

Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force

Meeting Minutes for 8/26/2021 9:00 AM- 12:00

Virtual Meeting

Minutes (for review and confirmation at next meeting, November 17, 2021)

I. Welcome and Attendance

Meeting convened by Representative Mia Gregerson and Acting DSHS Secretary Don Clintsman

Voting Members

- Rep. Michelle Caldier, (R) Washington State House of Representatives
- Don Clintsman, Department of Social and Health Services (Executive Co-Chair)
- Sen. Jeannie Darneille, (D) Washington State Senate
- Jennifer Dellinger, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- Sen. Manka Dhingra, (D) Washington State Senate
- Rep. Carolyn Eslick, (R) Washington State House of Representatives
- Sen. Chris Gildon, (R) Washington State Senate
- Rep. Mia Gregerson, (D) Washington State House of Representatives (Legislative Co-Chair)
- Diane Klontz, Department of Commerce (Co-Chair Advisory)
- Mark Kucza, Department of Corrections
- Haley Lowe, Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction
- Daisye Orr, Department of Health
- Rep. Strom Peterson, (D) Washington State House of Representatives
- Tim Probst, Employment Security Department (Co-Chair Advisory)
- Nicole Rose, Department of Children Youth and Families
- Vacant, Washington State Senate (Republican representative)

Quorum? Yes No

Non-Voting Members

- Mystique Hurtado, Governor's Office Indian Affairs
- Anna Minor, Office of Financial Management
- Nam Nguyen, Asian Pacific Islander Commission
- Ed Prince, Commission on African American Affairs
- Maria Siguenza, Commission on Hispanic Affairs
- David Stillman, Department of Social and Health Services (Co-Chair Advisory)

Staff

- Jim Baumgart, Office of the Governor
- Babs Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services

Additional attendees: Briana Allen (DSHS), Noal Alsharbini (Community Action Partnership), Michael Althausen (Senate Democratic Caucus), Sarah Garcia (DSHS), Emily Grossman (Commerce), Victoria Hilt (Poverty Reduction Workgroup- Steering Committee), Lonnie Johns-Brown (Consultant), Alexis Marx (DSHS), Lindsay Morgan Tracy (DSHS), Kole Musgrove (for Rep. Mosbrucker), Erik Peterson (DSHS), Lori Pfingst (DSHS), Shellea Quillen (Health Care Authority), Amy Lynn Roark (Poverty Reduction Workgroup- Steering Committee), Anne Stone (DSHS), Manny

Santiago (LGBTQ Commission), Alina Swart (Poverty Reduction Workgroup- Steering Committee), and Nicholas Swiatkowski (DSHS)

II. Public Comment

Lonnie Johns-Brown asked this group to consider how credit scores impact auto insurance pricing, which impacts ability for folks to drive to work.

III. Task Force Business - Rep. Mia Gregerson and Babs Roberts

- **Confirm prior meeting minutes:** [Minutes from May](#)
 - Rep. Gregerson moved, Tim Probst seconded, and minutes were approved.
- **Taskforce membership and Request Legislation-** Babs Roberts
 - DSHS is requesting legislation to add the LGBTQ Commission and Office of Equity to this group as nonvoting members. Stakeholders have asked to add the Women's Commission as well and commented that these commissions should become voting members.
 - Discussion:
 - Sen Darneille - Are justice-involved persons represented? Response: Only specifically by DOC.
 - Sen Gildon – What's the breakdown of executive level of current taskforce? Response: Executive branch is eight, legislative branch is eight. Representatives from other offices or commissions and Office are nonvoting members. [Link to membership.](#)
 - Sen. Gregerson – the draft version of the bill will be available at the next meeting.

IV. Enhancing and Modernizing LEWPRO Work – Rep. Mia Gregerson, Don Clintsman, Babs Roberts

Decision making approach

- The Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Taskforce was created in 2011. Before that, the TANF block grant was overseen by an executive sub-cabinet group. The Taskforce included members of the subcabinet group (ESD, Commerce, DSHS, SBCTC - DCYF was added when it was established) and legislative representation. Much of the TANF WF oversight responsibility moved to the new Taskforce. Then with passing of [HB 1482](#), the Taskforce became LEWPRO with a focus on intergenerational poverty reduction and additional new members.
- Child Care Collaborative Task Force and the Food Policy Forum are similar to LEWPRO, set up by legislation or proviso, similarly structured membership, but have a different structure to the meetings including things like table talks, small break out groups etc.

Discussion:

- Do the other groups give feedback directly to the governor? Remember, the Poverty Reduction Work Group is an advisory group for this taskforce and created a 10 year plan.
- Rep. Gregerson is trying to determine if consensus is the best way to move work forward. Do we want to make this more of a committee style?
- Sen. Darneille – We are exiting at least 20% of prison populations into communities; how do they get connected to services? Some policies among different programs makes it hard for certain groups to get services.
- Secretary Clintsman –We will be bringing this important topic up for further discussion at the next meeting.

