



## Mecklenburg County

# *Work First County Plan* *for* *2005-2007*

### *Prepared by*

Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services

### *Contacts*

***Richard W. Jacobsen, Jr.***, Social Services Director

Phone: 704-336-3020; Fax: 704-336-3361; email: [jacobrw@co.mecklenburg.nc.us](mailto:jacobrw@co.mecklenburg.nc.us)

***Diana P. Tini***, Economic Services Division Director, Economic Services Division

Phone: 704-353-1695; Fax: 704-353-1325; email: [tinidw@co.mecklenburg.nc.us](mailto:tinidw@co.mecklenburg.nc.us)

***Susie Parrott***, Economic Services Division Manager, Work First/Employment Services

Phone: 704-353-1628; Fax: 704-353-1325; email: [parrosh@co.mecklenburg.nc.us](mailto:parrosh@co.mecklenburg.nc.us)

***Department of Social Service's Web Site: [www.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/codss](http://www.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/codss)***

### *Mailing Address*

301 Billingsley Road  
Charlotte, NC 28211

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**Mecklenburg County  
Board of Commissioners**

Tom Cox, *Chairman*  
Dan Ramirez, *Vice Chairman*  
H. Parks Helms  
Jim Puckett  
Norman A. Mitchell, Sr.  
Valerie Woodard  
Dumont Clarke  
Ruth Samuelson  
Bill James

Harry L. Jones, Sr., *County Manager*

Commissioners' and Manager's Office  
PO Box 31787  
Charlotte, NC 28231-1787

Phone: 704-336-2472  
Fax: 704-336-5887

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## **I. Conditions Within the County**

This section describes some of the current realities for low-income families in Mecklenburg County.

### **A. Transportation**

Overall unmet transportation needs in 2003 were similar compared to four years earlier when considered on a per capita basis. However, a rapidly expanding population in Mecklenburg County has increased the total number of households with an unmet transportation need (such as transportation to work, health care services, or adult education).

In 2003, 31% of households with incomes under 100% of federal poverty had unmet transportation needs, or about 6,800 households. Twenty percent of households with incomes between 100% and 200% of federal poverty had an unmet transportation need, or another 6,800 households.

Overall, 41% of households with incomes under 100% of federal poverty do not have a vehicle available for use, or about 8,800 households. Thirteen percent of households with incomes between 100% and 200% of federal poverty do not have a vehicle available for use, or about 4,400 households. Three percent of households with incomes over 200% of federal poverty do not have a vehicle available for use, or about 7,300 households (all transportation data from the 1999 and the 2003 Mecklenburg County Community Needs Survey).

### **B. Housing**

The availability and stability of home ownership among low income households in Mecklenburg County have economic benefits to the family. Low income households in the Charlotte area who are homeowners spend nearly 20% less of their income in housing costs than do low income renters and pay 17% less in utility costs (2002 American Housing Survey).

Homeownership is at a high, due to historically low interest rates allowing increased affordability for all citizens, and new types of low down payment financing helping lower income families. The home ownership rate in Mecklenburg County rose from 62.3% in 2000 (2000 Decennial Census) to 63.7% in 2002 (2002 American Housing Survey) and presumably has risen further since that time as interest rates bottomed out in 2003 (yearly average of 5.8% for a 30 year fixed mortgage) and remain very low in 2004 (projected final yearly average of 5.9%) for a 30 year fixed mortgage. Mecklenburg County is following national trends, but lags behind national home ownership rates, which set a new record of 69.2% in the second quarter of 2004 (U.S. Housing Market Conditions, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2004, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).

The Charlotte metro area is more affordable for home buyers than the national average. The most recent Housing Opportunity Index (HOI) for the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill MSA is 74, compared to a national HOI of 65 (source: NAHB – National Association of Home Builders). The index reflects the percentage of recently sold housing that is affordable to households of median income in an area. The NAHB forecasts that 2005 home mortgage interest rates will rise to approximately 2002 rates to a yearly average of 6.7% for a 30 year fixed mortgage – still historically low, but affordability will decline somewhat.

Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recommend that no more than 30% of gross income be spent on housing plus utilities. Based on these guidelines, the median monthly rent of \$695 in Mecklenburg County (2003 American Community Survey) is considered affordable for families earning about 48% of the median family income of \$58,449 (2003 American Community Survey). Rental subsidies are available for families earning less than 80% of median family income, with priority given to families earning less than 60% of median family income and families with children under age 15. In the Charlotte area, 59% of low-income renters (incomes below federal poverty level) have median housing costs that exceed 30% of their income (2002 American Housing Survey). As of September 2004, the vacancy rate of rental housing in Mecklenburg had climbed to 10.5% with prospects for the vacancy rate declining described as "weak" (Carolina Real Data). In recent years the improved affordability of home buying has caused the rental vacancy rate to climb and rental costs to decline.

### **C. Employment and Education**

Unemployment rates were substantially lower in 2004 (5.3% in July 2004) than in 2003 (6.0% in July 2003) (NC Employment Security Commission) and are projected to continue to decline in 2005 (Carolina Economic Forecast for 3Q2004, Belk Business College at UNCC). Unemployment rates are not reported at a County level by level of education, but national rates show that unemployment for those without a high school diploma or its equivalent have unemployment rates three times higher (about 8%) than those with a college degree (about 2.5%). Those with a high school diploma are unemployed at twice the rate (about 5%) than those with a college degree (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Education is critical to moving recipients from welfare dependence to economic independence.

Although not directly comparable to unemployment rates, research does show that in Mecklenburg County those who are searching for a job but who cannot find one vary greatly by level of education (2003 Mecklenburg County Community Needs Survey).

<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>Percent who Need a Job but Cannot Find One</i>
Less than high school diploma	16.2%
High school diploma or GED	8.8%

College graduate	4.1%
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Most of the fastest growing occupations in the Mecklenburg County area require at least some post-secondary education and usually an associate college degree at a minimum (Occupational Trends through 2010 for Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill MSA from the NC Employment Security Commission). The employment prospects for those with limited education is very challenging.

However, due to turnover rates and the larger size of certain occupational groups, nine out of the ten occupations with the largest number of annual openings only require short-term or medium-term (less than 12 months) on the job training (and presumably in most cases a high school diploma or equivalent). The 15 occupations that require only short- and medium-term on the job training and have the highest number of annual openings is listed below, along with additional information.

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Number of Annual Openings</i>	<i>Entry Wage and Average Wage (per hour)</i>
Cashiers	1,460	\$6.78 – \$8.28
Retail Salespersons	1,240	\$7.08 – \$11.70
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand, excluding construction	1,190	\$7.32 – \$10.73
Waiters and Waitresses	1,170	\$6.03 – \$7.65
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	800	\$6.01 – \$7.54
Customer Service Representatives	720	\$10.74 – \$14.76
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	670	\$7.81 – \$10.68
Office Clerks, General	560	\$8.60 – \$12.35
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, non-technical *	550	\$12.74 – \$25.12
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	530	\$11.88 – \$17.35
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	440	\$11.59 – \$15.00
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	400	\$8.75 – \$10.11
Security Guards	370	\$8.10 – \$11.24
Packers and Packagers, Hand	350	\$7.61 – \$10.19
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks *	330	\$10.48 – \$14.95

*\* Requires medium-term on the job training; the other occupations require short-term training*

An hourly wage of \$7.53 is required for one adult working full time to earn more than the poverty level for a family of three (this does not count the value of the Earned Income Tax

Credit and Child Tax Credits). Two-thirds of the occupations listed above have entry level wages higher than \$7.53 per hour (2004 Occupational Employment and Wages, NC Employment Security Commission).

