

**Orange County
Department of Social Services**

**Work First County Plan
October 1, 2009-September 30, 2011**

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**Public Comment Period:
September 21 through October 5, 2008**

Work First is North Carolina's program to administer the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant. A planning committee consisting of representatives from local government, public, private and neighborhood organizations, and Work First participants designed the attached plan to administer Work First in Orange County from October 2009 to September 2011.

The public may review and comment on this draft plan prior to its submission to the Board of County Commissioners. Public comments will be received from September 21, 2008 through October 5, 2008. Following approval by the Board, the plan must then be submitted to the North Carolina Division of Social Services, which will in turn present the collective State Plan to the North Carolina General Assembly.

Written comments on the draft plan will be accepted through October 5, 2008. Please submit your comments by e-mail, mail, or in person at the Social Services reception area office or fax to:

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Work First Block Grant Plan Orange County

I. Conditions within the County

Orange County has a population of 124,313. It is uniquely diverse with 78% Caucasian, 13.8% Black, 4.5% Hispanic, and 4.1% Asian and Other. The per capita income for the county is \$41,435. The median family income is \$45,527, ranked tenth in the state. Fifty one percent of adults in Orange County have a college education, the highest percentage in the state of North Carolina. The state average of adults with college education is 22.5%. In Orange County, 87.6% of the population has a high school education compared to 78% for North Carolina.

The average cost of a home in Orange County is \$382,794 and the median cost is \$250,000. Orange County's tax rate is 99.8 cents, an increase of 4.18 cents. It is the second highest property tax rate in the state.

The unemployment rate for July 2008 was 5.1 percent and has shown a slight increase since April 2008. Orange County has had 16 businesses either close or lay-off workers this year. Government (county, state, and municipalities) jobs account for 48% of the county's workforce. The current economy with budget shortfalls and major deficits for government has a major impact on job development and placement.

Orange County Economic Development Commission's State of the Local Economy Report for April 2008 captured the top ten employers in the county:

- UNC-Chapel Hill
- UNC Health Care System
- Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
- Blue Cross & Blue Shield
- Orange County Schools
- Orange County Government
- Town of Chapel Hill
- Sports Endeavors, Inc.
- HR Prime LLC
- Harris Teeter, Inc.

Orange County's current Work First population faces major obstacles in obtaining and retaining employment. Work First participants are competing for jobs with a highly skilled workforce. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers without a high school diploma and a recent connection to the workforce are unable to obtain jobs that provide a living wage. The high cost of home ownership and the lack of safe, affordable rental housing continue to be a major issue for low-income families in Orange County. Rental households face serious challenges with high costs, inadequate supplies, and competition with university students for limited housing stock.

Transportation to and from work, childcare transportation, and access to childcare continue to be key issues for low-income families. Lack of transportation is a major barrier in assisting families' transition from dependency to independence. The market rate for a five star childcare center for an infant exceeds \$13,080 per year. Many families need help paying the cost of quality childcare. Low-income families will not be able to provide childcare from 50% of their income. After school care and care during holidays and inclement weather days present major hardships for families. Also, the lack of daycare and transportation for second and third shift work is an issue.

Barriers such as substance abuse, criminal records, and chronic physical and mental health problems have no quick fix. Frequently, individuals have faced more than one of these barriers. As caseloads decline by individuals finding and sustaining employment, the ones remaining present the most complex barriers and challenge our creativity and collaborative efforts in assisting them to self-sufficiency.

A profile of our Work First caseload is described below:

Work First Caseload Data

Cases with adults	99
Child-only cases	137
Total cases	236
Total recipients	462

Work First Profile

- 95% are women, 5% are men
- 50% are under age 30, 50% are over
- 50% have high school diploma
- 47% live in Northern Orange
- 53% live in Southern Orange
- On average families have two children
- Average payment \$216

Length of Time on Work First

- 0-6 months – 48%
- 7-12 months – 16%
- 13-24 months - 15%
- 25-36 months – 7%
- 37-48 months – 2%
- 49-60 months – 1%
- Over 60 months- 11%

II. Planning Process

A. Planning Committee

The full listing of participants can be found in Attachment 3. Organizations and individuals represented on the planning committee include:

Board of Social Services	Orange County Assistant Manager
Child Care Services Association	Orange County Child Support
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	Orange County Department of Social Services
Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce	Orange County Health Department
Communities in Schools	Orange County JobLink
Durham Tech	Orange County Literacy Council
Dispute Settlement Center	Orange County Public Transportation
Economic Development Commission	Orange County Schools
Educational Opportunity Center	Orange Enterprises, Inc.
Employers	Orange-Person-Chatham Mental Health Regional Partnership Workforce Development Board
Employment Security Commission	Teen Parent Expansion Program
Habitat for Humanity	The Women's Center
Horizons	Town of Chapel Hill
HR Consulting	Town of Chapel Hill Department of Housing
Interfaith Council	UNC-CH
Joint Orange-Chatham Community Action Agency	UNC Health Care
OC Friends of the CFW	WF Participants
OC Housing & Community Development	
Orange Community Housing & Land Trust	

B. Public Comment

The Orange County Work First Plan was available at several locations in the county for public comment from September 21 through October 5, 2008. The plan was available at the Orange County Public Libraries, Government Services Center, Skills Development Center, Southern Human Services Center, Orange County Department of Social Services and all planning partners. Notification was made to the public that the plan was available for public comment by advertising in the News of Orange, the Chapel Hill News and The Herald Sun. The plan was also available on the Internet at <http://www.co.orange.nc.us/socsvcs/wfplan.htm>

C. Planning Process

Orange County Board of Social Services submitted recommendations for the planning committee to the Orange County Board of County Commissioners on July 21, 2008. On August 19, 2008, the Board appointed 56 members to the Work First Block Grant Planning Committee. Four work group meetings with community leaders and Work First participants were held on September 9, 2008, September 12, 2008 and September 15, 2008. Recommendations from the four work group meetings were shared with the planning committee on September 19, 2008.

More than 40 people representing a wide variety of community organizations attended the first meeting on August 25, 2008 at the Southern Human Services Center in Chapel Hill. The first meeting provided an overview of Work First policy along with barriers, issues and concerns facing Work First participants. Committee members signed up for a choice of four work groups exploring strategies and opportunities in the area of employment, transportation, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and family well-being.

