

**Durham County**  
**Work First Plan County Plan Model for 2007-2009**

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## I. Conditions Within the County

***Briefly describe the current realities for low-income families in your county and key issues addressed by the plan. What are the most pressing problems? In addition to the narrative, provide relevant supporting documentation. Include current and projected economic trends such as new businesses, plant closings, and job availability. In this section, do not include much raw data, instead, include analysis and cite the sources.***

The Work First Planning Committee discussed the current realities of low-income families living in Durham County and developed a list of issues and needs. The community defined “low-income families” in accordance with the State’s Need Standard. The issues and needs listed below continue to be major barriers to self-sufficiency in Durham County.

- **Education:** Major issues related to education are the dropout rate, extremely limited alternative education programs to better prepare residents for local employment, and the need for adult educational services in a variety of areas, such as tutoring and courses to obtain a GED or a high school diploma. In addition, sufficient time is needed for Work First participants to complete the necessary training in order to obtain work in Durham’s highly competitive job market that will lead to self-sufficiency. The dropout rate data for school year 2004-2005 indicated a rate of 3.91% for middle and high school students in Durham Public Schools compared to a slightly lower rate of 3.23% for the State. The Durham Public School drop out rate number is down from 2003-2004 when it was 4.02%.
- **Job Readiness Counseling:** The major issue related to job readiness counseling is the need for a comprehensive life skills management program for Work First participants. A life skills management program would teach such skills as personal budgeting, managing and coping with stress, arranging and maintaining transportation and child care, participating in a teamwork environment, and managing conflict. The program would also emphasize personal development such as confidence building, work ethic, committing to long-term job placement and balancing work and personal life. Currently, such programs are available through Durham Technical Community College and North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The Department of Social Services (DSS) has partnered with Durham Technical Community College to create a customized class for Work First participants. The two-week program includes goal setting, teambuilding, dealing with change, conflict resolution and other topics to prepare participants for the workforce. More of these types of classes are needed in order for Work First participants to achieve job readiness.
- **Job Retention Career Advancement:** As more Work First participants enter the workplace and leave the welfare rolls, their ability to remain in a job is jeopardized without adequate, on-going training, support and counseling.

Further training is often necessary for participants to advance in their careers. However, many of the jobs available to Work First participants do not pay high enough salaries and lack the flexible work hours which would allow participants time to pursue supplemental or higher education opportunities. Some Work First participants, find it difficult to advance in their jobs. The Workforce Investment Act Program administered by the City of Durham provides training and job coaching to low-income individuals who have enrolled in the program. Unfortunately, this program is supported by various grant funds whose funding sources and focus may vary from year to year, making it difficult for this program to consistently address problems of retention and advancement.

- **Health Care:** For low-income families not eligible for Medicaid or Health Choice, major issues arise related to health care. Health care issues include the inability to afford the costs of basic medical care, medications and health insurance. As a result, low-income families often use the hospital's emergency room as their primary source for medical treatment. This problem is especially evident among the County's growing Latino community, in which low-income workers cannot afford or do not have jobs which provide health insurance. It is estimated that 94% of the Latino men and 29% of Latino women are employed in low-income jobs that do not provide health insurance. Durham County DSS has placed staff at medical sites throughout the county to take collect and process applications for medical assistance. Several community agencies also have applications for medical assistance which can be completed and mailed back to the agency. The Durham Community Health Network, comprised of Duke University Medical Center, DSS, the Durham County Health Department, Lincoln Community Health Center, and several local private health care providers, provides health care management for high-risk Medicaid recipients suffering from chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes and hypertension. The Local Access to Coordinated Health program (LATCH) is a coalition of service providers (Duke University Medical Center, the Durham County Health Department, DSS, Lincoln Community Health Center, El Centro Hispano, Planned Parenthood, Catholic Social Ministries and the Durham City Parks and Recreation Department) which focuses on helping uninsured Latinos and other non-English speaking families access health care. The LATCH program is now a part of Duke's Division of Community Health.
- **Basic Necessities:** Major issues related to basic necessities include the need for safe, decent and affordable housing and the lack of consistent nutritional health. Housing for low-income families remains a problem especially for families in North East Central Durham because some residents still lack decent housing. The revitalization of Barnes Avenue and the plan to build new mixed income housing on the old Few Gardens Public Housing site are both attempts to address this problem and more such efforts are needed. Food Stamp eligible families and children in Durham County, including many Work First participants, are at a greater risk of being overweight and obese,

and developing diabetes, heart disease and other chronic diseases. Many of these families lack access to adequate healthcare or are underinsured. The nutritional health of these families is further compromised by limited access to “healthy food” choices at reasonable prices in their neighborhoods. A local study of the availability of grocery stores in Durham County showed only three chain supermarkets in the eastern half of Durham, while the western half had 12 chain stores. According to UNC researchers, the scarcity of chain supermarkets leads to health problems and poorer food options/choices among residents in poor neighborhoods. In a survey of food stamp applicants participating in EBT training sessions, 54% of those surveyed reported that “cost” affected what foods they purchased. This finding reinforces the need to focus nutrition education efforts on diet quality, and how to purchase nutritious foods on a limited budget.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s report entitled “Out of Reach,” in 2005, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in Durham County is \$755. Housing is considered affordable if it costs no more than 30% of the renter’s income. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying more than 30% of one’s income on housing, a household must earn \$2,517 monthly or \$30,200 annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year at this level of income translates into an hourly wage for rent of \$14.52 per hour.

In Durham County, a minimum wage worker earns an hourly wage of \$5.15. In order to afford the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment in Durham county, a minimum wage earner must work 113 hours per week, 52 weeks per year or a household must include 2.8 minimum wage earners working 40 hours per week year-round.

In Durham County, the estimated mean (average) wage for a renter is \$16.58 an hour. In order to afford the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment at this wage, a renter must work 35 hours per week, 52 weeks per year or work 40 hours per week year round or include an additional .09 worker(s) earning the mean renter wage of \$16.58 in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable.

Monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for an individual are \$579 in Durham County. If SSI represents an individual’s sole source of income, the individual can afford only \$174 in monthly rent, while the FMR for a one-bedroom is \$673.

- **Transportation:** The lack of reliable and affordable transportation continues to make it difficult for many low income households to hold and maintain jobs because of the difficulty of getting to and from the workplace. Durham’s public transportation system does not adequately provide service to all areas of the county and its outlying growth areas. For parents with school-aged

children who must arrange to retrieve a sick child from school, or attend a school conference, public transportation is available to only some outlying schools on a unique limited schedule and not to others. Although the city has a plan to address the issue with transportation, it appears it will be sometime before the problem can adequately be addressed. Public transportation service in the evenings and on weekends has increased; yet service needs remain for some who work evenings, weekends and holidays. Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) which provides service from Durham to the Research Triangle Park and Raleigh has increased its service, but still does not adequately meet the transportation needs of Durham County residents.

- **Child Care:** The availability and accessibility of affordable, quality child care and the need for flexible and extended child care hours remain a major issue. Although Durham has made significant gains in the availability of quality child care (3-star and above) to low-income families, insufficient resources have created an extensive waiting list which makes quality and affordable child care inaccessible for many low-income families. Additionally, with some of Durham's public schools adopting a year-round schedule and different start times, an increased need for child care on school holidays and/or vacations, and before and after school has resulted. Child care deficits also exist for families with sick children or those families who work in the evenings or on weekends. As of September 18, 2006, there were 2,312 children on the child care waiting list.
- **Personal and Family Counseling:** Major issues related to the need for personal and family counseling still exist. Limited services are available to low-income families. Durham County is in need of programs which provide marital counseling, parent/child conflict counseling, child and adult abuse/neglect counseling, and financial counseling.
- **Service Access:** Durham County is fortunate to have non-profit human service agencies that offer essential services; yet clients experience difficulty getting to these human service agencies in part due to the agencies' lack of flexible service hours. United Way has an automated service directory which provides information about service providers, their locations and hours, and other pertinent information related to human services. This automated service is accessible 24-hours a day by telephone (United Way 2-1-1) and provides both information and referrals. Even with the United Way service directory, more resources are needed, especially in the area of transportation, to connect families with the appropriate services.
- **Demographics:** Durham County is home to a diverse population. Based on the most recent U.S. Census figures (2005), Durham County's current population is estimated at 242,582. According to the 2000 Census, the median household income hovers at \$42,763, which is over \$4,000 higher than the State's median household income. Also, according to the 2000 Census, approximately 13.4% of Durham's population is living below poverty,

of that percentage 17.2% are children. The census data also reported the racial composition of Durham's community as: 50.4% Caucasian; 39.1% African-American; 11.1% Hispanic or Latino; 3.3% Asian; .03% American Indian or Alaskan native; less than 1% Native Hawaiian; some other race 4.7%; and 2.28% multiracial (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000).

- **Economic Profile:** Durham County has a diverse economic base rooted in high-technology industries, including biopharmaceutical, computer, telecommunications and electronics. This diversified economy attracts and maintains large employers throughout the county, as evidenced by its five largest employers: Duke University and Medical Center, IBM, Durham Public Schools, GlaxoSmithKline, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC. Additionally, Durham County is the home to much of the world-renowned Research Triangle Park (RTP), the largest and most successful planned research and development park in the country. The 130+ firms in RTP employ approximately 40,000 workers.

Known as The City of Medicine, Durham is home to a plethora of medical facilities, services, and personnel. Nearly one in three workers in the Durham labor force works in a health or medical related industry. Durham County has one of the nation's top five concentrations of physicians per capita (Durham Chamber of Commerce 2004).

- **Job Availability:** Durham County continues to see a growth in jobs created. So far in 2006 (January-August) 794 new jobs have been created. In calendar year, 2005 (January-December), 2,196 new jobs were created in Durham County. These figures are higher than in previous years and the future is looking promising with the development of several recent business expansions and announcements this year alone.
- **Earnings and Income:** Durham County's median household income for 2005 was \$44,941, while the per capita income for 2005 was \$34,212. These numbers reveal a disparity in earnings across the County's population. The number of families who live below poverty level is disturbing. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2005) reveals that 29.0% of "families with a female householder (no husband present)" had an income, in the past 12 months, which was below the poverty level.
- **Employment:** The unemployment rate in Durham County has been declining since July 2002 when it hit an all-time high of 6.0%. The unemployment rate for July 2006 was 4.2% as compared to July 2005 when it was 4.7%. Durham has a slightly lower unemployment rate than state which currently has a rate of 4.7% (NC Employment Security Commission and US Census Bureau). While job growth continues to remain steady, there is a concern that new jobs created in Durham County are not going to Durham County residents.

- **Plant Closings:** According to the most recent compilation of closings and layoffs by the state Employment and Security Commission for 2005 through August of 2006 Durham County, experienced 86 closings and 20 layoffs which affected 4,000 people. For 2006 (January –August), there were 33 reported closing and 5 layoffs which affected 635 people. These numbers reveal that Durham County is still in the midst of a downward economy.
- **Economic Development:** In Durham County, for the period of January 2006 through June 2006, the total announced investment for new and expanding industry is \$201,992,000 (Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce). The capital investment for Durham County has a mix of expanding and new ventures and businesses which indicates a high degree of confidence in the area labor force, the economy for businesses to continue reinvesting in the community and Durham’s ability to attract new companies to relocate here. The table below displays the 2006 Major Development Activity Report.

