

**New Hanover County  
2001-2003 Work First Plan  
(Revised)**

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**Contact Person:**

**Karen Vincent, Assistant Director for Economic Services  
New Hanover County Department of Social Services  
1650 Greenfield Street  
Post Office Drawer 1559  
Wilmington, NC 28402  
(910) 341-4712  
(910) 341-4022 FAX  
kvincent@co.new-hanover.nc.us**

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2001-2003 Work First Plan  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### NEW HANOVER COUNTY 2001-2003 WORK FIRST PLAN

The New Hanover County 2001-2003 Work First Plan was developed by a committee appointed by the New Hanover County Board of County Commissioners and comprised of representatives of human service organizations and the community.

#### GOALS

The goals developed by the North Carolina Department of Social Services include:

1. Reducing the Work First Caseload
2. Putting Adults to Work
3. Staying off Welfare after going to Work
4. Meeting the "All Families" Participation Rate
5. Meeting the "Two Parent " Participation Rate
6. Avoiding Welfare through Diversion Assistance
7. Increasing Child Support Orders and Collections for Work First Families
8. Child Well-Being

#### STRATEGIES

Strategies proposed to assist New Hanover County in meeting these goals include:

1. Comprehensive Assessment Process - Thorough up-front assessment to determine if some applicants' needs can be addressed through other resources including but not limited to child care, transportation, emergency financial assistance or benefit diversion.
2. On-Site ESC Interviewers- To provide employment location assistance to Work First clients and other families with income at or below 200% of poverty.
3. Partner with Wilmington Housing Authority - To better assist clients in getting and keeping subsidized housing.
4. Excellent Tenant School - To provide information to low income families on the role and responsibilities of being a tenant with the goal of increasing their chances to attain and maintain quality affordable housing.
5. Coordinate Services with SEC for Mental Health Treatment - for more effective screening and follow-up for clients with both mental health and developmental disability disorders.
6. Collaborate with Domestic Violence Shelter and Services - To provide services and support to victims of domestic violence.
7. Coordinate Services with SEC for Substance Abuse Screening and Treatment- To provide screening, evaluation and treatment to clients with a substance abuse problem.
8. Promote Job Readiness Programs Utilizing Existing Resources - To provide adequate job readiness skill through resources of New Hanover County Community Action, Cape Fear

- Community College and the YWCA of the Lower Cape Fear.
9. Complete Academic and Vocational Assessment - Of Work First clients through the HRD program of Cape Fear Community College.
  10. Increase Awareness of Available Employment Related Training and Services - Through the distribution of more information during the assessment process.
  11. Short Term Training - Of needed employment skills, including skills for non-traditional jobs for women through Cape Fear Community College.
  12. Educational Program for Parents - Including information on how to be a working parent, child care and child development issues and preparing for the world of work in a short term program developed with the assistance of the New Hanover County Partnership for Children and the New Hanover County Health Department.
  13. Resident-Owned Van Service- Will be explored with the Wilmington Housing Authority and the Wilmington Community Development Corporation.
  14. Pooling Transportation Resources - With other organizations providing some employment related transportation for a coordinated, more comprehensive transportation system.
  15. Partner with the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce - To obtain business support for initiatives to hire and retain Work First clients.
  16. Transportation Coordinator -To garner additional community support for subsidized employment transportation through contributions and usage of the transportation tax credit.
  17. Quality Assurance Plan for Transportation System- To monitor existing employment transportation options.
  18. Wheels to Work - Developing a program to use donated automobiles as an option for persons with employment transportation difficulties.
  19. Recipient Survey - to employed former clients to receive suggestions for change or improvements to process.
  20. Job Coaching - Using existing resources through the WHA, provide on the job support to working Work First clients.
  21. Partner with Job Coaching Association - To explore the possibility of developing a program to assist Work First clients in making career decisions.
  22. Adult Mentoring - Through the efforts of volunteers from the faith community.
  23. On-Site GED - For persons to work on obtaining a GED at employer-based locations.
  24. New Hanover Health Network Work First Initiative - To provide support for NHHN employees in entry level jobs to increase skills to move to higher level positions.
  25. Computer Based Training - Offered through St. Stephen's AME Church provides curriculums in job readiness and job skills training.
  26. ESC Follow-Up - Through telephone calls to Work First employers to assess placement.
  27. Case Management Follow-Up - To address clients problems up to four months after case termination.
  28. Fatherhood Resource Center - To offer support and information to Non-custodial parents regarding their rights and responsibilities.
  29. Mentoring Work First Children - Through programs offered through Communities in Schools, New Hanover - Pender JOB READY, and the Work Force Development Board.

## APPEAL PROCESS

Applicants/Recipients who wish to contest a decision adversely affecting their receipt of public assistance may appeal in accordance with N.C.G.S. §108A-79 through a process established by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Standard County - No change from state TANF Plan.

## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Federal/state TANF funds of \$5,366,046 and New Hanover County's Maintenance of Effort requirement of \$2,643,117 fund Work First activities and some essential child welfare services at \$8,008,046.

### **III. Conditions within New Hanover County**

**A. A brief description that builds the case for the county's plan:**

1. As the New Hanover County 2001-2003 Planning Committee examines the progress of welfare reform and the current realities for low-income families in our county, it is important for us to keep things in perspective. We have been extremely successful in putting people to work, reducing the Work First caseload and forming partnerships to help families overcome barriers. Despite these achievements, however, self-sufficiency still remains an elusive goal for many of our current and former recipients. For some, the key problems include lack of affordable housing, limited transportation options and low wages which cannot lift them above the poverty level. They have joined the ranks of the "working poor," sharing their frustrations and concerns. Others have even more deep-seated problems, including substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health issues, which can't be resolved with "temporary assistance." Our efforts to address these difficulties must be further tempered by economic realities. We may have a great deal of flexibility in the choices we make, but we still have a limited supply of funds and certain requirements over which we have no control. We also want to focus on the broader picture, helping as many low income individuals as possible without giving short shrift to those receiving cash assistance. With this in mind, our goal in developing our Work First plan has been to acknowledge the challenges we face and call upon our partners in the community to help us meet them. By the same token, we need the State's support in asking the Federal government to re-examine participation requirements. In light of the change in composition of our caseload, it has become increasingly more difficult to balance the needs of the participants with some of the rules with which we have to work. All these factors need to be considered if we are to move forward.

**Supporting documentation:**

1. Per the *Wilmington Star News* and data from Wilmington Housing Authority's Subsidized Housing Program (Section 8), the average monthly rent for a 2 bedroom apartment (plus utilities) in Wilmington is \$600. The median cost of a home is \$126,000.
2. As of 8/30/00, there were 797 individuals on the Section 8 waiting list. It is taking up to four months for people to be called in to submit an application; six months to complete the process.
3. In September 2000, there were over 1200 vacant 2 bedroom apartments in Wilmington. At the same time, there was only a handful certified for Section 8. Landlords can get higher rent from the private market and seem to be holding out for these additional funds.
4. Public transportation is only available in parts of the city and does not



extend to the boundaries of the city limits. The buses stop running at 6:00 p.m. Saturday service is minimal and Sunday service is non-existent. Our van pool service is not effective in providing work related transportation, which forces us to rely heavily on costly taxi service. The majority of our participants do not own a vehicle.

5. The average starting salary for our clients is approximately \$6.50 per hour based on Employment Security Commission (ESC) records. Most of these entry level jobs do not offer benefits.
6. Our 69.01% caseload reduction is one of the highest in the State as of the most-recent “Able-Bodied Report” (July, 2000). Of the 868 cases remaining on that date, 489 were child only (56% ); 379 (44%) contained an adult. There were 388 adults in these 379 cases (9 were 2-parent families). Of these, 95 were exempt from work requirements because they have a child under age one; 84 were exempt due to incapacity issues, leaving 209 who were considered “Able-Bodied.” Approximately half of those (125) who were deemed “Able-Bodied” were in our “high maintenance” caseload due to issues relating to substance abuse, protective services, inability to retain employment, etc. Overall, we had one of the lowest percentages of Able-Bodied Adults (24.08%) when compared to other large counties such as Mecklenburg (42.4%), Forsyth (43.56%), Guilford (44.05%); Cumberland (40.65%); Durham (35.84%) and Wake (33.92%)
7. Statistics from our “SUCCESS” reviews indicate that this population has multiple physical and mental health problems. Out of 48 clients:
  - 30 had been treated for mental health disorders;
  - 30 had been subject to a Child Protective Services investigation;
  - 23 had more than one medical problem, including high blood pressure, sickle cell anemia, HIV, etc.;
  - 13 had domestic violence issues;
  - 5 acknowledged current or previous substance abuse problems.

