

I. MACON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

WORK FIRST COUNTY PLAN

2009 - 2011

As of: July 1, 2008

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III. Macon County Vision statement was adopted by the Welfare Reform Planning Committee:

"A community partnership empowering families on time-limited assistance to achieve a higher level of economic independence."

IV. Conditions Within the County

- A.** Macon County is one of the fastest growing counties in Western North Carolina, having experienced an influx of retirees and part-time residents. The county is located in close proximity through a good highway system to several major metropolitan centers. Atlanta, Georgia is 127 miles to the south; Knoxville, Tennessee is 112 miles to the north; Greenville, South Carolina is 90 miles to the southeast and Asheville, North Carolina is 60 miles to the east. The county has three geographical locations: Franklin, the county seat, Highlands, and Nantahala.

The total county population is estimated at 32,770 for 2006 with 22.4% of the population classified as elderly. Macon County has a median age of 45.2. Single parents head 17.5% of Macon County families based on the 2000 census data. Population of the county significantly increases during the late spring, summer, and early fall months due to seasonal residents and visitors in the area.

Our area has two hospitals, two free clinics, a locally based Air Ambulance that supports the regional medical facilities and a wide variety of medical and dental practices throughout Macon County.

The picturesque mountain setting of Macon County has made tourism the number one industry. Construction is the county's second leading industry, followed by manufacturing and agriculture. The unemployment rate for June 2008 was 5.2% with an average unemployment rate of the states 6% for 2008. Medium size businesses are opening in our area including Big Lots, Fatz, Cody's and many others. Our work force numbered 16,980 persons in June 2008.

The most pressing problem for low-income families in Macon County is the fact that most of the available jobs are seasonal, part-time opportunities. Additionally, the jobs offer low wages and few, if any, benefits.

V. Principles of Partnership / Civil Rights Act

Macon County will continue to incorporate Family Centered Practices in the daily involvement with Work First Families. This is achieved with Family Centered

Practice, System of Care and Multiple Response Systems which has been Macon County's philosophy for many years. Each Work First applicant/recipient, as well as our Child Protective Services and Foster Care recipients is treated with respect. ES/HRPS is trained to give each person a chance to be heard and gives us the opportunity to learn their strengths, so as better to achieve their career choices, leading to long term employment and short term Work First.

We realize that each family has different needs and strengths; this realization helps the agency withhold unfair judgment. Our recipients are encouraged to work together in developing a successful plan. Each applicant/recipient will be worked with according to their specific needs.

Macon County will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and provide Interpreter services in any language, as we have a full time employee on site who speaks Spanish/English fluently and also an interpreter phone is available for any language at each employee's disposal.

Macon County complies with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and all requirements imposed by our pursuant to the regulations issued in accordance to that Title.

VI. Planning Process

Members of the local planning committee met on September 8, 2008, and were appointed or re-appointed by the Board of County Commissioners on the evening of September 8, 2008 at the Board of Commissioners meeting.

Dr. Jim Davis, representing Macon County Board of Commissioners and Business
Wendy Dalton, representing the Social Services Board
Dorothy Crawford, representing Area Mental Health Board
Tammy Dills, representing the Public Health Board
Nancy Cantrell, representing the Board of Education

Dale West, representing the Employment Security Commission

Chuck Sutton, representing the Community-Based Organizations/Macon
Program for Progress

Frances DeWitt, representing Job-Link

Barbara Grindstaff and Rene Bell, Consumers

Kim Angel, representing Macon Area Transit

Farrell Jamison, representing Southwestern Community College

Lester Evans & Carolyn Pattillo, Appeal process

Wesley Price, representing Child Welfare Staff and Faith Based

Virginia Casada, representing Department of Social Service Consultant

Jane Kimsey, representing the Department of Social Services (DSS)

Also, serving in an advisory capacity are these DSS Work First employees:

Sheila Conley, Kristy Carver and Polly Bradley;

The Committee has met regular for the past eleven years to review and update the welfare reform plan. Identified needs and basic concepts to address the needs for the current proposed plan were developed by the committee with detail work completed by the Social Services staff. Decisions were made by consensus.

The public review process included the plan being posted at the following locations from September 9, 2008 through September 26, 2008:

Macon County Public Library
Employment Security Commission
County Manager's Office
Department of Social Services

Public notices of how to obtain and comment on the plan were announced in the Franklin Press, the Highlander, the Macon County News, and on WFSC/WNCC in Franklin and WHLC in Highlands. Review of the plan and comments have been obtained informally from community leaders, concerned citizens, and a former welfare recipient. The local planning community members assisted in obtaining comments and will continue to meet on a regular basis to assist in implementing the plan and revising the plan when needed.