<b>Company</b>	<b>New/Exp</b>	<b>Space (sf)</b>	<b>Investment</b>	<b># Jobs</b>
<u>AW North Carolina</u>	Expansion	0	0	50
<u>Eisal Inc.</u>	Expansion	85,000	\$105,000,000	84
Empire Distributors	New	230,000	\$14,200,000	80
Kennedy Covington	New	32,000	\$6,200,000	100
Stiefel Labs	New	155,000	\$12,550,000	250
United Therapeutics	New	125,000	\$54,200,000	175
<u>Duke Corporate Education</u>	Expansion	60,135	\$7,516,875	0
<u>Quill Medical Inc.</u>	Expansion	2,005	\$100,125	10
Square One Bank	New	16,000	\$2,225,000	45
<b>Total</b>		<b>705,140</b>	<b>\$201,992,000</b>	<b>794</b>

(Source: Durham Chamber of Commerce 2006)

- **Self-Sufficiency:** It is important to also consider how much money it takes for a family of a given size and composition to be self-sufficient, i.e. to pay for their basic necessities without public assistance payments such as Work



First, Food Stamps, medical care and/or child support. Self-sufficiency also means maintaining a decent standard of living and not having to choose between basic necessities. Due to the relatively high cost of living in Durham County, many low-income individuals face difficult decisions such as to how to prioritize basic necessities such as whether to pay for child-care or medical care.

The American Chamber of Commerce Research Associates (ACCRA) Cost of Living Index is widely used in evaluating the costs, and the wages or salaries needed to meet those costs in a given area. The national average of all participating cities is 100%. Durham's composite index is 86.7%, which is the 26<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation. Durham's rank has gone down over the years; with it being at its highest, in 2004, which was 14<sup>th</sup>.

Many low-skill jobs available to Work First participants in Durham County pay much less than what is needed to be economically self-sufficient according to cost of living calculations for a family of four in the Durham Metropolitan Statistical Area. Two adults with two school-aged children would need to earn \$3,000 per month in order to meet their family's basic needs.

Using data from the 2006 Occupational Employment and Wages statistics for Durham County, the entry wage for cashiers is estimated at \$6.44 per hour, for food service workers \$7.30 per hour, retail salespersons \$6.99 per hour and the entry wage for telemarketers is \$7.91 per hour (NC Employment Security Commission). These wages illustrate the difficulty of meeting a self-sufficiency standard in Durham County.

## II. Planning Process

### A. Planning Committee

***List the members of your local planning committee. Include names and affiliations. Membership of the committee must include, but is not limited to a representative of:***

- 1. the county board of social services,***
- 2. the board of the area mental health authority,***
- 3. the local public health board,***
- 4. the local school system,***
- 5. the business community,***
- 6. the board of county commissioners and***
- 7. community-based organizations that are representative of the population to be served.***

***In addition, it is highly recommended that you include representatives of:***

- 8. the local community transportation system***
- 9. faith-based organizations, and***
- 10. recipients of Work First and other types of assistance and***

**services**  
**11. Child Welfare Staff**

On August 14, 2006, Durham County's Board of Commissioners officially approved a local planning committee of citizens to develop Durham County's Work First Block Grant Plan for Fiscal year 2007-2009. The members of this committee consist of the following persons:

<i>Jim Polk</i>	-	<i>Chair, Durham Citizen</i>
<i>Barker French</i>	-	<i>Designee for Ellen Reckhow</i>
<i>Henry Scherich</i>	-	<i>Designee for Becky Heron</i>
<i>James Davis</i>	-	<i>Designee for Lewis Cheek</i>
<i>Rev. Michael Page</i>	-	<i>DSS Board, BOCC</i>
<i>Pamela Glean</i>	-	<i>DSS Board</i>
<i>Lula Johnson</i>	-	<i>Triangle United Way</i>
<i>Cheray Cherry</i>	-	<i>Employment Security Commission designee for Kathy Elliott</i>
<i>Rev. Pebbles Lindsay-Lucas</i>	-	<i>Families First Coordinator</i>
<i>Tyrone Everett</i>	-	<i>Center for Employment Training</i>
<i>Delphine Sellars</i>	-	<i>NC Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Ryan Felhman</i>	-	<i>Genesis Home</i>
<i>Betty Burton</i>	-	<i>Genesis Home</i>
<i>Aurelia Sands Bell</i>	-	<i>Durham Crisis and Response</i>
<i>Dr. Tom Buzzard</i>	-	<i>Freedom House</i>
<i>Tamala McDowell</i>	-	<i>Department of Juvenile Justice Delinquent Prevention</i>
<i>Kathy Hoffmeier</i>	-	<i>Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce designee for Libby Barnes</i>
<i>Alma Davis</i>	-	<i>Durham Crisis and Response</i>
<i>Pierre Owusu</i>	-	<i>DATA Transportation Planning</i>
<i>Sue Jackson</i>	-	<i>Durham Technical Community College</i>
<i>Victoria Peterson</i>	-	<i>Triangle Citizens Rebuilding Communities, Inc.</i>
<i>Tom Russo</i>	-	<i>Durham Technical Community College</i>
<i>Joyce Conwell</i>	-	<i>Families First,</i>
<i>Bill Burroughs</i>	-	<i>Milestones Hospitality Training Program</i>
<i>Brenda Scurlock</i>	-	<i>NC Vocational Rehabilitation</i>
<i>Erroll Reese</i>	-	<i>Easy Web Inc,</i>
<i>Micheline R. Malson</i>	-	<i>Community Volunteer</i>
<i>Mary Curtis</i>	-	<i>DJJDP/The Youth's Lighthouse</i>
<i>Kendra Timberlake</i>	-	<i>Measurement Inc.</i>

Former Work First Recipient:

Syvilla Liles - DSS Client

Representatives from Social Services and the County Manager's Office:

Heidi York - County Manager's Office  
 Sam Haithcock - DSS Director  
 Charles Harris - Director, Family Safety and  
 Permanency  
 Rhonda Stevens - Director, Family Economic  
 Independence Division  
 Sharon Hirsch - Director, Customer Access and  
 Program Support  
 Mary Flounoy - Program Manager, Child Support  
 Darnella Warthen - Program Manager, DACCA  
 Wilda Carter-Neville - Family Crisis Unit Supervisor  
 Rachel Joseph - DSS - Intern  
 Beth Steenberg - DSS, Planner /Evaluator  
 Barbara Daniels - DSS Program Manager,  
 Nutrition Access  
 Yvette Bailey - DSS/Child Protective Services

**B. Public Comment**

***Your plan must include documentation of your public comment process. Describe when and how public comments were received, the length of the comment period and how the public was notified of the opportunity to comment.***

Durham County used two major methods to solicit public comments for the county's Work First Plan.