## **2. Vision Statement**

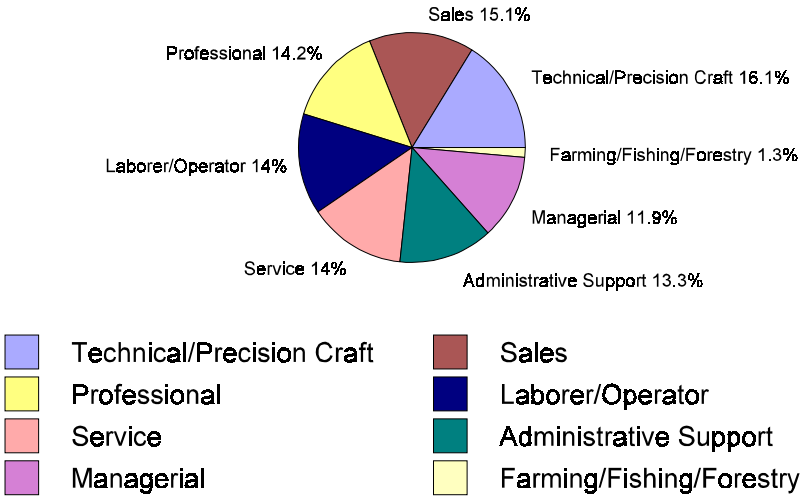
Our vision in New Hanover County is “Communities partnering with families to promote self sufficiency, dignity and opportunity.”

### **B. A description of the economic conditions in your county**

New Hanover County is located in the southeastern part of North Carolina. It is the second most dense county in the state with a land area of 185 square miles and a population of 151,832. We have a projected population growth within the next five

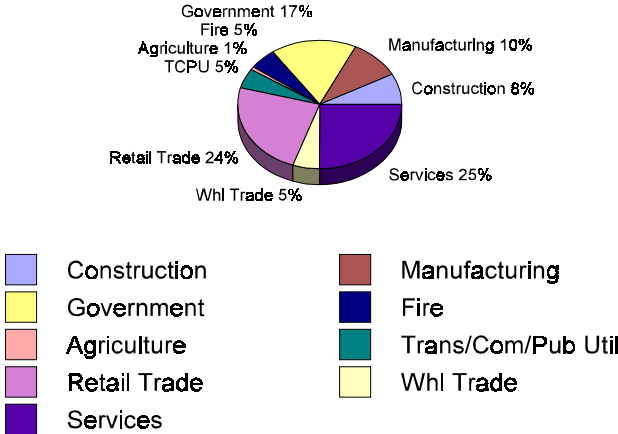
years (2000 - 2005) of 13.3%. New Hanover County has participated in the state's economic prosperity with a median household income growth of 44.8% in the last ten years (from \$27,364 in 1990 to \$39,623 in 2000). The economic growth is projected to continue but at a slower rate (17.7% from 2000 to 2005). According to information obtained from Wilmington Industrial Development, Inc., employment in New Hanover County is divided pretty evenly between technical, managerial and professional jobs requiring specific skills and/or educational attainment and sales, laborer and service jobs with relatively low wages and few benefits.

### Employment in New Hanover County



The Department of Commerce shows a different picture as it looks at where people are going to work in New Hanover County.

### Share of County Employment, 1998



According to the Cape Fear Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau, over 5,000 jobs in New Hanover County are related to the tourism industry. With an annual payroll of tourism workers equaling \$77.77 million, that equates to an average annual income for workers in the tourism industry of \$15,500, less than 200% of poverty for a single individual.

An industry that has developed in New Hanover County in recent years is the film industry. More film revenue has been generated in Wilmington over the past several years than in any other United States' city, with the exception of Los Angeles and New York. Wilmington alone has seen more lights, cameras and action than 45 states. This industry has, however, not been very stable, resulting in long periods of under or unemployment for those families dependent upon film revenues for their annual incomes.

The top ten employers in New Hanover County are:

New Hanover Regional Medical Center	Hospital	4,000
New Hanover County Schools	Education	2,613
Corning, Inc.	Optical Fiber	1,500
General Electric	Nuclear Energy Production	1,150
New Hanover County	Government	1,239
UNC Wilmington	Higher Education	1,116
General Electric	Aircraft Engines	1,050
City of Wilmington	Government	687
Applied Analytical Industries (AAI)	Pharmaceutical Testing	740
Kosa	Dimethyl Terephthalate	600

Top Ten Industrial Employers in New Hanover County are:

Corning, Inc.	Optical Fiber	1,500
General Electric	Nuclear Energy Production	1,150
General Electric	Aircraft Engines	1,050
Applied Analytical Industries	Pharmaceutical Testing	740
Kosa	Dimethyl Terephthalate	600
Bedford Fair Industries	Women's Apparel Mail Order	400
Louisiana-Pacific	Laminated Veneer Lumber	300
Pharmaceutical Product Development	Pharmaceutical Testing	300
Interroll Corporation	Conveyer Components	275
International Paper Company	Folding Cartons	250

According to Wilmington Industrial Development, Inc. the types of employers/industries being recruited into this area include the bio-technology industry and pharmaceutical companies. The emphasis is to recruit companies that

have higher skilled, better paid positions which meet the employment needs of graduates of Cape Fear Community College's Focus Industry Program including the Chemical Technology curriculum and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington's Marine Biology and Chemistry programs.

Recent expansions or new industries in the region include a large fiber optics expansion at Corning, Inc. resulting in over 200 new positions and the construction of KCS Enterprises, the manufacturer of Rampage Sportfishing Yachts in neighboring Brunswick County with 400 new jobs.

Recent downsizing in our county include major layoffs at Bedford Fair, a mail order company and the closing of Block Industries, a textile manufacturer.

The 1999 annual unemployment rate for New Hanover County was 3.0% with the April, 2000 rate down to 2.8%. According to the NC Department of Commerce, in the third quarter of 1999, there were 5,682 active job applicants in our county.

**IV. Planning Process**

The members of the New Hanover County Work First Planning Committee were designated by the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners on August 21, 2000. Membership consists of:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
F. Wayne Morris	New Hanover County Department of Social Services (NHCDSS)
Dr. Arthur Costantini	Southeastern Center for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (SEC)
David Rice	New Hanover County Health Department (NHCHD)
Dr. Al Lerch	New Hanover County Board of Education
Diana Corbett	Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
J. Alan Jones	Wilmington Housing Authority (WHA)
Patricia Melvin	New Hanover County Manager's Office
Pamela O'Brien	YWCA of the Lower Cape Fear (YWCA)
Serena Robinson	Former Service Recipient
Rev. John Burton	St. Stephen's AME Church
Mack Wade	NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
Jewel Sparrow	NC Employment Security Commission / JobLink (ESC/JobLink)

Janet Nelson  
Margie Parker  
Dr. Eric McKeithan  
Barbara DeBose  
David Smith

NHC Partnership for Children (Smart Start)  
Cape Fear Workforce Development Board  
Cape Fear Community College (CFCC)  
New Hanover Child Support Office  
Social Security Administration (SSA)

In developing the plan, the committee organized sub-committees to specifically identify strategies to best address the plan's goals. In addition to committee members, the following individuals worked with one or more sub-committees:

Walter Vincent	SEC
Danny Brock	Chairman of Commissioners of WHA and local realtor
Chris McNamee	NHCDSS
Diane Lackey	NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT)
Liz Schulz	NHCDSS
Jean Wall	NHCDSS
Tammy Galloway	WHA
Deborah Houston	New Hanover County Transportation Coordinator
Annette Crumpton	New Hanover County Department of Aging
Karen Vincent	NHCDSS
Rodney Jackson	Progressive Transportation Services
Janet McCumbee	NHCHD
Johnetta Duncan	WHA (Section 8)
Lashaunda Pressley	WHA
Laura Hines	WHA
Rose Coston	WHA
Arena Everett	NHCDSS
Linda Moore	New Hanover County Human Relations
Catrechia McCoy	WHA
Renee McGill-Cox	Domestic Violence Shelter and Services (DVSS)
Jane Butler	SEC
Avone Treadwell	CFCC
Sherylle Cerniglia	ESC
Ben Gault	VR
Amy Derck	SEC
Bill Christ	SEC
Dee Hairston	SEC
Lynn Smithdeal	NHCDSS
Bridget Terry	SSA
Betty Jo McCorkle	NHCHD
Sandy Saburn	Innovative Coaching Group
Fred McRee	Communities in Schools/No More Rolling Stone
Ray Gilbert, Sr.	Fatherhood Resource Center of Brunswick County

Hugo Bryant	Fatherhood Resource Center of Brunswick County
Sharon Benoit	New Hanover Health Network (NHHN)
Geraldine Fennell	ESC
Beau McCaffrey	New Hanover County Board of Education
Valerie McIver	St. Stephen's AME Church
Jim Ormsby	WGNI Radio Station
Lois Steele	YWCA
Sally Tribou	New Hanover County Community Action
Wilma Moses	New Hanover County Community Action
LaSaundria Folks	CFCC
Danielle Metty	Child Advocacy Commission
Candace Artis	NHCHD
John Ranalli	New Hanover Regional Medical Center
Glenn Kling	Engine Angels

In addition, a focus group was held with Work First clients participating in the Job Readiness Class sponsored by the YWCA Welfare to Work Bridges program to get their input into the Work First Plan.