VII. Outcomes and Goals for the County

A. Statewide Work First Goals

1. **Employment**. Employment Services will work with 100% of all Adults so that self-sufficiency will be realized.
2. **Meeting Federal Participation Rates**. Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment for 50% of all Parent and 90% of Two Parent Participation. Macon County has met this goal for the past twelve months as we have had child only cases.
3. **Providing Employment Services**. Active participation in intensive employment services for all families will be done in order to meet the participation rate and ensure that families are served adequately before the end of five years. Employment services will assist 80% of all parents and 100% of Two Parents with job preparation and job placement.
4. **Benefit Diversion**. For a more successful outcome, Benefit Diversion will be given to 5 families to meet their emergency needs through short term, temporary assistance.
5. **Staying Off Welfare**. 90% of Adults will stay off welfare after going to work.
- ~~6. **Child Support**. Child support collections have increased to \$2,355,049 with 850 child support orders in 2008.~~

7. Job Retention. 60% of families who leave Work First for employment will continue to be employed 6 months after leaving the program. 50% of families who leave the program for employment will continue to be employed 12 months after leaving the program.

8. Caseload Reduction. Due to current economic conditions, we have met this goal in Macon County.

County Developed Outcome Goals

Macon County has not established outcome goals beyond those outlined by DHHS, DSS.

VIII. Plans to Achieve and Measure the Outcomes and Goals

A. Macon County will meet each goal as follows:

1. Reducing the Work First caseload by:

- a) Implementing NC Standard Plan, WFFA Manual Section 101, for initial screening and assessment, including:
 - ◆ Providing referrals to community resources. Electronic Mountain Area Resource [Guide, developed](#) through the Smart Start Initiative, is available on the Internet at www.regiona.org; a state wide resource directory is available through NC careLINK at www.nccarelink.gov an agency developed printed Macon County directory of local resources is also available (**Attachment 1**).
 - ◆ Providing onsite employment information/opportunities including local newspaper classified listings posted bi-weekly; access to ESC job listings and available assistance to customers in finding employment.
 - ◆ Providing alternative assistance such as:
CIP – ~~\$400~~ up to \$600 per year limit, based on FY07-08 State eligibility criteria (200% of poverty-heating/cooling crisis)
Emergency Assistance - \$200 per year limit (200% of poverty
TANF Funds - limited to \$200/yr per household to address barriers that threaten employment (200% of poverty)
- b) Mandatory two-week job search prior to application for all able-bodied adults who have a recent connection to the workforce, or who are assessed to be job ready and are not exempt. Intake-HRPS provides customers with recent job listings and has access to ESC job listings for

recommendations.

- c) Making relocation funds available to customer. Funds are limited to \$200 and are available to those who meet WFFA income and eligibility requirements to relocate customer to an area where a support system or employment can be found to assist customer. The Intake-HRPS will evaluate families for this assistance. Caseworkers may also make this recommendation after the application process has begun. The Work First Supervisor must approve any recommendation for this assistance. The Intake-HRPS will be responsible for determining the services to be purchased and for completing a payment request for the service provider. Clients who receive relocation assistance could be eligible for one night's lodging and food provided by a Transient Fund administered by the Macon County Sheriff's Department. Services Unit staff will be available to assist with transportation needs for these clients. A ride to the bus station could be provided, for example.
- d) Providing free transportation via Macon Area Transit System for WFFA recipients. Macon County's Transportation Coordinator will arrange rides in a demand/responsive manner. This service is provided through NCDOT. Non-recipients can arrange transportation for a nominal fee.
- e) Macon County's goal is to serve customers without increasing applications for WFFA. Other community agencies will be recommended as appropriate to provide assistance for families in crisis/emergency situations that are temporary. REACH may assist with temporary shelter. Care Net and Manna Food Bank can provide assistance with food as well as medical and shelter emergencies.

2. Macon County will put 3 adults who are approved for WFFA to work. Strategies include:

- a) Providing intensive job development and job coaching services to all "job-ready" mandatory clients through the Employment Services Human Resource Placement Specialist (ES-HRPS). The ES-HRPS maintains five day per week coverage at Macon County's chartered Job-Link Career Center and has full access to all job orders. **(Attachment 2).**

- b) Providing career assessment for all mandatory WFFA clients unless the client is determined to possess transferable skills. Southwestern Community College (SCC) will provide a two-day assessment class at the Macon County Job-Link Center located at the Employment Security Commission (ESC). Transportation can be provided by Macon Area Transit and can be arranged by the ES-HRPS. Childcare costs can be reimbursed to the participant as needed. The class includes a skills assessment using the "Test of Adult Basic Skills" (TABE) and a career assessment using the "Career Decision Making System" (CDMS). Individual career counseling will also be provided by SCC's Human Resource Development (HRD) instructors. Information gathered will be provided to the ES-HRPS so that preparation and employment may be obtained in a timely manner.
- c) All other Job-Link partners will enhance job search and job-readiness activities for WFFA participants. Job-Link partners include ESC, SCC, and Macon Program for Progress/Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. SCC offers a job-readiness workshop at the Job-Link Center as the ES-HRPS deems necessary. Topics include employment application and resume development, valuable employee characteristics and interviewing skills. An admission representative from SCC and the WIA Case Manager are available to coordinate vocational training at the college. A Vocational Rehabilitation counselor is available onsite **once a week**. As the Job-Link Center is located at the ESC, all ESC services are available to WFFA customers and recipients.
- d) ESC staff will be responsible for monitoring Work Registration for WFFA applicants.