**Public Comment Period**

A draft of county's Work First Plan for 2007-2009 was strategically distributed in the county on October 4, 2006. The closing date to make comments on the plan was October 9, 2006. A public announcement was issued on the plan. The public announcement asked for comments on the plan, indicated the length of the comment period, the purpose of the plan and where the plan could be obtained was placed in Durham's newspapers

The plan was also placed on the Durham County Government's website, in the County Manager's Office, in all local public library branches, and at the Durham Housing Authority. Copies of the plan were sent to the Durham Public Schools Administration Office, the Durham Congregations in Action, El Centro and other community agencies which work with Work First and other low-income families. Additionally, copies were made available to the public at Durham's two human service agencies: the

Durham County Health Department and the Durham County Department of Social Services.

On October 9, 2006 a public hearing was held at the Durham County Board of County Commissioners meeting to discuss Durham's draft Work First Plan and receive further public comments. The plan was then revised by the Planning Committee to incorporate the public comments received.

**C. Planning Process:**

***Describe the collaboration that led to the plan's development and the proposed process for continued collaboration and coordination to carry out the plan throughout the year. Include a discussion of the committee appointed by the county board of commissioners to identify the needs of the population to be served. How did this committee contribute to the review and development of the county block grant plan to respond to the identified needs? How was other public comment obtained and processed? How will this committee contribute to the county's implementation of the plan?***

The planning committee had a total of seven (7) meetings: August 16, 2006, August 24, 2006, September 6, 2006, September 12, 2006, September 18, 2006, October 4, 2006 and October 10, 2006 to identify the needs of the population to be served, discuss the economic conditions in Durham, recommend electing or standard county status, formulate strategies and recommendations for the plan and provide general input into the development of the Work First Plan. Minutes of each meeting are available for review.

Several members of the planning committee previously served on the planning committee for the 2005-2007 Plan and were able to assist new members in better understanding the Work First Program and the issues participants face. A draft list of the Work First Planning Committee members was sent to the BOCC on August 14, 2006. A final list of the Planning Committee members was officially approved by the BOCC at the Board's October 9, 2006 meeting.

Work First participants, religious, civic and non-profit organizations involved in providing services to Work First participants were invited to formulate strategies and recommendations on how to best address the needs of the poor and low-income families of Durham County. The committee developed subcommittee to bring recommendations for discussion back to the larger committee to be included in the plan. These committees included: the Focus Group committee, Emergency Assistance committee, Mentoring committee, Child-Only committee, and an Innovative Strategies committee. Further input was also gathered through

focus groups in the community. One of the first tasks of the committee was to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners whether Durham County should select Standard or Electing County status. The committee recommended Standard County status for Durham. The Durham County Department of Social Services' Board was notified on August 23, 2006 of the committee's recommendation. On August 28, 2006, the BOCC approved the recommendation of the Planning Committee and submitted it to the state as required by August 31, 2006.

On October 10, 2006, the planning committee approved the final version of the Work First Plan and a copy was sent to the Department of Social Services' Board on October 24, 2006. The final plan was then submitted to the Board of County Commissioners and received approval on October 23, 2006. The plan was submitted to the North Carolina Division of Social Services as required by October 31, 2006. The Board of County Commissioners agreed to extend the planning committee's existence so that it may continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the plan on children and families of Durham County. The subcommittees of the Planning Committees also plan to continue to meet throughout the 2007-09 Plan period.

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

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

***The NC Division of Social Services, in consultation with the county department of social services and county board of commissioners, will establish acceptable levels of performance by counties in meeting the following six Work First goals.***

Listed below are the state-established goals for Durham County for fiscal year 2005-2006. The goals for 2005-06 and the numbers achieved are also listed. Once defined, Durham County will work to achieve to the outcome goals for Work First as provided by the state for the FY2006-07. (**NOTE:** Goals have not been established beyond this period).

#### **1. Employment.**

Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First clients. Durham County's goal for FY 2005-06 was to place 100 participants into employment. Durham County placed 239 participants into employment which far exceeded the goal.

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

Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment. Durham County's goal is to place 50% of "all-parent" and 90% of "two-parent" families into at least 35 weekly hours of

countable work activities. The goal for FY 2005-06 was also 50% for all families. Durham achieved 54%. The goal for “two-parent” families was 90% and Durham achieved 50%.

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

Active participation in intensive employment services for all families is necessary to meet the participation rate and to ensure families are served adequately before the end of the five year time limits. 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. Durham County’s goal is to provide intensive employment services to 80% of all-parent families and 100% of two-parent families. The goal for FY 2005-06 was 80% for all families and Durham County achieved 92%. The goal for two-parents was 100% of which Durham County achieved 93%.

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

The most successful outcome possible is for an applicant to avoid the need to become a recipient. Durham County’s goal is to provide diversion assistance to 342 applicants. The goal for FY 2005-06 was to provide diversion assistance to 342 families; Durham County actually provided diversion assistance to 468, exceeding the FY 2005-06 goals.

### **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. Durham County’s goal is to keep 90% of those who go to work off welfare for 12 months. The goal for FY 2005-06 was also 90% and Durham County was able to keep 95% of those who went to work off welfare for 12 months.

### **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 in turn 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 to 12 month intervals following termination. Durham County’s goal is to have 60% of those who have been off Work First for 6 months earning income. For 2005-06, 74% of

those who left Work First for employment in Durham were still earning income after 6 months.

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

***[Standard Counties: County departments of social services, in consultation with NC DHHS and the county board of commissioners are responsible for establishing county outcome and performance goals (108A-27.6)] Describe how your county will measure the outcomes for each goal.***

Durham DSS will measure progress towards each of its outcomes by reviewing the monthly Work First Performance Reports. These reports are produced by the state and track each county's status toward goal achievement.