The core of the Work First Planning Committee was made up of the members of the New Hanover County SUCCESS Committee. Committee members had made a prior commitment to look at the barriers to self-sufficiency for the hardest to serve Work First clients. They had been meeting on a regular basis to review cases and determine how collaboration between organizations might eliminate barriers. They are committed to continuing that process into the coming year. Individual organizations also committed to pursuing specific strategies as identified in the attached letters of commitment ( Attachment #1).

Sub-committees were established for the following areas: Transportation, Housing, Child Care, Job Retention, Education and Training, Child Support, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, and Domestic Violence. Recommendations of each sub-committee were reviewed and discussed by the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee discussed possible changes in eligibility requirements. The compiled plan was reviewed by the sub-committee members, and forwarded to the Work First Planning Committee.

Draft copies of the plan were available for public scrutiny beginning Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup> at the New Hanover County Public Library Main Branch, New Hanover County Administration Building, New Hanover County Department of Social Services and on the DSS web site, [www.co.new-hanover.nc.us/DSS/draft.htm](http://www.co.new-hanover.nc.us/DSS/draft.htm). Public comments were requested at the County Commissioners Meeting on November 27, 2000. None were presented.

The plan was presented to the New Hanover County Board of Social Services for comments and approval at its meeting on November 15, 2000. The plan was modified based on recommendations received at each of these steps prior to submission to the New Hanover

County Board of Commissioners.

The New Hanover County Work First Plan for 2001-2003 was presented to the Board of County Commissioners for comments and approval on November 27, 2000.

The New Hanover County Commissioners voted on March 26, 2001, on the recommendation of the New Hanover County Board of Social Services, to reverse their decision and to request the state change New Hanover from electing status to standard for the biennium 2001-2003.

## **V. Outcomes and Goals for the County**

### **A. Statewide Work First Goals**

Many of the state goals have not yet been established for 2001-2002. We intend to meet any expectations that are set.

#### **1. Reducing the Work First Caseload**

These state established goals are not available at this time.

#### **2. Putting Adults to Work**

These state established goals are not available at this time.

#### **3. Staying off Welfare after Going to Work**

The state established goal is to have a minimum of 85% of former Work First participants still off Work First after 12 months.

#### **4. Meeting the “All Families” Participation Rate**

Effective October 1, 2000, the federal participation rate requires that 45% of all families participate in approved work related activities the required number of hours each week. This expectation will increase to 50% effective October 1, 2001.

#### **5. Meeting the “Two Parent” Participation Rate**

The rate for “two parent” families where both are able to work is tracked as a subset of the overall participation rate. The federal requirement for two-parent families is 90%.

#### **6. Avoiding Welfare through Diversion Assistance**

These state established goals are not available at this time.

## **7. Increasing Child Support Orders and Collections for Work First Families**

The state established goal is to increase child support orders and collections for current and former Work First families by 10%.

## **8. Child Well-Being**

The state established goal is that a protection plan be in place for 100% of the Work First children who are substantiated as abused or neglected by Child Protective Services.

### **B. County Developed Outcome Goals**

We will place our efforts and resources toward attaining and exceeding the state set goals.

## **VI. Plans to Achieve and Measure the Outcomes and Goals**

### **A. 1. Reducing the Work First Caseload**

New Hanover County plans to reduce the Work First caseload through a combination of the following several initiatives:

#### Comprehensive Assessment Process

Reducing the number of people who need to apply for Work First is certainly the first step in reducing the caseload. Work First is just one of many tools used by the Individual and Family Support Intake Units to assist families in crisis. The client sees one worker who assesses all of the client's needs on the front end and pulls in appropriate resources from the agency and other community organizations. In this way we are able to divert many clients from ever becoming dependent on the Work First Program through the use of child care, transportation resources, or a referral to Child Support Enforcement and Employment Services.

#### On-Site ESC Interviewers

Two Employment Security Commission Interviewers, located in the DSS, will assist Work First applicants and ongoing participants in finding jobs. They provide this same assistance to families with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level to prevent them from ever going on the program.

#### Partner with Wilmington Housing Authority



Finding safe and affordable housing is a critical issue for our participants and can affect their ability to function effectively on the job. As a result, we will strengthen our partnership with the Wilmington Housing Authority by having quarterly meetings with supervisory staff as well as the Housing Sub-Committee formed to develop the Work First Plan. This latter group includes members of the private sector, who may be in a position to recruit more landlords to participate in the Section 8 program.

#### Excellent Tenant School

The Work First Housing Sub-Committee is evaluating the feasibility of developing a short-term training program in which participants may enhance their skills in several areas with the goal of increasing their chances of attaining and maintaining quality affordable housing. Topics to be addressed include: landlord/tenant relations; crisis resolution and negotiation skills with landlords; basic budgeting skills; enhanced housekeeping skills; health and safety issues; basic upkeep that saves the tenant and landlord money; resources for better money management. Upon completion of the course, individuals will receive certification which will entitle them to certain benefits. Benefits proposed include rent reductions, partial return of deposit, higher eligibility for the home ownership pool being created by the Wilmington Housing Authority, possible extension of lease at the same rate. The success of the program is contingent on the willingness of the Wilmington Housing Authority to take the lead role and in the proposed cultivation of a group of landlords who will agree to offer incentives in exchange for program participants. Tentative approval has been given for a \$1,000 grant from the Eastern North Carolina Poverty Committee to support the school.

#### Coordinate Services with SEC for Mental Health Treatment

Mental health issues are a significant barrier to employment for the majority of the clients reviewed through the SUCCESS initiative, as well as for others in our “high maintenance” caseload. A procedure has been developed in conjunction with the Southeastern Center for more effective screening and follow-up on both mental health and developmental disability disorders. Once a worker identifies a client who is in need of an evaluation or treatment, a referral will be made to the Qualified Substance Abuse Professional (QSAP). He/she will serve as the liaison with designated staff at the Southeastern Center who will complete initial evaluations, refer for treatment and assign cases to Case Managers or to the Community Treatment Team as appropriate. The QSAP will monitor continued compliance with treatment and will notify the Work First staff accordingly, regarding issues that could affect the client’s successful participation in the Work First program. Contacts have been established with key Southeastern Center staff in Adult Services, Children’s Services and Developmental Disabilities so the needs of the whole family can be more adequately addressed.

#### Collaborate with Domestic Violence Shelter and Services

Violence within the family is also recognized as a major barrier to self sufficiency. The Individual and Family Support Intake staff or the ongoing Work First staff notifies applicants/recipients at the end of the interview of their right to claim an exemption from work requirements under the Family Violence Option. If clients indicate that they wish to speak with someone further about family violence, the worker calls the Domestic Violence Shelter and schedules an appointment. While the Employment Services Social Worker works with the client to provide appropriate services, no plan of action is completed until the Family Violence Assessment is returned from the Domestic Violence Shelter. The Social Worker then develops a plan of action with the client, incorporating the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Shelter personnel. This may include waiving some, all, or none of the Work First requirements and arranging necessary services. We are continually revising our plans in regard to domestic violence.

#### Coordinate Services with SEC for Substance Abuse Screening and Treatment

The New Hanover County Department of Social Services (DSS) recognizes the barrier to self sufficiency created by substance dependence and abuse in the family. All applicants for Work First Financial Assistance are screened for substance abuse. A positive screen automatically generates a referral to the QSAP located at the DSS. An applicant who refuses to be screened is denied Work First benefits.

The QSAP from SEC provides an in-depth, on site assessment of recipients potentially in need of substance abuse services using the federal Substance Use Disorders Diagnostic Schedule (SUDDS) Evaluation. When chemical dependence is indicated, he/she refers the client for in patient or out patient long term treatment programs. If the adult fails to comply with the treatment plan developed with the QSAP, the adult is ineligible for cash assistance but continues to get Medicaid. The children remain eligible for Work First. A protective payee is appointed to manage benefits for the family.

Anytime a worker has reason to suspect substance abuse by a Work First recipient, the above process can begin again. A protective services referral may be made at anytime substance abuse is suspected.

#### Promote Job Readiness Programs Utilizing Existing Resources

We will provide clients with adequate job readiness skills through promoting the survival skills training offered to Work First clients at New Hanover County Community Action, the ENTRY program provided through Cape Fear Community College (CFCC), and by increasing the number of Work First clients who can participate in the Bridges Program through the YWCA.

#### Complete Academic and Vocational Assessment

To ensure the greater possibility of Work First clients getting and keeping jobs, DSS

working with Cape Fear Community College will offer a more thorough and comprehensive assessment during the initial application process. Academic and vocational assessments will be provided to assist clients in focusing their job search.

#### Increase Awareness of Available Employment Related Training and Services

More information on the entire job search process and Work First services will be provided so that applicants/recipients will have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the job search and services available to support them in their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency. Information on area organizations which provide specific training programs, including Employment Security Commission/JobLink, CFCC, Wilmington Housing Authority, YWCA Bridges, St. Stephen's Church, and other such training programs will be distributed and persons encouraged to participate. Services and assistance, including Medicaid, budgeting, Food Stamps, child care, Earned Income Tax Credit, housing, transportation, and activities for children will be described in detail.