3. 90% of all adults who leave welfare for work will stay off welfare. Strategies include:

- a) Providing transitional employment services for clients who go to work while actively participating with ES-HRPS. These clients can receive up to six months of services after receiving their last WFFA check if income is under **200%** of Federal poverty levels. Services may include: a monthly follow-up by the ES-HRPS; transportation reimbursement or assistance; case management. Support services available to active participants will also be provided to newly employed clients. Clients placed in a job through job coaching services will receive onsite coaching for at least one day, and no

more than four weeks, with three months of follow-up services, depending on individual. TANF Funds will be used to provide gift certificates to Wal-Mart for continued successful employment at 30-, 60-, and 90-day intervals.

- b) Providing non-recurring work-related expenses for newly employed clients. Clients will be eligible for this assistance for six months after receiving their last WFFA check if income is under 200% of Federal poverty levels. This is limited to **\$500** per participant. It will be targeted to eliminate any situation that threatens a client's new economic independence. Assistance may include: vehicle repairs, insurance, licensing fees; medical/dental services when not otherwise available; shelter; and temporary childcare assistance.
- c) Continuation and promotion of ~~Extended~~ Transitional Medicaid and prioritized subsidized childcare for clients.

4. 50% of all parents will meet the Federal participation rate. Strategies include:

- a) Increasing the participation rate. Macon County will strive to bring more people into active participation with the ES-HRPS more quickly. The ES-HRPS will strive to complete an individualized plan for self-sufficiency, the Mutual Responsibility Agreement Plan of Action (MRA), with all WFFA clients within one week of orientation. **(Attachments 3, 4)**. This will be achieved via the Intake HRPS' front-end assessment, MRA Core Responsibilities, and by referral to the ES-HRPS for orientation **(Attachment 4)**. Macon County will require adult parents of children over three months old to be active participants. The MRA Plan of Action will outline client responsibilities with a minimum of 40 hours of countable work activities. Supportive services will also be outlined on this agreement. The ES-HRPS will be responsible for scheduling appropriate activities, coordinating services, and monitoring client progress. Clients will submit a Time Card by the fifth of each month **(Attachment5)**. The MRA will be reviewed and updated at least quarterly. The ES-HRPS will monitor, track, and report client work activities and hours via the DSS-6908 **(Attachment 6)**, and will ensure that the required "countable" hours are scheduled to allow clients to count in the "All parent" participation rate.
- b) Streamlining eligibility determination and services for clients. Macon County will establish a set order of services for clients that will assist in serving clients more quickly and efficiently. This

continuum of services will emphasize intake diversion services, two-week job search for all able-bodied adults, job development, job coaching, and referrals **(Attachment 7)**.

- c) Establishing changes in sanctions and terminations for non-compliance with Mutual Responsibility Agreements (MRA). Macon County will comply with the NC standard plan ~~to reduce recipient's check by 25% for three months as the sanction for a first infraction of either MRA. The second sanction will be termination without eligibility for three months. The third sanction will be termination without eligibility for six months.~~

5. 90% of two-parent households will meet the two-parent participation rate. Strategies include:

- a) Offering Benefit Diversion as appropriate. Many two-parent households apply for services as a result of a recent job loss or family crisis. These households will receive Benefit Diversion, up to the three-month maximum amount, to alleviate immediate crisis until one or both adults can return to work. The Benefit Diversion money can be approved the day of intake, and can eliminate financial stress until a paycheck can be received. Because Benefit Diversion does not cause a household's time clock to be activated, these families would not be included in the participation rate, reducing the number of two-parent households receiving TANF.
- b) Establishing "Pay After Performance" guidelines for two-parent households. As directed in the WFFA Manual, Section 119, change 6-2004, Macon County will make an immediate referral to ES-HRPS for all two-parent households who are not eligible for Benefit Diversion, or who have exhausted their B/D assistance and are not currently employed. Within one week, ES-HRPS will complete MRA Plan of Action, outlining 40 hours of countable activities, including training, to become effective upon approval of WFFA application. At least one of the two able-bodied adults included in the WFFA assistance unit must participate to be eligible for WFFA. However, both may chose to participate and the total hours divided among the two adults. After training is completed, a job search activity may be resumed with or without the job coaching services as deemed appropriate by the ES-HRSP. The family will be informed that their WFFA check will be issued after completion of the required number of hours in countable activities. Once the participating parent turns in a Time Card by the fifth day of the following month, a TANF check will be issued. Macon County will

follow NC standard plan for "Pay After Performance".

- c) In cases where medical or mental disabilities have led the family to apply for assistance, an immediate referral will be made to Vocational Rehabilitation or to the Social Security Administration Office, at the discretion of the ES-HRPS. The family must follow through with appointments and recommendations of these agencies in order to receive WFFA. Assistance will be issued on a monthly basis, and the ES-HRPS will meet with these families monthly to review progress.
- d) The ES-HRPS will provide case management services for all Two-Parent households.