On September 19, 2008 with more than 40 people attending, committee members heard presentations from the four work group meetings. These strategies and recommendations were approved as the plan to achieve the county's outcomes and goals.

III. Outcomes and Goals for the County

A. Statewide Work First Goals

The North Carolina Division of Social Services, in consultation with the county department of social services and county board of commissioners, established acceptable levels of performance for Orange County in meeting the following six Work First goals:

1. **Employment.** Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First clients.
2. **Meeting Federal Participation Rates.** Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment.
 - I. All Families Rate – 50%
 - II. Two Parent Rate- 90%
3. **Providing Employment Services.** Active participation in intensive employment services for all families in order to meet the participation rate and to ensure families are served adequately before the end of five years. One measure of success is the percentage of families who are required to participate in employment services that counties are assisting with job preparation and job placement.
 - I. All Families- 80%
 - II. Two Parent- 100%
4. **Staying Off Welfare.** Efforts to reduce welfare rolls, help adults find jobs, and increase self-sufficiency are undermined when families return to welfare. Families leaving Work First because of a job are tracked to determine if they return to cash assistance.
5. **Job Retention.** Families who leave Work First for employment and continue to be employed 6 to 12 months after leaving the program show evidence of keeping their income and increased job stability, which impacts a family's well being. This measure will be based on the number of responsible adults that leave Work First Family Assistance for employment who are still employed at 6 and 12 month intervals following termination.
6. **Benefit Diversion.** The most successful outcome possible is for an applicant to avoid the need to become a recipient.

B. County Developed Outcome Goals

The Work First Planning Committee recommended to the County Commissioners to continue with the following outcome goals. The Department of Social Services shall continue to uphold its mission to provide quality services to the citizens of Orange County. Specifically, the Department of Social Services should do so by seeking to assist

Work First participants in obtaining and maintaining employment, meeting federal and state goals pertaining to employment and job retention, and helping families meet the basic physical, social, educational, health, and economic needs of children and adults who comprise Work First families.

Orange County exceeded all 6 outcome goals as defined by the Division of Social Services.

	Goal	YTD
Employment	70	115
Stay off Work First	90%	96%
Benefit Diversion	155	228
Providing Employment Services	80%	93%
All Parent Participation Rate	50%	61%
Job Retention	60%	69%

IV. Plans to Achieve the Outcomes and Goals Activities and Supportive Services

A. Activities

Employment Strategies and Recommendations

Outcome: Develop opportunities for Work First participants to improve their employability through subsidized and unsubsidized employment, on-the-job training, work experience, job searches, job readiness and community services.

- a. Build relationships with employers
- b. Educate employers on tax incentives and on-the-job training
- c. Develop a relationship with local employers to offer mock interview sessions with Work First participants
- d. Explore and apply for offender grants
- e. Build Partnerships with local law schools and attorneys to assist with expungements
- f. Utilize former Work First participants as mentors and provide opportunities for them to share their employment success stories
- g. Implement on-the-job training program
- h. Establish an incentive program for participants to encourage job placement
- i. Match skills and interest of participants with available job openings or entrepreneurship
- j. Develop more training opportunities for skill building to participants through work experience
- k. Develop more work experience sites
- l. Create a mechanism for screening and assessing clients knowledge, skills and abilities
- m. Provide retention services for twelve months

- n. Build partnerships with Chamber of Commerce, Department of Labor, Job Link Center and Employment Security Commission working with TANF eligible families

B. Supportive Services

Outcome: Provide training programs that will increase the employability of Work First Participants and their ability to locate and maintain employment.

- a. Continue the twelve weeks Work First Enrichment Class an intensive and structured employment preparation program leading to a certificate of completion
- b. Offer vocational skills training to Work First participants
- c. Continue faith community partnering program
- d. Collaborate with Wheels for Work and driver's training program
- e. Collaborate with community agencies and make referrals as appropriate
- f. Continue job coaching and mentoring programs for hard to place participants
- g. Provide intensive employment services for the hardest to serve participants which include vocational assessment, job placement, and follow-up
- h. Offer incentives for participants working on a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and encourage employers to hire participants working on their diploma
- i. Ensure participants have an awareness of transportation resources
- j. Advocate for the needs of participants through public forums and poverty forums in an effort to gain community support on issues
- k. Research early drop-off childcare issue. Explore using other centers

Outcome: Improve access to transportation for employment, vocational training and child care for Work First Families.

- a. Identify current van pooling routes within Orange County
- b. Utilize van pooling for participants living and working in same proximity
- c. Collect information on existing transportation systems such as Triangle Transit Authority, Orange Public Transportation and Chapel Hill Transit
- d. Contract for Work First drivers for improved access
- e. Assist in marketing efforts for Triangle Transit Authority, Orange Public Transportation and Chapel Hill Transit
- f. Advocate for expanded resources for rural services
- g. Enhance mass transit efforts by connecting short routes with longer routes (connecting Orange Public Transportation with Triangle Transit Authority)
- h. Enhance the car donation program
- i. Encourage financial education for Work First participants receiving car donations or assist in purchasing a car
- j. Assist Work First participants with down payment when financially possible
- k. Assign clients to Employment Service workers/caseworkers based on consistency of transportation needs (i.e. pick up more than one client at a time)
- l. Re-open voided/previously used transit pick-up areas where there is currently no service (in rural areas)
- m. Advocate for transportation rate increases for daycares

Outcome: Develop intervention strategies that empower and strengthen families through the acquisition of basic necessities such as housing, nutrition, health, child care, support networks, relationship building, life skill and communication skill building, financial literacy and engaging involvement from non-custodial parents.

