

Chatham County
Work First Block Grant Plan
2010-2011

Contact Person: Cindy Snipes
Address: PO Box 489
Pittsboro, NC 27312
Telephone: (919) 642-6919
Fax: (919) 542-6355
E-mail: cindy.snipes@chathamnc.org
Date Submitted: October 27, 2008

Table of Content

I. Conditions Within County.....3

II. Planning Process6

 A. Planning Committee.....6

 B. Public comment7

 C. Planning Development.....7

III. Outcomes and Goals for the County.....8

 A. Statewide Work First Goals8

 B. County Developed Outcome Goals9

IV. Plans to Achieve and Measure the Outcomes and Goals9

 A. Activities.....10

 B. Supportive Services11

V. Administration13

 A. Authority for Administration13

 B. Service Delivery Organization13

 C. First Stop and Employment Security Commission14

 D. Child Care15

 E. Transportation.....16

 F. Substance Abuse Programs.....16

 G. Domestic Violence Option.....17

 H. Maintenance of Effort17

 I. Child Welfare Services.....18

VI. Emergency Assistance18

VII. Service to low income families (under 200% of Poverty)20

VIII. Services to Non-Custodial Parents.....20

IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement20

X. Sheltered Workshops.....21

XI. Work First Demonstration Grant.....22

XII. Certification.....22

XIII. Addendum.....24

I. Conditions Within County

A. Current Realities for Low Income Families

There are currently 107 Work First cases in Chatham County. Of these cases, 88 are child-only cases. These cases are ones in which the parents are absent and the child is being cared for by other family members or ones in which the parents are not eligible to be included in the case (such as with parents that are undocumented). These cases have not been affected by the new policies of the Work First program. (Not subject to work requirements or time limits)

In the county's Work First caseload, there are 23 adults who are subject to work requirements. Of these, there are 11 adults who are able-bodied. There are some adults who are unable to work as determined by a doctor's statement.

Community residents rank substance abuse as a leading concern and barrier for Work First families in terms of employment. It is estimated that 30% of all Work First clients have substance abuse problems in their families. With the geographic size of the county, transportation also presents a significant problem to low-income families.

The Hispanic immigrant flow to Chatham County makes planning for human services needs difficult. (The largest city in Chatham County has an estimated 39% Hispanic population based on 2000 Census data which is the most current available. The two elementary schools in Siler City have Hispanic populations of 65% at Siler City Elementary School and 73% at Virginia Cross Elementary. 80% of health department prenatal clients are Hispanic, 70% of largest industry employees are Hispanic). The future impact on welfare reform and human services is difficult to predict. Many of these immigrant families are extremely poor, with no assets. Currently however there are only 10 of these cases from the Hispanic community.

The Housing Authority processes Section 8 Housing Subsidy applications for low-income families. This agency has just over 410 leases available for qualifying households. Many of the applications that are approved never receive subsidy—for a number of reasons including poor credit ratings, lack of housing, poor rental references. Currently, no applications are being approved because of funding limitations.

1. Needs related to Child Care include:

- Affordable, quality child care
- Flexible and extended hours for both transportation and day care
- After school child care
- Weekend child care
- More home child care
- Transportation to child care

- More training to child care providers
- Child Care for emergency situations such as school closure, sick child
- Sufficient funding to ensure Work First customers access to childcare subsidies as well as the working poor

2. Needs Related to Transportation Include:

- Chatham County has very limited public transportation
- Dependable/affordable transportation to jobs in the County and to neighboring counties
- Accessible transportation to Work First employment services
- Extended hours transportation to meet demands of second and third shift jobs
- Van pools
- Ride Sharing
- Transportation to Child Care for 0-5 and school-age children
- Transportation for work and child care emergencies for workers and children
- Transportation to human services providers for Work First clients

3. Needs relating to Job-readiness

- Life skills training (personal development, attitude, work ethic, motivational counseling, coping skills, conflict resolution)
- Additional time to complete education and training to obtain career goals that would lead to self-sufficiency
- Addressing specific issues such as disabilities, substance abuse, legal problems, domestic violence, bad credit, language and cultural differences, and age
- Ongoing interagency training, communication and information sharing to fully utilize existing resources
- Credit counseling to obtain housing
- Coordination of services to eliminate duplication and facilitate better planning
- Positive mentors and role models
- Relapse prevention, especially working with the substance abuse system
- Increased assessment and intervention services
- Long term career vision and support to attain that vision
- After-school programs to assist children with employed parents in completing homework and in other activities (those under 12 as well as adolescents)
- Maintain parent involvement in all aspects - increase or enforce parental responsibility
- Recognition of recipient accomplishments as they move through the system
- Flexible service hours; access to health and medical services during non-traditional hours

