



Council for Lifelong Learning

Workforce Florida, Inc., Better Jobs/Better Wages Council

Fact Sheet

September 2001

<p>1. What is the Better Jobs/ Better Wages Council ?</p>	<p>The Better Jobs/ Better Wages Council (Council) is one of three standing councils within Workforce Florida, Inc., tasked with developing strategies to target the needs of job seekers and employers. (See the Workforce Florida, Inc. Fact Sheet.)</p>
<p>2. What purpose does the Better Jobs/ Better Wages Council serve?</p>	<p>The Council helps underemployed workers improve their skills so they can get better jobs with better wages that provide economic self-sufficiency. It also is responsible for overseeing the state's welfare transition program with an expanded emphasis on helping former welfare recipients succeed in the workplace and avoid a return to dependence upon cash assistance. The Council's responsibilities also include the Incumbent Worker Training program, which helps employers retrain and upgrade the skills of their employees to meet the changing demands of the economy and avert layoffs.</p>
<p>3. What type of strategies does the Better Jobs/ Better Wages Council develop?</p>	<p>While the Council is responsible for a number of specific programs, they generally focus strategies on redirection, retention, and reliance.</p> <p>Redirection programs exist to help redirect individuals and families heading for public assistance. All too often, caseworkers automatically assign families to cash assistance rolls when other programs may meet their needs more effectively. In some cases, families are forced to accept cash assistance because other programs (such as subsidized childcare or Medicaid) are not available unless they are on welfare or eligible for transitional benefits.</p> <p>Redirection programs can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• teen pregnancy prevention—programs targeting teens at risk of welfare dependency;• avoidance—non-custodial parent employment programs, special childcare and substance abuse services that allow individuals to avoid welfare with modest assistance; and• diversion—providing emergency services at agencies or one-stop centers immediately prior to determining eligibility for welfare, typically through one-time cash payments or employment placement and counseling.

	<p>Reliance strategies emphasize supporting families with special services as they move from public assistance to self-sufficiency. Although providing these services - known as transitional benefits - can be more costly than cash assistance, initially, these benefits provide a critical lifeline to families attempting the transition from welfare to economic independence. Expenses, such as childcare and transportation, can easily consume budgets in households maintained on minimum-wage jobs. However, only about half of welfare "leavers" are aware of or are accessing transitional benefits that could make the difference between success and failure in a new career.</p> <p>A statewide workgroup recently reviewed procedural roadblocks that make it difficult for eligible families to access benefits and their recommendations are now being implemented. Additionally, a multimedia communications strategy that reaches out to current clients, former participants, and career managers is now nearing completion.</p> <p>Retention is also a critical concern as working families - including former and potential public assistance clients - need a strong job retention plan that leads to skill upgrading and a career path that provides economic self-sufficiency. Developing strategies that help entry-level workers keep their jobs - and help businesses retrain and retain workers - is vitally important now, while the economy is booming and workforce issues are a top concern for many employers.</p>
<p>4. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 445.005 F.S. -- Better Jobs/Better Wages Council of Workforce Florida, Inc.</p>
<p>5. Where can I get more information?</p>	<p>Workforce Florida, Inc. 325 John Knox Road Building 200 Tallahassee, FL 32303 (850) 921-1119 www.workforceflorida.com</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on Workforce and Technical Skills (850) 922-9463</p>