or participate in a job interview.

“I think the first thing in terms of preparation is getting the right attitude about work, about life, about handling themselves in a more positive way, building their self esteem, building their confidence. If you take a person who doesn’t have these things, just putting them in a job doesn’t get them that. They have to begin to believe in themselves, they have to be in a situation prior to going to work that

allows them to stretch themselves and see where it is possible for them to go.”
(Provider)

“Employers say they can teach the skills but they need someone who will show up on time everyday, dress appropriately, and be responsible, and communicate.”
(Provider)

“They’ve not held down a job and they didn’t have to be there at 8 o’clock, they didn’t have to punch a time clock, they don’t know how to deal with children who are sick. This is a very big issue. That’s why I work with them individually, especially on what I call life skills. If we can’t get life skills...they can get all of the degrees in the world, but they don’t know how to have good communication, good relationships, budget for their own home...” (Provider)

“When we were doing the laid off workers, we could give them some computer skills and they were back out in the workplace and we had 100% completion and 100% placement. Then we started dealing with the welfare to work clients and we had to institute just some of those things...a dress code. And a lot of that is because we have to train them...when you say wear what’s appropriate to come to work in...if they don’t know what’s appropriate, then you have an opportunity to tell them when you see them in something that’s not appropriate.” (Provider)

?? Providers suggested that trainees would also benefit from additional support in the form of mentors and greater assistance with the practical aspects of moving to a working culture, including an appropriate wardrobe, childcare and transportation. Some trainees also reportedly need greater assistance in addressing co-occurring issues, including transportation, mental health, substance abuse, and spousal abuse.

“Mentoring is so important. I think when people get into a very large system, they get lost, they don’t get the mentoring that they actually need.” (Provider)

“The City of St. Petersburg comes in and puts on a program concerning spousal abuse – it shocks the women that they are being abused. They equate jealousy and control with being loved and cared about. They equate love and abuse with the same thing. Helping and training these women is a help to break the cycle for their children and the children recognize the value of education.” (Provider)

“The smaller groups allow them to talk about what they’re going through personally – they coach and encourage one another. There’s not enough of these small groups or cohorts that go through the program together and are experiencing the same thing.” (Provider)

“They’ll get almost all the way there and then they quit. Family and neighbors demean those who are successful, rather than supporting them.” (Provider)

“What is available for them to get the proper attire to wear to work? That’s tough.” (Provider)

Job Training Offerings

?? While some WAGES recipients participating in the focus groups were training for specific jobs in the medical field, such as medical or dental assistant, x-ray or ultrasound technician, and Certified Nurses Aid, others were gaining computer and other general office skills (e.g., billing and customer service), and a few were training for factory or warehouse jobs. In addition, some job training programs were offering classes addressing employability skills, such as resume development, interviewing, and “dressing for success.” Placement assistance was provided on a very limited basis and not by all programs. What is clear is that for a large number of trainees, job training was an opportunity to learn general skills rather than train for a specific job. The exception was programs preparing trainees for a trade or skilled labor.

“The WAGES class taught you the whole gamut of how to dress, how to carry yourself, how to hold yourself, how to speak at an interview, everything. Will definitely use those skills to get a job.” (Recipient)

“I learned computers, because I didn’t know very much about computers. Now I can get into the Internet, I can go all over the place.” (Recipient)

“The most interesting thing that I’ve learned in it is how you can have two outfits, with two basic colors like navy blue and a black outfit and just buy different blouses and different jackets, and you can wear like the same pants and same skirt and wear different shirts and things like that and still look professional and you don’t have to buy a whole bunch of clothes to be professional, which I found very interesting.” (Recipient)

“The problem for me is not finding a job, it’s finding a job that fits my situation with my kids.” (Recipient)

?? In the course of receiving training for gainful employment, some WAGES recipients reported gaining self-confidence, overcoming shyness and developing their communication skills. They also gained a greater understanding of their own interests, skills, and abilities, ultimately helping some to direct their course of study toward a job that they enjoyed.

“I learned I am a people person – not a paper person. I accepted lower pay to do what I like.” (Recipient)

“I’m not as shy as I was before.” (Recipient)

“I learned how to get along with others and meet new people. I learned how to, you know, when you get the job, how to keep it.” (Recipient)

?? Providers described the current job training programs as preparing trainees for a particular job or trade, including working in the medical field as an x-ray or ultrasound technician, medical or dental assistant, Certified Nurses Aid, or phlebotomist. In some instances, females were being encouraged to consider programs training them for non-traditional jobs, such as auto mechanic or plumber. However, many programs were not training to prepare enrollees for a specific job or trade, rather they were teaching general skills, including computer training, customer service, and business administration. Most programs were also offering job search skills, teaching trainees how to fill out an application, develop a resume, participate in an interview, conduct a job search, and “dress for success.” As part of some programs, trainees were exposed to the work environment through visits to job sites. Only in rare instances were programs offering job placement assistance.