Durham DSS will monitor services offered by contracts to include performance and services provided to families based on those contracts.

DSS will also work closely with the State Work First representative during his visits on ways to continue to improve performance and ensure success in meeting its Work First outcomes for each goal.

### **1. Employment.**

The plan will identify the number of adults that Durham County is responsible for putting to work. A collaboration of the services of Work First Employment Services, Employment Security Commission, Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Durham Technical Community College, human services, non-profits, faith, civic and the business communities will be used to achieve this goal.

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

The plan reflects the family participation rates as outlined by federal legislation.

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

Durham County will provide intensive services to all families subject to Work First time limits.

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

Durham County will evaluate each applicant through a joint assessment

by the cash assistance worker and the employment services worker to determine whether diversion is the most successful plan for the family.

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

Retention of employment will ensure that families will not return to welfare. Durham County will provide participants the necessary job skills and job readiness training through Center for Employment Training (CET), Durham Technical Community College, Easy Web, Inc., Employment Security Commission and others. The county will also provide supportive and retention services to families that meet 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

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

Durham County will use the state data collected in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> month after leaving Work First.

### **IV. Plans to Achieve The Outcomes and Goals**

#### ***Activities***

***Describe the activities that will be available to participants to enable your program to meet the goals listed above. What agencies or organizations in your community will provide these activities, and where will they take place? Include both public and private resources. How will these activities contribute to meeting the goals? If your county will operate a work supplementation program, describe the program.***

#### **1. Employment**

**Strategy 1:** The Department of Social Services will send a congratulatory letter to recipients who have gone to work outlining services such as Food Stamps, Medicaid/Health Choice, Earned Income Tax Credit, Transportation and Child Care for which they may be eligible. Instructions on how to continue or apply for these services will also be included. This letter will also encourage recipients to work with their Work First worker if problems arise with their job.

**Strategy 2:** The Work First Section has an on-site staff person from Freedom House to conduct assessments and referrals for suspected substance abuse. Outside treatment and other services will occur as deemed necessary. This will be a joint effort with the Department of Social Services and Freedom House and will occur at the Department of Social Services.



**Strategy 3:** The Work First Section will enroll hard-to-place participants in the Center for Employment Training (CET) program. The training will occur at the CET location at the Golden Belt Center. Work First Employment Services staff will monitor the participants' progress. Monthly reports will measure progress toward this goal.

**Strategy 4:** The Work First staff will continue to refer participants to the on-site counselor for Durham Crisis and Response Center for domestic violence assessments and counseling services.

**Strategy 5:** DSS will establish On-The-Job training programs with employers for hard to employ participants. These efforts will be closely coordinated with Employment Security Commission and the Chamber of Commerce's job development representatives.

**Strategy 6:** Work First staff will continue to conduct an individual assessment of each applicant. The information gathered from participants will include the participant's family composition, work history, education and employment skills. This information will be used to develop a mutual responsibility agreement and to provide support services for participants. In an effort to work more effectively with participants with multiple barriers in the future, Work First will continue to explore ways to provide a more detailed educational and training assessment that would better address the participants' individual needs.

**Strategy 7:** DSS will meet with a select group of local physicians to discuss the importance of medical history and documentation in securing long-term benefits such as re-training, disability or employment for families.

**Strategy 8:** DSS will continue the monthly Success Team meetings. The Success Team is a group of representatives from various agencies or supportive service groups which develops an action plan for individuals transitioning from Work First. This model incorporates many of the same principles as Durham County's System of Care model in providing service to adults.

**Strategy 9:** DSS will provide additional mentoring services designed specifically to address self-esteem, anger, bitterness, depression, relationships, and substance abuse issues. The beneficiaries of these services could be participants that have been revolving through the system and are repeating the same cycles in their lives and want help, or first time participants coming in and showing signs of needed support systems to deal with personal issues.

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

**Strategy 1:** DSS will continue the joint cash assistance and employment services' assessment process and the intense case management process for individuals applying for Work First. Individuals will begin their job readiness/job search activities at the time of application. The participants will meet with the Employment Security Commission and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce job placement representatives and the Freedom House representatives. This will also occur at the Department of Social Services.

**Strategy 2:** DSS will continue to identify and provide specialized supportive services to participants with 30+ months used on their lifetime clock.

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

**Strategy 1:** Work First Employment Services staff will continue to provide supportive services to families participating in work-related activities.

**Strategy 2:** Work First applicants/participants who have had a history of being denied or terminated for failing to keep appointments or failing to comply with their Mutual Responsibility Agreement or who have had difficulty in retaining employment will be referred to the Job Achievers and Development Academy (JADA) classes and to Job Seeking, Attitude Motivation, Maintain (JAMM).

## **4. Benefit Diversion.**

**Strategy 1:** DSS will evaluate each Work First applicant to determine whether his or her needs can be met by receiving diversion assistance.

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

**Strategy 1:** CET staff will monitor the individuals that complete the CET program.

**Strategy 2:** DSS will continue to link families with the faith community through the Families First program. The faith community will provide services and emotional support to help participants retain employment (i.e. transportation, tutoring, mentoring).

**Strategy 3:** DSS will assign all Work First cases terminated because of employment, time limits or received a Benefit Diversion to the Transition Team to monitor for up to one year.

**Strategy 4:** Child Support workers will see Work First applicants immediately upon application for services. The Work First caseworkers will make certain that each participant sent to Child Support have the proper identification to sign Affidavits.

**Strategy 5:** Child Support workers will partner with Work First staff to share information by offering ACTS Inquiry training and by extending and accepting invitations to section meetings. This interaction will enhance service to participants in both the Child Support and Work First programs.