Two parent families have more earning potential, allowing for two incomes, higher paying employment by one of the parents (for occupations that might require overnight travel or extended hours), or a lessened reliance on subsidized child care (for which there is a waiting list). Two adults working full time would each only require an hourly wage of \$4.53 to bring a family of four above poverty level. If each earned \$7.53 per hour, the same family of four would have income of 166% of the federal poverty level (nearly 200% when the value of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credits are included). The economic benefits for two parent families are clear. In Mecklenburg County, only 3.0% of married-couple families with children under age 18 live in poverty, while 17.5% of single-parent families with children under 18 live in poverty (2000 decennial U.S. Census)

#### **D. Child Care**

Full-time child care in Mecklenburg County for a pre-school child range from \$5,000 to \$8,000 annually, depending on age and the type of care chosen. Part-time care for a school age child costs up to \$3,000 per year. The presence of two parents in the home is clearly an advantage, either eliminating the need for outside child care or allowing a second wage earner to substantially offset the cost of child care.

Subsidized child care is available to families with income over 200% of federal poverty, allowing anyone earning entry wages in the occupations described above to qualify for care. Due to nearly flat funding from North Carolina over the past several years, the subsidized waiting list has risen and hovers around 5,000 children. Families who transition from Work First are given priority for child care.

## **II. Needs of low-income families**

Utilizing surveys of former Work First participants as well as the input from Work First staff and other agencies who work with our population, the Work First Planning Committee identified needs of Mecklenburg County's low-income families in eight major categories:

- Transportation
- Affordable Housing
- Lack of Work Ethic and Basic Life Skills
- Lack of Education or Developmental Disabilities
- Substance Abuse
- Child Care
- Domestic Violence
- Criminal History as it Relates to Employment

### **A. Resources and barriers related to Transportation**

As previously mentioned, the expanding population in Mecklenburg County has increased the total number of households with an unmet transportation need. Work First participants must often juggle not only their transportation route to work, but also via a child care center for their children. Because many families do not have access to a personal vehicle, they must seek jobs that have work hours that fit with public transit bus schedules.

#### **Existing Resources:**

- a. Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) provides bus passes to DSS at a 30% discount. CATS web site ([www.ridetransit.org](http://www.ridetransit.org)) announces new routes.
- b. Expanded bus routes in hard to reach areas (Arrowwood, Huntersville, North Mecklenburg) Also buses coming from and going to Gastonia, Mooresville, Concord, Lincoln County, Union County and Rock Hill, SC, and many small towns in Mecklenburg County. CATS can work with employers to identify clusters of employees and design routes based on needs
- c. Discounted bus passes provided to employers enrolled in CATS Employer Transportation Coordinator program
- d. Extended bus route hours of 5:00 am to 2:00 am
- e. Vans for car pools are provided by CATS. The van pool must either originate or end within Mecklenburg County. Fourteen passenger vans and new 7 passenger vans require no special license for the driver and no fee for the driver. Vans can also be leased to companies.
- f. *Cars for Work* through Goodwill Industries.
- g. Car pool - revamping (704) 336-RIDE. CATS does offer carpool matching services.
- h. Looking at employers outside the bus line that might hire Work First participants and have them transported by van.
- i. Job Link provides some transportation linked with training.
- j. Mecklenburg County continues to receive funds from the Department of Transportation to administer a Transitional transportation program for Work First participants who leave the program due to employment.
- k. ROSS (Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency) Program through Charlotte Housing sponsors drivers education classes
- l. CATS neighborhood shuttle network provides intracommunity connections thereby preventing/reducing passengers' need to commute to the Transit Center to access businesses, services, etc. within the community. New routes have been added recently in the University area and in East Charlotte.



**Remaining Barriers:**

- a. Time it takes to get to and from work including trip to day care.
- b. Recipients see the lack of a car as a transportation barrier even if they live on the bus line.
- c. Lack of available funds for car insurance.
- d. Participants have no drivers license and little means to acquire one.
- e. Customers often do not a backup transportation plan.

**Possible Solutions**

- a. Educate employers about the availability of vans for carpooling.
- b. CATS and DSS Directors communicate regarding needs of customers and identify targeted areas of employers.
- c. Study the need to include vehicle purchasing within the IDA initiative.
- d. Light rail (2006?).

**B. Resources and barriers related to Affordable Housing**

Affordable housing in Mecklenburg County is defined as housing for which the occupant pays no more than 30% of his/her gross income for gross housing costs, including utilities. Work First participants are challenged with securing affordable housing.

**Existing Resources:**

- a. Match provided for Individual Development Accounts (212 participants to date with 112 drawing the match).
- b. Using a coordinated team, Community Link Housing Program is open to 50 families and includes case management, retention services, education of home maintenance.
- c. Local Housing Preference will assist Work First families, Foster Care children aging out and the Family Reunification participants.
- d. Housing Authority has 200 Section 8 vouchers.
- e. CASA Works provides 8 apartments for families receiving Substance Abuse treatment. Work First families have priority and a Work First employment worker is assigned to these cases.
- f. FSS (Family Self Sufficiency) Program of the Charlotte Housing Authority.
- g. Turnover of 400-600 Housing Authority units a year.
- h. Habitat for Humanity wants our customers.
- i. Homeless Community Task Force has developed an action plan that was approved by City Council in August, 2002.

- j. Family Jump Start Program with Community Link.
- k. The Pathways Program at CPCC is partnering with Bank of America to offer low interest loans to graduates of these classes. The classes will include training on home ownership and credit counseling.
- l. Charlotte City Council is placing \$15 million of housing bonds on the November 2004 ballot. Will target individuals at or below 60% of median income.
- m. Salvation Army Transitional Housing facility just opened.
- n. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership.

### **Remaining Barriers:**

- a. Waiting list for public housing and Section 8 is currently 3-5 years.
- b. More mixed income housing/Fair Share needed in the Charlotte area.
- c. Lack of affordable rental and home ownership housing for households earning below \$15,000. The Neighborhood Development Housing Study indicate 6,900 rental units are needed for households that have income of less than \$15,000 per year with 2/3 of those for families with less than \$15,000 annual income.
- d. Lack of beds (4,600) to serve Charlotte-Mecklenburg's homeless population.
- e. There are TANF families residing in the Salvation Army Women and Children's Shelter.
- f. No temporary housing available, particularly for families.

### **C. Resources and barriers related to Lack of Work Ethic and Basic Life Skills**

Work First staff continue to report the lack of Work Ethic and Basic Life Skills. Topics such as problem solving skills and inappropriate work behaviors continue to be addressed in much of the curriculum utilized in various Employment Services training components.

### **Existing Resources:**

- a. Work First two-week Orientation class.
- b. DSS Employment Resource Center.
- c. VANTEDGE Workshop with ACS
- d. Work Ethic card given to all applicants for youth work permits.
- e. Vocational Rehabilitation/Job Coach model.
- f. Human Resources Development at CPCC.
- g. Adventures in Attitudes Curriculum.
- h. ESC/JobLink Centers. Currently there are four centers.
- i. Vocational Interest and Exploration Workshops and Work Adjustment with Goodwill Industries.
- j. Work First Work Experience Component.
- k. Workforce Development Board developed work ethic publications and distributed to employers.
- l. Charlotte Housing Authority economic development/Family Self Sufficiency.