“You have to be careful with some agencies because they’re getting all this money and they [trainees] can’t get a job. The biggest one was medical transcription and the other one was AI plus computer networking that JC [junior college] finally stopped doing because they flooded the market.” (Provider)

“It [job site visits] really gets them excited about going to work at a location, because a lot of times they’ve never been inside an office or they’ve never sat at a desk, or they’ve never had their own little cubby hole, so it’s very much an incentive. And it helps too...because they begin to visualize themselves there and it helps to motivate them.” (Provider)

“We look at it as part of our responsibility to get them [trainees] placed, because we discovered early that if you just give them the training and this is a resume, now go to it, it never happens. So we go as far as setting up interviews, taking them to interviews.” (Provider)

“They’re encouraging women to become mechanics and plumbers and the money is there, but I don’t think the agencies are stressing this to women. They’re not looking at it as a viable career for a woman and it is, because plumbers make \$13 or \$14 an hour.” (Provider)

?? Although not widespread, some programs also offered classes relating to employability, referring to them as “soft skills.” These programs were reportedly addressing trainees’ interpersonal skills and attitude, and working toward building their comfort level with a work

culture. They were also striving to build trainees' self-confidence and empower them to help themselves.

“We don't do what's defined as hard skills training. We do more what is described as soft skills training – interpersonal skills. Soft skills are the everyday behavioral things like being able to accept constructive criticism, managing anger, understanding what a good work ethic is, being able to get to work everyday and not just on time but early. Being there everyday, understanding that once you make a commitment to an employer there are some things you have to put in place to make sure you uphold your end of the deal. Once they say you're hired, they have an expectation and [we teach] all the things you need to know to meet those expectations. Building confidence, building self-esteem.” (Provider)

“That's how this whole program came about, employers said if you send me somebody that has the right work attitude, a good work ethic, I can teach them how to do the job. So that's what this program does. It teaches employment readiness, but with a focus on changing attitude.” (Provider)

Need for Additional Offerings

?? WAGES recipients specifically commented that some programs did not offer adequate time and opportunity for computer training, reporting a lack of equipment that limited the amount of time they were able to practice their skills. Those receiving training in the medical field reported that the programs were not providing adequate preparation for completing the paperwork involved in doing the job. In addition, there was a general lack of information concerning job training opportunities, with trainees suggesting better and broader dissemination to increase awareness of the programs that are available. A few specifically commented that the amount of information they received about job training and other services was dependent on the individual WAGES case worker. Others suggested that programs emphasize teaching study and organizational skills, as well as how to get a job.

“I don't know what each program is really about. You have to rely on caseworkers to help you get services. If they think you don't need it, you don't get it.” (Recipient)

“I was prepared [for work] only because I worked in an office and done paperwork and worked in a store and done waitressing. The patient care I can do with no problem, the x-rays I can do now, but it's the paperwork that always stumps you. The paperwork is so much and so hard.” (Recipient)

“Practice on study skills. I need some help with that and am really rusty on that. I need help getting organized.” (Recipient)

“They closed the class on how to get a job, etc. We need one of those and study skills.” (Recipient)

?? The consensus among providers was that the most pressing need is for job training programs to emphasize the “soft skills” necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment. These included self-sufficiency, personal responsibility, addressing a poor attitude or the fear of success, and generally coping with and managing the everyday demands of employment. While providers were teaching these skills to some degree in all programs, it was not a part of the official curriculum in most cases. In addition, programs were not specifically designed or equipped to address trainees’ mental health issues, medical issues, or help them overcome the limitations of having a criminal background. A few providers mentioned that trainees required to attend remediation were not gaining ground to obtain gainful employment, suggesting that this requirement for learning employment skills was not beneficial for all clients.

“If you give a man a fish, he’ll eat for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he’ll eat for a lifetime.” (Provider)

“I think we’re all doing a little bit of it [employability training], but it needs to be more and it needs to be for a longer period of time.” (Provider)

“They’re poor people looking to go to work. They didn’t come to you...many of them come there because they want a job. They’re forced to stay in remediation for months before they can get a job. You’re defeating the purpose because that’s not why they came there and most of them don’t make it.” (Provider)

“There is nothing in place officially in the program [to teach soft skills]. I don’t think it’s being addressed.” (Provider)

“That’s the thing that we’ve found in working with the population, which was how dare we assume that they know things that they really don’t and that we have to teach those independent living skills and encourage them in that area as well as the workforce.” (Provider)

Barriers to Employment

?? WAGES recipients identified a variety of barriers to obtaining employment, mirroring those mentioned in Phase I of the research in 1999. Lack of available and reliable transportation, along with access to low cost and reliable childcare were mentioned with the greatest frequency. The expense of daycare was mentioned as exceeding a reasonable percentage of earnings from employment, with these costs not including meals and other necessary supplies for the children. In addition, WAGES recipients were not consistently receiving comprehensive information about available job training programs and other services.

Others reported that lack of health insurance for their children, lack of time, and an inability to deal with tragic and stressful life events, were barriers to obtaining employment.