6. Macon County will help customers by offering Benefit Diversion to five families per year. Strategies include:

- a) Macon County will follow guidelines in NC standard plan, WFFA Manual Section 102, change date ~~3/1/05~~ 4/01/08, regarding Benefit Diversion and will administer as appropriate.
- b) Benefit Diversion is designed to help with a specific crisis or an unexpected emergency situation. It is not intended to meet recurring or ongoing needs. North Carolina Benefit Diversion is limited to three months.
- c) If the family seems appropriate for Benefit Diversion, the Intake HRPS will recommend them for consideration. The Work First Supervisor must approve any recommendation before this assistance can be offered.

~~7. Macon County will increase Child Support orders and collections WFFA clients by 4%. Strategies includes:~~

~~The NC Child Support Enforcement IVD Section has been very supportive of the DSS efforts to increase child support orders by contracting with DSS to provide intake services through county staff. This was one of the first state and county partnerships in NC and has been very effective by establishing more orders.~~

~~Through this new partnership, Macon County anticipates 90% of WFFA customers will receive intake services for child support administered by the Intake HRPS. Any customer with a non-custodial parent involved who~~

~~does not have the established case in ACTS will have a case initiated at interview.~~

8. All children in WFFA households who are receiving child protective services will have an active Intervention Plan supervised by a Child Protective Services Social Worker (CPS-SW). Strategies include:

- a) The CPS-SW and the ES-HRPS will collaborate on provision of services to mutual clients. Families under 200% of poverty will be provided an array of services to eliminate incident of abuse and/or neglect.
- b) KIDS Place, a community agency devoted to the protection and well-being of abused and neglected children, provides a safe, non-threatening environment for investigations, medical examinations, and counseling. Court Intervention Services are also available. Macon County's Child Protective Services Social Workers work closely with this agency in the investigation and treatment of abused and neglected children and their families.
- c) Parenting classes are provided by Macon Program for Progress, KIDS Place, and the Family Restoration Program. Referrals to these classes are most often made by Child Protective Services Social Workers. General information about classes is posted in the Department of Social Services lobby.
- d) Family preservation services are available through Mountain Youth Resources for families where children are identified at risk of being removed from the home. A Social Worker provides in-home services to reduce and/or eliminate the risk of removal for six to eight families, which allows more intensive intervention.
- e) A "Family Enrichment Resource Center" is provided at the Macon County Public Library. Parenting materials including books, workbooks, videos, and audio tapes are available for families focusing on enhancement of skills to promote child well-being.

IX. Administration

- A. The Macon County Board of County Commissioners has delegated the administration of the Work First program to the Macon County Department of Social Services. Nothing in the Macon County Electing Plan

shall imply an entitlement to any resource or service at the disposal of Macon County and the implementation of the Electing Plan.

- B. The Department of Social Services has focused on providing services in the most efficient, customer-friendly and cost-effective manner possible. **Macon County has adequate Income Maintenance staff to meet with the applicants/recipients on the day they come into the agency, and take an application as needed.** Simultaneously, the One Stop/Job-Link Center was developed to better serve clients. The Department had extended staff work hours from 7:30am to 5:30pm to better meet the needs of working families. Due to lack of customer participation, work hours were returned to 8:00am to 5:00pm with the possibility of having extended work hours during the summer months when more families are employed. The Department continually assesses the needs of the community and attempts to be responsive to those needs. **Employment Services and Eligibility Services are not a consolidated function.**
- C. The Employment Security Commission (ESC) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) developed a plan whereby all applicants for cash assistance will register for work at the ESC/Job-Link Center (**Attachment 8**). The ES-Human Resource Placement Specialist will be co-located at the Job-Link Center at the ESC and DSS to help provide job placement and resolve any barriers to employment.
- D. **Childcare, Transportation, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Community Service Employment**

Childcare funds are prioritized for Work First clients. The first priority for CCDBG funds are children receiving Child Protective Services or Foster Care with Work First families receiving secondary priority. The Region A Partnership for Children provides funds for Work First clients in the seven western-most counties of North Carolina. The funds were allocated with the intent that no family receiving Work First would be on a waiting list for childcare. The ES-HRPS and the Day Care Coordinator work collaboratively to find innovative childcare solutions for families with special needs.

Transportation services will be provided for Work First applicants, Work First active participants and those WFFA recipients newly employed for six months following employment under Employment Services transitional program if income is under 200% of Federal poverty levels. The estimated allotment to this program will be **\$1,000.00**.