- m. Issue of values: Picture of hope - use of spirituality, Scriptures in context people can relate (historical perspective) Network with houses of worship.
- n. DSS expectations for appropriate dress in the workplace is a positive model.
- o. Individual Development Accounts require this training.
- p. Community Link/ Housing Program.
- q. Consumer Credit Counseling.
- r. One-on-one contact with customers by Social Workers and Career Facilitators.
- s. Cooperative Extension
- t. Charlotte Area Fund
- u. Urban League
- v. Women's Commission (Job Bank/New Choices Program, Customer Service Training).
- w. Displaced Homemaker Alternatives/Clothing Closet.
- x. Contracted Life Skills and Adult Basic Education classes for Work First participants at Central Piedmont Community College.
- y. Character Education at Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools.
- z. Charlotte SAVES is a new program to promote savings.
- aa. Partners in Hope mentoring program.
- bb. Peters Place offers soft skills training for shelter residents.
- cc. B.R.I.D.G.E. program.
- dd. Jobs Partnership program in Jackson Park.
- ee. "Hope" training at Forest Hills Church.
- ff. Flex-o-graphic Trade School.
- gg. Resident Opportunities & Self-sufficiency Program (ROSS) with Charlotte Housing Authority.
- hh. West Boulevard Empowerment Center's employment classes
- ii. INSPIRE Program (ACS WIA Contract) for youth
- jj. YMCA Strengthening Families
- kk. "B" code case bank
- ll. Love, Inc. (12-week budgeting class)
- mm. Computer Empowerment training
- nn. Communities in Schools
- oo. Jacob's Ladder
- pp. Safe Journey

**Remaining barriers:**

- a. Follow-up with employer after client goes to work.
- b. Recognition by participant of this as an issue.
- c. Less work ethic in low paying jobs.
- d. Lack of employer ethics are also a factor.
- e. Family and peers negatively influence.
- f. Assumptions made about work ethic - a depressed client not showing up at work may be labeled as not wanting to work.

- g. Not a lack of skill but a symptom of decision making, life skills, problem solving.
- h. Timing of offering these skills: exposed too early in process and are not provided after a job is obtained.
- i. Once is not enough - clients need to hear over and over.
- j. Clients need to understand that motivation must come from within.
- k. Lack of long term planning skills.
- l. Live pay check to pay check.
- m. Values and priorities are different.
- n. Cultural issues not always addressed

### **Possible Solutions**

- a. The curriculum of Orientation/VIEW should be monitored annually. Their curriculum should compliment each other and each program should be kept abreast of changing needs.
- b. Establish a group to identify information that customers need repeated on an ongoing basis.
- c. Continue to look at what other counties are doing in the area of Work Ethic and Basic Life Skills.

### **D. Resources and barriers related to Lack of Education or Developmental Disabilities**

As previously mentioned, research from the NC Employment Security Commission indicates a correlation between the level of education and the ability to find a job.

### **Existing Resources:**

- a. Central Piedmont Community College
  - 5. Pathways
  - 6. Adult High School
  - 7. ABE/GED/ABLE
  - 8. ESL
  - 9. Work Place Basic Skills located at the work site
  - 10. Family Literacy – three sites
- b. Jump Start – Scholarship Program
- c. EvenStart.
- d. B.R.I.D.G.E. Jobs Program.
- e. On-site educational opportunities provided by some employers.
- f. On-site Vocational Rehab services.
- g. SSI Claims Training.
- h. Time Warner reading program for adults and children.
- i. Reading Fathers program in the jail.
- j. Reach Out and Read Pediatric Literacy Program.
- k. Goodwill.
- l. Area Mental Health program.

- m. Charlotte Area Fund Computer Skills training
- n. Community Culinary School of Charlotte
- o. The Transformation Center of the Carolinas
- p. Greater Enrichment Program
- q. Project INSPIRE
- r. TABE testing at Orientation to the World of Work and Goodwill
- s. Urban League – COST-C Computer Training
- t. Computer Empowerment

### **Remaining Barriers:**

- a. Poor attendance in scheduled activities.
- b. Lack of family support.
- c. Undiagnosed development disabilities.
- d. Poor matching of customers with educational program (customer has barriers that are not addressed by the program).
- e. Training is sometimes not offered until the end of the 24-month time clock.
- f. Pathways Program is becoming a last resort for some customers.

### **Possible Solutions**

- a. Focus on hands-on skill sets that do not require high grade levels/education
- b. Offer informational sessions for workers to help them to match the best program for the customer.
- c. Develop measures to identify what barriers are preventing completion of educational programs.

## **E. Resources and barriers related to Substance Abuse and Mental Health**

About 14% of all local arrests in Charlotte/Mecklenburg are for Driving While Impaired, resulting in approximately 5,320 arrests each year. 80% of child protective cases locally involve a substance abuse problem in the home. At least 600 children currently in foster care in Mecklenburg have been the victims of substance abuse in their birth families.

Approximately 11% of all births in Mecklenburg have some exposure to drugs other than alcohol and nicotine before being born because of the drug use of their mothers. More than 80% of reported cases of domestic abuse involve alcohol and other drugs.

### **Existing Resources:**

- a. Four QSAP's (Qualified Substance Abuse Specialists) on site screen for substance abuse, mental illness and domestic violence
- b. Motivating Resistant Client (Project Courage/Take Charge).
- c. CASCADE –including child care slots for Substance Abuse Treatment participants.

- d. Numerous providers; Hope Haven, McLeod, Substance Abuse Service Center, Chemical Dependency Center, Shelter for Battered Women's counselor.
- e. Psychologist available for Work First evaluations.
- f. CASA Works.
- g. Domestic Violence position formerly funded with State TANF funds.
- h. Drug Court and Family Drug Court.
- i. Southeastern Addictive Institute of Learning (SAIL) and the Chemical Dependency Center offers assistance in Spanish as well as English.
- j. State Plan to contract for county Mental Health/Substance Abuse/Domestic Violence services plans to contract most services within three years.
- k. Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT), a co-occurring disorders program.
- l. Resources at Behavioral Health Center-Randolph (therapy and medication management) and Center for Mental Health.

**Remaining Barriers:**

- a. Denial by clients that problems exist.
- b. Lack of follow through, continuity, high no-show rate, poor retention.
- c. Limited slots for residential treatment for women and their children in the facility.
- d. Resources are expensive.
- e. Fear that disclosure will lead to loss of child; protective services.
- f. Impact of alcohol minimized.
- g. Stigma of seeing a QSAP.
- h. Customers know how to answer questions to prevent a positive screen.
- i. 4-8 week waiting time for appointments at the Behavioral Health Center.

**F. Resources and Barriers for Child Care**

The North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development conducted an online survey asking the citizens of North Carolina how quality child care impacts their lives. The survey was completed by 900 parents, child care providers, community educators and employers. Some of the key findings include the following:

Parents say that child care helps their children learn new skills but without dependable child care, they would have to quit work. Ninety-seven percent of the responding parents and 94% of responding teachers said children are better prepared to be successful in Kindergarten because of high quality child care experiences. Employers say that without dependable child care employees are absent more and have difficulty concentrating when their children are not well cared for.