“Once you get a job, they go by how much you’re making an hour [to determine daycare costs]. I think there needs to be some kind of...a few months of helping out before they totally drop you. I mean going from no money while you’re in school to getting a check and finally trying to get on your feet and then right away having to pay \$200 a week for day care is just too quickly.” (Recipient)

“Daycare is too expensive - \$102 a week for four year old. \$150 for a 1 year old. If they’re in home daycares they are more expensive than coordinated day care. I have to provide lunch, juice, and diapers for my child. They would only eat two snacks a day otherwise.” (Recipient)

“They didn’t tell me about another [training] program. They do everything to stop you [from getting training].” (Recipient)

“You have to go to a certain medical clinic. I can’t afford to pay for my medication. I’m not taking my blood pressure pills.” (Recipient)

“Too many referrals, you see too many different people. It is set up to get you tired of the system.” (Recipient)

“You could do the least little thing and people will let you go. They don’t want to work with you, they don’t want to hear your excuses, they don’t care about what you’re going through at home, they don’t care if you have children, they don’t care about your transportation problems, they say they don’t want to hear it.” (Recipient)

“I know they say the benefits are the same in different states, but in Ohio I was making \$1200 more per month and getting the same benefits and three times the amount of food stamps. And here you have to see this person for this, and this person for this – 50 different people and you can’t see them without a referral.” (Recipient)

?? Providers identified the barriers to employment for some trainees as their inability to transition from a cycle of dependency to a life of independence. Specifically, trainees did not believe their benefits would be cut off if they did not obtain employment, they were unable to manage a budget based on employment income, were inexperienced with time management and goal setting, and lacked the self-esteem and the appropriate attitude to succeed in a job. According to some providers those trainees who cling to entitlements are doing so out of fear of the unknown, fear of failure and even of success. A few providers even mentioned being aware of efforts on the part of those facing the loss of TANF to have

their child or children identified as having a disability in order to draw funds from social security.

“What I’ve found with budgeting with my college students is that they’ve gotten their loans, they’ve gotten their scholarships and they’re kinda doing all right and then all of a sudden they don’t have all of that and the first year out of college is traumatic and is all hooked to budgeting and understanding what they’ve received in free stuff.” (Provider)

“One of the biggest barriers we have is trying to convince them that they have six more months and they have no more money. They don’t believe it.” (Provider)

“We have perpetuated another form of welfare. I had one woman where six of her seven children were drawing social security. So, now that TANF is going to stop, the scam is to get your child declared crazy. We call them crazy checks...and it never stops.” (Provider)

“They’ve allowed that [poverty] to become a way of life. The biggest obstacle of all is fear. A lot of times what we see as being uncooperative and...it’s more fear than anything else. It’s a fear of success. You’ve got to understand, once you’ve become comfortable living a certain way and being accepted...it’s more a fear of success because now you may earn too much money to live in a city housing project, so it means that I have to move someplace else. So often times they’ll sabotage any opportunity that will force them out of their comfort zone.” (Provider)

?? Other practical barriers to employment mentioned by providers included a lack of job training slots for the working poor, lack of employment offering livable wages and affordable health insurance, limited time with caseworkers resulting in a lack of individual attention, lack of information about services, a long waiting list for mental health services, poor transportation options, and unmet childcare needs. Trainees were reportedly not being “matched” to jobs that suit their interests and skill level, thereby setting them up for failure. Others were described by providers as not having the appropriate attitude, not being oriented to a working culture, and not knowing how to be responsible to an employer.

“I’d say half my clients have mental health issues and drug addiction issues, felony conviction backgrounds, or just medical problems where they’re probably never going to be able to work again, but they have to jump through hoops.” (Provider)

“If you’re not in the right job, I don’t care how much it pays, you’re not going to make it. It gets back to the restrictions in terms of the length of time the

caseworker has to spend with a person. Because there has to be more emphasis on what is going to be the right job for you.” (Provider)

“Employers tell us that the top three reasons people lose the job...is because of absence, lateness and attitude. They don’t do well at accepting constructive criticism. They have a tendency to take it personally. Usually it’s the excuses that they give for being late or absent are going to be the reason they lose their job.” (Provider)

“People come into the system in shock and they have no idea where to go or what to do and no one to tell them.” (Provider)

Transportation Needs

?? WAGES recipients specifically described the public transportation system as lacking in availability and reliability, and therefore requiring too much advanced time/travel time to reach their destination. Others lacked information as to how to take the bus and the bus schedules. Physical disabilities and childcare responsibilities also made using the bus more difficult. Other transportation difficulties included struggling with the availability benefits, such as gaining access to gas cards, insurance coverage, and car repairs.

