



## STATE OF GEORGIA

### Division of Family and Children Services

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Director

## Georgia SNAP Works 2.0

A coordinated multi-agency assessment and case management delivery system

This information is being presented for the purpose of providing testimony to the Members of the Agriculture Committee's Nutrition Subcommittee regarding the Past, Present and Future of SNAP: Innovation and Success in Employment and Training Programs.

### **Pilot Overview**

Georgia was awarded \$15 million as a grant recipient of the Fiscal Year 2015 Pilot Projects to Reduce Dependency and Increase Work Requirements and Work Effort under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Grant Application. The Project, titled Georgia SNAP Works 2.0: A coordinated multi-agency assessment and case management delivery system, was written in partnership with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) and the Georgia Local Workforce Investment Agency (GLWIA) to provide services to Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) in 10 Georgia counties (See Map Attached).

Through this partnership, 2500 mandatory participants in Georgia's Employment and Training Program (called SNAP Works) will receive coordinated case management services through an integrated system that is based on a medical HMO. Primary case managers work closely with secondary case managers (specialists in partner organizations), each applying their respective expertise to meeting the needs of participants and continuously sharing information and insights via a centralized web-based system.

The 10 counties providing pilot services were selected based on their number of ABAWDs, and the location of SNAP Works offices relative to the GDOL and GLWIA location in the county, so as to limit transportation as a barrier to participation. Diversity of the client population was also a factor in selecting the 10 counties. Georgia chose to operate in the second largest urban county in the state, several smaller rural counties, as well as three counties in the coastal region. The GDOL also researched the areas for the availability of high-demand jobs as well as proximity to a technical school for participants who may need further training before being able to accept employment.

For the purposes of the pilot, it was determined that approximately 2,500 individuals would be selected to be in the pilot services group, and approximately 2,500 in the control group as indicated by the Independent Evaluator. The target population was selected to be ABAWDs who are 18-49 years old and have been unemployed for more than 12 months. Furthermore, all of the counties selected to provide grant services were designated as mandatory for participation for ABAWDs residing in the project area. Georgia's E&T Program operated as a mandatory program until the economic downturn in 2008. When the program operated from 2009 to 2013 as a voluntary program, the participation rate fell below five percent. Concerns about the ability to attract clients to the grant operating as a voluntary program led to the decision for the pilot to be a mandatory program. In a mandatory program, clients are contacted by mail to attend an orientation. Those failing to attend are sanctioned from one to six months depending on the number of violations, if good cause is not determined. To successfully engage the numbers of clients needed to participate during the three year study, this type of outreach to clients, along with consequences for failure to participate, were deemed necessary.

### **Grant Objectives**

The intent of Georgia's pilot project was to develop and test methods of employment and training programs, and services specifically designed to increase the number of SNAP work registrants who transition to unsubsidized employment, increase the earned income of work registrants, and reduce the reliance of work registrants on public assistance. The project design involves a mix of strategies that support rapid attachment to employment, including: three-tiered participant assessment and employment plan development, education and training, job search, intensive case management, community partner support services, rehabilitative services for individuals with barriers to employment, and other necessary services such as substance abuse treatment. This multiple strategy approach is intended to reach individuals with a variety of barriers related to chronic unemployment, such as low skills or limited work experience.

For the purposes of the grant, the following career pathways were selected: manufacturing, ware-housing, transportation, medical, automotive, building maintenance and welding. In all of the selected areas, these industries have numerous training and job opportunities for a variety of backgrounds, interests and barriers. Many of the programs required for entry into the selected industry do not require a GED, and some do not require a background check. These career pathways were also selected because they are not exclusively entry-level and most pay above minimum wage. The original goal of the grant was to provide opportunities to clients to once and for all foster true and meaningful reduction of reliance on public SNAP assistance in the state, therefore the selected career pathways were intended to provide participants with a living wage of no less than \$12.00 per hour.

Initially, Georgia DFCS SNAP Works case managers conduct a brief Participant Employability Assessment to confirm the participant as a mandatory work registrant as well as to determine whether participants meet the criteria for the grant. If selected, the participant will then be referred to GDOL case managers for primary case management. Each participant is assigned a GDOL primary case manager who guides the participant from beginning to end, while coordinating the efforts and inputs of all partner case management contributions.

Upon receipt of the referral from DFCS and the results of the initial assessment, GDOL staff conduct a second employability readiness assessment of the participant's skills, experience, education, credentials, work readiness/soft skills, and barriers. The primary case manager develops a customized Individual Employment Plan (IEP) for each participant, with the establishment of an occupational goal, a career path, potential barriers, and a mitigation plan for those barriers. If the GDOL primary case manager determines a participant is immediately employable, the customer will receive pre-employment and work readiness services as needed, and a staff-assisted and self-directed job search will begin. If the GDOL primary case manager determines the participant needs educational or training prerequisites prior to employment in the chosen occupation, the participant will be referred to the appropriate GLWIA for education and training services.