**Existing Resources:**

- a. Presbyterian Hospital is the only child care provider who offers a child program for sick children and it is limited to employees of Presbyterian.
- b. Families searching for child care can access CCRI's (Child Care Resources Incorporated) internet searchable database (*Child Care eSearch*) via the CCRI website to locate a child care program that meets their needs.
- c. CCRI has a referral line to assist families called Child Care Search (704-348-2181). Families who call this number can access referrals to local child care programs, receive consumer education on how to choose quality child care and eligibility requirements for child care subsidy funding, and are pre-screened for the child care subsidy waiting list.
- d. DSS has child care subsidy funds set aside for Work First recipients receiving Substance Abuse treatment.
- e. CCRI provides an on-site interpreter for the Spanish speaking population seeking child care subsidy.
- f. Teen parents enrolled in high school can access child care subsidy if their mother receives TANF and is enrolled in Work First Employment Services or as funding is available from Smart Start.
- g. Deployed military families receive top priority for subsidy funding.
- h. CCRI collaborates with Charlotte Housing Authority, Smart Start of Mecklenburg County, Goodwill Industries, QSAP and Central Piedmont Community College to assist families in receiving child care subsidy.
- i. More at Four projects that it can provide free preschool for 1,057 at-risk four year old children during fiscal year 2004-2005.
- j. Need more subsidized funding.
- k. Hours of operation for child care centers. Need more centers that operate during non-traditional hours (i.e., 24-hours, weekends, etc.).
- l. Transportation.
- m. Upgrade tracking system to eliminate abuse and misuse of child care services.

**Existing Barriers:**

- a. Currently a waiting list for child care subsidy exists. As of September 25, 2004 a total of 5,322 children were on the waiting list.
- b. The State Fiscal Year 2004-05 initial child care subsidy allocation from the state to Mecklenburg County is \$39,912,981. This amount is approximately \$3,000,000 less than the amount needed to maintain the number of children enrolled in the State Child Care Subsidy Program at the end of SFY 03-04, as well as those that enter the child care subsidy program during SFY 04-05 from priority populations (children in Work First families, families involved in Child Protective Services, or employed foster care parents). The projected shortfall does not include any funding needed to serve the children currently on CCRI's child care subsidy waiting list.
- c. Non-traditional child care is still a barrier. Although CCRI had 46,005 child care slots listed in Mecklenburg County licensed child care programs in August of 2004, there

were

only 3,903 slots available during second shift and 440 slots for children available during third shift. Weekend care is available for only 812 children on Saturday and 258 children on Sunday in licensed child care programs listed on the CCRI database.

- d. Second shift employees enrolled in the child care subsidy program frequently request first shift child care and state child care subsidy funding regulations do not allow funds to be used for this. Child care subsidy funding only supports the hours the parent works (with the exception of using first shift child care when the parents need to sleep if working third shift).

### **G. Resources and Barriers for Domestic Violence**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department responded to more than 31,000 domestic reports in 2003. Mecklenburg County Civil Department files 3,000 domestic violence restraining orders each year.

#### **Existing Resources:**

- a. Domestic Violence Counselor on site in ESD and YFS.
- b. Women's Commission.
- c. Victim Assistance Program.
- d. NOVA Group (Also available for Spanish clients).
- e. Child Development Community Policing in limited districts.
- f. Domestic Violence court.
- g. Quarterly Training for staff on DV issues with big push in October.
- h. Safeguarding of client information by ESD and Child Support.
- i. Child Support meets with the judges on DV cases.
- j. Child Support/YFS collaboration.

#### **Existing Barriers:**

- a. DV court can be a barrier.
- b. Fear.
- c. Some in the court system fear removal of their children.
- d. Staff skills may not always identify the issues.
- e. Language and Culture.
- f. State no longer funding DV positions through TANF.
- g. Victims Assistance has cut their hours due to loss of funds.
- h. Loss of DV positions at Community Link and AMH due to funding issues.
- i. Loss of Mending Hearts program due to funding.
- j. Research shows 40-60% of Work First recipients are exposed to domestic violence but only 7% identify it as a barrier.
- k. Lack of communication between agencies (i.e, Women's Commission/DSS/ESC/Sheriff Dept/Court System/Judges/Child Support Enforcement)



1. Lack of staff with Child Support Enforcement due to State funding.

## **H. Criminal History as it Relates to Employment**

During the 2003-2004 fiscal year, 76% of all Work First participants attending job search and work experience activities with ACS had a criminal record that interfered with their ability to obtain employment.

### **Existing Resources**

- a. Energy Committed to Offenders Employment Counseling Program.
- b. Mecklenburg County Job Link Centers.
- c. Adult Probation/Parole.
- d. ACS - workshops regarding criminal histories.
- e. Federal Bonding Program.
- f. WOTC – WTW tax credit.
- g. Drug court.
- h. Access to some systems to obtain records and information on arrests in Mecklenburg County and North Carolina are available. Also criminal records from County Courthouse are available at no charge.

### **Existing Barriers**

- a. Many participants have criminal records that don't show up in the online North Carolina system.
- b. Customers are not forthcoming with their criminal background
- c. Customers do not place accurate and full information about criminal records on work applications, which results in termination once it is discovered by the employer.
- i. Limited assistance from attorneys regarding expunged records.
- d. Access to records outside of North Carolina.
- e. Criminal records checked at onset of Employment Services Program.

## **WORK FIRST VISION STATEMENT**

To create opportunities for welfare recipients to become self-sufficient while improving the economic security and well being of the entire family. Self-sufficiency is defined as:

- Taking personal responsibility to identify and act on what is in the best interest of my

- family and myself to improve our quality of life.
- Making informed decisions so that my reliance on public assistance is minimized.
  - Lasting economic independence.

### **III. Planning Process**

#### **A. Planning Committee**

On September 21, 2004, the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners voted to administer the Work First Program in Mecklenburg County as a *Standard County*. As a Standard County, the eligibility criteria and payment methodology for Work First Family Assistance (cash assistance) is set by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and is, therefore, not included in this Proposed County Plan for the Work First Program. This Plan includes recommendations for administration of Work First Services and Work First Diversion Assistance

The following agencies/organizations were invited to participate on the Planning Committee:

- Child Care Resources, Inc.
- Central Piedmont Community College
- Workforce Development Board
- Charlotte Chamber of Commerce
- Charlotte Housing Authority
- Employment Security Commission
- Charlotte Area Transit (CATS)
- N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Child Support Enforcement
- Mecklenburg County Area Mental Health Authority
- Mecklenburg County Health Department
- United Way of Central Carolinas
- Applied Computer Solutions (ACS)
- Community Link
- Urban League
- YMCA of Greater Charlotte
- Crisis Assistance Ministry
- Chemical Dependency Center
- Social Services staff members from the following Divisions participated on the Work First Planning Committee:
  - Economic Services including the Faith and Housing Initiatives
  - Youth and Family Services
  - A complete membership list of those representatives who participated on the Work First Planning Committee is attached.

## **B. Public Review and Comment**

The Work First Plan was submitted for public comment beginning October 1 - through October 12, 2004. Copies were placed at the DSS office on Billingsley Road, the public libraries, the County Manager's office and on the internet in two different sites. The County's information web page, [www.4citizenhelp.com](http://www.4citizenhelp.com) was the primary site with a link to the DSS site.

## **C. Planning Process**

The Planning Committee met on September 27, 2004 to identify the needs of the population to be served, analyze the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of current services provided, and update this proposed plan to administer the Work First Program from October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2007. In addition to direct participation by the above captioned agencies and individuals, surveys were requested from former participants in the Work First program. Questions were asked to determine what they saw as barriers to becoming self-sufficient as well as the most important services to offer once their time benefits terminated. The Department of Social Services will continue to keep this team informed of the need for revisions to the Plan, and encourage members of the committee to communicate new initiatives or trends they are seeing.

## **IV. Outcome and Goals for the County**

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

#### **1. Employment**

Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First clients.

#### **2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates**

Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment.

#### **3. Providing Employment Services**

Active participation in intensive employment services for all families is necessary in order to meet the participation rate and to ensure families are served adequately before the end of five years. One measure of success in Work First is the percentage of families who are subject to the work requirement that counties are assisting with job preparation and job placement.