“I have a 30 pound kid. There are no buses on Gandy. For a Medicaid bus pass, I have to pay \$1.50 for 100 trips. I have to walk 20-30 minutes on road, no sidewalks to get to nearest bus stop.” (Recipient)

“I’m trying to work, go to school, keep appointments. The bus makes me miss appointments.” (Recipient)

“I had to catch the bus. I had to get up at four o’clock in the morning, get my child dressed; I had a two-year old son. I was pregnant and my other son, the babysitter would come pick him up. I’d have to take him [two year old] to daycare, catch the bus, go down and get off the bus and go to work and sometimes I would have to take two or three different buses to get where I was going and if the bus was late, then I got to work late and if the bus was early and I missed that bus, then I missed work or I would have to catch that next bus. So, a lot of days I missed work because of the bus system.” (Recipient)

“Bus drivers are rude. They don’t know neighborhoods to help you know where to get off.” (Recipient)

“I used to get a gas card every month, I just found out that this will be the last month they’ll be giving out gas cards.” (Recipient)

?? Providers specifically noted that trainees struggled with a lack of transportation, describing the public transportation as failing to meet the needs of riders in terms of the actual routes and the time of day buses were running. For this reason, the amount of time required to drop off children at childcare and then travel to job training or work was extraordinary, placing a great burden on those relying on public transportation. Even those with their own cars struggled with the unreliability of their transportation and limitations in the help they received from WAGES to keep their cars running or insured. In addition, independent cabs were reportedly refusing to pick up WAGES riders, primarily because they do not tip the driver.

“What transportation?” (Provider)

“We do not have a mass transit system here that works properly and who is going to tackle that? We’ve got these huge busses running around here empty, going places that people don’t seem to go. How do we change that?” (Provider)

“These people go to school at 10 o’clock at night, but guess what, no buses run that late.” (Provider)

“The independent cabs don’t necessarily respond. The women would say that they would stand there and the cab would never show up.” (Provider)

“They [cab drivers] would rather have no one in the cab than a wages participant.” (Provider)

“With all the change over right now, we’re [One Stop Center] not even offering services. We have no money for services as of yesterday until July. So, I’m not sure what’s going to happen.” (Provider)

?? In addition to a great deal of stress on trainees, providers reported that transportation barriers resulted in trainees missing classes and being sanctioned for lack of attendance. Despite efforts to change the hours classes were being offered and pressure on transit authorities, the transportation needs of trainees were not being met. Lack of dissemination of information concerning the various types of transportation assistance available to WAGES recipients was also reported to prevent trainees’ ability to overcome this barrier.

“We tried changing the hours to give them time to get there and it didn’t work. That’s why we opened a school in St. Pete because there was no way they could get to North County.” (Provider)

“You cannot convince Pinellas County Transit Authority that they have a problem. They think they’re covering the entire city. It may look great on a chart, but it doesn’t mean a hill a beans, to somebody who has to ride the bus.” (Provider)

“If you are on WAGES, they can get car insurance and they can get their car fixed as long as the car is in their name. That depends on who your case worker is and that depends on whether you know that or not.” (Provider)

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM
WAGES RECIPIENT TRAVEL DIARIES**

A total of 36 travel diaries were received from the 65 focus group participants, giving an overall response rate of 55 percent. The breakdown by county is as follows:

- ?? Hillsborough County, 13 respondents
- ?? Pasco County, nine (9) respondents
- ?? Pinellas County, 14 respondents.

TABLE *				
JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL SURVEY				
TRIP SUMMARY				
Trip Purpose	# of Trips Hillsborough County (n=13)	# of Trips Pasco County (n=9)	# of Trips Pinellas County (n=14)	Total #of Trips (n=36)
Business	111	118	195	424
Social	43	48	109	200
Work	80	65	104	249
Total	234	231	408	873

?? The previous table provides a summary of one-way trips by WAGES participants, divided into three general categories. (Return trips to “Home,” n=380, are not include in the table.) Business trips included shopping, appointments, laundry, and picking up or dropping of family members. Social trips include visits to friends, family, church, and entertainment. Work trips included trips to work, job interviews, training, and school. Trips to “work” only accounted for 9% of the total trips. Overall, business trips accounted for 49% of the total; work, nearly 29%; and social, 23 %. In comparison with the 1995 NPTS, family and

personal business trips account for approximately 46% of all trips; social trips approximately 25%; and work and work-related trips only 20%.

?? While the number of Hillsborough County WAGES participants is nearly equal to that of Pinellas County, the number of trips made by Hillsborough County participants most closely approximates those made by participants in Pasco County. There may be several contributing factors to this phenomenon. An examination of travel modes helps to explain this finding.

JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL SURVEY				
TRIP MODE SUMMARY				
Trip Mode	Hillsborough County	Pasco County	Pinellas County	Total
Bicycle	0	0	9	9
Mass transit	20	0	85	105
Cab	0	9	3	12
Car	171	205	344	720
Family member's car	29	17	5	51
Friend's car	64	57	49	170
Walk	51	77	63	191
Total	335	365	558	1,258

?? Overall, WAGES participants in this sample traveled primarily by car. More than 57% of respondents reported traveling by car, using their own vehicle or a borrowed vehicle. An additional 15% of trips were reportedly made in a family member's car or other private vehicle, such as one belonging to a friend or neighbor. Combined, nearly three-fourths of all trips were made by private automobile. (While this survey did not solicit data on vehicle ownership, the national average of vehicle ownership among welfare recipients as reported by the Federal Transit Administration has been estimated at 6%). The 1995 NPTS estimated that 26% of low-income households did not have a car. Only 4% of other households did not have a car. The 1995 NPTS showed that on average, almost 90% of all trips were made by private vehicle. Murakami and Young found that 84% of low-income workers traveled to work by private vehicle (1997:8).