Work First customers falling within 200% of poverty will be eligible for \$35 gas vouchers (**Attachment 9, 10**) to be used for job search or employment, not to exceed three vouchers in a fiscal year per household, and no more than one per month. Work First applicants can be eligible for \$35 gas vouchers to be used for job search or employment, attending orientation or career assessment classes, not to exceed three in a year, and no more than one per month. Applicants without available transportation will be referred to Macon Area Transit (MAT) by the Intake-Human Resource Placement Specialist (**Attachments 9, 11**). These vouchers will be funded with TANF funds. Participants can be reimbursed \$.30 per mile, up to three months after starting and maintaining work, for travel expenses to work activities as outlined on the MRA Plan of Action by providing a signed travel log in a timely manner. Active participants who provide carpooling services for other WFFA participants may receive additional reimbursement, as deemed appropriate by the ES-HRPS. A Human Resource Aide will provide transportation for Work First active participants when all other transportation options have been exhausted.

Car repairs can be made for WFFA active participants only if the participant is employed or is newly hired. The vehicle MUST be registered in the participant's name. Funding is at the discretion of the ES-HRPS, but repair cost is not to exceed "Blue Book" value of the vehicle.

Substance Abuse Screening will be conducted as required by Federal law. Smoky Mountain Center (mental health provider) and the Department of Social Services have an agreement whereby a professional will provide screening, assessments, and referrals for treatment. These services are provided onsite (**Attachment 16**).

Domestic Violence Option will be provided as required by Federal law. The caseworker will screen applicants for domestic violence issues and make the appropriate referrals. All applicants will be notified of their right not to participate with Employment Services if employment would place the applicant or applicant's children in danger due to a domestic violence issue. Procedures for clients if they are experiencing family violence are as follows:

- 1) Clients must read, understand, sign and indicate to speak to someone on the Notification of Family Violence Option form.
- 2) Caseworkers must refer clients for family violence screening or further assessment if they are self-disclose or if there are indicators of family violence present to Reach of Franklin or other agencies that are equipped to work with domestic violence.

- 3) Reach will administer the screening and assessments for domestic violence.
- 4) If the client requests a waiver from any Work First requirements, the worker must consult with agencies concerning the request before it can be granted.

Community Service Employment

Macon County Department of Social Services will not provide a Community Service/Vocational Training Opportunity for Work First Program participants.

E. Private and Public Funding

Macon County has secured additional funds, both public and private, to support the Macon County Electing Plan. These funds supplement the TANF Block Grant. Both Smart Start funds and the Child Development Block Grant are prioritized to remove childcare barriers for Work First clients. The Department of Transportation (DOT) has proposed additional funding to help meet Work First and employment transportation needs. MOE savings of 10% from the maintenance of effort reduction will be utilized for staff salaries, benefits, indirect costs, and economic development.

F. Appeals Process

A public assistance recipient or applicant has the right to appeal the decision of the Macon County Department of Social Services or the Board of County Commissioners granting, denying, terminating, or modifying assistance. Each applicant or recipient shall be notified in writing of his or her right to appeal. An example of the appeals rights notification is provided and submitted as **(Attachment 12)**.

The county will follow the appeals process as stated in N.C.G.S. 108A-79 **(Attachment 13)** with the exception of the state hearing officer, which will be replaced with an impartial two member committee of volunteer community representatives from Macon County. The Board of County Commissioners will appoint volunteers to be hearing officers.

G. Exemptions from Referral to Employment Security Commission

To be eligible for WFFA, applicants must register with ESC unless exempt for the following reasons (~~child-only case, disabled with doctor's statement~~, caretaker of child less than 3 months old, adults who are

approved for or receiving SSI, VA benefits-100%, Social Security Disability or age 65 and above from First Stop registration.) (Attachment 4).

~~Community Service Employment~~

~~Macon County Department of Social Service will not provide a Community Service/Vocational Training Opportunity for Work First Program participants.~~

X. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

NC Standard Plan will be adhered to except for changes as noted below. Any future statewide policy changes will be reviewed and evaluated before Macon County implements such changes. If changes are made, the Macon County Work First Plan will be amended to incorporate changes.

A. Eligibility Criteria

- 1) **Citizenship**
"Citizenship/Immigrant Rules" WFFA Manual, Section 111,
Standard Plan will be adhered to.
- 2) **Residency**
"State/County Residence Rules" WFFA Manual, Section 108
Standard Plan will be adhered to.
- 3) **KINSHIP**
Change "Kinship/Living with Rule", WFFA Manual, Section 112,
change date as follows:

Limit the following relationships as meeting the kinship rule:

- a. Parent, including a natural mother or father, a legal father, or adoptive parent, after the issuance of the final order
- b. Brother, sister, including half brothers and sisters
- c. Grandparent
- d. Uncle or Aunt
- e. Stepparent
- f. **Step-Brother or Sister**
- g. **Great Grandparents**
- h. **Great Uncle or Aunt**

This relative must be providing care for the child on a day-to-day basis and be responsible for ongoing decisions regarding the child's

well being. A relative who meets the above relationships must be included in the case with the child, unless they are an SSI recipient **or receiving SS disability income and is not a required member of the assistant unit.**

4) INCOME AND BUDGETING

Change "Income and Budgeting", WFFA Section 114, Section I, as follows:

Count income of everyone living in the household in the budget unit EXCEPT:

- a. SSI recipients are not eligible for WFFA and their income will not count toward the assistance unit.
- b. Do not count Social Security disability income received by budget unit members OTHER than those required to be included in the assistance unit; i.e., a mother and child reside in household with a grandfather who receives Social Security disability. The grandfather's income does not count toward mother and child. If mother and child reside in the home with child's father who receives Social Security disability and is a required assistance unit member, the father's income counts toward the assistance unit.