#### Short Term Training

We plan to work collaboratively with CFCC to provide clients with the necessary short-term training to enable them to obtain employment in the local job market. We will identify possible 6-12 week training programs available through CFCC. Funding barriers will be eliminated through partnering with the faith community, other human services agencies and the financial aid programs at CFCC. We will identify students through the Work First Intake and ongoing units, other community agencies and employers to gain adequate class enrollment. Special focus will be on non-traditional jobs for women, such as construction trades, truck driving, machinery, auto mechanics and auto body repair, since these jobs often pay higher wages.

#### Educational Program for Parents

Working with the New Hanover County Partnership for Children and the New Hanover County Health Department, we will develop an educational program for parents of infants and small children. The program will include elements of how to be a working parent, child care/child development and preparing for the world of work.

#### Resident-Owned Van Service

The Wilmington Housing Authority (WHA) and Wilmington Community Development Corporation (CDC) have committed to work with us to explore the possibility of developing a housing authority resident-owned van shuttle service to provide work related transportation. The plan entails the WHA, through its Self Sufficiency and HOPE VI programs to identify residents who have expressed an interest in establishing their own business. Residents will work with the CDC to receive technical assistance in starting a van service, and making it profitable. WHA

will lease vans to these residents and DSS and other community agencies will contract with them to provide employment related transportation.

#### Pooling Transportation Resources

All human service organizations which are currently providing transportation to their clients, either through agency vans or through a contract, have been approached to determine if it would be cost effective to pool our resources. The availability of transportation funds will be expanded by Federal Job Access monies recently awarded to New Hanover County. Those federal dollars, when pooled with local funds currently allocated for employment transportation, will allow us to bargain more effectively with transportation providers. A strategic plan will be developed and implemented. The result will be a more reliable and comprehensive transportation system for all organizations.

#### Partner with the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is developing a Work First Advisory Committee to address business issues regarding hiring and retaining Work First employees. Its Transportation Sub-Committee will educate business leaders about possible tax incentives of employer sponsored transportation and will highlight existing local employers who offer group employee transportation. A second sub-committee will educate business leaders about Work First and will highlight employers who are all ready hiring Work First participants. A third sub-committee will encourage employers to integrate training and educational programs into job descriptions helping to ensure that Work First participants will attain independence of the welfare system. The Chamber will also host several Work First Roundtable Discussions where they will introduce local Work First best practices and solicit new business' participation. The Chamber will produce literature for business owners about Work First and the company benefits it can produce.

#### Transportation Coordinator

Other community support will be garnered for assistance with employment transportation through a new Transportation Coordinator position. This position would be responsible for a community education effort on the needs of the working poor targeting civic and service organizations as well as the faith community. Short term and long term commitments to assisting with employment transportation will be developed and implemented. This position will also assist the area employers in completing the paperwork required to ensure businesses take advantage of the transportation tax credit.

#### Quality Assurance Plan for Transportation System

A quality assurance plan will be implemented to monitor transportation services. To ensure the most cost effective and efficient transportation system, other providers will be approached for additional options in the provision of employment

transportation.

### Wheels to Work

Working with Engine Angels, a faith based organization and other community resources, we plan to develop a Wheels to Work program for former Work First clients. Engine Angels will accept donated automobiles and coordinate with area auto repair shops and possibly the Cape Fear Community College Auto Mechanics' Program to make the vehicles road worthy. DSS will identify former Work First clients with employment transportation needs to receive the cars for a modest cost.

## **2. Putting Adults to Work**

New Hanover County plans to put adults to work through a combination of the following initiatives which have been detailed above:

On-Site ESC Interviewers (See VI. A. 1.)

Partner with Wilmington Housing Authority (See VI. A. 1.)

Excellent Tenant School (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Mental Health Treatment  
(See VI. A. 1.)

Collaborate with Domestic Violence Shelter and Services (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Substance Abuse Screening and Treatment (See VI. A. 1.)

Promote Job Readiness Utilizing Existing Resources (See VI. A. 1.)

Complete Academic and Vocational Assessment (See VI. A. 1.)

Increase Awareness of Available Employment Related Training and Services  
(See VI. A. 1.)

Educational Program for Parents (See VI. A. 1.)

Resident-Owned Van Service (See VI. A. 1.)

Pooling Transportation Resources (See VI. A. 1.)

Wheels to Work (See VI. A. 1.)

Partner with Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce (See VI. A. 1.)

Transportation Coordinator (See VI. A. 1.)

Quality Assurance Plan for Transportation System (See VI. A. 1.)

In addition, we will use the following initiatives:

### Recipient Survey

Former Work First clients will be surveyed to obtain feedback on services received, whether services offered to assist them in obtaining employment might be improved or changed to better support employment retention. This feedback will allow us to make changes in the process which might be more effective for future new hires.

### Job Coaching

Through Project Self-Sufficiency and HOPE VI, WHA implemented a Job Coach Program wherein clients are visited at the work place, to determine if the transition into employment has been successful. Work First clients employed at that same work site can participate in this program and obtain personal support and encouragement to retain employment. The YWCA Bridges program also has an employability coach who follows Work First clients participating in that program.

### Partner with Job Coaching Association

DSS will explore the possibility of developing a working relationship with Wilmington Job Coaches Association to provide some limited community service to Work First participants or other low income individuals. This is a group of for-profit Employment Coaches and Counselors who assist individuals as they make decisions on what is needed to move up in a position and improve employment opportunities.

## **3. Staying off Welfare after Going to Work**

New Hanover County plans to enable clients to stay off welfare through the following initiatives described above:

On-Site ESC Interviewers (See VI. A. 1.)

Partner with Wilmington Housing Authority (See VI. A. 1.)

Excellent Tenant School (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Mental Health Treatment  
(See VI. A. 1.)

Collaborate with Domestic Violence Shelter and Services (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Substance Abuse Screening and Treatment (See VI. A. 1.)

Complete Academic and Vocational Assessment (See VI. A. 1.)

Increase Awareness of Available Employment Related Training and Services  
(See VI. A. 1.)

Educational Program for Parents (See VI. A. 1.)

Resident-Owned Van Service (See VI. A. 1.)

Pooling Transportation Resources (See VI. A. 1.)

Wheels to Work (See VI. A. 1.)

Partner with Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce (See VI. A. 1.)

Transportation Coordinator (See VI. A. 1.)

Quality Assurance Plan for Transportation System (See VI. A. 1.)

Job Coach (See VI. A. 2.)

Partner with Job Coaching Association (See VI. A. 2.)

In addition, we will use the following:

### Adult Mentoring

Faith community efforts to provide support to Work First clients will be encouraged. Currently, local congregations have begun training parishioners to implement Families First and Family Partners programs. DSS staff have attended trainings and are helping to facilitate the development of these programs.

### On-Site General Education Degree (GED)

We will develop opportunities for persons to increase job training and education through the support and opportunities provided by employers. Specifically, we will promote On-Site GED classes at rest homes, nursing homes, and other employers, along with a paid hour in the day to attend the class.

### New Hanover Health Network (NHHN) Work First Initiative

New Hanover Health Network is initiating an aggressive program to invest in their future workforce. Work First clients, hired in entry level positions, will be offered opportunities to increase their education and skills and advance into higher skilled, higher paying jobs. The process is described below:

New employees attend NHHN orientation and CFCC Human Resource Development Program

- A vocational assessment will be offered to those employees indicating need and interest.
- On-Site GED and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes will be available to employees.
- Employees will be given a period of time to complete GED.
- A CNA class will be offered through a work/study model in cooperation with local community colleges.
- Accelerated programs will be offered to qualified employees.
- In specific job categories, additional training may be available after employees meet qualifying criteria.

NHHN will offer the program in nine counties. Partnerships will be formed with CFCC as well as other community colleges in the region that serve surrounding participating counties. Nurses and other health professionals who are community college instructors will be secured to teach On-Site classes. Mentoring will be provided by those individuals and others to the employees in the workforce development program.

### Computer Based Training

We will promote St. Stephens AME Church's career development computer based training program for Work First clients and others needing assistance in obtaining a job or improving their current position. We will use the Chamber of Commerce to promote the above initiatives with employers, highlighting the NHHN model

program as one to replicate.

Employment Security Commission (ESC) Follow-Up

Employment Security Commission personnel will call employers of Work First clients several times in the first month after the original placement to determine how the employee is doing and what, if anything, ESC or DSS could do to improve the transition from Work First to employment. Information gathered will be evaluated and acted on to improve the employment opportunities and the retention rate of our clients.

Case Management Follow-up

Work First staff will retain cases as needed, but no longer than four months, following termination of cash assistance in an effort to address problems that could impede job performance.

**4. Meeting the “All Families” Participation Rate**

New Hanover County plans to meet the all families participation rate through the following initiatives described above:

On-Site ESC Interviewers (See VI. A. 1.)

Partner with Wilmington Housing Authority (See VI. A. 1.)