?? On average, more than 15% of all trips made by study participants were made on foot. Participants in Pasco County made more than 20% of their trips by foot, Hillsborough County participants more than 15%, and Pinellas County participants about 11%. These findings are similar to that of Murakami's and Young's, where 6% of low-income workers were more likely to walk, using this mode of transportation for 13% of social trips and 9% of business trips. Other households in the 1995 NPTS reported walking as the mode of transportation for 7% of all social trips and 4% for business (Murakami and Young 1997:8-10).

- ?? More than 8% percent of these respondents' trips were made by mass transit, which included a bus or van. This exceeds the national average of 2%. It also should be noted that Pasco County has a very limited mass transit system and Pasco County residents did not report taking any trips by van. Hillsborough County participants averaged nearly 6% of trips by mass transit. Pinellas County respondents reported more than 15% of trips by mass transit, both exceeding the findings of Murakami and Young who found that low-income workers reported used public transit to get to work 5% of the time (1997:8).
- ?? The average distance calculated for all respondents' trips was slightly more than four miles. Pasco County participants traveled an average of more than five miles per trip, followed by Pinellas County residents (almost four miles per trip), and Hillsborough County residents (3.75 miles per trip). This was consistent with Murakami and Young who found that 60% of all trips for low-income persons were three miles or less and 66% percent for low-income, single parent households (1997:11).
- ?? If the average per person trips per day (5) for these focus group participants per day is extended to an annual estimate, it would equal 1,825. This constitutes the most striking difference between these study participants and the 1995 NPTS survey, which found that low-income persons made 1,340 trips annually, and other persons made 1,648 annual trips per person. The finding is somewhat supported by the average trip length and mode, suggesting that this study sample is making a number of a short trips on foot. Murakami and Young state:

“Given the dispersion of jobs in our large metropolitan areas, the ability to travel beyond three miles from our homes is critical [to] the accessibility of jobs. The ability to travel beyond three miles from our homes is also critical to our ability to access goods and services.” (1997:11)

- ?? The number of trips reported by this study sample suggests that respondents have access to goods and services within their range, but what is not revealed is the cost of this access. For example, are participants shopping at convenience stores and therefore paying higher prices for goods? Another consideration is the amount of “tripchaining.” The survey asked participants to report each trip of five minutes or more, the focus groups and survey data provide several instances where participants travel from home to a childcare facility or school to drop off one child, then to another facility five minutes or more away to drop off another family member before continuing to another destination. This type of travel behavior or “tripchaining” may be necessary to meet the training and job search requirements of and continued eligibility for WAGES.

APPENDIX A:
TOPIC GUIDES

**JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION
FAMILY FOCUS GROUP TOPIC GUIDE
(FINAL 12/8/00)**

Introduction

Good evening. I'd like to thank you all for coming. We appreciate your willingness to talk with us tonight about your experience with job training opportunities and your transportation issues. Before we get started, I want to assure you that your comments and the information you provide will be kept in the strictest confidence. Your names will not be associated with any of the information and it will have no impact on your eligibility for services. We're passing around a confidentiality agreement. Basically it lets you know that the information you provide is confidential and by signing it you agree to take part in the study. In the same way, I ask you to honor each other's confidentiality. What we say here tonight is private and needs to remain private when we leave the group.

We're also passing around a brief survey for you to fill out. This helps us get to know you and your situation a little better by providing us some background information. There is no need to write your name on this form. We'll take about 5 minutes to fill that out. If the questions aren't clear or you need any help completing it, just let us know. When everyone's done, I'll ask you to pass them up here to me.

If everyone's ready, I'd like to start the group discussion. I like to encourage a free flowing discussion, so you if you have something to say, you don't need to raise your hand, just jump in. We are tape recording tonight, so that we can refer back to what you say when we write the report. Once we review the tapes for the report, they are destroyed and your names are not associated with your comments. Your comments are important to us, so I ask you to speak loudly and clearly so that we can pick up the information on the tape. I'll also ask that only one person speak at a time. If you talk over one another or carry on side conversations, there is the potential that we will lose important information. Also, the recording device is fairly sensitive, so I ask that you try to avoid tapping or pounding on the top of the table, as it will drown out the conversation.