#### **4. Benefit Diversion**

The most successful outcome possible for an applicant for public assistance is to avoid the need to become a recipient.

#### **5. Staying Off Welfare**

Efforts to reduce welfare rolls, help adults find jobs, and increase self-sufficiency are undermined when families return to welfare. Families leaving Work First because of a job are tracked to determine if they return to cash assistance.

**6. Job Retention**

Families who leave Work First for employment and continue to be employed 6 to 12 months after leaving the program show evidence of keeping their income and increased job stability, which impacts a family's well being. This measure will be based on the number of responsible adults that leave Work first Family Assistance for employment who are still employed at 6 and 12 month intervals following termination.

**B. State Recommended County Outcome and Performance Goals for 2005-2007**

**1. Employment:**

Mecklenburg County's goal for adults entering Employment is 1,903 (pending).

**2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates:**

Mecklenburg County's goal to meet participation rates is 50% for All-families and 90% for Two-parent households.

**3. Providing Employment Services:**

Mecklenburg County's goal is to provide intensive employment services to 80% of the families who are subjected to the work requirement and 100% of two-parent households.

**4. Benefit Diversion:**

Mecklenburg County's goal is to utilize Diversion Assistance for 1,800 (pending) families.

**5. Staying Off Welfare**

Mecklenburg County's goal is for 90% who leave because of a job to remain off public assistance.

**6. Job Retention**

Mecklenburg County's goal will be for 60% of families who leave Work First due to employment to remain employed at 6 months and 50% remain employed at 12 months.

**V. Plans to Achieve and Measure Outcomes and Goals**

**County Plan to Achieve Statewide Goals**

**1. Employment**

- a. All potential applicants for Work First Family Assistance will be required to first register for work with the Employment Security Commission. DSS will provide the funding for two ESC staff to complete this registration on-site and not delay applications for other programs.
- b. **Job readiness, job placement and job development** activities are provided on an individual basis as well as in group settings by DSS Employment Services staff and other public and private vendors. Job readiness includes:
  - Vocational interest and training
  - Work experience and job shadowing
  - Job search, and
  - Career advancement and Retention skills
- c. Two ESC employment interviewers are co-located with Work First staff and monthly Job Fairs allow on-site interviewing by employers. DSS also has a contractual arrangement for a Job Developer located on-site. Services are contracted or coordinated with JobLink, Goodwill Industries, Vocational Rehabilitation and other agencies. An Employment Resource Center, an affiliate to the JobLink Center, is located at DSS and is available for use by all Work First applicants and recipients as well as other county residents who are interested in finding a job.
- d. **Work Experience** is an unpaid employment/training opportunity within a public or private agency or a for-profit company. Work First participants who are unable to find paid employment, who need to develop stronger job references or who lack job entry skills may engage in this activity. More than 75 Work Experience Agreements have been signed and are currently in force. This provides opportunities for as many as 206 individual placements at any given time.
- e. **Education and Vocational Training** are important aspects of Employment Services. A pre-vocational assessment is available through a contract agency. Central Piedmont Community College, through its Pathways to Independence Program, has custom designed training opportunities, such as entry level clerical and nurse's aide, to meet the needs of Work First participants. An intensive Adult Basic Education class combined with medical transcription skills is also available through CPCC.
- f. Funds for tuition, books, supplies, uniforms and other expenses related to training or employment are available. This is in addition to payment of child care and transportation fees.
- g. Promote more aptitude testing to determine job interest of customers. This can be done through Goodwill VIEW or at Job Link or CPCC. This helps the customers develop longer term goals.
- h. Enhance communication with CATS on needs of employers to help them develop bus routes that meet participant and employer needs. CATS is available at Job finding Day to help participants find appropriate routes to get to interviews.
- i. Charlotte Chamber has a link to Work First on its Web Site which can post

some available applicants. The Chamber is also doing banner ads and other ads to encourage employers to participate.

- j. The T.T.I.P.S. contractor will continue Jobs Finding Day/Job Fairs.
- k. Ten categories of positions in Mecklenburg County government have been identified as potential for our customers. Applications are flagged for interviews if Work First is on the form. Other departments are encouraged to have a way to identify these participants. Another opportunity would be to continue to include expansion of Work Experience opportunities.
- l. Tiered Employment is a process of linking three companies with similar skills but with wages that increase based on the experience level of the employee. After maintaining a commitment to one employer and demonstrating proficiency, it is an automatic referral to the next tier and advancement in wages and benefits.
- m. Provide more on the job training (OJT) opportunities.
- n. Promote Federal Bonding program for recipients with criminal records.

## **2. Meeting Federal Participation Rate**

- a. DSS will provide additional training for employment services staff on focus and impact of meeting this rate and constantly review their barriers. This has been the focus of several initiatives in the Economic Services Division.
- b. Agencies will keep DSS informed of new services that are offered which may help meet the required number of hours.
- c. An Employment Service team has started an 18 & 19-year-old initiative to try to capture all the customers that meet the rate because of the appropriate education field.
- d. B-Code Case Bank is an employment services case bank designed to decrease the number of customers (whose youngest child is six or older) currently waiting to receive the assistance of an employment Social Worker. The primary focus is securing employment. Along with job searching, customers will be required to participate in job search activities/workshops such as: Resume Writing, Dress for Success, Your attitude Counts, Handling Crisis, Developing a Support System, Financial Security and Effective Communication.
- e. Work N.O.W. - New Opportunities for Work is a new Work First initiative that focuses on customers applying and obtaining employment during the application process as well as continuing once the application has been approved. The expectation is WF customers will continue to seek employment until they either find employment or their case is opened in the Employment Services Program. This is a joint effort between Intake Services, Case Management, Employment Services and the Job Link Centers.

- f. The Employment teams have been assigned areas of the city based on zip code districts. The districts matches districts established by Youth and Family Services (YFS). This allows workers to form relationships with churches, agencies/organizations in their zip code areas. This increases the potential for success in working with the customer.
- g. Customers entering the Employment Program are geared towards one of four distinct tracks depending on the education and previous work history. The four “Tracks to Success” includes Vocational/Educational Training, Job Search, Alternative Work Experience or services at Area Mental Health.
- h. The Economic Services Division (ESD) has designated two Employment Social Workers who are responsible for managing a specialized caseload consisting solely of customers involved with Vocational Rehabilitation. These two workers have additional training and skills in the field of working with customers who have mental and physical limitations.
- i. A specialized case bank, managed by a Quality & Training Social Worker Group, ensures customers with temporary disabilities and medical conditions are closely monitored for quick reengagement into activities once they are released from their doctor to participate.
- j. Employment teams have implemented a variety of new procedures such as the development of Employment Service Activity Tracks, the development of 12-week case plans, and a reengagement plan to ensure that customers are scheduled for activities that will lead to increased self-sufficiency.
- k. A variety of regularly offered activities and training programs with shorter waiting lists are utilized.
- l. Keying employment hours for customers not connected to employment workers will allow staff to capture employment hours in the Employment Program Information System (EPIS).

### **3. Providing Employment Services**

- a. ESD is increasing the workload for Employment Service Staff
- b. Customers who receive case management services through Strengthening Families and ACS are tracked in EPIS and considered active in employment services.
- c. Community Centers are being utilized to conduct group interviews. Assessments are being completed and cases are immediately assigned to Employment workers.
- d. Research is now underway for customers with a “No” in the Education data field. The youngest ones are being identified first and are being fast -tracked into enrolling into Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC). A contact person is being identified with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) to assist in identifying any TANF customers currently enrolled
- e. Teams are researching Work First potentials lists and sending assessment



letters to those customers not attached to an Employment worker.