Excellent Tenant School (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Mental Health Treatment  
(See VI. A. 1.)

Collaborate with Domestic Violence Shelter and Services (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Substance Abuse Screening and Treatment (See VI. A. 1.)

Complete Academic and Vocational Assessment (See VI. A. 1.)

Increase Awareness of Available Employment Related Training and Services  
(See VI. A. 1.)

**5. Meeting the “Two Parent” Participation Rate**

New Hanover County plans to meet the two parent participation rate through the following initiatives described above:

On-Site ESC Interviewers (See VI. A. 1.)

Partner with Wilmington Housing Authority (See VI. A. 1.)

Excellent Tenant School (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Mental Health Treatment  
(See VI. A. 1.)

Collaborate with Domestic Violence Shelter and Services (See VI. A. 1.)



Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Substance Abuse Screening and Treatment (See VI. A. 1.)

Complete Academic and Vocational Assessment (See VI. A. 1.)

Increase Awareness of Available Employment Related Training and Services  
(See VI. A. 1.)

## **6. Avoiding Welfare through Diversion Assistance**

New Hanover plans to use Benefit Diversion to avoid welfare dependence through the following initiatives described above:

Comprehensive Assessment Process (See VI. A. 1.)

On-Site ESC Interviewers (See VI. A. 1.)

## **7. Increasing Child Support Orders and Collections for Work First Families**

New Hanover County plans to increase child support orders and collections through our continued commitment to close collaboration with our local Child Support Enforcement Office and the use of the following initiative:

Fatherhood Resource Center (FRC)

Child support is critical in moving a family to self sufficiency. Many Non-custodial parents face some of the same barriers to self sufficiency that custodial parents face. They lack the education and job skills needed to obtain jobs with wages sufficient to support their children and themselves. Many are unemployed.

In addition, there are emotional and personal issues involved that affect their willingness to pay. Non-custodial parents who are involved in their children's lives are more likely to pay child support. Some Non-custodial parents want to tie paying child support to visitation with their children. When they are denied visitation, they refuse to pay support. In order to remove these barriers we must look beyond the court order for support to the individual.

It is our intention to endorse and assist in the establishment of a Fatherhood Resource Center in New Hanover County to provide advocacy/education for Non-custodial parents. This should not be an adversarial relationship but one through which Child Support and the DSS can disseminate information about the Child Support Enforcement program as well as other agency programs to Non-custodial parents. The FRC would also advocate with different resources such as Cape Fear Community College, the JobLink Career Center, the New Hanover Partnership for Children, Communities in Schools and the faith community for meeting the needs of the Non-custodial parents. They could partner with the DSS, ESC, and the New Hanover Child Support Enforcement agency to jointly develop resources which

would provide an alternative to jail, i.e., a mandatory referral to the JobLink Career Center, and advocate with the judges to use these resources.

## **8. Child Well-Being**

New Hanover County plans to ensure child well-being through the use of the following initiatives described above:

Partner with Wilmington Housing Authority (See VI. A. 1.)

Excellent Tenant School (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Mental Health Treatment  
(See VI. A. 1.)

Collaborate with Domestic Violence Shelter and Services (See VI. A. 1.)

Coordinate Services with Southeastern Center for Substance Abuse Screening and Treatment (See VI. A. 1.)

Educational Program for Parents (See VI. A. 1.)

Fatherhood Resource Center (See VI. A. 7.)

In addition, we will use the following initiative:

### Mentoring Work First Children

Our efforts to promote self sufficiency extend beyond the adult Work First clients with whom we work closely. To address the self sufficiency issues of the next generation, we will explore the possibility of working with Communities in Schools, Mentor at the Gate, New Hanover - Pender JOB READY and Work Force Development Board's Focus program administered by the YWCA and Year Round Youth Enhancement Program within the New Hanover County school system which provide support and guidance to the adolescent children of Work First clients. This guidance will assist them in making decisions regarding career and higher education choices. Parents of younger children will be made aware of community after-school enrichment and tutoring programs through brochures and flyers developed and distributed through the DSS.

### Measurements of Progress toward Above Goals:

We will measure our progress toward achieving the goals above through monitoring the following state and local reports:

Goal Status Report - Shows county's monthly progress toward meeting all eight goals.

Able-Bodied Report - Shows number and % of Able-Bodied adults in caseload, caseload reduction and composition of caseload.

Work First Case Profile Summary - Breakdown of caseload including length of stay

on program, work code status and employment status.

Statewide Work First Progress Report - Shows county as it compares with other 99 counties in regard to meeting all eight goals.

Work First Progress Report for Adults Entering Employment - Provides listing of clients placed in jobs on a monthly basis.

Monthly Report from ESC Staff Housed at DSS - Shows all recipients they assist in placing in jobs on a monthly basis.

Employment Services Management Report - lists all recipients and work related activities scheduled and completed monthly.

All Families Counted in Numerator Report - lists all participants meeting participation rate.

All Families Not-Counted in Numerator Report - lists all recipients not counted toward meeting participation rate.

All Families Counted in Denominator Report - Lists all recipients counted according to federal regulations.

All Families Participation Rate - Lists participation rate for all 100 counties.

Two Parents Counted in the Numerator Report

Two Parents Not Counted in the Numerator Report

Two Parents Counted in the Denominator Report

Two Parent Participation Rate

Benefit Diversion Cases - Lists individuals who received Benefit Diversion

IV-D Collections by Collecting County

All ACTS Cases that have a Court Order

- B. New Hanover is focusing our efforts on meeting and exceeding the state goals, therefore, we have no separate county established goals to measure.

## VII. Administration

- A. Authority for Administration

The Board of County Commissioners have the authority for the administration of the Work First Program. The program is administered in New Hanover County by the Department of Social Services.

- B. Agency Organization in regard to delivering services and determining eligibility.

Work First is just one of many tools used by the Individual and Family Support Intake Units to assist families in crisis. The client sees one worker who assesses all of the client's needs on the front end and pulls in appropriate resources from the agency and other community organizations. In this way we are able to divert many clients from ever becoming dependent on the Work First Program through the use of child care, transportation resources, Medicaid, or a referral to Employment Services and/or Child Support Enforcement.

Two Employment Security Commission Interviewers located in our office assist Work First applicants and ongoing participants in finding jobs. They also work with families with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level to aid them in their efforts to become self sufficient and not Work First clients.

One Employment Social Worker routinely participates in the One Stop/JobLink Center located at the Employment Security Commission.

Family Support Workers located in the ongoing Work First Units maintain both the eligibility and employment services portions of low maintenance cases. As needed to meet the client's needs in moving toward employment and self sufficiency, they have access to all the agency resources, i.e., Child Care, transportation, TANF-Emergency Assistance, county General Assistance, Medicaid and referrals to other community agencies.

The more difficult or high maintenance cases, such as those with substance abuse or domestic violence problems, are administered by Employment Services Social Workers and by Income Maintenance Caseworkers, in meeting service and eligibility needs.

C. Agreement between DSS and ESC for Providing Services.

The New Hanover County Department of Social Services purchases Work Registration, Job Readiness, Job Search, Job Development and Job Placement Services from the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina through the placement of two ESC Interviewers at the Department of Social Services. The ESC Interviewers' duties include providing the following services to Work First applicants and recipients as well as to individuals in families who meet the expanded TANF guidelines with income at or below 200% of the poverty level (Attachment #2):

Completing work registration and determining job readiness; providing job development services; matching job skills of participants with job openings; referring participants to jobs for which they qualify (emphasis will be upon obtaining jobs that hold the promise of enabling participants to support themselves and their families over the long run); providing individual and group job search assistance; assisting with job readiness activities; providing job retention services by following up with employers for a period of time after participants are placed on a job; utilizing the computer terminal to access the Employment Services Information System and other pertinent information necessary for the operation of the Work First Program.

D. Community Service Program

We do not plan to operate a costly community service program in the county. Participants will benefit more from involvement in the YWCA Bridges program

(Welfare to Work), the self sufficiency program at the Wilmington Housing Authority and other established job readiness programs.