I will be asking a series of questions tonight. I may ask follow up questions just to make sure I understand what you're saying. I want to be respectful of your time and wrap up the group on time so I'll try to keep us moving along and try to cover each topic. That means there may be discussions that I have to interrupt so that we have time to talk about other things. So, I apologize in advance if you don't get to say everything you'd like to say about a particular topic.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll ask and I expect that a variety of perspectives and situations may be represented around the table. Everyone here has had some experience with job training programs in the county as part of an effort to move from welfare to work, but that's where the similarities may end. Hearing about your experiences and listening to your opinions is why we are here tonight, so we encourage you to share. Are there any questions before we begin?

Involvement (10 minutes)

Let's start off by talking about how you became involved in the Job Training program.

1. Tell us about the process you went through to become involved in job training?

Probes: How did you become involved in the job training program?
What were your reasons for seeking job training?
How did you find out about job training?
How did you qualify for the program?

Expectations (10 minutes)

2. Describe the kinds of things you thought you would be learning in the program.

Probes: What types of skills were you expecting to learn?
What types of skills did you want to learn?

Offerings (30 minutes)

3. What did you learn in job training? (10 minutes)

Probes: What kinds of classes or training opportunities did they offer?
What skills did you gain that you didn't have before?

4. Tell me how the job training program helped prepare you to get and keep a job? (20 minutes)

Probes: What sorts of things did you learn to help you get a job? – e.g. interviewing skills, resume development, job search skills, etc.
What sorts of things did you learn that think helped you keep the job?
– e.g. how to dress appropriately, what it means to be on probation; how
– to get time off to care for a sick child or go to a doctor's appointment?
What are some of the other things you learned that were helpful or that you think may be helpful in the future?

Missing Elements (5 minutes)

5. What are some of things that you think could be helpful in getting or keeping a job that were missing from your job training program?

Barriers to Obtaining Work (30 minutes)

6. What are the major issues and challenges you are facing as you try to move from welfare to work? And for those of you who already have jobs, what are some of the issues and challenges that you face trying to keep your job?

Probes: Obtaining health insurance,
 childcare,
 household budgeting,
 coping with a physical or mental disability;
 dealing with a child with special needs;
 the practical issues of adjusting to a working environment (i.e., having the right
 and enough clothes, having food for lunches or lunch money, arranging
 transportation for children to and from school or other appointments).

7. [IF NOT ALREADY ADDRESSED] In what ways is transportation a challenge in your daily lives?

Probes: Getting to work
 Getting to training
 Shopping
 Getting your children to daycare
 Meeting other needs

8. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

MODERATOR: LEAVE ABOUT 15 MINUTES FOR BRIEF SUMMARY AND 10 MINUTES TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE TRAVEL DIARY

TOTAL TIME: 110 MINUTES

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!

**JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION
SERVICE PROVIDERS' GROUP TOPIC GUIDE
(Final 12/8/00)**

Introduction

Good evening. Thank you for coming. We appreciate your willingness to talk with us tonight about your experience as a trainer. Before we get started, I want to assure you that your comments and the information you provide will be kept in the strictest confidence. Your names will not be associated with any of the information. We're passing around a confidentiality agreement that puts in writing our commitment to use the information you provide for this study and we ask you to sign it, giving your written consent to be part of the study. In the same way, I ask you to honor each other's confidentiality. What we say here tonight is private and needs to remain private when we leave the group.

We're also passing around a brief survey for you to fill out. This helps us get to know you and what you do a little better by providing us some background information. There is no need to write your name on this form. We'll take about 5 minutes to fill that out. If the questions aren't clear or you need any help completing it, just let us know. When everyone's done, I'll ask you to pass them up here to me.

If everyone's ready, I'd like to start the group discussion. I like to encourage a free flowing discussion, so you if you have something to say, you don't need to raise your hand, just jump in. We are tape recording tonight, so that we can refer back to what you say when we write the report. Your comments are important to us, so I ask you to speak loudly and clearly so that we can pick up the information on the tape. I'll also ask that only one person speak at a time. If you talk over one another or carry on side conversations, there is the potential that we will lose important information. Also, the recording device is fairly sensitive, so I ask that you try to avoid tapping or pounding on the top of the table, as it will drowned out the conversation.

I will be asking a series of questions tonight. I may ask follow up questions just to clarify what you're saying. I'll also try to keep us moving along so that we can cover each topic. That means there may be discussions that we have to interrupt to have time to talk about other things. So, I apologize in advance if we don't get everything said on all of the topics. I want to be respectful of your time and wrap up the group on time.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll ask and I expect that a variety of perspectives and situations may be represented around the table. Everyone here is providing some type of job training as part of an effort to move from people from welfare to work, but the similarities may end there. Hearing about your experiences and listening to your opinions is why we are here tonight, so we encourage you to share. Are there any questions before we begin?

Program Involvement and Experience (10 minutes)

Let's start off by talking about how trainees are referred to your program.

Referral and Eligibility (15 minutes)

4. How are trainees referred to your program?
5. What makes someone eligible for job training?

Probes: What are the criteria?
Who is offered or can receive job training?