Meeting facilitation options

We are continuing to work on meeting specifics like getting notices out to the public, recording (e.g. TVW), etc.

Meeting structure and staffing

The group expressed support for meetings led by a facilitator

- *Decision making: Rep. Caldier - happy with doing a vote, though there are concerns about level of priority. At Food Policy Forum if there is a dissenting voice we include that into the report. Rep Eslick –Likes the idea of consensus rather than a vote, feels like this will help with ideas being presented and accepted. Rep Gregerson - Most of the work on food policy forum is consensus, but believes that a formal vote at some point will be important. Will put together a presentation for the next meeting of a structure for meetings and decision-making.*
- *Jim Baumgart – The governor has included poverty reduction as part of his strategic agenda for the next session and biennium. We continue to develop this agenda through September and October. Part of the strategic agenda will include the work of LEWPRO and various other legislative and executive task forces (tax reform, IT systems development for integrated applications, etc.), as well as the Poverty Reduction Work Group recommendations.*

V. Equitable Compensation for Community Experience – Emily Grossman and Tim Probst

- *Tim Probst - The idea of including customer voice has been moving for the last 10 years but the experience from the PRWG really brought that forward with special strength. The steering committee say that they know that these agencies are trying to help them but it doesn't always feel like that as different agencies might be asking for different things making it hard to move ahead. ESD has started using this approach with their partners.*
- *Emily Grossman –We aren't able to use public fund/stipends to reimburse costs for those living in poverty who advise us. We have been using philanthropic funds to do this. It is inequitable and unfair when state employees and stakeholders are getting paid to be at the table, but we expect those with lived experiences to volunteer their time and use their own resources to get there. All the agencies have expressed a desire to address this issue - a lot to work on: What would a statewide approach look like? What would the amounts be? Who would qualify, etc.?*
- *Sen. Gregerson – what is coming next? Emily is working with the governor's office, they are interested in this topic too. They are collaborating but there isn't a plan to put something specific forward at this time.*

VI. TANF/WorkFirst Updates - Babs Roberts

WorkFirst Spending Plan 2021-23 ([see document](#))

- *Part of the role of this taskforce is approving TANF spending.*
- *We ended SFY 2021 with some changes due to pandemic.*
 - *Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA) is available to people who need just short-term assistance, usually because they have a job lined up – cases and spending down significantly, believe that this is due to economic uncertainty - families aren't sure if they can meet ongoing needs.*
 - *Low spending on WorkFirst services, fewer families referred to services since it was voluntary and new challenges like children home from school etc.*
- *Grant spending increases based on caseload forecasts.*

- *WorkFirst Services spending will go back up because participation requirements resume in September. DSHS is asking staff to assess where families are and develop participation plans accordingly and working with partners to use the funds they have to meet the family's needs.*
- *TANF adult caseload is now more than 20% higher than pre-pandemic.*

WorkFirst Reengagement in Required Participation

- *Reengagement starts in September, each participant will get a phone appointment letter.*
- *WorkFirst Program Specialists will start working with folks with the fewest months.*
- *Social Services staff will begin with families with the highest number of TANF months. While TANF time limits are suspended through June of next year, we want to make sure these families are on a good path to either move off TANF or look into hardship extensions.*
 - *At appointments, participants will discuss their situation, concerns, and goals for their families and, with their worker, build that into a plan for job search, school, supported work, internships. This may also include referrals to treatment, supports to remove barriers, etc. We will connect participants to child care as needed and support services such as gas vouchers, work clothing, etc.*
 - *Clients are able to call our customer service contact center (CSCC) to be connected live, have an alert set for a call back, or a direct transfer to leave a voicemail or speak to their worker.*
 - *Communication: We sent mailer to all impacted clients. Added a message while on hold with the CSCC. There will be automated appointment reminder calls before each family's appointment. We are also doing stakeholder and partner communications.*
 - *Sen. Darneille – How many of 18,000 families face a drop dead date for the end of phasing in? How many families have never faced requirements because they came onto TANF during the pandemic?*
 - *Babs Roberts - We are hoping to reengage/meet with everyone by end of Nov, and will be tracking the number we aren't able to connect with, and constantly monitoring what that looks like.*
 - *There are over 6,000 households with less than 18 months on TANF. These clients were required to complete an orientation explaining the program, but weren't required to participate.*
 - *Over the last 18 months CSD revised how we complete evaluations with WF participants. Our new Pathway Development Tool is more client driven, strengths based and questions focus on what do clients want, and how can we help them get there.*
 - *Sen. Darneille - How are we measuring what's happening in other states, and does our process for re-engagement look at similar outcomes?*
 - *Babs Roberts - We are talking to other states, Babs chairs an affinity group with APHSA (National Association of State TANF Administrators – NASTA) which consists of peers across the country. They have also been discussing COVID response and the future of TANF and reengagement. Some states never suspended participation, some started reengagement months ago. Have been working with other states to get ahead of speedbumps, in terms of work participation. We think we are going to be fine with federal work participation requirements.*
 - *Rep. Gregerson – How can this group help support sharing this work to get prepared to the voluntary communities? Also, if there are core APHSA recommendations on TANF/WorkFirst principles, can we get a briefing on that in the future?*