**E.** Describe how your county will prioritize its child care funds.

When the availability of Child Care funding is less than the amount needed to serve all eligible children, New Hanover County DSS will prioritize the order in which funds will be expended as follows:

- 1) Children who need child care assistance to support child protective services.
- 2) Children whose parents, foster parents, or other adult responsible for the care of the child need child care support in order to maintain employment.
  - a. Mandatory Work First recipients who work full-time (30 hours)
  - b. Foster parents who work full time
  - c. Parents/responsible adults who are employed full-time
  - d. Mandatory Work First Recipients who work part-time
  - e. Foster parents who work part-time
  - f. Parents/responsible adults who are employed part-time
- 3) Children whose parents, foster parents, or other adult responsible for the care of the child need child care support in order to seek employment. **Seeking employment:** When a parent is unemployed but is seeking employment, child care services must be provided for a minimum of 30 days **only** if requested and the parent or responsible adult is **already receiving** subsidized child day care services.
  - a. Mandatory Work First recipients who are seeking employment
  - b. Foster parent who are seeking employment
  - c. Parents/responsible adults who are seeking employment
- 4) Children whose parents/foster parents/or other adults responsible for the care of the child need child care to attend school or job training activities that lead to employment.
  - a. Work First recipients
  - b. Foster parents
  - c. Teen parents attending high school or its equivalent
  - d. Adults participating in GED or Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs (6 months maximum)
  - e. Parents or responsible adults who are enrolled in a post secondary education training (maximum of 2 year enrollment)

- 5) Children who receive Child Welfare Services and whose families need child day care assistance to prevent or remedy problems that may result in the neglect or abuse of children, to prevent foster care placement, to support family reunification, and to provide support in times of crisis.
- 6) Children who need child day care to meet developmental needs whose emotional, cognitive, social or physical development is delayed or at risk of delay.
- 7) Children over the age of ten who are not documented special needs and not receiving care in second or third shifts.
- 8) Children in relative placements with the exception of children receiving care in second or third shifts.

Describe in detail how local transportation needs will be met through local coordination and collaboration.

New Hanover County Department of Social Services has been working collaboratively with other community agencies and private employers since January 2000 to improve transportation options for Work First and other low income county residents. The Wilmington Housing Authority (WHA) and Wilmington Community Development Corporation (CDC) have committed to work with us to explore the possibility of developing a housing authority resident-owned van shuttle service. The WHA, through its Family Self Sufficiency and HOPE VI programs will identify residents who have expressed an interest in establishing their own business. Residents will work with the CDC to receive technical assistance in starting a van service, and making it profitable. WHA will lease vans to selected residents and DSS will contract with them to provide employment related transportation.

The Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is developing a Work First Advisory Committee to address business issues regarding hiring and retaining Work First employees. Its Transportation Sub-Committee will educate business leaders about possible tax incentives of employer sponsored transportation and will highlight existing local employers who offer group employee transportation. The Chamber will also host several Work First Roundtable Discussions where they will introduce local Work First best practices and solicit new business' participation. The Chamber will produce literature for business owners about Work First and the company benefits it can produce.

Other community support will be garnered for assistance with employment transportation through a new Transportation Coordinator position. This position

would be responsible for a community education effort on the needs of the working poor targeting civic and service organizations as well as the faith community. Short term and long term commitments to assisting with employment transportation will be developed and implemented.

A quality assurance plan will be implemented to monitor the transportation providers. To ensure the most cost effective and efficient transportation system, other potential providers will be approached for additional options to provide employment transportation.

All human service organizations currently providing transportation to their clients, either through agency vans or through a contract, have been approached to determine if it would be cost effective to pool our resources. The availability of transportation funds will be expanded by Federal Job Access monies recently awarded to New Hanover County. Those federal dollars, when pooled with local funds currently allocated for employment transportation, will allow us to bargain more effectively with transportation providers. A strategic plan will be developed and implemented. The result will be a more reliable and comprehensive transportation system for all organizations.

Working with Engine Angels, a faith based organization and other community resources, we plan to develop a Wheels to Work program for former Work First clients. Engine Angels would accept donated automobiles and work with area auto repair shops and possibly the Cape Fear Community College Auto Mechanics' Program to make the vehicles road worthy. DSS would identify former Work First clients with employment transportation needs to receive the cars for a modest cost.

Describe in detail your arrangements for coordination with the area authority for mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services to provide assessments and treatment. Do you have a local agreement? What are the conditions of that agreement?

The New Hanover County Department of Social Services recognizes the barrier to self sufficiency created by substance dependence and abuse in the family. All applicants for Work First Financial Assistance are screened for substance abuse. A positive screen automatically generates a referral to the Qualified Substance Abuse Professional (QSAP) located at the DSS. An applicant who refuses to be screened is denied Work First benefits.

The QSAP from Southeastern Center for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services provides an in-depth, on site assessment to recipients potentially in need of substance abuse services using the federal Substance Use Disorders Diagnostic Schedule (SUDDS) Evaluation. When chemical dependence is indicated, she refers the client for in patient or out patient long term treatment

programs. If the adult fails to comply with the treatment plan developed with the QSAP, the adult is ineligible for cash assistance but continues to get Medicaid. The children remain eligible for Work First. A protective payee is appointed to manage benefits for the family.

Anytime substance abuse is suspected in a household with children and the parent refuses screening and/or treatment, a protective services report is made.

The Memorandum of Agreement between the DSS and Southeastern Center states the intent to reduce substance abuse related barriers to employment for current Work First applicants and recipients and for Food Stamp applicants convicted of a class H or I substance abuse felony offense. Under the terms of the MOA, Southeastern Center agrees to provide representation on the committee developing the Work First County plan, to provide on site assessment and referral to recipients in need of substance abuse services, to share in the responsibility of screening applicants and recipients, to provide prevention or treatment services for the recipients' children, and to provide a care coordination plan for the recipient while in treatment.

The screening and follow up assessment by the on site QSAP has proven to be very effective in terms of identifying those with dependence on alcohol and drugs, in accessing treatment for them and in terms of costs.

In light of the strides made in the area of substance abuse treatment, a procedure has been established to address mental health and developmental disability issues as well. Once a worker identifies a client who is in need of an evaluation or treatment, a referral will be made to the QSAP. He/she will serve as the liaison with designated staff at the Southeastern Center who will complete initial evaluations, refer for treatment and assign cases to Case Managers or to the Community Treatment Team as appropriate. The QSAP will monitor continued compliance with treatment and will notify the Work First worker accordingly regarding issues that could affect the client's successful participation in the Work First program. Contacts have been established with key Southeastern Center staff in Adult Services, Children's Services and Developmental Disabilities so the needs of the whole family can be more adequately addressed.

**F. Coordinating with Domestic Violence**

Violence within the family is also recognized as a major barrier to self sufficiency. The Individual and Family Support Intake worker or the ongoing Work First worker notifies applicants/recipients at the end of the interview of their right to claim an exemption from work requirements under the Family Violence Option. If clients indicate they wish to speak with someone further about family violence, the worker calls the Domestic Violence Shelter and schedules an appointment. While the Employment Services Social Worker works with the client to provide appropriate



services, no plan of action is completed until the Family Violence Assessment is returned from Domestic Violence. The Social Worker then develops a plan of action with the client, incorporating the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Shelter personnel. This may include waiving some, all or none of the Work First requirements and arranging necessary services. ( Attachment # 3)

**G. Public/Private Partnerships**

New Hanover County has a track record of successful public/private partnerships.

The Transportation Advisory Committee, made up of public agencies, not for profits and private employers has been meeting since January 2000 to resolve the issue of inadequate transportation not only for working people but for medical appointments and to meet other needs. See E. above.

For several years now the DSS has partnered with the faith community. Several local churches have provided financial support to meet one time needs such as car repairs not covered under DSS programs. More recently we have begun working with Families First (North Carolina Council of Churches) and the Family Partners (Catholic Social Ministry) who have agreed to act as mentors for some of our Work First families. St. Stephens Church has also set up a computer based learning program which we have available as a resource for our clients.

Private industry and public agencies including DSS partnered in designing the ENTRY Program at Cape Fear Community College. Once participants complete the program, one employer, New Hanover Regional Medical Center, has agreed to interview the participants. Several others have agreed to accept referrals from the program for interviews.

We have developed an extremely effective working relationship with staff at the Employment Security Commission which has been of benefit to both of our agencies. As noted previously, we contract with them to outpost two of their Interviewers in our office to help clients find jobs and we in turn provide staff at the JobLink Career Center located at ESC. In addition, we have worked together on various planning committees and in conducting job fairs. We also participate in the Wilmington Job Service Employer Committee (JSEC), which promotes “employers and government in partnership.”

Our interaction with the Cape Fear Council of Governments has been extremely productive as well. Their Workforce Development Program staff spearheaded the implementation of our county’s Welfare to Work plan, awarded the grant to the YWCA’s “Bridges” program and conducted follow-up training and workshops to keep all of us on track. In addition, our clients benefit from other employment and training programs they sponsor which target disadvantaged youth and adults and

workers who have been displaced from their jobs due to a plant closure or layoff. They have also invited us to participate in Workforce Development Board meetings, which address workforce issues in both the public and private sector. This Board is responsible for the oversight of the Welfare to Work program, the JobLink Career Centers and programs administered by the Cape Fear Service Delivery Area through the recently implemented Workforce Investment Act.

For several years we have worked collaboratively with the New Hanover County Partnership for Children on such issues as child care subsidy and child care transportation. DSS staff work closely with the Partnership in its strategic planning process. The Partnership plans to enlist the support of the business community to assist with child care subsidies and to develop a greater understanding of the need for quality child care. Quality child care can have a major impact on reducing workplace absenteeism and turnover. They will take a leadership role, along with other community organizations, in designing an educational program for the parent who plans to go back to work.

Finally, we work with the Chamber of Commerce through their Work First Advisory Council, to inform employers and to garner their support for the use of the transportation tax credit and to encourage them to hire Work First clients. The business community is seeing the need for affordable child care and the Work First Advisory Council will seek employer support for meeting that need through subsidy and on site centers.