Training Needs and Offerings (40 minutes)

6. What do you perceive to be the training needs of TANF recipients?

Probes: What skills do they need?
What kind of preparation do they need to work in this job market?
What kinds of things did you expect to be teaching?

7. What kinds of training do you provide?

Probes: What classes are offered?
What types of skills are trainees learning? e.g., job search, vocational, practical, dealing with work culture?
What types of jobs are trainees being prepared for?

Missing Elements (10 minutes)

8. What aren't you teaching that you think would be valuable in helping trainees obtain and maintain employment?

Barriers to Employment (20 minutes)

9. What are the major issues and challenges trainees are facing when trying to move from welfare to work or maintain gainful employment?

Probes: Obtaining health insurance,
childcare,
household budgeting,
coping with a physical or mental disability;
dealing with a child with special needs;

the practical issues of adjusting to a working environment (i.e., having the right and enough clothes, having food for lunches or lunch money, arranging transportation for children to and from school or other appointments).

10. How is transportation a barrier for trainees to finding and keeping a job?

11. How was transportation a barrier in terms of training attendance?

Probes: How did having to rely on the bus affect attendance?
 How did having to rely on others for transportation affect attendance?
 How did unreliable transportation affect attendance?

12. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

MODERATOR: LEAVE ABOUT 15 MINUTES FOR BRIEF SUMMARY

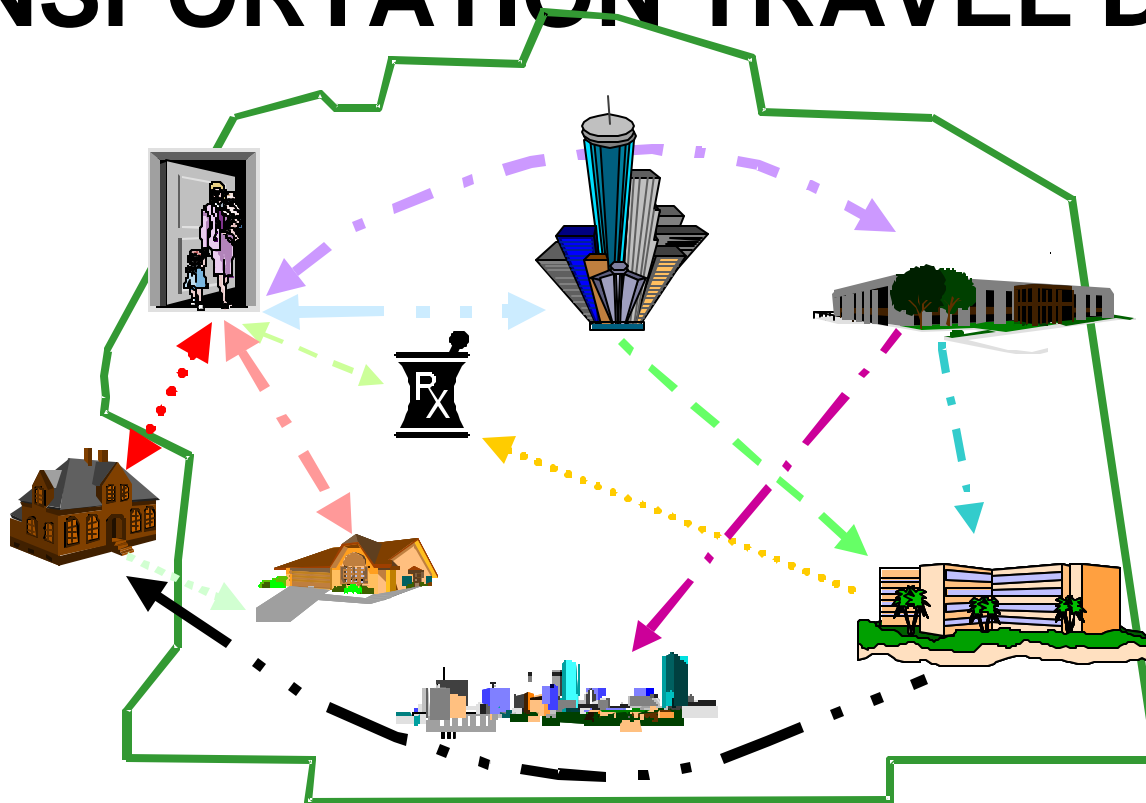
TOTAL TIME: 110 MINUTES

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!

APPENDIX B:
SURVEYS AND TRIP DIARY

{ADVANCE | y 95}

JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL DIARY



{ADVANCE \y 95} **JOB TRAINING AND
TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL DIARY**

JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL DIARY INSTRUCTIONS

Dear Participant,

To understand better your job training and transportation needs, we are asking you to keep a record of how you travel for one week. You will receive \$30.00 for making this record of your travel. Complete one line (#1, #2, #3, etc.) each time you travel from one place to another for one week. A sample diary is included.

