

## **Florida Department of Children and Families – Economic Self-Sufficiency Program Transformation**

- Greeting
- Economic Self-Sufficiency Program or ESS, administers the state’s benefit eligibility program for food, cash and medical assistance.
- Also housed within the Department of Children and Families, is the Office of Child Welfare, Substance Abuse and Mental Health, and Adult Protective Services.
- DCF serves some of Florida’s most vulnerable populations.
- The agency is undergoing a shift and approach in serving these populations and specifically the transformation of the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program.

### **WIG:**

- Florida’s DCF has prioritized prevention as our top priority and goal.
- Mitigating crisis or prevention for the department looks vastly different across the board for each program area.
- To align the agency, Secretary Poppell brought in and institutionalized the 4DX Franklin Covey model to create one large, important goal.
- WIGs – which stands for a Wildly Important Goal.
- The department’s WIG is to “Reduce the number of families in crisis by 20% by June 2021.”

### **ESS’ WIG:**

- For the ESS program, we began to look and itemize our data to help identify ESS’ crisis population.
- We defined crisis as being chronically dependent on public benefits.
- Data showed that after the 21-month mark of being on benefits, the likelihood that someone would be chronically dependent on public benefits drastically increases.
- ESS defined its crisis population as individuals ages 18-59 on SNAP or TANF after the 21<sup>st</sup> month.
- The ESS program is the front door to services to the agency. If we can help Florida families gain self-sufficiency by removing the financial burden and stress from the home when they first file for benefits—then we will help reduce the number of individuals who then spill over into the child welfare or substance abuse and mental health arenas.
- This mindset and approach has shifted the operations of the agency’s programs as we work to align terminology, share resources, data and information, and use common tools in serving DCF customers.
- DCF is working to identify and help families sooner before a crisis occurs.

### Care Coordination:

- To shift the ESS program from *just* providing benefits to prevention services, we established the Care Coordination Program to help clients identify and remove barriers to self-sufficiency.
- Care Coordination for ESS was developed to address our client's employment and workforce barriers.
- Model built from the ground up - front-line team members and local community-based providers.
- Over a three to four-month period, the team built an assessment, developed a tracking tool, defined the process flow, and created extensive trainings to assist with motivational interviewing techniques and trauma informed care.
- Standardize the process from beginning to end to eventually adopt statewide.
- Care Coordination is a voluntary program and it was developed to follow normal business operations across the public benefit process.
  - Client fills out an application for benefits.
  - During the required interview Care Coordination is offered to client.
  - Client accepts - Care Coordinator conducts an assessment with the client to identify goals and barriers to employment.
  - Care Coordinator then refers the client to a suite of services and resources using the department's network of community partners, sister agencies, non-profit organizations, and faith-based providers.
  - Care Coordinator follows up with the client and provider to get feedback on the interaction(s)/ services rendered.
  - This referral process will continue until all barriers identified are removed and/or the individual is able to secure employment.
- Care Coordination officially began in August 2020 in Northwest and Central regions - deployed with existing resources (30 FTEs).
- Common barriers for our clients continue to be employment, education, bill payment assistance, housing and basic needs (personal hygiene, clothing, food).
- We will continue to re-evaluate successes and pitfalls every six months to strengthen the program and expand our footprint statewide to serve more clients.

### ESS Stakeholder Workgroup:

- ESS Stakeholder Workgroup established to align resources, policies and initiatives to make meaningful difference statewide in closing benefit gaps and ending generational poverty.
- Stakeholders included are the Florida Department of Education, CareerSource Florida, the Florida Chamber, Department of Economic Opportunity, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and the Florida Children's Council.

- The goal of the workgroup is to align resources and services and to catalog the meaningful initiatives being conducted across the state.
- With this information aligned, the state can begin to remove the structural boundaries between programs and initiatives.
- Work to identify the top 5-10 initiatives or policy changes that the stakeholders can support to begin making meaningful positive movement in resolving these complex problems throughout Florida.
- Close