- a. Expand our job readiness model to include role playing, health and literacy, financial planning, budgeting, conflict resolution, credit counseling and self assessment
- b. Strengthen education about family planning and consequences about lack of family planning on benefits
- c. Provide client information about educational resources which include literacy council, computer training, general equivalency diploma, finances, nutrition and father read, mother read and baby read programs
- d. Determine common clients between Work First and Health Department's Maternal Care Coordination and Child Services Coordination to utilize their in home visits
- e. Educate clients to be better consumers and advocates of their health care
- f. Refer clients to other agencies for health and nutrition information
- g. Ensure clients are aware and educated on the importance of having two parents, establishing paternity and child support payments
- h. Utilize community resources to provide work adjustment services including job coaching, job mentoring and peer mentoring
- i. Develop a mentoring group from successful past participants in the Work First program
- j. Expand Fatherhood on the Move program
- k. Expand and network more in the faith-based community

Outcome: Increase employability and sustainability for participants with mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues through treatment planning and supportive services.

- a. Conduct thorough family assessments
- b. Provide domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse screenings and referrals for counseling when appropriate
- c. Identify Work First participants receiving services from other community agencies as well as Child Protective Services to build a strong collaborative network and develop a combined treatment plan through a collective team approach
- d. Improve relationship with Vocational Rehabilitation to assist families in improving employment opportunities
- e. Involve previous successful Work First participants and community mentors in the program in order to provide additional motivation and encouragement for current participants, help them focus on goals, and recover from set backs
- f. Incorporate additional "self care" education and incentives into the program which will promote better physical and mental health for participants through regular health evaluations with doctors, proper exercise and sleep, and through quality family time/activities

- g. Develop support and mentoring groups to support retention and sustainability

Outcome: Provide individualized case management services that ensure the safety, development and well-being of children.

- a. Connect Families To Parenting
 - Explore the possibility of teaching parenting skills that relate to the support of a child throughout elementary and secondary school years
 - Encourage parents to become comfortable working within the school system to address problems that may arise and to become an advocate for their child's need
- b. Child care
 - Encourage parents to become a partner with their childcare provider, in an attempt to put parents in the role of a school involved parent
 - Explore the possibility of faith-based teams becoming involved as mentors in this regard
 - Identify family mentoring programs that may be currently available and determine gaps in services
 - Provide resources to cover the cost of care while participants are looking for work
 - Identify a strategy to help parents with the cost associated with outstanding balances on parent fees
 - Offer scholarships for school age children
 - Continue current subsidy programs
 - Advocate for an additional subsidy for low-income families
 - Develop individualized plans for parents with special child care needs
 - Ensure the DSS Board monitors the progress of the community on the child care recommendations
- c. Other supportive services
 - Expand services to teens which include pregnancy prevention and parenting
 - Provide emergency assistance for Work First eligible families (200% FPL)
 - Provide short-term diversion assistance for up to three months

V. Administration

A. Authority

Orange County Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously on August 19, 2008 to remain a standard county. The Orange County Department of Social Services will have the authority for administration of the Work First Program.

B. Organization

A copy of the Orange County DSS organizational chart has been attached to this document (Attachment 2). The Income Maintenance Director has primary oversight for the Work First Program. The main office for the Department of Social Services is

located at 300 W. Tryon Street in Hillsborough, the county seat. Services are also available through our satellite office at 2501 Homestead Road in Chapel Hill. A number of employment and training agencies, including Work First and Employment Services, are co-located at the Orange County Skills Development/JobLink Center.

A generic intake worker interviews Work First applicants when they appear at either the Hillsborough or the Southern Orange Social Services office in Chapel Hill. Their circumstances are assessed to determine whether diversion assistance is appropriate or an application for ongoing assistance should be initiated. The intake worker also assesses other needs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, etc. During the interview process a non-exempt Work First applicant is scheduled for orientation and work preparation. The Work First Employment Services social workers handle these sessions. Two parent applicants are referred during the application process to Employment Services. Work First Cash Assistance and Employment Services are consolidated into one unit to further enhance the agency's ability to meet performance goals. Work First Employment Services social workers work with non-exempt individuals during the processing period and provide the appropriate supportive services needed to help families make the transition from welfare to work.

The Child-Only TANF cases are handled by a social worker I. This worker provides intensive short/long-term services to assist families who may be experiencing difficulties that may disrupt family stability. The worker also completes the Work First Reviews.

The Skills Development/JobLink Center is a broad-based skills training and employment assistance program accessible to Work First participants and other Orange County citizens. Co-located in the Center are staff from Durham Technical Community College, Employment Security Commission, Orange County Literacy Council, Joint Orange Chatham Community Action Agency (JOCCA), Good Work, OC Disability Awareness Council, Educational Opportunity Center, Veteran Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Work First. The Center staff provide job training, career interest assessments, job readiness, job search, workforce investment act, unemployment insurance benefits, and job placement services. The Department of Social Services is the lead agency with oversight for the Center.

C. First Stop

First Stop is designed to assist applicants and Work First recipients in becoming employed. All non-exempt Work First applicants and recipients are required to register with the Employment Security Commission, follow through on job referrals, and attend work preparation workshops.

First Stop registration is conducted at the Employment Security Commission office in Hillsborough. A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Employment Security Commission and the Orange County Department of Social Services is attached (Attachment 1). Orange County continues to utilize First Stop

services. The Employment Security Commission continues to assist clients by providing job search, job development, and job placement services.

D. Child Care

Orange County Social Services provides day care subsidy payments to eligible families as defined by federal, state and local policy. When insufficient funds are available to meet demand, a waiting list is implemented. The following policy outlines the priority for payments when a waiting list is in place.

1. Child Protective Services (CPS) active cases or other Child Welfare Services when necessary to assure protection of children.
2. Children in OCDSS custody (Foster Care) to support employment of caretaker or other need.
3. Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) recipients employed or who are participating in approved activities or training.
4. Teen parents who need child care to complete High School Education or its equivalency.
5. Children who reside in homeless families to ensure safety and protection.
6. To support employment. Priority is given to those employed full-time.
7. To support part-time employment.
8. To support education or training leading to employment.
9. Children who need child care for their Developmental Needs.

Orange County is currently serving families through and including number 5. State regulations require that certain funds be set aside each year to serve children with Special Needs. Once these set aside funds are expended, children with special needs are placed on the waiting list in the appropriate category.

E. Transportation

Ongoing communication exists between DSS and Orange Public Transportation, the local transportation agency. DSS staff members serve on the local transportation board and articulate the needs of Work First participants during transportation planning sessions. In addition, DSS has an agreement with OPT for the services of a transportation mobility manager to develop individual transportation plans and for the use of a vehicle to transport Work First participants.