#### H. Appeal Process

As a standard county, New Hanover will follow the procedures established by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to allow families to appeal decisions adversely affecting their receipt of public assistance.

### VIII. **Electing Counties Only - Eligibility Criteria**

Standard County - Not applicable

### IX. **Emergency Assistance**

Counties must provide emergency assistance for families. All county plans are limited by the following eligibility guidelines:

- The family must have a child who lives with a relative as defined for Work First cash assistance and who meets the age limit for Work First cash assistance.
- Total gross family income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty

level.

- Family members must meet the same citizenship requirements as for Work First cash assistance.
- Assistance may not be provided for any medical care, regardless of whether the participant is covered by Medicaid.
- Only short-term benefits may be provided. Short-term benefits are described as:
  - nonrecurring, short term-benefits designed to deal with a specific episode of need;
  - Is not intended to meet recurring or ongoing needs; **and**
  - Not extending beyond four months.

We will follow the guidelines for Emergency Assistance as issued by the state and federal governments. In light of this, we adopted the enhancements noted in DSS Administrative Letter 11-99 effective November 1, 1999, as indicated above.

Clients are assessed for Emergency Assistance as a part of an overall problem solving and planning process to enable them to be self sufficient.

#### **X. Services for Families with Income at or Below 200% of Poverty**

New Hanover County is currently serving all Work First parents who are subject to the work requirements. We are providing follow-up and retention services as needed to former Work First recipients. Depending on availability of funding, we will continue to provide services to families with income at or below 200% of poverty.

Services may include problem solving, case management, counseling, job search, job readiness, work-related expenses, transportation and child care. Other allowable services as indicated in TANF guidelines, such as skills training, education, On the Job training and parenting skills will be provided on a referral basis. We will assess our expenditures and staffing patterns in these areas at regular intervals to determine if we have sufficient funds to continue offering these services to those other than Work First recipients and at what level.

#### **XI. Services for Non-custodial Parents of Work First Recipient Children**

New Hanover County will not provide employment related services to Non-custodial parents using Work First Block Grant funds. We need to stay focused on providing services to all Work First participants first. We do intend to maintain a close relationship with our local IV-D office, however, and will examine this issue with them at some point in the future.

Child support is critical in moving a family to self sufficiency. Many Non-custodial parents face some of the same barriers to self sufficiency the custodial parents face. They lack the education and job skills needed to obtain jobs that pay well enough to support their children

and themselves. Many are unemployed.

In addition, there are emotional and personal issues involved that affect their willingness to pay. Non-custodial parents who are involved in their children's lives more often pay child support. Some Non-custodial parents want to tie paying child support to visitation with their children. When they are denied visitation, they refuse to pay support. In order to remove these barriers we must look beyond the court order for support to the individual.

It is our intention to endorse and assist in the establishment of a Fatherhood Resource Center (FRC) in New Hanover County to provide advocacy/education for Non-custodial parents. This should not be an adversarial relationship but one through which Child Support and the DSS can disseminate information about the Child Support Enforcement program as well as other agency programs to Non-custodial parents. The FRC would also advocate with different resources such as Cape Fear Community College, the JobLink Career Center, the New Hanover Partnership for Children, Communities and Schools and the faith community for meeting the needs of the Non-custodial parents. They could partner with the DSS, ESC, and the New Hanover Child Support Enforcement agency to jointly develop resources that would provide an alternative to jail, i.e., a mandatory referral to the JobLink Career Center, and advocate with the judges to use these resources.

## **XII. Child Welfare Services**

The Work First and Child Welfare Sections are committed to working together to ensure the well-being of children served by both programs. We utilize our in-house computer system (AS-400) to first identify common cases. When a new case is assigned to any section, the worker opens a "service" for the client. He/she researches the inquiry screen to determine other services the client may be receiving. The Work First worker then contacts the appropriate Child Welfare worker (i.e. in the Children's Protective Services or Children's Services section) or vice-versa if an open service is identified in the other program. The two workers discuss their involvement with the case and define goals and objectives. Work First activities scheduled conform to the recommendations of Child Welfare staff. The workers maintain regular contact with each other to determine the progress the client is making and if contracts or expectations need to be changed. Any staffings scheduled to discuss mutual concerns are held jointly. Likewise, if a case is being transferred (e.g. from the Children's Protective Services to the Children's Services Section) or the case is being closed, Work First and Child Welfare staff notify each other accordingly. All efforts are made to ensure that we are not working at cross purposes with each other and that the safety of the child(ren) and well-being of the family remain our primary objectives.

We also maintain regular contact among the various sections and educate each other regarding changes in policy which would have a bearing on each program. We will enhance this arrangement by offering training which staff in all sections concerned can attend together.

### **XIII. Success for Families at Risk Initiative**

Following is a report given to the Success Council on July 27, 2000:

When we held our first meeting of the *Success* Coordinating Council on January 20, 2000, we discussed how we planned to mutually review cases of Work First recipients who had used more than half of their 60 month lifetime benefit limit. We knew these individuals had serious problems. We knew that each of our agencies had been involved with most of them at one time or another. We also knew that none of us had succeeded in “fixing” things as far as these families were concerned. Now that we have reviewed 48 cases in the past few months, we have more details than we had previously. Certain patterns have become clearer. Progress has been made, particularly in regard to collaboration among agencies. Although we may have a better understanding of what the issues are, we have more questions than answers at this point. The purpose of this report is to highlight some of our findings and challenge each of us to decide where we go next.

In analyzing the data on our 48 cases, several factors were reviewed. These included age of the participants, number of children, education, work history, living arrangement, vehicle ownership, incidence of protective services reports, treatment for mental health problems, medical problems, family violence and substance abuse issues. Some of the data came directly from an application form or another agency. Some (e.g. concerning domestic violence, substance abuse, medical or psychological problems) was extrapolated from DSS case summaries. It is probable that if these records were researched further, the numbers noted in the summary below would be higher.

- **30** clients range in age from 30 to 62. **18** are in their twenties.
- **36** have 2 or more children under 18 living with them. **12** have one child; **18** have two; **18** have 3 or more. If we were to consider children over 18 as well, however, the majority would have 3 or more.
- **26** do not have a high school diploma or GED. Of the remaining 22, **6** have a GED, **13** graduated from high school and **3** have high school plus some post-secondary education. The educational level for the 26 is broken down further as follows:
  - **1** - 6<sup>th</sup> grade
  - **8** - 8<sup>th</sup> grade
  - **5** - 9<sup>th</sup> grade
  - **8** - 10<sup>th</sup> grade
  - **4** - 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- **26** have not worked in at least 3 years.
- **35** live in public (**14**) or subsidized (**21**) housing.
- **32** do not own a car.

- **30** have been investigated by a Child Protective Services' worker; **22** of these have been investigated 2 or more times in the past 5 years; **8** of the 30 have been referred to a Children's Services worker because the report was substantiated.
- **30** have been treated for mental health problems; **9** are currently in treatment at Southeastern Center. The primary mental health diagnosis was depression (**20**). Other diagnoses included paranoid schizophrenia, manic depression, anxiety disorder and suicidal tendencies. This total represents number of adults and does not include the number of children treated.
- **23** have 2 or more medical problems. These include high blood pressure, diabetes, sickle cell anemia, back problems, asthma, HIV, knee and hip problems, arthritis and sarcoidosis.
- **6** are caring for severely disabled children (cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, ADHD, asthma.
- **13** have domestic violence issues.
- **5** acknowledged current or previous substance abuse problems.
- **22** had been denied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at some point.

In terms of current case status, **11** of the 48 cases are now closed for Work First. The reasons for case closure are:

- **4** became employed
- **1** was awarded Social Security
- **1** was awarded SSI
- **1** moved out of the county
- **1** would not develop a Mutual Responsibility Agreement
- **1** could not be located
- **1** did not want to comply with work requirements
- **1** no longer had custody of her child due to CPS issues. This individual just reported she is pregnant.

The *Success* team members began meeting weekly initially but switched to a bi-weekly meeting after several months. No meetings were held in July as we wanted to report our findings to the *Success* Council. Some agencies sent representatives consistently, others did not. The team members tried to look at the family as a whole in making recommendations. In some instances, the clients accepted services offered; while in others they did not. The liaison with Social Security has been particularly effective in helping clients either with receipt of benefits or with preparation for an appeal. Likewise, Vocational Rehabilitation staff met with five clients and are currently working with two of these to develop plans. Other referral sources included the Health Department, Housing Authority, Cape Fear Community College, the "Big Buddy" program, Southeastern Center, "Bridges" (Welfare to Work program), the Cape Fear Literacy Council, Child Advocacy Commission, Child

Support Enforcement and local attorneys who handle SSI appeals. In addition, Employment Services' staff accompanied clients to doctors' appointments when the participant's prognosis and work capacity appeared to be vague.

