

MEETING SUMMARY

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON
WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

Wednesday, April 25, 2018
9:00 A.M.
Room 151, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Jane English, the Senate Co-Chair of the Legislative Task Force on Workforce Education Excellence, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jane English, Senate Co-Chair; Representative Bruce Cozart, House Co-Chair; Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Lance Eads; Representative Sonia Eubanks Barker; and Representative Dan M. Douglas.

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Kenneth Calhoun; Mr. Randy Henderson; Mr. Stephen Horton; Mr. Paul Rivera; and Mr. Mike Rogers.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Ken Bragg; Representative Vivian Flowers; Representative Kim Hammer; Representative Roger Lynch; Representative Reginald Murdock; Representative DeAnn Vaught; and Representative Carlton Wing.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of March 27, 2018, were approved as written.

Exhibit:

Exhibit C – 03/27/2018 Minutes

Remarks by the Chairs

Senator English introduced the presentation on the implementation of the work and community engagement requirement for persons eligible for the Arkansas Works health insurance program. She stated the participation rate in the workforce system in Arkansas is about 52%; and persons missing from that system need to be engaged to ensure a robust economy.

Discussion of Implementation Process for the “Work” Requirement for Arkansas Works Recipients

Presenters:

Ms. Cindy Gillespie, Director, Arkansas Department of Human Services, was recognized. Ms. Gillespie stated that the Arkansas Works Work and Community Engagement Program is a partnership between the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS). She said implementation of the work requirement received federal approval in March 2018. She explained DHS is responsible for implementing the requirement to work on individuals who are in the Arkansas Works Program, and for having the capacity for those individuals to report against that requirement. She noted Medicaid coverage for individuals under Arkansas Works is affected by whether or not the

requirement is met. She said the goal of DHS is to transition individuals to DWS and other partners to improve education and work skills and move them into the labor force. Ms. Gillespie related the history of the implementation process to date. She continued the comprehensive presentation with a discussion that included: phasing in populations; exemptions; mailing notices to enrollees; providing a state website for reporting; availability of computers; providing outreach and education services; monitoring work requirements; and timelines for various aspects of the phase-in. She stated the goal for DHS, the insurance carriers, and other partners, is to help individuals take advantage of services that are available to them in the state. She commented that DHS is using a robust social media campaign to connect with individuals.

Mr. Kelley Linck, Chief Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Arkansas Department of Human Services, was recognized. Mr. Linck said partners participating in outreach efforts have included the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Arkansas Hospital Association, Goodwill Industries, Arkansas Community Action Agencies Association, and Arkansas Independent Colleges and Universities, among others.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- concerns about issues facing individuals, such as lack of knowledge about public internet access, waiting lines for computer use in libraries, portals, limited Broadband, etc.,
- ensuring everyone is given the information, and the opportunity to fulfill the requirements for services,
- providing services to those who do not have, and will never have, an email account,
- requirements being placed on those administering primary care responsibilities to help individuals make sure their information is current in the system, and
- reestablishing “navigators” to help fill the gap for those who are not utilizing all that is on the table.

Mr. Daryl Bassett, Director, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, was recognized. Mr. Bassett expressed his confidence in having sufficient manpower available, and use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) staff in an assessment role, to respond to individuals referred by DHS; he said intermittent staff may have to be added. He said emails will be sent to individuals to schedule attendance in DWS offices to avoid lines; and DWS is looking at community-based organizations to assist with reaching out to individuals. Mr. Bassett remarked that dealing with this demographic includes certain unknowns: who are we going to be dealing with; what is their state of job-readiness; what are their educational qualifications; and do they have transportation or other issues that will prevent them from accessing our services. He said an assessment process will help uncover those issues. Mr. Bassett stated that individuals are going to fall into three areas: low-touch, medium-touch, and high-touch; the low-touch individuals being those who come in basically ready to go to work. He said participation in this new process is requiring DWS to do nothing more than it already should be doing to find ways to put people to work. He said reports will be provided through ARWINS, a platform developed in-house principally for the TANF program. Mr. Bassett said DWS is looking at this as an opportunity to introduce a litany of services to a demographic that has not been looked at before, and provide them with a way to help themselves and their families reach a level they have not been able to attain because they have not known about the services at DWS.

Contributor to the Discussion:

Mr. Ron Snead, Deputy Director, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- making every effort to reach all individuals,
- DHS setting up individuals with emails,
- cut-off point for tolerance of individuals who are non-compliant with the system,
- availability of an appeals process,
- case management system over the long term,
- a state-issued email system as an official means of communication,

- business and industry providing resources and opportunities to support clients,
- helping clients with soft skills training,
- providing partially subsidized employment opportunities,
- furnishing a specifically defined set of criteria that people need for working in a particular business or industry to DWS,
- availability of data following up on employees that have been placed,
- getting workforce ready without jobs available in the area,
- promoting entrepreneurship as well as jobs,
- volunteerism and community engagement,
- looking at job referrals not as an end product, but as a bridge to a better opportunity,
- those who are job-ready being prepared to move to another location in order to find a job opportunity and meet the work requirement, and
- things besides work, including volunteerism, that meet the community engagement requirement.

Handout:

DWS AR Works Reports/Metrics

Next Scheduled Meeting:

Wednesday, May 23, 2018, at 9:00 a.m. in Room 151 of the State Capitol, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.