As a result of the collaboration, local transportation routes have been expanded to meet the needs of some Work First participants and the Wheels for Work Program was developed. The Wheels For Work Program matches donated vehicles with low income working families, and assists low income working families with car repairs.

There is no cost to riders using the Chapel Hill Transit System. Work First participants living and working on the bus line take advantage of this service. For Work First families living outside of the Chapel Hill Transit System, transportation continues to be a major barrier.

Work First participants with access to personal vehicles receive a mileage reimbursement. Others carpool, vanpool, utilize Orange Public Transportation or Triangle Transit Authority. NC Department of Transportation grant funds are used to meet the various transportation needs of former Work First participants.

Orange County DSS also utilizes bus passes, van pools, and some use of taxis to assist individuals to get to and from their work activities.

F. Substance Abuse Services

Orange Person Chatham (OPC) Area Mental Health Authority received funding to continue the on-site Qualified Professional Substance Abuse (QPSA) position in Orange County. OPC Mental Health will continue to provide substance abuse services to Work First families through contract services. As part of mental health reform, OPC Mental Health Authority contracted with Chrysalis Foundation to perform the initial screening and assessment of Work First participants. A representative from Chrysalis Foundation will be on site two days per week and will be available by telephone.

Orange County DSS works closely with UNC-Hospitals, Horizons, and Sunrise staff for residential and outpatient treatment services for Work First participants. A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement between OPC Area Mental Health and Orange County Department of Social Services is attached (Attachment 4).

G. Family Violence Option

Orange County DSS has a contract with the Family Violence Prevention Center of Orange County to provide full assessments of domestic violence, counseling and support group sessions, and coordinate any needed services such as emergency housing, transportation, and legal services.

H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

Orange County will utilize Maintenance of Effort funds to support activities that will lead to employment and self-sufficiency. Some of the services and programs earmarked for funding are:

- Salaries and fringe benefits for Work First Cash and Employment staff, and some emergency assistance staff
- Professional services contracts with vendors and community service agencies that serve Work First families
- New initiatives identified during the year by the Block Grant Planning Committee
- Participant expenses related to education, training, job readiness, job retention, and other expenses directly related to participants obtaining and retaining employment
- Emergency assistance services

- Day care services for eligible children aimed at employment and employment preparation

I. Child Welfare Services

Economic Services and Child Welfare Units will collaborate to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Orange County will spend over \$418,144 of the Work First Block Grant for Child Welfare Services.

VI. Emergency Assistance

Orange County will provide emergency assistance to families based on the following criteria:

- The family has a child who lives with a relative as defined for Work First Cash Assistance.
- Total gross income does not exceed 200% of the poverty level.
- Family members meet the citizenship requirements as outlined in Work First Cash Assistance.
- Assistance for medical care will be provided with maintenance of effort dollars.
- Meet the income and asset limits. (The asset limit is \$3,000 in resources that can be readily converted to cash in five days.)
- Be in an emergency situation.
- Not have received Work First-EA within the past 6 consecutive months.

An emergency situation includes but is not limited to:

- Homelessness or in immediate danger of becoming homeless,
- Utility disconnection received,
- Loss of employment,
- Catastrophic illness,
- Loss of supporting family member,
- Natural disaster, or
- A child at risk of being deprived of the basic necessities.

TANF-EA is used for non-recurring, short-term needs.

Services provided include housing, food, and utility assistance. Benefits will be in response to a specific episode of need and will not meet the federal definition of assistance. Orange County will provide assistance using the voucher method. Benefits will be limited to \$300 per applicant/per year. The total dollar amount of Emergency Assistance is \$150,000.

Emergency assistance may be used to stabilize the family or to avoid out-of-home placement of the child (ren). A social worker of the case whether in Child Welfare, Prevention Service, Employment Services, or Adult Services will provide an assessment and determine the type of assistance needed. All families utilizing emergency assistance

will be provided financial counseling and educated on basic budget and money management techniques to empower and strengthen financial literacy.

VII. Services to Low-Income Families

Orange County DSS will provide services to low-income employed families at or below 200% of poverty. Services may include transportation or transportation related expenses, work attire, tools, shelter cost, or utility assistance, domestic violence services, and any other employment retention assistance or social work intervention with at risk families as funds are available. The amount of funds that will be available for 200% will be directly related to the number of cases in the Work First caseload.

VIII. Services to Non-Custodial Parents

Orange County Department of Social Services is committed to providing assistance in the development of an initiative to serve non-custodial parents. We recognize that the need for child support in Work First families is critical to them becoming and remaining self-sufficient. There are 253 Work First families at any one time. Of this number there are about 275 non-custodial parents, generally fathers. Of the 275 non-custodial parents, there are 145 child-only cases with both parents absent. Orange County will implement a non-custodial parent program to improve the employment skills and enhance parental responsibility for the emotional and financial well being of children.

Program participants must be a non-custodial parent of a Work First child with income at or below 200% of poverty, and a US citizen or an eligible alien. Program participants will be identified through Child Support Enforcement. The program's initial focus will be on fathers.

The fatherhood initiative will enable non-custodial fathers of Work First children to take more responsibility for their children. The Work First Block Grant Planning Committee believes that with county and nonprofit agency partnerships, this program will help to improve the lives of Work First non-custodial parents, their children, and custodial parents.

IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement

Orange County will continue to exempt all single parents with children under the age of one for a lifetime limit of 12 months. Individuals with children under the age of one who are working 30 hours per week are not eligible for this exemption. If the single parent loses their job, they may reclaim the exemption for a lifetime maximum of 12 months.