#### **4. Benefit Diversion**

- a. Each potential applicant for Work First Family Assistance is evaluated for potential eligibility for Work First Diversion Assistance. Eligibility requirements for Diversion Assistance are set by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and include specific conditions which must apply to the individual's employment-related situation
- b. Work First applicants with employment potential are referred to the ACS diversion program.
- c. First Stop identifies individuals who apply for Work First who still have Child Care through CCRI and tries to re-employ them quickly.
- d. Continue to educate other agencies and departments on Benefit Diversion (i.e., YFS, Community Link, EFA).

#### **5. Staying Off Welfare**

- a. All Work First applicants are being referred to Job Link Centers.
- b. At the 18-month staffing, and when an individual goes into Job Bonus, they are given a packet of information listing other available resources.
- c. When an individual loses a job, Employment Staff are encouraged to contact the employer as an advocate for the participant and try to work out the issues.
- d. Resumes are on diskette so that updates can be made at any public library
- e. Mentors such as Strengthening Families look for ways to get to know the family so that they become a support for the family.
- f. Partnering with Community Agencies and/or organizations already established in the neighborhoods strengthens support being provided without duplicating services (YFS).
- g. Continue to engage the Faith Community for mentoring.

#### **6. Job Retention**

- a. Mentors are needed for families. Staff will look at the Mayors Mentoring Alliance as a resource.
- b. Staff will insure the most important services (i.e., Medicaid, Food Stamps, Child Care, Health choice) continue after termination of Work First
- c. Budgeting and Time Management education courses are needed for participants.
- d. TANF Housing and IDA's will continue to be promoted.
- e. Staff will continue to promote the use of tax credits for recipients and employers. Include EITC for recipients and WOTC for employers.

**Support Services:**  
See above.

## VI. Administration

### A. Authority for Administration of the Work First Program

As a Standard County, authority for administration of the Work First Program lies with the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services.

### B. County Organization for Service Delivery

The Economic Services Division of the Department of Social Services administers the Work First Program in Mecklenburg County. Currently, Economic Services includes 363 budgeted positions in three major areas:

Strategic Leadership                      8      budgeted positions

*Strategic Leadership* provides overall leadership, management and direction for the Division, process design and evaluation, legislative monitoring and analysis, program analysis and statistical reporting.

Indirect Services                              102      budgeted positions

*Indirect Services* includes quality assurance and training for all division staff, performance monitoring, career development, human resources and clerical support.

Direct Services                                253      budgeted positions

*Direct Services* includes intake and application processing, case management and contract authorization and monitoring for all Economic Services Division programs and services.

Seven intake teams take and process applications for Work First Family Assistance, Medicaid, Food Stamps and Refugee Assistance using a generic approach to service delivery. Off-site intake services are provided by Caseworkers through a contractual agreement with Carolinas HealthCare System.

Sixteen teams are responsible for Case Management of Work First Family Assistance, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Refugee Assistance and Employment Services. Employment workers and Case Managers work together to coordinate delivery of services to each family. Case Managers are responsible for maintaining Medicaid, Work First Family Assistance, Food Stamp and Refugee Assistance cases. Social Workers and Career Facilitators provide and arrange for Employment Services.

An Employment Resource Center is maintained by Employment Specialists to provide applicants and recipients easy access and assistance with job search. Through a contractual agreement, job development, job search and job placement services are provided on-site by ESC and TTIPS (Teaching, Training Individuals

Professional Skills) staff. Applicants and Work First participants are afforded access to the One-Stop/JobLink Center and DSS Social Workers coordinate service delivery off-site. Social Workers are also stationed at Central Piedmont Community College and Charlotte East. In addition, DSS contracted with ACS to develop Alternative Work Experience opportunities and placements.

### **C. Administration of the First Stop Program**

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Employment Security Commission based on guidelines received from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. ESC staff is co-located at DSS to provide the registration on-site and avoid delays in applications.

### **D. Child Care**

#### **Priorities for Child Care Funds**

- a. Children within Families in which the parent/responsible adult has been activated or deployed for military and meets all child care subsidy guidelines.
- b. 4.5 % Special Needs Children (legislative mandate)
- c. Child Protective Services: Treatment Plan of at Least 90 Days
  - To remain in home
- d. Cash Assistance (30 hours)
  - A maximum amount budgeted for Work First recipients participating in substance abuse treatment (QSAP)
  - Work First Employment Services with 30 hours of activities
  - Teen parent attending school working toward high school completion whose able-bodied parent is a Work First participant and/or working with QSAP
  - Cash Assistance with employment of 30 hours
- e. Employment
  - Placement in employed foster home
  - Placement with employed relative (CWS with referral from Y&F Services)
  - Employment (30 hours +) Income Eligible on Waiting List
  - Employment (20 hours +) and school (10 hours +) receiving TANF
  - Combined with school to total 30 hours +
- f. Child Welfare Services Without Child Protective Service Referral
- g. Education
  - Post secondary (20 hours)
  - Teen Parents working toward high school completion
- h. Developmental Needs

## **E. Transportation**

If an individual is active in the Employment Program and transportation is a barrier to employment, DSS will assist with transportation. Assistance is in the form of bus tickets or TRAC cards for public transportation or mileage reimbursement. Assistance can be issued when a recipient is in any phase of employment services, once a Mutual Responsibility Agreement has been completed. Assistance can continue up to 60 days after the participant becomes employed. Once a participant leaves active status due to employment they may apply for Transitional Transportation Services. These services include TRAC cards, mileage reimbursement and minor car repairs.

Expansion of hours by Charlotte Department of Transportation (some lines begin at 5:00 am and run until 2:00am) improves service to employers and can increase job possibilities. In addition, the installation of a Kiosk at DSS expands customers' knowledge of bus routes.

Goodwill Industries provides opportunities for low-income individuals to own donated cars through these agencies. This program, known as *Cars for Work*, focuses on individuals with stable employment histories who are currently employed and need transportation to stay employed. Mecklenburg County was instrumental in introducing legislation which now allows municipalities to donate vehicles to this program.

## **F. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**

In 1997, DSS established a Memorandum of Agreement with the Area Mental Health Authority to provide substance abuse services to TANF applicants and recipients. A team of AMH staff placed on-site at DSS not only provides substance abuse services but also mental health and domestic violence screenings and referrals for Work First customers. The DSS Employment Worker has the responsibility for establishing customer contracts and ensuring that services address individual customer needs. They receive routine technical assistance and training related to behavioral health issues in order to improve their skills and capabilities in identifying customer problems and utilizing referral resources.

In the spring of 2001, DSS launched a motivational counseling program as a pilot project targeted to Work First customers who have not progressed towards self-sufficiency. The program, Project Courage: Take Charge, has found that this subsection of TANF customers appear to have characteristics that impede employment, such as: mental disorders, substance abuse, and are victims of domestic violence in conjunction with lacking sufficient job skills. The goal of the program is to assist the customer in recognizing personal barriers to productivity and help them obtain professional help to address their behavioral health issues. When customers

are deemed ready to graduate into another level of service intervention and/or are ready to be engaged in employment activities, the Project staff in conjunction with the DSS Employment Services staff and the customer develop a plan for service delivery.

#### **G. Family Violence Option**

In 1999 North Carolina adopted the Family Violence Option of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 in the state Work First plan. The Family Violence Option allows county departments of social services to screen individuals receiving Work First services who are experiencing domestic violence, and refer those requesting counseling and supportive services to the appropriate agencies. In addition, county departments of social services may provide a waiver of some or all Work First requirements for these individuals.