The GLWIA case manager guides the participant to successful completion of a training program as provided through the Georgia Technical College System and other approved Georgia education and training providers. They outline available training options within the participant's preferred career pathway and utilize DFCS and GDOL assessment results, including identified barriers, to drive the activities. After training is completed, the case manager will refer participants back to GDOL for job placement and advisement on employment options.

### **Pilot Update**

Shortly after notification of the grant award, DFCS and GDOL project staff began meeting to ensure that the pilot was implemented as outlined in the grant application. This included development of participant workshops, hiring grant positions, developing a communication protocol between the agencies, developing training documents, as well as GDOL developing the web-based system used for case management documentation.

Additionally, we have been working closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its evaluation contractors, Mathematica Policy Research and its partner MDRC, to ensure the pilot has a strong study design. Training sessions were held for DFCS, GDOL and GLWIA case management staff beginning in November 2015. MDRC conducted training for grant staff on how to conduct random assignment in late January 2016. Shortly after receiving OMB approval, random assignments to the grant

began in February 2016 in two pilot counties. Additional counties were added monthly with all 10 counties operational by July 1, 2016.

Referrals to the pilot begin with DFCS inviting clients in the 10 pilot counties to attend orientation. A report of mandatory ABAWDs is received weekly in each county and orientation letters are generated from this report. Each county has a monthly quota of participants required to volunteer for a chance to receive the enhanced services, based on the 5,000 total clients the pilot is to have served after a 24 month enrollment period.

A cornerstone of the evaluation is random assignment to either pilot services, or to the control group (regular E&T Program services), which will demonstrate the degree to which the pilot participants are successful in securing good jobs. Participants not volunteering for the pilot are still required to participate with the regular SNAP Works Program.

Attendance at orientation was initially low, with less than 10% participating, resulting in the majority of the pilot counties failing to meet the random assignment goal. This necessitated a request to change the original pilot target (only inviting ABAWDs unemployed 12 months or longer to orientation) to include to all ABAWDs regardless of the time unemployed. This change, along with implementing some outreach procedures to participants, such as placing phone calls to clients two days before orientation, has improved outcomes in all 10 pilot counties and increased interest in the pilot. SNAP eligibility staff is required to discuss the ABAWD status in detail with clients at SNAP intake and case renewal as well as to provide information on the pilot.

With all 10 counties fully operational and strategies implemented to attract participants and increase participation, in August 2016 DFCS met referral goals. Currently over half of recipients who have been selected to receive pilot services have attended their first GDOL orientation. Of these initial referrals, there are several success stories that would not have been possible without the pilot and the partnership of DFCS, GDOL, GLWIA and other pilot partners working together to secure a successful outcome.

## **1. Systemic Success Stories**

An essential core of Georgia's grant is a case management 'primary care' approach, where critical community partners coordinate their respective services to address the employability of SNAP recipients. For example:

- a. M.K. is a veteran suffering from behavioral and substance abuse issues that are negatively impacting his ability to search for – and obtain/hold – employment. Collaborative services from the GDOL, Veterans Services, and community substance abuse treatment are being coordinated by the SNAP program, to mitigate barriers to successful employment.

- b. C.W. is a young lady with developmental and educational challenges, who has no work history. She is currently unable to pass prerequisite tests to enter post-secondary training opportunities. Collaborative services from DFCS, GDOL, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitative Agency and a local WIOA workforce partner are coordinating their efforts to secure a supportive and work-based on the job training opportunity.
- c. Y.S. is a young man who was released from prison after being incarcerated for seven years. Working with GDOL's knowledge of employers willing to employ people with a criminal background, the client was able to find a job shortly after joining the program with EmployBridge, making over \$12.00 an hour and is no longer receiving benefits. With the network of partners afforded to him through this pilot, he is continuing to work on the barriers many prisoners face at re-entry.

## **2. Employment Outcomes**

All grant participants receive pre-employment workshops and career guidance assistance from GDOL, and receive assistance creating and posting an on-line resume in the Employ Georgia system. These resumes are searchable by employers and provide automatic job matches and alerts to both interested employers and the job seeker participant.

Below are just a few examples of employment outcomes gained through the collaborative efforts of the program. Given the early stages of this evaluation study, long-term analysis will continue regarding the wage career laddering growth of these and all participants.