X. Innovative County Strategies

Demonstration Grant Initiative

Orange County participated in a 3 year Work First Demonstration Grant with the Division of Social Services with the final year to be completed June 30, 2009. This grant initiative has allowed for a twelve-week comprehensive job readiness and enrichment program providing a more hands-on learning environment for Work First participants. The class has four main components that drive it. These components include immediate engagement, a “no excuses” atmosphere, significant rewards for accomplishments, and a driven and committed staff. These components work together to empower participants in the class to take control of their lives and make changes required to gain lasting employment. The curriculum is very extensive and clients leave the class with a high level of confidence in their abilities as a result. The class begins with life-skills training that sets the foundation for the rest of the course. Two weeks of work experience training in addition to supplemental in-class sessions allow participants to make mistakes in worry-free environment. The work experience sessions are divided to allow time for feedback and work improvement. There are 7 weeks of employability training. The class has involved collaboration with Durham Technical Community College, the Dispute Settlement Center, Cooperative Extension, The Orange county Skills Development Center, the Women’s Center and HR Consulting (financial literacy), and the Employment Security Commission. In addition to the classroom skills, participants are assisted in developing strong interpersonal skills through a series of projects and assignments. This facet of the class helps clients prepare for work and life by helping them to build effective relationships with one another, hold themselves accountable for individual actions, work as a team, rebuild broken family relationships, build healthy coping skills, and develop a personal mission statement and life goals. The class is effective because of its unique blend of education and training combined with motivation and support.

Other components of grant are:

- A job coach to assist participants with life management skills necessary to manage home, meet the development and educational needs of their children, and enforce workplace behaviors (punctuality, attendance, positive attitudes and work attire).
- A medical social worker to assess persons with disabilities, serious health and mental health problems, learning disabilities and other barriers and to follow through on strategies for independence. The social worker completes comprehensive assessment of participants and provides intensive case management. Social worker assists with completion of SSI applications and gathers all the required documentation. Referrals are made and transportation is provided.

- Incentives for participants in work activities. Incentives to be used are gift cards, gas cards, clothing allowances, and a \$3,000 car allowance for sustaining employment for 6 months.

Transportation Initiative

A transportation coordinator works individually with Work First clients to arrange transportation for employment or other work-related activities. This position is funded in collaboration with Orange Public Transportation and Work First. In addition, this position coordinates the Wheels for Work Car Donation Program. Fifteen Work First participants and 15 working low-income families received cars in fiscal year 2005-2006. Transitional Funds from NC Department of Transportation were used to assist 52 former Work First participants in obtaining and maintaining transportation resources.

Intensive Teen Support Project

This project was designed to expand the case management services to pregnant and parenting teens. Research studies support that intervention and preventive services to teens significantly impact school attendance, employability, and out of wedlock births. Two Adolescent Parenting social workers are housed in the Orange County School and Chapel Hill Carrboro School Systems to facilitate a school based support group for teen parents and at risk students focusing on pregnancy prevention, health and academic and career planning issues.

Financial Education and Counseling

The DSS has a contract with H. R. Consulting and the Women Center to teach financial life skills and household management. The goal of the programs is to assist families in developing the capacity to track and prioritize expenditures and become independent.

The Center For Employment Training (CET)

Orange County has a contract with CET to provide Work First participants training in the areas of Automated General and Medical Office Skills, Electronics Technology, Medical Insurance Billing, and Shipping and Receiving/Warehouse. CET will place 70% of the Work First participants who complete the programs in to employment and place 70% of those employed in a training related job utilizing their skills acquired in their course of study.

Orange Enterprises (OE)

Orange Enterprises provides vocational evaluations, facility based work adjustment, job placement, and follow-up for the hardest to place Work First participants. During the evaluation period, the participant is paid minimum wage. The evaluation period is six weeks long. The participant is given many opportunities to work and improve work habits.

Orange County Skills Development/JobLink Center

On January 11, 1999, the Orange County Skills Development /JobLink Center located at 503 West Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, North Carolina began providing a comprehensive

array of employment and training services in a holistic manner. The Center was rechartered in April 2004 as a level III JobLink Center. Chartering demonstrated the Center's history of collaboration among human service agencies and the alignment with the ideals associated with the vision of a one-stop career center. Orange County Department of Social Services is the lead agency for the Center.

The Skills Development/JobLink Center:

- Offers comprehensive employment and training services to job seekers and employers.
- Enables citizens to make informed choices about careers and employers can make informed decisions about workplace needs.

The agencies located in the Center are Orange County Department of Social Services, Employment Security Commission (ESC), Joint Orange Chatham Community Action Agency (JOCCA), NC Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR), Durham Technical Community College (DTCC), the Orange County Literacy Council (OCLC), Good Work, Educational Opportunity Center, Horizons' CASAWORKS, and the Orange County Disability Awareness Council.

A customer entering the Center encounters a unified system of services. A common intake process is used. The common application connects the customer to the entire system of workforce development opportunities. All customers are able to obtain a basic assessment of skills, interests, and aptitudes if they choose. All people, including special populations such as welfare recipients, persons with disabilities, dropouts, dislocated workers, and others, have access to services. This model is predicated heavily on customer choice with services ranging from self-service to staff assisted service.

Improved Access for Hispanic Families

Orange County Department of Social Services is committed to improving the accessibility of core services to persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Ongoing efforts have been made to increase the cultural competency of staff through workshops, providing county sponsored Spanish language classes, and developing an LEP procedure handbook. Staff have been working to make available linguistically appropriate printed documents for clients whenever possible. The Orange County Department of Social Services has contracts with a number of interpreters and translators and has developed a Spanish voice mail system. Regarding staff, the department has worked to recruit bilingual staff and to enhance current staff members' skills by participating in a Spanish immersion program.

XI. Special Issues

Orange County's current Work First population faces multiple obstacles in obtaining and retaining employment. Work First participants are competing for jobs with a highly skilled workforce. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers without a high school diploma and a recent connection to the workforce are unable to obtain jobs that provide a living wage. Barriers such as substance abuse, criminal records and chronic physical and

mental health problems have no quick fix. They are resolved as a result of participant commitment, adequate resources, and time.

Employment barriers are realities for low-income families in Orange County. Listed below are typical barriers experienced by low-income families in Orange County from the Work First Planning Sessions:

- Lack of adequate and affordable transportation,
- Lack of education,
- Limited work experience,
- Lack of non-traditional dependent care hours,
- Lack of affordable housing,
- Chemical dependency,
- Lack of resources to handle crises.

Jobs paying a living wage require more skill and education than participants have. Orange County Work First participants are competing against a highly educated pool for entry-level positions. Work First participants typically have insufficient financial supports and personal resources to handle problems that occur. Few participants have a back-up plan for childcare or if their transportation breaks down.