Child only cases will be certified for one year **after the initial application of six months certification period is completed. Section 201 – "Reviews for Family Assistance" – adheres to State Plan.**

Changes in situation due to income will **adhere to the State Standard Policy.**

5) RESOURCE RULES

Change "Resources", WFFA Manual, Section 115, "A. Resource Limit", Page 1, as follows:

Macon County will **adhere to State Standard Plan.**

6) APPLICATION PROCESSING

Macon County will follow NC Standard Plan, "Initial Screening and Assessment", WFFA Manual Section 101, as written EXCEPT, if applicant fails to provide information requested on DSS-8146A within **45** days, the Intake-Human Resource Placement Specialist

may deny the application on the 45th day, unless applicants have not provided verification of citizenship and is showing good faith to provide items, then application can pend up to 6 months.

7) SANCTIONS

"Sanctions", Section 120, Macon County will adhere to State Standard plan.

8) CHANGES IN SITUATION

Change "Changes in Situation", WFFA Manual, Section 202, as follows:

Macon County will comply with NC Standard Plan regarding changes in situation.

9) PAY AFTER PERFORMANCE

All potential work eligible Work First Family Assistance participants will be required to participate and satisfactorily complete countable work and work related activities prior to receiving Work First cash benefits. Families who fail to complete their required hours as mutually agreed upon in their Mutual Responsibility Agreement must establish Good Cause as outlined in North Carolina Work First Policy, for non-compliance. Failure to comply with countable hour requirements or establishing "Good Cause" for non-compliance will result in no Work First Family Assistance Check and a sanction of six months of ineligibility.

B. Proposed Changes

Macon County does not propose any changes in benefit levels, only in eligibility criteria. These changes are proposed in order to better serve families by helping them assume responsibility and become self-sufficient.

C. Requested Waiver

Macon County does not request any waivers.

XI. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (EA)

Emergency cash assistance will be provided to families who meet the eligibility requirements as stated in the basic requirements of the WFFA Manual, Section

102, Page 10, Section II, "Emergency Assistance". The eligibility for this program will be based on prudent judgment of the Intake-Human Resource Placement Specialist when determining the emergency situation. The maximum payment level for Macon County will be \$200 per year. This cap can be re-determined in the case of Domestic Violence and if the county declares a state of emergency due to natural disaster or severe weather. The total amount to be allocated to this program for emergency cash assistance will vary.

Emergency Assistance is designed to assist families with sporadic emergency needs and is not intended to meet recurring or ongoing needs. If a family has received emergency assistance in two consecutive fiscal years, they will be referred to Employment Services at the Job-Link Center to be given assistance from Employment Services. The adult caretaker will be given an extensive interview and asked to complete a workbook which focuses on family budgeting and job skills. If there is evidence of physical or mental impairment, the Human Resource Placement Specialist will assist with disability reports, obtaining medical records, scheduling appointments and accompanying them to the Social Security Office. Emergency Assistance applications will not be approved until the adult Caretaker meets with the employment Services Human Resources Placement Specialist and has complied with the services offered to them. If they refuse to comply or fail to keep a scheduled appointment with Employment Services, they will not be eligible for a period of one fiscal Year.

An emergency will be defined as a need which will result in children suffering (lack of housing, food spoiled due to lack of refrigeration, etc.) as a result of a situation beyond the control of the adult caretaker (laid off from work, stolen paycheck, unexpected car repair, etc.). No Emergency Assistance will be provided to applicants if the emergency cannot be alleviated, as EA is expected to alleviate the emergency. Assistance will not be provided for any medical care, regardless of whether they are covered by Medicaid.

Provided services can include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Utilities
- ◆ Car payment, insurance, repair
- ◆ Childcare
- ◆ Domestic Violence

XII. Services for Families with Income at or Below 200% of Poverty

Services will be provided to families with income at or below 200% of poverty to:
support job retention,
strengthen families, and
promote healthy development of parents and children

All WFFA Standard eligibility guidelines will be applied.

Funds available for this service are limited to \$200/yr per household; therefore, services are prioritized for former Work First families, Child-Welfare families, and one-time hardship cases as deemed appropriate by Work First Supervisor.

XIII. Services for Non-Custodial Parents of Work First Recipient Children

Macon County will not utilize TANF funds to serve non-custodial parents based on other NC counties' experience with this service.

XIV. Child Welfare Services

Due to the agency size and number of WFFA cases, close collaboration occurs between the Work First and Child Welfare units in ensuring the well being of children being served by both programs. Children Services Team staff cases weekly and receive information from Human Resource Placement Specialists on mutual cases. All available resources are identified and provided in accordance with eligibility rules. Families with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal poverty level receive services including but not limited to training in parenting skills, short-term housing, transportation, childcare, respite care, and counseling to strengthen the family and promote healthy development of families and children.