**Strategy 6:** DSS will involve the Nutrition Division of the Durham County Health Department in providing education to Work First participants on how to maintain food security after entering the workforce, how to purchase and prepare healthy foods, how to control chronic illnesses with dietary compliance, and how to stay physically active most days of the week. This education will help Work First participants improve food security and make healthier food choices for optimal nutritional health, both of which have been scientifically linked to work productivity. Through the DINE for LIFE program (Durham's Innovative Nutrition Education for Lasting Improvements in Fitness and Eating) food stamp eligible families will continue to receive quarterly newsletters promoting healthier food choices and active lifestyles. Newsletters and community nutrition sessions at various community venues (i.e. low-income housing developments, transitional homes/shelters) will promote menu planning on a limited budget, the consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, etc. with "target nutrition and health messages." The health messages will be reinforced on bus posters, in the newspapers, and on the radio.

## **6. Job Retention.**

**Strategy 1:** Work First staff will contact families in which the adult is included on the case to assess the transportation needs of the family.

**Strategy 2:** DSS will continue to provide employment related supportive services to families who have income at or below 200% of the poverty level.

**Strategy 3:** DSS will refer employed Work First participants to the Money Wise training program.

## **B. Supportive Services**

***Describe the supportive services that will enable individuals to participate in the activities described above. What services will be provided? Who will carry them out? Where will they take place?***

The supportive services and activities have been included for each goal listed in IV. A. In addition, Durham County plans to offer support services of transportation, child care, counseling, substance abuse referrals and treatment, retention services and transitional benefits.

## **V. Administration**

### **A. Authority**

***Will authority for administration of the Work First Program be delegated to an entity or agency other than the county department of social services (standard counties)? If so, name and describe that entity or agency. (Notwithstanding any delegation of duty, the county board of commissioners shall remain accountable for its duties under the Work First Program).***

The authority for the administration of the Work First Program will be designated to the Durham County Department of Social Services.

### **B. Organization**

***Describe your agency's organization for the purposes listed below. Describe any collaborative arrangements (such as co-location of staff) you have with other agencies, such as ESC, WIA, Job Link Centers, etc.***

**1.** Intake; **2.** Emergency Assistance; **3.** Employability Assessment; **4.** Employment Services; **5.** Other supportive services; and **6.** Eligibility Determination

The Department of Social Services' Family Economic Independence Division will provide Work First Cash Assistance, Employment Services, Child Care Services, Child Support Services, Food Stamps and Medicaid. Services will be delivered directly by DSS personnel, contracts, or Memorandums of Understanding with other community agencies. These community agencies will have a worker located within the DSS office (e.g., Employment Security Commission, Freedom House in partnership with The Durham Center, Durham Crisis and Response Center,

Vocational Rehabilitation and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce). The One-Stop/Job Link Center in Durham is used as a part of the application process.

Each individual that comes in to request Work First services receives an individual assessment. The assessment and orientation process vary depending on the individual. Work First Cash Assistance and Employment Services staff works as a team in completing the assessment and application process for all new participants for services. Individuals who are working with one or more service provider within the agency or have a history of public assistance will receive more intensive assessments than new applicants. The purpose of the assessments is to ensure that all families who apply for Work First are thoroughly assessed as a part of their eligibility determination and provided the full complement of services needed to facilitate their move to self-sufficiency. DSS has teamed staff in these two areas and has assigned cases by units accordingly.

The Family Crisis Unit provides counseling and financial assistance to families with children in their homes. The family must meet income guidelines and have a crisis that is resolvable with the funds provided. Women-In-Action, Presbyterian Urban Ministries, Salvation Army, and Operation Breakthrough are agencies which work collaboratively with the DSS in assisting families who are experiencing financial hardships.

A DSS organizational chart is included as **Attachment 1**.

### **C. First Stop**

***Describe the arrangement between your agency and your local ESC regarding First Stop registration. Describe any services, for which you are contracting or will contract with ESC to provide. Include the cost of these services.***

***Your plan must include a copy of your current memorandum of understanding with ESC concerning First Stop registration.***

The Department of Social Services has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Employment Security Commission to operate the First Stop Program which will provide employability screening for all participants who wish to apply for Work First. The participants first apply for Work First at DSS and then they visit the Employment Security Commission within 10 days for an employability screening in order to complete the application process.

DSS also has a contract with Employment Security Commission and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce to provide job placement

services. An employment counselor from each agency is co-located at the DSS office. The contract costs for services with Employment Security Commission are reflected in the Work First budget and the First Stop Memorandum of Understanding with the Employment Security Commission has been included as **Attachment 2**.

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

***Describe how your county will prioritize its subsidized child care services.***

Child care continues to be a vital service necessary for Work First participants to obtain and maintain employment. Durham County has been able to make child care services available to all of its Work First participants who need them. Work First families are given top priority, for child care services and are second only to child care services for Child Protective Services and Special Needs Children.

To provide better quality child care and customer service, DSS has relocated its child care services to a location that is adjacent to two of the major child care service providers in Durham County: Durham's Partnership for Children and Child Care Services Association. The County operates a unified child care service in collaboration with Durham's Partnership for Children, Child Care Services Association and Operation Breakthrough, which is the umbrella agency for Head Start. This unified system of child care, called the Durham Alliance for Child Care Access (DACCA), operates as a one-stop-shop where families can receive child care subsidies, information and referrals for child care, education and written materials about quality child care, and transportation services. In addition, a DSS child care social worker is also located at the DSS office on Duke Street to address the child care needs and provide information and referral services for Work First families regarding choosing and using quality child care.

Durham County has a child care waiting list which, as of September 2006, had more than 2300 children on it. Durham County will explore the availability of Work First funds to use with its Division of Child Development, Smart Start and United Way funds to support the child care program for the 2007-09 plan period. Durham County has established an Advisory Council comprised of child care providers and parents to assist in continuing to develop strategies to work toward providing quality child care for all of Durham's children.

To provide better quality child care and customer services, DSS has relocated its child care services to a location that is adjacent to two of the major child care service providers in Durham County: Durham's Partnership for Children and Child Care Services Association. The

County operates a unified child care service in collaboration with Durham's Partnership for Children, Child Care Services Association and Operation Breakthrough, which is the umbrella agency for Head Start.