At this point, 37 of the original 48 cases are unresolved though some of these individuals are working toward a goal. In addition, there are now 8 more cases with 30 or more months that need to be reviewed and there will be 15 more coming up in the next three months. We need to schedule these new cases for an initial evaluation and revisit those that we discussed previously.

In terms of the "success" of *Success*, there have definitely been some positive outcomes. As noted previously, the collaboration among the agencies who have participated has helped not only with providing direction for these cases but with others as well. We each have a better understanding of what our parameters are and have learned about new resources in the community. Some clients have moved off Work First, though it is possible that a few of these will return. The overriding concern, however, is what can we accomplish on a long-range basis? This process has taught us much. We can accomplish more, not just for these individuals but for all our mutual clients, if we continue to work together. On the other hand, it is evident that some of these clients need more help than all of us together can provide. What is to happen to them when their Work First benefits end?

#### **XIV. Funding Requirements**

**A.** New Hanover County will use Maintenance of Effort funds :

- to support Emergency Financial Services,
- to contract with the Employment Security Commission for two full time employment interviewers out posted at the Department of Social Services,
- to provide Child Day Care services,
- to fund a transportation coordinator position, and
- to purchase work related supplies, i.e., tools, uniforms.

**B.** In conjunction with the Adoption and Safe Families Act enacted by Congress in 1997, New Hanover County's Child Welfare system has three goals: safety, permanence, and well-being. The TANF Block Grant is helping us meet these goals. Currently, 43% of our total TANF funds are spent in the provision of Children's Services. Mandated by state law, these services encompass Children's Protective Services Intake, Children's Protective Services Investigations, and Child Welfare Services to children for whom abuse and neglect have been substantiated.

Of the TANF funds spent in the provision of Children's Services, 85% is spent in Children's Protective Services Intake and Children's Protective Services

Investigations. Protective Services Intake is the process of receiving and documenting reports which allege that a child(ren) may be abused, neglected or dependent and making a thorough evaluation of the information provided by the reporter to determine whether a protective services investigation will be initiated. Children's Protective Services Investigations is conducting those activities necessary to determine whether or not allegations of abuse, neglect, or dependency are true, and to evaluate the safety of the child in the home. If the allegations are found to be true and the children are determined to be at risk, on-going Child Welfare Services are provided to children and families to ameliorate the conditions causing the risk. This includes services to keep children safely in their own homes, out of home placement for children who are at imminent risk, and arranging treatment services to the family in efforts to reunite the children with their families. Twenty nine percent of the TANF funds spent in the provision of Children's Services is spent in on-going Child Welfare services. All of the children served in Children's Services meet the TANF criteria.

- C. In the current budget, Work First Diversion Assistance is budgeted at \$286,021. Work First Family Assistance is budgeted at \$3,041,373. Work First Services is budgeted at \$2,656,630. The maintenance of effort contribution is \$1,602,595.

## **XV. Innovative County Strategies**

### **New Hanover Health Network Work First Initiative**

New Hanover Health Network is initiating an aggressive program to invest in their future workforce. Work First clients, hired in entry level positions, will be offered opportunities to increase their education and skills and advance into higher skilled, higher paying jobs. The process is described below:

- New employees attend NHHN orientation and CFCC Human Resource Development Program.
- A vocational assessment will be offered to those employees indicating need and interest.
- On-Site GED and ESL classes will be available to employees.
- Employees will be given a period of time to complete GED.
- A CNA class will be offered through a work/study model in cooperation with local community colleges.
- Accelerated programs will be offered to qualified employees.
- In specific job categories, additional training may be available after employees meet qualifying criteria.

NHHN will offer the program in nine counties. Partnerships will be formed with CFCC as well as other community colleges in the region that serve surrounding participating counties.



Nurses and other health professionals who are community college instructors will be secured to teach On-Site classes. Mentoring will be provided by those individuals and others to the employees in the workforce development program.

### **Excellent Tenant School**

The Work First Housing Sub-Committee is evaluating the feasibility of developing a short-term training program in which participants may enhance their skills in several areas with the goal of increasing their chances of attaining and maintaining quality affordable housing. Topics to be addressed include: landlord/tenant relations; crisis resolution and negotiation skills with landlords; basic budgeting skills; enhanced housekeeping skills; health and safety issues; basic upkeep that saves the tenant and landlord money; resources for better money management. Upon completion of the course, individuals will receive certification which will entitle them to certain benefits. Benefits proposed include rent reductions, partial return of deposit, higher eligibility for the home ownership pool being created by the Wilmington Housing Authority, possible extension of lease at the same rate. The success of the program is contingent on the willingness of the Wilmington Housing Authority to take the lead role and in the proposed cultivation of a group of landlords who will agree to offer incentives in exchange for program participants.

Tentative approval has been given for a \$1,000 grant from the Eastern North Carolina Poverty Committee to support the school.

### **Educational Program for Parents**

Working with the New Hanover County Partnership for Children and the New Hanover County Health Department, we will develop an educational program for parents of infants and small children. The program will include elements of how to be a working parent, child care/child development and preparing for the world of work.

### **Resident-Owned Van Pool**

The Wilmington Housing Authority (WHA) and Wilmington Community Development Corporation (CDC) have committed to work with us to explore the possibility of developing a housing authority resident-owned van shuttle service. The WHA, through its Self Sufficiency and HOPE VI programs will identify residents who have expressed an interest in establishing their own business. Residents will work with the CDC to receive technical assistance in starting a van service, and making it profitable. WHA will lease vans to these residents and DSS will contract with them to provide employment related transportation.

### **Fatherhood Resource Center**

It is our intention to endorse and assist in the establishment of a Fatherhood Resource Center

in New Hanover County to provide advocacy/education for non-custodial parents. This should not be an adversarial relationship but one through which Child Support and the DSS can disseminate information about the Child Support Enforcement program as well as other agency programs to non-custodial parents. The FRC would also advocate with different resources such as Cape Fear Community College, the JobLink Career Center, the New Hanover Partnership for Children, Communities in Schools and the faith community for meeting the needs of the non-custodial parents. They could partner with the DSS, ESC, and the New Hanover Child Support Enforcement agency to jointly develop resources which would provide an alternative to jail, i.e., a mandatory referral to the JobLink Career Center, and advocate with the judges to use these resources.

### **Wheels to Work**

Working with Engine Angels, a faith based organization and other community resources, we plan to develop a Wheels to Work program for former Work First clients. Engine Angels would accept donated automobiles and work with area auto repair shops and possibly the Cape Fear Community College Auto Mechanics' Program to make these vehicles road worthy. DSS would identify former Work First clients with employment transportation needs to receive the cars for a modest cost.

## **XVI. Special Issues**

New Hanover is a coastal community and as such is very susceptible to hurricanes. When we are hit by a hurricane, staff from throughout the agency are pulled from their normal functions to handle the disaster. Typically we must staff shelters for some time after the agency reopens. Large numbers of citizens normally not receiving any assistance from the county are thrown into economic situations which require assistance. Staff operates the Disaster Food Stamp program and sees a high volume of clients through the Individual and Family Support Intake unit for financial help and problem solving/advocacy. At times we have had to operate one or more Disaster Relief Fund programs as well.

Substance abuse is a serious problem due to the high urban nature of New Hanover County. We are the second smallest county land size and seventh in population.

Being a coastal community also affects job opportunities in the county. As a tourist community, a significant number of available jobs are minimum wage at entry level, most without benefits. Our challenge is to assist Work First recipients in obtaining jobs with higher wages and benefits sufficient to meet the basic cost of living.

## **XVII. Current Electing Counties**

New Hanover County has been extremely successful in meeting the Work First goals. We have reduced the caseload from 1689 families in July 1997 to 868 families in July 2000, a

49% decrease. Since the program began in 1995, our caseload fell 69% from 2801 to 868. We have literally put thousands to work and have a retention rate of 94%! Child Support collections have continued to climb at a rate above the 10% goal established by the state.

Being an electing county has given us the opportunity and obligation to work collaboratively with other public agencies and the private sector as can be seen throughout this document. The business community is becoming involved. The result of this collaboration has been better service for our clients. We identified needs in the first Work First county plan, i.e., child care for second and third shifts and increased awareness of the transportation problems and needs of working families in New Hanover County. We have been able to meet some of those needs. There are now three child care centers in the county that provide care for alternate shifts and weekends. Transportation remains a major problem in New Hanover County. However, progress is being made. The community, both public and private sectors, has come together to resolve the problem. Working together we will make our vision, "Communities partnering with families to promote self-sufficiency, dignity and opportunity," a reality.

### **XVIII. Certification**

This plan was adopted by the New Hanover Board of County Commissioners on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of May 2001.

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William A. Caster, Chairman  
New Hanover Board of County Commissioners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sherman L. Criner, Chairman  
New Hanover County Board of Social  
Services

ATTACHMENT 1

ATTACHMENT 2

ATTACHMENT 3

ATTACHMENT 4

# **DRAFT**

**New Hanover County  
2001-2003 Work First Plan  
for  
Consideration by the  
Board of County Commissioners**

**November 27, 2000**