XV. Success for Families at Risk Initiative

A Success for Families at Risk Initiative Plan was developed by Macon County **(Attachment 14)**. Since the Initiative Plan has been developed, only one Work First participant has been determined at risk, having received cash assistance for 30 months. The Plan was implemented in June 2000 for this participant. The Success Team identified several beneficial services for the at risk family. Before any services could be initiated, the family relocated to another state to be near family members. No other families are in danger of being at risk at this writing.

XVI. Funding Requirements

A. Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds will be used for Child Welfare staff and services, Work First employment staff, Emergency Assistance, and contract services to support employment. MOE is \$168,596.

B. TANF Child Welfare expenditures are budgeted at \$741,770 for FY 08-09

C. FY 08-09 Budgeted amounts for:
Child Protective Services \$408,187

Work First Diversion <u>Cash</u> Assistance	20,000 <u>22,000</u>
Work First Case Management	118,337
Work First Eligibility & Fraud	54,638
Work First Cash Assistance	22,000
(includes \$ 20,000 for Benefit Diversion)	
Work First Services	138,608
(Includes employability, child care, other supportive & contract services)	

XVII. Innovative Strategies

A. Provide intensive job development and job coaching

Family Centered Services are provided to Work First applicants/recipients as a priority of achieving outcomes and goals. The ES-HRPS will be located at Macon County Job-Link Center as a partner, provide direct services to clients "in the field". Job development/coaching will be provided at the work site from one to four weeks and follow up will be provided. ES-HRPS may provide a voucher for Consignment clothing shops, thrift stores and Wal-mart for job interviews. ES-HRPS networks with employers by making employer visits and offering the Work Opportunity Tax Credit explaining the benefits for hiring Work First recipients. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is discussed at time ES-HRPS meets with employers. The act was passed in 1990 which made it unlawful to discriminate in employment against a qualified individual with a disability (**Attachment 10**). ES-HRPS sets up display at local job fairs promoting Work First and Job-Link Center. ES-HRPS has professional relationship with Workforce Development Board and the Workforce Investment Act Case Managers for partnering to make sure participants have all resources readily available to them if they are eligible.

B. Provide career assessment for all applicants

Southwestern Community College will assess skill level of WFFA participant using Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and career choice using the Career Decision Making System (CDMS) in a two day on site class. Workforce Investment Act participants may also attend these classes to meet WIA eligibility and assessment requirements. ES-HRPS utilizes the short term skills training classes for participants at Southwestern Community College.

C. Provide retention assistance

Assistance to working families for up to six months after leaving welfare for work.

- D. *Provide coordinated transportation services for clients*
Transportation assistance to promote and maintain employment as explained in Section VII, E, Transportation Services.
- E. *Time Limits for Working Participants*
Work First families with adults receiving Work First assistance for a cumulative of 24 months are ineligible for 36 consecutive months following termination unless granted extension. Months that families received in other states do not count in the 24 months.

Work First families with working adults are subject to 60 months lifetime limit. This time limit is a cumulative total that includes months of TANF assistance received in other states.
- F. *Work with caretakers of infants*
ES-HRPS will work with caretakers of infants when the child reaches three months of age, helping them become job ready, arrange childcare, and find employment **(Attachment 4 – pg 36,37)**. Like other participants, these caretakers will be eligible to receive job placement, job coaching, and retention services. ES-HRPS will make appropriate referrals to Smart Start with parenting workshops for participants as well as utilizing Smart Start's lending libraries on an as needed basis.
- G. *Evaluate Child Only Cases*
At review and at initial application for new customers, Macon County will have customer complete a detailed assessment of the family situation **(Attachment 15)**. Based on this assessment Intake HRPS will evaluate and recommend alternatives to WFFA, including pursuing child support from absent parents and/or adoption assistance.
- H. *Provide information about services at DSS*
ES-HRPS will make referrals to other services within DSS to eligible participants including Food/Nutrition, Medicaid and Children Services. Also appropriate referrals are made to our local Health Department.
- I. *Provide Housing for Urban Development (HUD)*
ES-HRPS keeps an updated list of subsidized housing in the community. ES-HRPS works closely with HUD and makes appropriate referrals to HUD for recipients.
- J. *Providing information and assistance to homeless shelter*
ES-HRPS has professional relationship with our local homeless shelter and utilizes same with appropriate referrals in domestic violence and counseling in mental health when needed for participant