- a. J.J. obtained employment with Chenga Security at the CDC, working as an Asset Protection Officer, earning \$20.45 per hour. She is an Army Veteran with prior experience in Human Intelligence Collection, a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master's Degree in Forensic Psychology, all of which support this career path.
- b. A.D. obtained employment with the Argos USA Corporation working as a CSR Field Technician, earning \$15 per hour. She previously had seven years' experience as a hospitality clerk, with only a GED certification.
- c. C.C. obtained employment at Transportation Security Administration at Hartsfield Jackson International Airport working as a Transportation Security Agent, earning \$14 per hour. She previously worked as a graphic artist instructor, with a Bachelor's Degree in Media Arts, but was interested in a career change.
- d. C.W. obtained employment with Chime Solutions working as a Health Plan Specialist, earning \$14 per hour. He previously worked various jobs as a warehouse worker, baker and customer service representative, with a Bachelor's

Degree in Culinary Arts. He is now most interested in pursuing a sales and customer service career path.

- e. O.S. obtained employment with the Coca Cola Bottling Company as a Warehouse Associate/ Forklift Operator, earning \$13.62 per hour. He previously worked as a security officer and customer service representative. Having only a high school diploma, he sought a forklift operator's license to pursue employment in the high demand logistics career path.
- f. R.C. obtained employment with Gainesville Fire Protection working as a Fire & Sprinkler System Assistant, earning \$12.50 per hour. He previously worked as a sales representative in telephone communications.
- g. D.K. obtained employment with Direct Hit Logistics (DHL) as a materials handler, earning @ \$5,000 per quarter (@ \$11 per hour). Having no high school diploma, she hopes to pursue her GED, and then continuing education as a forklift operator to progress in the logistics occupational path.
- h. V.S. obtained employment with the DeKalb County Sheriff's Office as a Detention Officer, earning \$2,507 per month (@ \$14 per hour).

### **3. Education & Training**

As envisioned by the grant, participants who are experiencing a credential deficit as an employment barrier are obtaining necessary education and training services in a demand occupational pathway.

- a. A.M. has completed her first two certificates of completion for her Claims and Adjuster and Property and Casualty Agent pre-licensing courses, with one course remaining in Accident and Sickness Claims. Upon completion, she will be taking her State Licensing examinations.

She worked previously as a sales clerk, and has an Associate's Degree in computer systems.

At the time of this summary, this is a medium to high demand occupation in the Metro Atlanta area, with over 500 openings noted in the past year and an average annual salary of \$46,580 - \$75,270.

- b. O.S. (noted in the Employment Outcomes above), obtained certification as a Forklift Operator.

At the time of this summary, this is a medium to high demand occupation in the Metro Atlanta area, with over 540 openings noted in the past year and an average annual salary of \$24,030 - \$33,710.

- c. T.R. is currently attending a state technical college, pursuing Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning technology certification.

He previously worked as a warehouse pallet operator, and possesses a high school diploma with no post-secondary education.

At the time of this summary, this is a medium to high demand occupation in the Metro Atlanta area, with over 530 openings noted in the past year and an average annual salary of \$32,020 - \$49,160 per year.

- d. P.B. is just commencing activities at a local university, pursuing Digital Marketing credentialing.

He previously worked as a warehouse receiving associate and package handler, possesses a high school diploma with no post-secondary education.

With all counties currently operational, the very extensive data provided by the grant evaluator, Mathematica, is being used daily to analyze the progress in each of the 10 counties to determine where the process is working well, where improvements are needed, and to suggest possible solutions. Very early analysis has shown that participants in rural areas still struggle with transportation needs despite being provided a monthly allowance, necessitating the need to find alternative resources. Grant partners have also met to discuss other ways to lessen the transportation barrier such as providing services in multiple locations as well as giving participants more options in scheduling activities to lessen the need to report to a GDOL office several days a week.

There have also been a few early findings that were not expected when the grant was submitted. For example, more than 50% of the participants possess a high school diploma or higher, with fewer needing education or a certificate before being deemed as work ready. It was anticipated in the grant application that more than half the pilot's participants would need to receive further training, adult education/GED or to obtain a certificate before being work ready.

## **Challenges**

Georgia was notified in 2015 that several counties would no longer be eligible for the waiver exempting ABAWDs from the ABAWD time-limit on the receipt of benefits to three in 36 months if not participating in a work activity. Three of Georgia's 159 counties became time-limited, including Gwinnett County, one of the areas selected for the pilot.

Participation from the ABAWD population in E&T services in Georgia has been a challenge for many years leading to a high rate of clients sanctioned for non-participation. The implementation of the time-limit ABAWD program in Gwinnett County has necessitated changing the orientation in that county to include an enhanced explanation of rights and responsibilities, with many ABAWDs still not aware that participation in the grant will help them remain eligible for benefits while working with GDOL on the job search, or while attending an education or training activity. Fewer clients are attending orientations in Gwinnett, one of the counties that was expected to have a large number of participants seeking further training due to a robust technical school presence in the area.