The policy requiring the implementation of the Family Violence Option became effective April 2000. DSS convened a committee representative of local domestic violence agencies to determine how best to implement the program. The committee recommended that a full-time Domestic Violence Social Worker be hired to perform assessments, develop safety plans, provide crisis counseling, and refer customers to domestic violence agencies. The position also would provide case consultation, technical assistance, and training to DSS staff, and monitor compliance with the FVOP policy as established by DSS protocols and procedures. The Department provided funding to the Women's Commission for this position. The Mecklenburg Domestic Violence Advisory Board and the Board of County Commissioners approved the local plan and authorized a Protective Services Social Worker position be established to provide the specified services. DSS established a Memorandum of Agreement with the Women's Commission to assist in the implementation of the specified services. The DV Social Worker delivers direct services to TANF customers on-site at the Kuralt Centre. In addition, the Commission has primary responsibility for clinical supervision of the position and share with DSS the related administrative functions and duties.

The Domestic Violence Social Worker has established domestic violence training for DSS staff on a quarterly basis. In addition, she provides new employees domestic violence training as part of the department orientation sessions and specialized training to individual teams of staff. After a full assessment is completed, the DV counselor will report back to the referring worker if the customer is in need of the Family Violence Option Waiver and if that customer was referred to ongoing counseling sessions. During Fiscal Year 2002, 5,312 individuals were screened for domestic violence. The DV counselor on site received 229 referrals. Out of these referrals, 82 full assessments were completed and 14 waivers were recommended.

## **H. Maintenance of Effort**

The following will be funded using Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds:

- Work First Administration
- Work First Services
- Work First Purchase of Services
- Emergency Assistance program
- Childcare staff for CCRI
- Fraud Investigations staff
- Substance Abuse Child Care
- Work First General Administration
- IV-E Child Protective Services staff

## **I. Child Welfare Services**

Mecklenburg County plans to use 79.2 % of the Work First Block Grant for Child Welfare Services in fiscal year 2004/2005.

## **VII. Emergency Assistance**

Mecklenburg County will operate an Emergency Assistance (EA) program. The following types of assistance may be provided to alleviate the household's emergency:

- Housing-related emergencies
  - Rent - the household must be in immediate danger of eviction
  - Mortgage - the household must be in immediate danger of foreclosure
- Other emergencies
  - Utilities - may include gas, electric, water and telephone
  - In-kind Goods and Services - includes situations such as those where the agency purchases an item, i.e. cribs, day care, respite care
  - Other Services-those deemed appropriate by the Emergency Financial Assistance Director.

All Emergency Assistance necessary to alleviate the emergency can be authorized during a 12 month benefit period. The 12 month benefit period begins on July 1 of the fiscal year and continues through the balance of the fiscal year. During that benefit period, the maximum benefit is \$500 (up to \$500 for housing-related emergencies and up to \$200 for other emergencies.) The family can receive cash assistance an unlimited number of times during the 12-month period, but the total authorized cannot exceed these maximum amounts.

To be eligible for cash assistance, a family's total net monthly income cannot exceed 135% of the federal poverty level. The family must be in an emergency situation and be living in North Carolina with the intent to remain. There must be at least one child in the home, under the age of 18, who lives with a specified relative or verified caretaker. Families must also meet citizen requirements for Work First.

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

At this time, Mecklenburg County will not provide services to this population using Work First Block Grant funds. Our goal is to be able to expand our services to include this population but we must currently focus resources on those recipients we currently serve. Based on funding availability, we will continue to look at opportunities to provide additional services to this population.

An exception will be made for those TANF recipients involved in the Charlotte Housing Authority “Moving to Work” initiative. For those individuals, case management services will be provided for up to 18 months after the termination of their TANF cash assistance. This will allow for some continuity of services as the families progress through the time-limited benefits with the Housing Authority.

In addition, services are provided to this population through our TANF-DV services, our NCDOT Transitional Transportation services, (car repairs, mileage, insurance), our Employment Resource Center at the Kuralt Centre (resumes, job search, interview guidance, job fairs), and with our employment staff stationed at the five (5) Job Link Career Centers in Mecklenburg County.

There may also be opportunities to continue Work First Services to former TANF families who were working with Child Welfare Services when their benefits terminated and are not in need of those services any longer but do need some support services that could strengthen the family.

### **IX. Services for Non-Custodial Parents of Work First Recipient Children**

Mecklenburg County will not use Work First Block Grant funds to serve non-custodial parents. Rather, we will support this effort being undertaken by the Welfare-to-Work and Fatherhood Initiatives.

### **X. Exemption from Work Requirement**

Mecklenburg County continues to exempt from Work First participation those able-bodied adults with a child under 12-months old in the home.

### **XI. Innovative County Strategies**

#### **A. Economic Services Division FY05 Contracts/Grants**

##### ***1. Central Piedmont Community College: ABE/Life Skills***

**Purpose:** This class is an enhancement of the ABE/GED basic education curriculum offered by CPCC. The class combines basic reading and math instruction with practice in life skills including positive communication, conflict resolution, building good work habits, etc. The purpose is to teach the basic skills needed to succeed in a regular classroom setting and/or succeed in a job.



## 2. *Charlotte Chamber*

**Purpose:** To market the Work First Program and its participants to the local business community. To accomplish this, the Chamber uses its resources to educate employers about Work First and seeks commitments to hire participants. The Chamber targets presentations to large employers in specific industries. The Chamber encourages its members and other businesses to consider Work First employees as a sound investment in their labor force.

## 3. *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*

**Purpose:** The Department of Social Services provides three collaborative psychologist positions to coordinate services between CMS, Department of Social Services, and Youth and Family Child Protective Services.

## 4. *Community Link, TANF Housing*

**Purpose:** Community Link will provide housing assistance and case management to working families in Mecklenburg County that are making the transition from TANF to self-sufficiency. Adult participants will pursue skills training that will lead to increased wages, access to on-going community supports, and ultimately sustained housing in the private rental market w/o subsidy.

## 5. *ACS State and Local Solutions (formerly Curtis & Associates)*

**Purpose:** This organization provides information and referral, assessment, work experience, job readiness, job development and placement. ACS also provides a six-week intensive job readiness/job search component for Work First participants who are case-managed by DSS staff.

## 6. *Employment Security Commission of NC*

**Purpose:** The ESC contract provides: (1) Two ESC Employment Interviewers to provide job search, job development, and placement on site at DSS. (2) Two First Stop Employment Service Interviewers to provide First Stop employment registration on site at DSS.

## 7. *Goodwill Industries, VIEW Class*

**Purpose:** The Goodwill VIEW class assists participants in developing a realistic and informed career choice. Participants receive evaluations of their interest and aptitude and do research into a variety of careers. The participant also learns what training is required, what the labor market is like in those fields, what wages and hours to expect and advancement opportunities.

## 8. *NCDOT Grant*

**Purpose:** The NCDOT grants funding provides four primary types of assistance through the Economic Services Division of the Department of Social Services. (1) Mileage reimbursement for use of personal automobile for transportation to employment destinations. (2) Bus passes to enable eligible individuals to use

Charlotte Transit to access employment destinations. (3) Minor car repair - \$500 or less. Payment will be made to vendor.

**9. *Strengthening Families (formerly Success by Six)***

**Purpose:** The Strengthening Families program, a part of the YMCA, serves TANF families to help them meet core requirements in the Mutual Responsibility Agreement. Their focus is on serving children ages 0-6 and the parents/caretakers of those children living in designated “at risk” geographic areas of Mecklenburg County.