- K. *Provide information on food pantries*
ES-HRPS will make appropriate referrals to local food pantries and assist participant with voucher and information needed to receive items.
- L. *Partnering with faith based community*
Welfare Reform Committee has two Ministers serving on our board. The agency has two staff members who are Ministers. ES-HRPS works with these Ministers when families and participants are in need of housing, transportation and counseling
- M. *Provide services for Mental and Physical Impairments*
ES-HRPS provides intense services for participants that have mental and physical impairments. ES-HRPS assesses the impairments, makes referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation. DSS partners/contracts with Vocational Rehabilitation to perform the Functional Assessments, then after this is completed depending on the severity, ES-HRPS will meet with the participant; gather information on the medical and mental information by having participant sign consent of releases. Once medical and mental information is gathered ES-HRPS completes SSA-3368-BK online for adults and SSA-3820-BK for children online. ES-HRPS compiles all the medical information, completes the Functional Report; SSA needs to determine if the participant is disabled, makes an appointment either by telephone or in person interview at the local SSA office with a Consultant. That information is sent to Raleigh, should the participant be denied benefits ES-HRPS assists participants to appeal the claim online. If transportation should be a barrier for participant to make the medical appointments that SSA requires them to go to, ES-HRPS will transport or make accommodations for transport. Vocational Rehabilitation will work with ES-HRPS and participant for part-time employment by having their Engineer make modifications for work area if needed. Vocational Rehabilitation also sponsors DSS participants by paying a stipend for them to attend Rehab Facility to be evaluated with employment being end result. This is a six week program.
- N. *Volunteering*
ES-HRPS has served voluntarily on a variety of committees to partner with the business and community based organizations. ES-HRPS served on the Board of Directors at Webster Enterprises for several years. Webster Enterprises is an Organization that provides service for the mental and physical impaired. They provide evaluations, work, supported employment, job development for persons with disabilities, and provide

support of persons with developmental disabilities by having a full time Counselor onsite. ES-HRPS has also served on Macon Program for Progress Policy Council for three years. MPP also has the grant funding for HUD housing that ES-HRPS collaborates with.

XVIII. Review Prior To Expiration of Time Limits

The process by which the county will review all Work First caseloads prior to expiration of time limits will follow procedures as described in standard Work First Manual, Section 105, III and Section 105A, IV.

IXX . Current Electing Counties

Macon County Electing County Plan has experienced great success since implementation on July 1, 1998. Statistics show better than 90% reduction in WFFA caseload from SFY '97-SFY '06, with 99% of adults staying off welfare after going to work. Child support collections, administered by State IVD division, have increased by 98% of set goal. The Governor's Report Cards for 2000 and 2001 found Macon County with A's in caseload decline, employment and retention. In 2000 and 2001, child support enforcement received a B in increasing collections.

The statistics have consistently been positive, but the *real* success has been exemplified by the former Work First recipients' personal stories:

- ◆ In March of 2005 a single mother of two small children had just left her husband due to substance abuse and domestic violence. She had no education other than high school. I made an appointment for us to meet with Adult Work Force Investment Act to discuss options for education. WIA enrolled her and started her at Southwestern Community College in the fall of the year in 2005. She took Health Information Technology and graduated with an Associate Degree in May of 2007 being on the Presidents list throughout the two years and worked part time jobs. I went with her and assisted her to get on the HUD program for housing. I took her to Macon County Social Services and helped her apply for Food Stamps and Medicaid for the children. She has since remarried, built a home, off all public assistance and is employed at Highlands Cashiers Hospital and her job title is Physician Billing-Accounts Receivable Clerk earning \$14.50 per hour. The employer is very happy with her ability to learn quickly has she is a self starter and very dependable. She is continuing taking classes at SCC to advance her career opportunity in the future.

- ◆ A grandmother who has full custody of her granddaughter (is one of our child only cases in Work First) came into ES-HRPS office. She was referred by an Income Maintenance Caseworker. She had applied for disability on her own, was denied and had not appealed the case within the sixty day time limit. I assisted her with a new disability claim as she had been diagnosed with Parkinson Disease. I got her approved for disability but there still wasn't enough income even after she started receiving her SSDI for her to provide all the things the granddaughter needed in school. The grandchild was a "New Century Scholar Student" and making all "A's", needed a home computer and the internet to do her homework. Our DSS office was able to purchase the grandchild a computer through our participation funds. I went to a local business that provides internet service, told them the circumstances and they provided free internet service for one year. Since then the granddaughter has been diagnosed with rare benign tumors in her head and is being treated at the Children's Hospital in Winston Salem, at this time surgery is not an option. She is missing a lot of school but is able to keep up with her school work since she has the computer at home and internet access.
- ◆ This single mother with one child came to the office needing assistance with past due power bills. She had other past due bills that she was needing help with. She was assisted with Emergency Assistance Services. She was then referred to the Employment Security Commission to meet with the Job-Link partners in the Employment Express Programs (Work Force Investment Act). The ES-HRPS assisted her in marketing her job skills. She found employment with Macon Program for Progress as the Support Our Students Coordinator. This person has been employed since December of 2005 and has proven to be reliable, hard working and well organized. The employer is well pleased with her ability to learn quickly and work independently. She is earning \$12.50 per hour and has full benefits.

XX. Certification

The Macon County Work First Electing Plan was reviewed and approved by the Macon County Board of Commissioners on _____, 2008

Chairman, Macon County Board of Commissioners