- ? Remember to complete a line for each return trip. For example, if you travel to training, complete a line for that trip. When you return home, complete another trip.
- ? Be specific. Record each place you went on a separate line, even if you stopped several places on one journey.
- ? Record each time you change your means of transportation as a separate trip. For example, if you ride in a vehicle to a busstop and then take the bus to training, these should be recorded as two separate trips.
- ? Record bicycle and walking trips that are 5 minutes or longer.
- ? The first trip should be the first place you went after 4 a.m. each day.
- ? The last trip should be to your home, or to wherever you ended the day at 3:59 a.m. of the next day.

At the end of one week, return this travel diary to Catholic Charities, 6933 9th Avenue North, St. Petersburg, FL 33710. Your travel diary must be returned to Catholic Charities in order for you to receive the \$30.00. If you have any questions about the travel diary, please call, Beverly Ward at (813) 974-9773. Thanks!

Beverly Ward

JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION SAMPLE TRAVEL DIARY
(See instructions for more details.)

ENTER YOUR ZIPCODE IN THIS BOX:

When did you travel? (Date)	Where did you go? (For example, home, work, grocery store, friend's house)	What time did you begin your trip?		How far did you travel to get there?(3 miles, 2 blocks)	How did you travel?(car, bus, bike, walk, etc.)	How long did it take to get there?	Who was with you? (friends, daughter, husband, etc.)
12/18/00	Babysitter's	6:45	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> p.m.	4 blocks	walked	15 mins.	son
12/18/00	job training	7:00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> p.m.	4 miles	bus	45 mins.	
12/18/00	lunch	11:30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> p.m.	2 blocks	walked	10 minutes	friends
12/18/00	babysitter's	1:00	<input type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> p.m.	4 miles	bus	45 minutes	
12/18/00	grocery store	2:00	<input type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> p.m.	2 blocks	walked	10 minutes	son
12/18/00	home	2:45	<input type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> p.m.	3 blocks	walked	20 minutes	son
12/19/00	babysitter's	8:00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> p.m.	4 blocks	walked	20 minutes	son
12/19/00	ride to busstop	8:30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> p.m.	6 blocks	car	15 minutes	friend
12/19/00	interview	9:00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> p.m. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> p.m.	5 miles	bus	40 minutes	

JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL DIARY
 (See instructions on back of sample diary for more details.)

ENTER YOUR ZIPCODE IN THIS E

When did you travel? (Date)	Where did you go? (For example, home, work, grocery store, friends house)	What time did you begin your trip?		How far did you travel to get there?(3 miles, 2 blocks)	How did you travel?(car, bus, bike, walk, etc.)	How long did it take to get there?	Who was with you? (friends, daughter, husband, etc.)
		<input type="text"/>	a.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	p.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	a.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	p.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	a.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	p.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	a.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	p.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	a.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	p.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	a.m.				
		<input type="text"/>	p.m.				

**JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION
FOCUS GROUP SURVEY**

1. What county do you live in? (Check One)

 ? Hillsborough County
 ? Pinellas County
 ? Pasco County

3. What is your date of birth? _____ (Month/Day/Year)

4. What is the highest grade in school you completed? _____

5. How would you describe your ethnic background? (Check One)

 ? African-American
 ? Caucasian
 ? Hispanic
 ? Asian
 ? Native American
 ? Other: please explain _____

6. Do you rent or own your home? (Circle One) RENT OWN

7. How many children are currently in your care? _____

8. Are you currently receiving welfare checks?

 ? Yes
 ? No ? When did you receive your last check? _____ (Month/Year)

9. How long have you been (or were) you on welfare? _____ (# of Years/Months)

10. What was the name of the agency or program where you received job training?

11. Did you complete the program?
- ? Yes
 - ? No ? How long were you in the program? _____(Months)
12. Are you currently employed?
- ? Yes? What is your job title? _____
 - ? No
13. Is transportation a problem for you in terms of finding and keeping a job?
- ? Yes
 - ? No
14. Which forms of transportation are available to you? (Check all that apply)
- ? Personal vehicle (car or motorcycle)
 - ? Bus
 - ? Friend's/relative's vehicle (car or motorcycle)
 - ? Getting rides from friends/neighbors/family
 - ? Taxi
 - ? Bicycle or other non-motorized transportation
 - ? Other: please describe: _____
15. Which of the following issues are making the process of going from welfare to work more difficult (Check all that apply)
- ? Physical disability
 - ? Emotional or mental health disability
 - ? Caring for a child or children with special needs
 - ? Caring for an elderly parent
 - ? Lack of reliable transportation
 - ? Lack of job skills
 - ? Other: please describe: _____

**JOB TRAINING AND TRANSPORTATION
PROVIDER FOCUS GROUP SURVEY**

1. In what county is your job training program located? (Check One)

?Hillsborough County

?Pinellas County

?Pasco County

2. For what program or agency are you currently providing job training?

3. What is the exact title of the program? _____

4. How long have you held your current position? _____ (Months/Years)

5. What other programs or agencies (**if any**) have you provided job training for in the past two years?

6. What is your educational background?

Degree: _____

Area of Study: _____

APPENDIX C:
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