Anticipating the level of participation per county and staffing appropriately has also been a challenge, along with staff turnover. Some of the smaller pilot counties have one case manager conducting orientations as well as meeting individually with participants. Adjustments had to be made to hire more staff than anticipated in some areas and to designate staff as floaters available to assist in multiple counties. This has presented an opportunity for information sharing between staff from partner agencies to regularly meet, talk about any issues and participant needs, and gain the knowledge needed to assist the partner agency if the need arises.

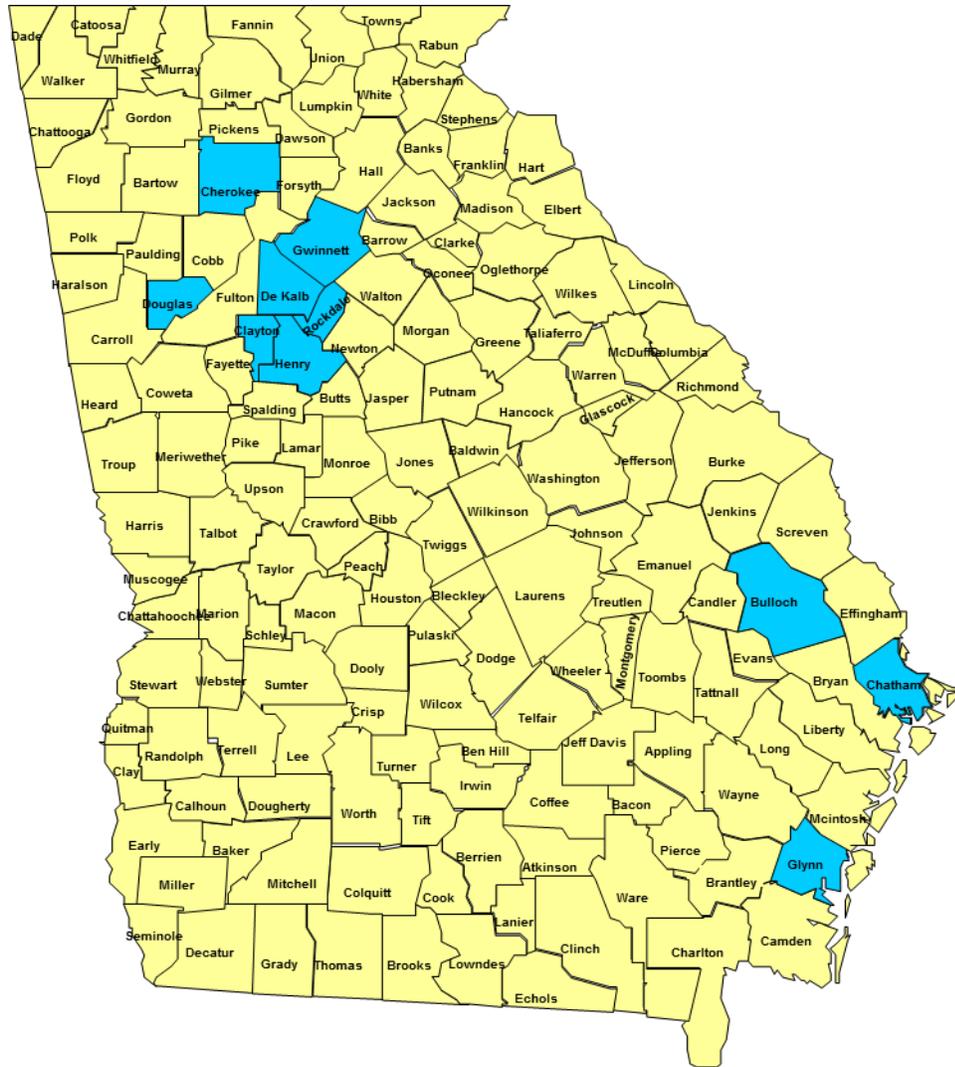
## **Conclusion**

These early outcomes show the promise of this pilot for providing positive outcomes for the Able Bodied Adult without Dependents population in Georgia. In conclusion, this level of information sharing and skill-building among multiple partners is unprecedented and is providing lasting solutions needed to address barriers that have led to long-term unemployment and reliance on SNAP. Early indicators demonstrate that as the Georgia partners continue to collaborate and communicate, the pilot will afford much needed information on how best to serve the ABAWD population.

Georgia is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this pilot.

# SNAP Works FFY2017 Service Area

## E & T Pilot Grant Counties



Pilot Study Counties		
Bulloch	Dekalb	Henry
Chatham	Douglas	Rockdale
Cherokee	Glynn	
Clayton	Gwinnett	



Division of Family and Children Services