**10. *TTIPS (Training/Teaching Individuals Professional Skills)***

**Purpose:** This position is responsible for job development and job placement for Work First participants, for promoting Work First in the business community and educating potential employers individually and in groups about the program, coordinates activities with the Charlotte Chamber and Job Link centers.

**11. *Division of Vocational Rehabilitation***

**Purpose:** A Rehabilitation Technician has been contracted to work under the direction of VR Counselors serving Work First participants. This position assists Work First individuals with their follow-through in obtaining needed documentation, keeping appointments, job search, and retention services. VR also assists those deemed to have disabilities “too severe” for competitive employment in the application for SSI/SSA.

**XII. Certification of Approval by the Board of Commissioners**

This Plan was approved by the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners on October 19, 2004.

**Motion was made by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_ voting \_\_\_\_\_, to approve the following item(s) with the exception of Items \_\_\_\_\_ to be voted upon separately:**

(ITEM 18) COUNTY WORK FIRST PLAN 2005-2007

To approve Mecklenburg County’s Work First Plan for 2005-2007.  
A copy of the Plan is on file in the Office of the Clerk to the Board.

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MECKLENBURG**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing motion was \_\_\_\_\_ by the Board of County Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, in a meeting held \_\_\_\_\_.

Witness my hand and the official seal of said Board, this the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Attachment A**  
**Certification of Request for Standard County Status**

**Previously submitted to Division of Social Services. Certification occurred on September 21, 2004 by the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners for Mecklenburg County to remain a Standard County.**

**Attachment B: Mecklenburg County Work First Planning Committee  
Members**

FirstName	LastName	JobTitle	Company	Address1	City	St.	Zip	Phone (704)
Ken	Adams	Contracts Administrator	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1398
Julie	Berger	ESD Manager	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1550
Eugene	Buccelli	Senior Vice President New Business Develop.	Urban League	740 West 5 <sup>th</sup> St.	Charlotte	NC	28202	373-2256 ext. 214
Barbara	Buchan	Assistant Unit Manager	NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	401 S. Independence Blvd. Suite730	Charlotte	NC	28204	342-6218
Jimmy	Carr	Success by Six Program	YMCA of Greater Charlotte	500 East Morehead St., Suite 300	Charlotte	NC	28202	716-6291
Corsha	Caughman	Welfare to Work Coordinator	Charlotte Housing Authority	1301 S. Blvd.	Charlotte	NC	28203	336-7623
Kit	Cramer		Charlotte Chamber	P O Box 32785	Charlotte	NC	28232	378-1301
Mark	Colston		Wal-Mart	3304 Eastway Dr	Charlotte	NC	28205	535-3708
Floyd	Davis	Director	Community Link	P O Box 37265	Charlotte	NC		372-6440 ext.11
Dorothy	Davis	Faith Initiatives	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	336-2872
Jennifer	Davis		FedEx Ground	6600 CSX Way	Charlotte	NC	28214	399-9646
Meg	Downs	Intake Manager	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1422
Leslie	Dwyer	Job Link Operations Manager	Workforce Development Board	700 Parkwood Ave.	Charlotte	NC	28205	336-6270
Lindsey	Embrey	Pathways Coord	CPCC	P.O. Box 35009	Charlotte	NC	28235	330-6183
Alice	Farmer		First Place Wachovia	1525 West W.T Harris Blvd.	Charlotte	NC	28288	427-1155
Sheila	Funderburk		Urban League	740 W. 5 <sup>th</sup> St.	Charlotte	NC	28202	
Kay	Galloway		Child Care Resources, Inc.	700 Kenilworth Ave.	Charlotte	NC	28204	376-6697
Patrick	Graham		Crisis Assistance	500-A Spratt St.	Charlotte	NC	28206	371-3001 ext. 134
Dave	Greenberg	Vice President	Paramount's Carowinds	P.O. Box 410289	Charlotte	NC	28241	587-9010
Rickey	Hall, Sr.	Special Assistant, Housing & Economic Dev.	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	336-8696
Wanda	Harward	Client Representative	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-0605
Joyce	Haynes	Contracts Administrator	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1522
Bill	Helms	Manager	The Westin Hotel	601 S. College St.	Charlotte	NC	28202	335-2067
Rita	Hill		Home Depot	9501 Albemarle Rd	Charlotte	NC	28227	535-6982
Mary	Jacobs	ESD Manager	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1543
Richard W.	Jacobsen	Director	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	336-5253
Suzanne	Jeffries	PS&I	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-0774

FirstName	LastName	JobTitle	Company	Address1	City	St.	Zip	Phone (704)
Helen	Lipman	Director, Planning & Evaluation	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd	Charlotte	NC	28211	336-6293
Cebby	McCarter	Program Admin	YFS	720 E. 4 <sup>th</sup> St	Charlotte	NC	28202	336-6663
Millard	McCluney		Charlotte Housing Authority	P.O. Box 36795	Charlotte	NC	28236-6795	336-7627
Peggy	McCoy	Assistant Director, ESD	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1584
Tyanne	McDonald	Q & T Team Coordinator	DSS	301 Billingsley Road	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1587
Bruce	Melosh	Program Ad.	AMH	429 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	336-3492
Deborah	Mikysa	Executive Director	Workforce Development Bd.	700 Parkwood Ave.	Charlotte	NC	28205	336-3952
Tarsha	Montgomery	Social Worker	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-7553
Donna	North		United Way	301 South Brevard St.	Charlotte	NC	28202	
Susie	Parrott	ESD Manager	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1628
Barbara	Peek	Manager	Curtis & Associates	4822 Albemarle Rd. Suite 219	Charlotte	NC	28205	563-5253
Zettie	Phillips	Marketing Representative	Charlotte Area Transit System	600 East Fourth St. C.A.T.S. - 9 <sup>th</sup> Fl.	Charlotte	NC	28202	336-4944
Cheryl	Pugh		Child Support	500 West Trade St.	Charlotte	NC	28202	347-7022
Karen	Roper		Petro Express	3925 Stuart Andrew Drive	Charlotte	NC	28211	621-1984
Lisa	Sammons	Maternity Care Coordination	Meck. Co. Health Dept.	2845 Beatties Ford Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28216	336-6443
Janet	Singerman		CCRI	700 Kenilworth Ave.	Charlotte	NC	28204	376-7865
Carl	Smith		Burger King	6634 Old Statesville	Charlotte	NC	28269	599-9890
Larry	Snider	Director of Special Projects	Chemical Dependency Ctr.	100 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	376-7447
Sherwood C.	Southerland, Jr.	Manager	ESC	500 West Trade St.	Charlotte	NC	28202	342-6131 ext. 201
Dianne	Strong-Sadler		DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-0636
Bobby	Sutton	Executive Director, Community Development	CPCC	P.O. Box 35009	Charlotte	NC	28235-5009	330-6183
Diana	Tini	Assistant Director, ESD	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1695
Monica	Wallace	PCTC Sup	Chemical Dependency Ctr.	100 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	941-0035
Tamlar	Walton	Admin Asst	Child Support Enf		Charlotte	NC		342-6120
Tonia	Watson	HR Recruiter	Carolinas Healthcare	P.O. Box 32861	Charlotte	NC	28232	446-2101
Dallas	Williams	Client Representative	YFS	720 East 4 <sup>th</sup> St.	Charlotte	NC	28202	432-6001
Jim	Wright	HS Business Analyst	DSS	301 Billingsley Rd.	Charlotte	NC	28211	353-1603

**Attachment C**

**Public Review and Comment**

**None were received.**