- Babs Roberts– happy to take questions from partners or communities who aren't hearing what is happening and can provide them information about the reengagement process so they have something available, along with the mailer that went out to clients.
- Also, attaching NASTA/APHSA link and happy to bring back [core principles](#) back to this group.
- We need to think about pathways and determining what people really want to do. Some federal measures are just about finding employment, not a lot of qualitative measures. ESD is looking at using the UW's [self-sufficiency calculator](#) to work towards employment that will meet ongoing needs.

Future Service Delivery

- During the COVID-19 crisis, CSD moved almost all services virtually, only doing limited in-person services with appointments for things like support services and vouchers. We created a phone TANF intake queue, previously TANF intake was done in person or with a scheduled appointment.
- CSD will restore some services in the CSOs, some only by appointment. We will maintain our CSO lobby navigators. EBT issuance in the lobbies will be returning to the CSOs.
- We are looking at partnerships with CBOs who want us to be in their locations to increase accessibility for clients. We can expand outstation options if we reduce the walk-in on-demand services. Out-stationed staff will learn more about communities and services offered through other agencies
- Changes will happen in phases. There are teams thinking out the processes, having conversations with key partners, asking them to inform this process.
- Questions:
 - Rep Eslick- Will this close down offices in small communities?
 - Babs Roberts- each time a lease needs to be reviewed we look to see if we are at the right place, where the clients need to access us. This may impact the brick and mortar footprint.

VII. Poverty Reduction Workgroup (PRWG) Updates – Lori Pfingst and David Stillman

We are highlighting work since we last met. The Blueprint for a Just & Equitable Future: The 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty still has eight strategies. [Link](#) for newer members of the taskforce. APHSA did a case study on process used to develop the steering committee. Very proud of this steering committee (several members here today).

- 60 recommendations is a lot, needed to prioritize this work, needs a strong foundation.
 - We also need to look at changes we can make right now to help impact poverty.
 - We need to adopt a definition and measure of recovery that guides the state towards long-term, equitable and inclusive economic growth.
 - Looking at the UW self-sufficiency model to not only help those in poverty determine what type of income and jobs would help them meet their needs, but also used to determine how our programs benefits measure up to what is needed to meeting needs.
- Legislative session changes in relation to 10-year plan. The PRWG doesn't own all this work.
 - Creation of the Office of Equity
 - Steering committee received funding to continue

- *Fair Start for Kids Act*
- *Continuous Medicaid coverage*
- *Housing and homelessness recommendations, money to prevent homelessness*
- *Establishing a new needs standard*
- *Expansion of reentry program, keeping families together act*
- *Where is PRWG going? We are the systems, the people working in these systems with a shared vision and purpose and working with those living in poverty.*
 - *Commit to action within and between agencies.*
 - *Prioritize implementation of 10-year plan.*
 - *Build towards a just future by including those that are historically excluded.*
 - *Hold state accountable by measures of progress on equity.*
 - *Just and equitable Recovery: What are we recovering from, and what are we recovering towards? COVID-19 helped illuminate inequalities that have been around centuries and decades. The typical ways we measured were unemployment rate and gross product. However, this might mask those groups that aren't seeing this overall improvements. Working on defining equitable future with Results Washington.*
 - *Floating idea of a community caucus to elevate community feedback including groups that have disproportionality experienced poverty. Working with community partners to define this and build it into decision making progress.*
 - *2021 legislation approved a universal basic income feasibility study. There are over 70 guaranteed income pilots happening right now.*
 - *Feasibility study assigned to ESA and PRWG to do a literature review, cost benefit analysis and strategy for people who participate in this pilot to understand how their benefits can be impacted.*
 - *Draft study recommendations due June 1, 2022.*
- *There will be a forum on basic income hosted by Laurie Lippold and others in the fall (date to come).*

VIII. Public Comment

Alina Swart – Shared the (monthly) child tax credit may have unintended consequences for those who typically budget around a larger tax return once a year.

Comment: The PRWG steering committee wants transparency about program eligibility criteria/rules. Says WACONN can be very confusing and requires that applicants check too many boxes.

IX. Good of the Order

- *Request from advocates to have a workshop on CSD's future service delivery model, wanted to know if those advocates are here and whether their questions were answered?*
- *Rep. Gregerson - Wants to record these meetings in the future and likes a committee structure.*

Next meeting date: November 17, 2021