Orange County's vision and mission statement apply to all citizens in Orange County. The County has in place a safety net of services for those people who do not have success through Work First or other programs. The Work First Block Grant Planning Committee will continue to address issues that affect the success of low-income families in Orange County and implement action steps to improve the well-being of families.

XII. CERTIFICATION

The Orange County Board of Social Services actively participated in the planning process for the Orange County Work First Plan. The Board of Social Services supports the strategies for meeting the statewide and county outcome goals identified by the community.

The Orange County Board of County Commissioners certifies that a committee of Orange County citizens was formed called the Work First Planning Committee. The Planning Committee identified the needs of the Work First population, and assisted in the development of the County Plan. The Work First Plan was available for public comment as designated by the North Carolina General Assembly.

Chairperson
Orange County Board of County Commissioners

Appendix

Attachment 1: Memorandum of Understanding Orange County Department of Social Services and Employment Security Commission

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is entered into 12th day of September 2006, by and between the North Carolina Employment Security Commission hereinafter referred to as “ESC, 601 Valley Forge Road, Hillsborough North Carolina 27278 and the Orange County Department of Social Services, hereinafter referred to as “DSS”, P.O. Box 8181, Hillsborough, North Carolina 27278.

WITNESSETH

Whereas, there is established in ESC, a program to be called “First Stop Employment Assistance” (hereinafter referred to as “First Stop”) which is designed to assist applicants and recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, known as “Work First”, through job registration, job preparedness and community service; and

Whereas, the Work First Program is a program of public assistance to provide eligible families with short-term assistance to facilitate their movement to self-sufficiency through employment; and

Whereas, the Work First Program in Orange County shall utilize the registration process of the First Stop Program; and

Whereas, this Memorandum of Understanding is entered into to define the responsibilities of DSS and ESC in Orange County in the cooperation of First Stop subject to the duties and limitations of the agencies established by law.

Now, Therefore, the parties agree as follows:

1. The components of First Stop are: a. job registration; b. job search; c. job preparedness; and d. community service.
2. The parties agree that the Employment Security Commission is the presumptive primary deliverer of job placement services for the Work First Program and is the primary job placement entity for the Work First Program as provided by G. S. 108A-29(a1) and (a5). The parties agree that the Community College System is the lead agency for delivery of job training, literacy and adult education programs in the state as provided in G.S. 115D-1. The parties agreed that Orange County DSS is the primary deliverer of Work First Diversion Assistance, Work First Family Assistance, and Work First Employment Services as provided in G.S. 108A-27(b).
3. It is agreed that co-location of County Department of Social Services, ESC representatives, and other workforce development entities would assist in the effective administration of First Stop at the Orange County Skills Development/JobLink Center at 503 West Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC.

4. Applicants and recipients seeking to apply or reapply for Work First and who are not exempt from the work requirements shall register with ESC. The point of registration shall be with the ESC Offices located at 601 Valley Forge Road, Hillsborough, NC and 503 W. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC
5. ESC shall refer registrants to job openings, make job development contacts for registrants, review eligibility for unemployment insurance and provide instruction to registrants for applying for the Federal Earned Income Credit, and information regarding The Work Opportunity Tax Credit.
6. ESC shall report to DSS any applicant's or recipient's lack of cooperation in required or optional First Stop Programs.
7. ESC and DSS may enter a cooperative agreement to provide all components of First Stop other than the required job registration. The optional components are: a. job search; b. job preparedness; and c. community service.
8. ESC shall promote the utilization of private employment services in the First Stop Program. ESC shall encourage private employment services to accept referrals of Work First participants by ESC.
9. ESC shall develop and distribute information to all employers concerning the "No Fault Referral" as the same as set forth in G.S. 96-9c (2) b (iv) that includes provisions that an employer's unemployment insurance account will not be charged if an employer separates an employee within 100 days of hire solely for bona fide inability to do the work and the employee was hired through a job order placed ESC.
10. ESC shall distribute information to employers concerning the "Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides a federal tax credit to employers who hire new employees from seven "Targeted" groups which have historically had difficulty in finding employment. Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are included in these "Targeted" groups.
11. ESC shall, through its Labor Market Information Division, provide statistical information on unemployment rates, labor trends by country, licensing requirements, economic development data, and career projection data and other data as is necessary.
12. ESC shall serve as the administrator for the Job Service Employer Committee's (hereinafter JSEC) serving Orange County and shall utilize the ESC designated JSEC in Orange County to oversee the operation of the First Stop Program and issue recommendations to improve the First Stop Program.
13. It is the desire of the parties that this Memorandum of Understanding not require re-execution each fiscal year. This Memorandum of Understanding shall be binding upon the parties for term beginning July 1, 2009 and continue in full force and effective until amended

or terminated by the parties as set forth herein, based upon Federal and State policy. No funds are committed under this agreement.

14. This Agreement may be modified or amended at any time by DSS or ESC in whole or in part with the consent of the parties hereto.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be executed in their name by their duly authorized officers, their seals to be hereto affixed the day and year first above written.