## **E. Transportation**

***Describe in detail how transportation needs of Work First participants will be met through local coordination and collaboration. What arrangements do you have with your local transportation system? What private transportation resources have you developed? Will your agency continue to support the transportation needs of former Work First recipients who are working and no longer Work First eligible? Give an estimate of the amount of funds from your Work First Block Grant that will be allocated for transportation services.***

Transportation continues to be a challenge in Durham County. However, Durham has been able to meet most transportation needs through the use of TANF and Department of Transportation funds. Funds have been used to purchase bus passes, provide shuttle services to and from work, pay for vehicle repairs and related fees for cars owned by participants who have gone to work and need car repairs to continue their employment. The Department of Social Services has used its agency van to transport participants for training and testing, and has also shared costs with employers who were willing to provide transportation to and from work for Work First participants. Durham Area Transit Authority (DATA), Durham's public transportation authority, has continued to expand its routes. DATA currently runs from 5:30 am till 12 midnight on Monday to Saturday and on Sunday from 6:00 am to 7:30 pm. The Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) provides services in some areas as late as 11:00 p.m. Transportation is also being provided by DATA to the Brier Creek area in Raleigh because of the availability of jobs. This service is funded through FTA's Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) grant. Although these changes represent progress in the transportation area much still needs to be done to transportation for Work First low-income families.

It is anticipated that Durham County will continue to use its transportation funds to make transportation more accessible for Work First participants especially to those who are employed and no longer receive cash assistance. DSS is also exploring methods to collaborate with other community agencies to obtain donated vehicles for Work First participants who have transportation needs when they become employed. The criteria to be used to select Work First participants who will receive donated cars will be developed in conjunction with collaborating agencies.

## F. Substance Abuse Services

***Describe in detail your collaboration 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? Include a description of the duties of your qualified substance abuse professional.***

DSS has established a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Durham Center, the area Mental Health Authority, for services to be provided by Freedom House for Durham County residents. The Durham Center has arranged for the Freedom House to provide training to DSS staff in screening for substance abuse issues and directly provide individual Substance Abuse Assessments for each person screened with qualifying criteria.

The MOA with the Durham Center also makes substance abuse and mental health treatment services available to those electing to avail themselves of such services. Freedom House staff are located at the DSS Work First office to accomplish these responsibilities. On-site staff members are responsible for coordinating treatment for those Work First eligible persons who are assessed with an abuse or dependency diagnosis. Freedom House opens a medical record for all eligible Work First individuals who consent to treatment related to their substance diagnosis. Freedom House's assessment also identifies other mental health issues and coordinates services as deemed appropriate. Treatment services need to be clinically identified as medically necessary and will be provided within the limitations of available resources.

## G. Family Violence Option

***Describe your arrangements for providing Family Violence Option waivers (See Work First Manual Section 104D) and your plans for coordinating with domestic violence service agencies in your area to provide services to victims of domestic violence.***

The Department of Social Services has a contractual agreement with the Durham Crisis and Response Center for on-site screening and assessment services for Work First families and Child Protective Services families who receive Work First. All Work First applicants are notified of the family violence services and the availability to speak with an on-site counselor. The family violence option is reviewed periodically with participants while Mutual Responsibility Agreements are developed or during their review for eligibility.



## H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

**List the activities, staff, and services that will be funded using Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds.**

WORK FIRST PLAN BUDGET		
	<u>FY08 Budget</u>	<u>FY09 Budget</u>
Expense		
<b>STAFF</b>	<b>\$7,213,585</b>	<b>\$7,484,094</b>
TANF Emergency Assistance	\$600,000	\$600,000
Ongoing Client Services	\$521,542	\$521,542
<b>TOTAL Expenses</b>	<b>\$8,335,127</b>	<b>\$8,605,636</b>
<b>Revenue</b>		
Work First Block Grant	\$2,677,438	\$2,841,482
County Share	\$5,657,689	\$5,764,154
<b>TOTAL Revenue</b>	<b>\$8,335,127</b>	<b>\$8,605,636</b>

## I. Child Welfare Services

**Give an estimate of how much of your Work First Block Grant you will devote to Child Welfare Services.**

The Department of Social Services has thirty Child Protective Services investigative positions that are supported in part or in full with TANF funds. TANF funds are also used to support administrative and supervisory costs in compliance with our approved cost allocation plan.

Communication between child welfare staff and Work First staff is a high priority for the agency and DSS has developed strategies to foster better communication and partnership between these two programs.

## VI. Emergency Assistance

**Describe your Emergency Assistance policies and procedures. For requirements, see Work First Manual Section 003, VIII.**

Durham County will provide Emergency Assistance primarily to families that meet the following requirements:

The family must have a child who lives with a relative as defined for Work First cash assistance and meets the age limits for Work First cash assistance.

Family members must meet citizenship requirements for Work First Cash Assistance.

The household must be experiencing a crisis/emergency. In the case of rent or mortgage they must have a late notice; in the case of utilities, they must have a notice indicating their utilities are past due.

Family must have total gross income of 200% of the poverty level or below.

Emergency Assistance will be provided for shelter, food, and utilities. A family may be eligible to receive up to \$400.00 once in a 12-month period. If the individual requesting assistance is not working, appropriate referrals will be made to Employment Security Commission, Workforce Investment Act, Vocational Rehabilitation, Child Support and other community based programs. Staff will refer individuals receiving Work First in need of Domestic Violence services to on-site staff for those services and refer individuals not receiving Work First to the local agency.

Additional resources from the Crisis Intervention Program (up to \$300) and the Emergency Energy Fund (funding level determined by contributions received) will also be available. The total amount allocated to emergency cash assistance for FY 07 will be \$600,000.

The Direct Medical Program (funded by United Way) and the Water Hardship fund (funded by the City of Durham) are available to clients who are determined eligible.

Work First participants who are in a sanction or penalty status will not be eligible for emergency cash assistance unless the status of the case changes for the family. The population that DSS serves is very migratory and may move several times within a year. DSS will not pay deposits for rent unless the client has received a Section 8 Certificate, or is moving into public housing, which should result in affordable monthly rent. People that receive utility allowances (checks) must have documentation that they have used the allowance to pay a utility before they will be eligible for TANF-EA.