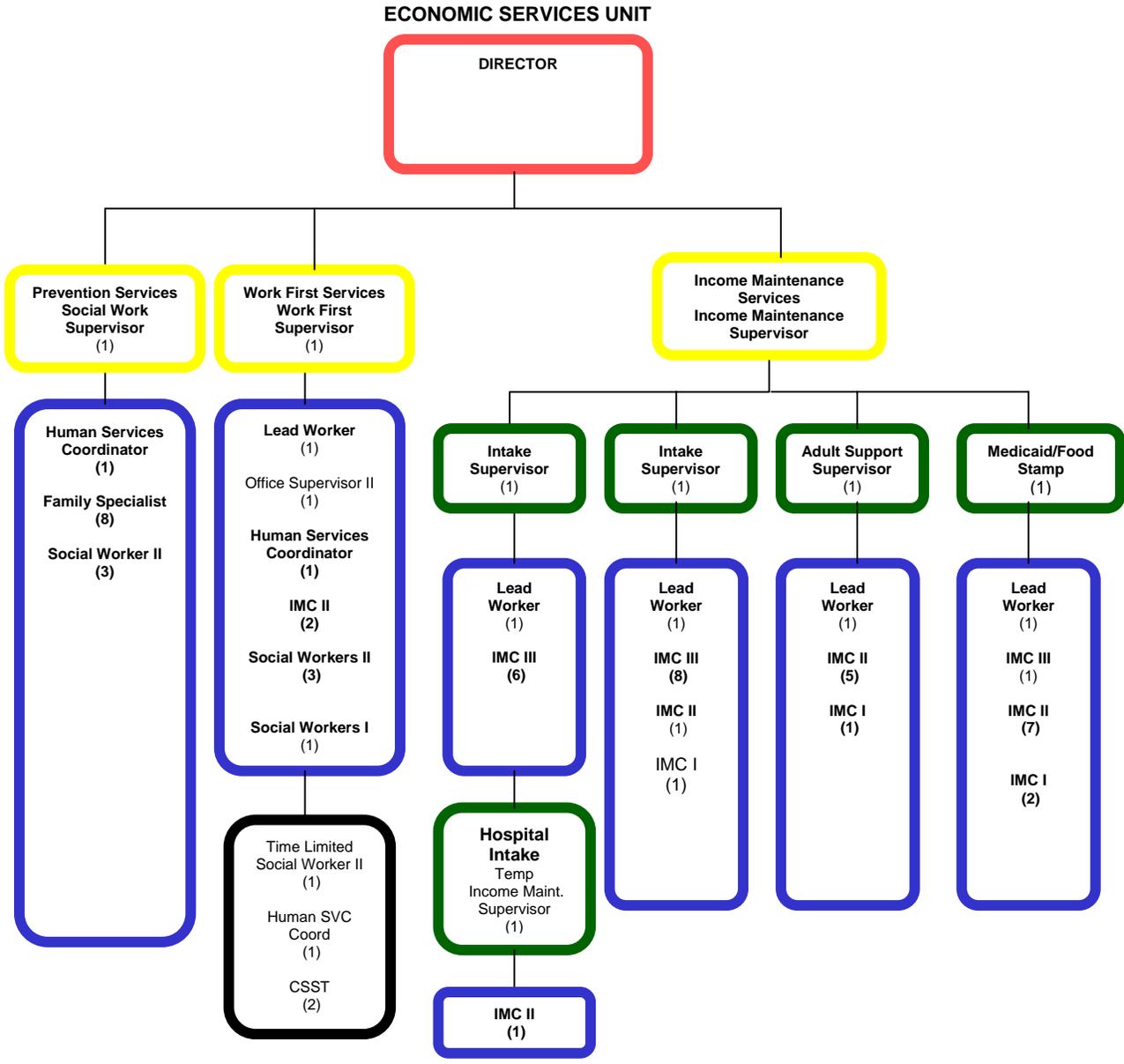
ATTEST:

Pamela Rich, Manager
Employment Security Commission

Nancy Coston, Director
Orange County Department of Social Services

This MOU does not create an obligation to purchase and, therefore, has not been preaudited.

Attachment 2: Department of Social Services Economic Services Organizational Chart



Attachment 3: Orange County Work First Planning Committee Membership List

Orange County Work First Planning Committee Membership List					
First Name	Last Name	Agency	Address	City	Zip Code
Althea	Austin	Holmes Child Care	PO Box 1168	Carrboro, NC	27510
Delores	Bailey	Empowerment Inc.	109 N. Graham St., Suite 200	Chapel Hill, NC	27516
Bradly	Broadwell	Economic Development Commission	110 E. King Street	Hillsborough, NC	27278
Kathy	Bryan	Orange Enterprises	500 Valley Forge Road	Hillsborough NC	27278
Carla	Calix	Citizen	1208 MKL Jr. Blvd Lt. 336	Chapel Hill, NC	27514
Margaret	Cannell	Hillsborough Chamber of Comm.	121 West Margaret St.	Hillsborough NC	27278
Mildred	Council	Employer	110 Emily Rd.	Chapel Hill, NC	27514
Cleon	Currie	Regional Partnership Workforce Development Board	8607 High Rock Road	Efland, NC	27243
Kelly	Davis	Orange County Literacy Council	503 W. Franklin Street	Chapel Hill, NC	27516
Robert	Dowling	Orange Community Housing & Land Trust	104 Jones Ferry Rd., Suite C	Carrboro, NC	27510
Natasha	Evans	Citizen	323 Lakeshore Drive	Hillsborough NC	27278
Tara	Fikes	Orange County Housing	PO Box 8181	Hillsborough, NC	27278
Valerie	Foushee	Orange County Commissioner	106 Claris Court	Chapel Hill, NC	27514
Rev. Sharon	Freeland	OCIM	300 Millstone Dr.	Hillsborough NC	27278
Jennifer	Galassi	Commission for Women	501 West Franklin St., Suite 104	Chapel Hill, NC	27516
Pat	Garavaglia	Board of Social Services	7 Ellen Place	Chapel Hill, NC	27514

Ann	Gerhardt	Dir. of Women's Center	PO Box 1057	Chapel Hill NC	27514
Victor	Glover	Citizen	604 Nunn Street	Chapel Hill NC	27516
Gwen	Harvey	Asst. County Manager	200 S. Cameron Street	Hillsborough NC	27278
Cynthia	Height	Case Manager-Community Care Central Carolina	Orange County Health Dept. P.O. Box 8181	Hillsborough NC	27278
Frances	Henderson	Orange County Dispute Settlement Center	302 West Weaver St.	Carrboro, NC	27510
Tara	Howard	Citizen	6809 St. Mary's Rd.	Hillsborough NC	27278
Anita	Hill	Case Manager-Community Care Central Carolina	Orange County Health Dept. P.O. Box 8181	Hillsborough NC	27278
Sarah	Kenny	El Centro Latino	101 Lloyd Street	Carrboro NC	27510
Norman	Klase	Dir. Of Human Resource Services-UNC Health Care	101 Manning Dr. Rm. 6017 EW	Chapel Hill, NC	27514
Susan	Levy	Habitat for Humanity	1829 E. Franklin Street Suite 1200B	Chapel Hill NC	27514
Dina	Logan	Durham Tech	1637 Lawson Street	Durham NC	27703
Cheryl	Lownes	Citizen	120 Fraizer Rd. Lot 12	Mebane NC	27302
Malinda	Marsh	Orange County JobLink	503 W. Franklin Street	Chapel Hill, NC	27516
Robin	Meritt	Citizen	649 Council Lane	Chapel Hill, NC	27516
Chris	Moran	Inter-Faith Council	110 W. Main Street	Carrboro, NC	27510
Aaron	Nelson	Chapel Hill Chamber	1045 Estes Dr.	Chapel Hill, NC	27515
Neil	Pedersen	Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	750 S. Merritt Mill Rd.	Chapel Hill, NC	27510
Eric	Peterson	Town of Hillsborough	P0 Box 429	Hillsborough NC	27278

Harvey	Reid	HR Consulting	109 N. Graham St., Suite 202	Chapel Hill, NC	27516
Connie	Renz	Horizons	Dept. OBGYN CB 7579 UNC	Chapel Hill, NC	27599
Patrick	Rhodes	Orange County Schools	200 E. King Street	Hillsborough NC	27278
Pamela	Rich	Manager of ESC	601 Valley Forge Rd.	Hillsborough NC	27278
Wandra	Richardson	Cedar Grove Day Care	PO Box 36	Cedar Grove, NC	27231
Margaret	Samuels	OC Partnership for Young Children	1829 E. Franklin Street, Suite 1200C	Chapel Hill NC	27501
Joe	Robbins	DSS Board Member	2136 N. Lakeshore Dr.	Chapel Hill, NC	27514
Karen	Rose	Town of Chapel Hill	838 Airport Road	Chapel Hill, NC	27514
Sue	Russell	Child Care Services Association	PO Box 664	Chapel Hill, NC	27514
Sandra	Sanchez	JOCCA	PO Box 27	Hillsborough NC	27312
Arthrell	Sanders	Board of Social Services	9419 Theresa Lane	Rougemont NC	27572
Sheila	Sholes-Ross	Communities in Schools	PO Box 9454	Chapel Hill, NC	27515
Shoshannah	Smith	Dir. Of Human Rights & Relations	501 W. Franklin St. Suite 104	Chapel Hill NC	27516
Janet	Sparks	Child Support Enforcement	PO Box 8181	Hillsborough NC	27278
Rosemary	Summers	Orange County Health Department	300 W. Tryon St.	Hillsborough NC	27278
Sharon	Tate	Little Treasures	554 North Nash Street	Hillsborough NC	27278
Al	Terry	Orange County Transportation	300 W. Tryon St.	Hillsborough NC	27278
Judy	Truitt	OPC	100 Europa Drive Suite 490	Chapel Hill, NC	27517
Tina	Vaughn	Chapel Hill Dept. of Housing	317 Caldwell St. Ext.	Chapel Hill, NC	27514

Ingrid	Weber	NC Vocational Rehabilitation	548 Smith Level Road	Carrboro, NC	27510
Albert	Williams	Board of Social Services	5515 Old Greensboro Rd.	Chapel Hill NC	27516
Kenneth	Wilson	Dir. of Family Violence Prevention Center	PO Box 187	Chapel Hill NC	27514

Attachment 4: Memorandum of Agreement Orange County Department of Social Services and the Orange-Person-Chatham Area Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Authority

- I. **INTENT:** This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is entered into and by the Orange County Department of Social Services and the Orange-Person-Chatham Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Authority hereinafter referred to as “Area Program”. The Work First Program provides short-term assistance to eligible families by facilitating their movement to self-sufficiency through employment. The objective of this agreement is to reduce substance related barriers to employment of current Work First recipients, applicants, and Work First and Food Stamp applicants convicted of a Class H or I substance abuse felony offenses. The Memorandum of Agreement establishes the responsibilities of the above referenced agencies in meeting the objective.
- II. Responsibilities Under the Memorandum of Agreement. The responsibilities of each Agency are as follows:
 - A. Area Program/Contractor:
 1. Representation on the committee responsible for developing the Work First County Plan.
 2. Contract the QPSA responsibilities to Chrysalis Foundation for Mental Health.
 3. Chrysalis Foundation for Mental Health will provide at least one day per week on site-assessment and referral to recipients in need of substance abuse services based on a schedule agreed to by County Departments of Social Services and the Area Program.
 4. Share in the responsibility for initial screening of recipients and applicants.
 5. Provide substance abuse prevention and/or medically necessary services for the recipients’ children.
 6. Develop a care coordination plan for the recipient while receiving substance abuse services.
 7. Authorize the appropriate level of care of recipients identified as requiring substance abuse services.
 - B. Orange County Department of Social Services:
 1. Representation on the Area Program committee that develops the Work First Substance Abuse Plan.
 2. Provide office space for Qualified Substance Abuse Professional.
 3. Provide initial screening of recipients and applicants.
 4. Develop a case coordination plan for the recipient while receiving substance abuse services.
 5. Assist recipients in accessing childcare and transportation services.

C. Joint Responsibilities:

1. Develop a plan for current Work First recipients, applicant, and Work First and Food Stamp applicants convicted of Class H or I substance abuse felony offenses to access substances abuse, mental health and developmental disabilities services.
2. Utilize the screening tool identified by DMH/DD/SAS and the Substance Use Disorder Diagnostic Schedule (SUDDS) IV assessment tool. These standardized tools are to be used by all programs receiving funds to implement this initiative.
3. Utilize the standardized consent form to facilitate confidentiality as provided by the State Division of Social Services.
4. Annual cross training of staff.
5. Ensure that childcare and transportation are not barriers to accessing substance abuse services.
6. Develop a reporting system of non-compliance by recipients pursuant to the requirements of the Work First Substance Abuse Program.

III. LIAISON: For the Orange County Department of Social Services, Yvette Smith, Director of Economic Services, will serve as liaison under these MOA. For the Orange-Person-Chatham Area Mental Health/Departmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Authority Tom Velivil, Service System Manager, will serve as liaison under MOA.

IV. MOA AMENDMENT: This MOA may be amended at any time with the concurrence of both agencies.

Judy Truitt, Director
 Orange-Person-Chatham Area Program

Nancy Coston, Director
 Orange County Department of Social Services

Date _____

Date _____