The agency will assess people who chronically request emergency services, annually during the application process on the anniversary date that have had no verifiable means of maintaining their living situation throughout the year. DSS staff will assist these people who are experiencing a crisis if they have a verifiable means of earned or unearned income (SSI, Child Support, etc.). Individuals who are working will be counseled on the Earned Income Tax Credit

and will be told about the VITA Program, which provides assistance in completing tax returns.

The Family Crisis staff will require that all individuals who receive financial emergency assistance services attend the Money Wise Program prior to receiving future services. All social workers in the Family Crisis Unit are trained to offer this service. The unit will develop protocol to work with these clients and inform them during the application process that they will not be eligible to receive TANF-EA the following year until have completed the Money Smart program.

The economy has been a large factor in people applying for emergency assisted services. Many people have lost their jobs and are new to the DSS. DSS will verify that these people have had recent employment, and assist them if they are eligible.

A plan will be put in place for individuals who chronically experience a crisis on the anniversary month of the previous service date. This plan will consist of the individual attending counseling classes staffed by trained Family Crisis Staff. Staff will use the Money Wise Program and will develop protocol that will inform individuals that they will not be eligible to receive TANF EA the following year unless they have completed the classes.

DSS will continue to use the Community Assistance Database (CADB). This program allows DSS and community partners that serve the same clients, and to track financial emergency assistance received by each household. The database will enable staff to get a clearer picture of the financial situation of a family.

The Child Welfare Section and the Family Crisis Unit will continue to provide financial emergency assistance to families with children in their homes under the age of 18. Both will be responsible for administering TANF-EA funds.

## **VII. Services to Low-Income Families (Under 200% of Poverty)**

***Describe your policies and procedures for these services as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003, IX. If you choose not to provide these optional services include a statement to that effect.***

Durham County will provide services to families in which the adult is included on the cash benefits with an income at or below 200% of the poverty level to assist in obtaining or retaining employment.

Durham County will provide assistance with transportation (primarily car repairs, reimbursements and bus passes), employment related equipment needs, special mandated clothing or shoes (uniforms), medically related needs for work not covered by Medicaid (special test, exams, etc.), cost of special license needed

(not to exceed \$50.00 per individual), and other work related expenses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The county will frequently monitor spending patterns in this area to ensure that there are sufficient funds available for mandatory participants.

Durham County will also provide Emergency Assistance to families who have a total gross income of 200% of the poverty level or below. Refer to section above for emergency assistance criteria.

#### **VIII. Services for Non-Custodial Parents**

***Describe your policies and procedures for these services, as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003, X. If you choose not to provide these optional services, include a statement to that effect.***

Durham County will not provide services to non-custodial parents as outlined in Work First Manual Section 003.

#### **IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement**

***Describe your county policy regarding exempting single custodial parents of children under age one from the work requirement. See Work First Manual Section 003, XI. If you do not specify a policy in your plan, there will be no exemption in your county.***

Durham County has a three-month exemption policy for single custodial parents with a child under the age one for the first three months who have not previously exhausted their 3 month or 12 month limit.

### **OPTION PLAN ELEMENTS**

**The following are optional sections that counties may want to include:**

#### **X. Innovative County Strategies**

***Describe activities or initiatives in your county that are innovative in meeting the goals of the Work First Program. These activities or initiatives may have already been described elsewhere in the plan; however, this is a place to showcase your innovations.***

***For example: Does your county have an innovative way to address domestic violence or literacy issues? What approach do you find successful in working with long-term recipient families? What is your strategy for serving adults with disabilities?***

DSS will collaborate with community partners to help meet its Work First goals. The committee has developed the following strategies.

1. Develop a program to assist a targeted group of employed current and/or former recipients to obtain driver's licenses.
2. Create a Pilot to assist a group of Work First participants who are Teen-Head-of-Households, between the ages 18 – 20, who do not have a high school diploma or GED to obtain a GED or high school diploma. This pilot group of participants will be expected to be enrolled in a secondary education program. The plan for achieving the GED and the supportive services that will be needed will be included on each individual's Mutual Responsibility Agreement (MRA). DSS will maintain a database to measure outcomes for those who pursue secondary education as a result of this pilot.
3. Create a committee to review incentives given to new employers coming to the Durham community that hire Work First participants and identify incentives or rewards to be provided to existing employers that hire and maintain participants. Review with participant's ways to "sell to employers".
4. Conduct quarterly Focus Groups of recipients, parents, employers, staff and the community to gather information on the program to be shared with the Planning Committee and staff.
5. Ask the Triangle United Way to include information about services related to grandparents and other relatives raising children on its hotline.
6. Additional services need to be provided to child only cases. These are cases in which no adult is included in the cash assistance benefits. A study of the child only caseload population will be conducted in order to better identify the needs of the Work First children served.
7. Increase the number of faith-based and community organizations who work with Work First clients to aid in their transition from welfare to work.
8. Identify funding sources that will support partnering with fatherhood initiative programs to provide services to non-custodial parents of active Work First participants.

## **XI. Special Issues**

***Describe any special issues or conditions in your county that could affect operation of the Work First Program.***

There is a need for services and financial support for many low-income families in which relatives are raising children whose parents are absent from the home.

These families often struggle financially but are not eligible for Foster Care or TANF services. If eligible for TANF funds, the amounts do not cover the cost for caring for the child(ren). They are often not eligible for Food Stamps and other supportive services. A kinship care program is badly needed to address the needs of these families.

## **XII. CERTIFICATION**

The Board of Commissioners of Durham County voted on the attached Durham County Work First Block Grant Plan on October 23, 2006. The vote was unanimous to approve the plan.

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Commissioner Chair Signature

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Date

Contact Person(s)

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## **XIII. Appendices**

Attachments:

1. DSS Organizational Chart
2. MOU with Employment Security Commission

# APPENDICES





**ATTACHMENT 2**