4. Needs related to Employment include:

- Employment opportunities that provide some flexibility and work skills instruction and acquisition
- More job opportunities above minimum wages
- Supporting life skills training
- Changing attitudes/expectations
- Job shadowing
- Commitment beyond incentives/sanctions to stay employed
- Support services for employer referrals
- More opportunities to gain experience-work experience sites
- Jobs with benefits - particularly health insurance
- Job retention

5. Needs Related to Substance Abuse Include:

- Better screening of substance abuse problems in Work First participants
- Systematic, immediate response to substance abusing clients
- Better collaboration between Mental Health and community programs in substance abuse
- Transportation to substance abuse treatments
- Child care and transportation to child care for Work First participants in treatment
- Long-term and short-term residential treatment facilities
- Continuity of service and case management

B. A Description of the Economic Conditions in Chatham County

Chatham County is a moderately growing community in North Carolina.

Chatham County is a rural county of 707 square miles in central NC. The total county population is 61,455 with a workforce of 31,927. The unemployment rate in Chatham County has increased to 5.8% due to major industry closings. The opportunity for sustainable employment varies depending on geographical location of residence within the County. The County borders the fast growing counties of Wake, Durham, Orange, Lee, Randolph, Alamance, Moore, and Harnett. Guilford County is within commuting distance of parts of Chatham. 53% of Chatham County residents of working age commute to surrounding counties for work.

The County's rural, agricultural nature is predominant, with a mixture of industrial, tourism, and agricultural businesses supporting the County's economy; however, strong economic conditions in surrounding areas, such as Chapel Hill, Raleigh, and the Research Triangle Park, have a positive effect on the growth of the County's population and economy, especially in the northern and eastern sections of the County. These neighboring areas continue to provide employment for many County residents.

Approximately 36 percent of the County's workforce is employed in the manufacturing sector, while another 20 percent are employed in education, health, and social services. Agriculture continues to play a very important role in the County's economy. Twenty seven percent of the land in the County is farmland. Receipts from farming totaled \$110 million ranking the County nineteenth (out of 100 counties) in the State. Livestock, poultry, and timber production account for a majority of these receipts.

North Chatham County is a bedroom and retirement area. The county as a whole consists of rural communities with very few large employers.

Tourism continues to play an important role in the County's economy. The County is home to B. Everett Jordan Lake, a regional 46,000 acre reservoir which is one of the State's top recreation areas. Furthermore, three rivers, the Haw River, The Deep River, and the Rocky River, provide scenic beauty, recreation and drinking water to the County and surrounding region.

In an attempt to further diversify its industrial employment base, the County is in the process of creating the Central Carolina Business Campus in Siler City. The County has provided land in the Business Campus to Central Carolina Community College for a job training center. The presence of the training center is expected to aid in the recruitment of tenants to the Business Campus. Chatham Hospital has recently built and opened a new facility. The County anticipates that the presence of the new hospital will attract other health-related facilities to the Business Campus.

Several major highways access the County. U.S. 15-501, U. S. 1, U.S. 64, and U.S. 42, along with numerous State roads link the County to Interstate 40 and 85. Utilizing the present highway network the area is served by major freight carriers, bus lines and delivery service. Air transportation is less than one hour away at Raleigh-Durham International Airport and Piedmont Triad International Airport in Greensboro. In addition, the County airport located in Siler City, has a 5,000 foot paved, lighted runway with instrument approach capability and can accommodate small business aircraft. A "reliever airport" located in neighboring Lee County is in close proximity to the Moncure industrial area in the southeastern portion of the County.

According to the Employment Security Commission, Chatham County's economy is described as "stale" with very few new jobs, with the ones being created in the service industry. Many of the counties large industries have closed in the past few years. The most recent loss of a poultry processing plant has left many without jobs.

II. Planning Process

A. Planning Committee

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners appointed the following community leaders to the Work First Planning Committee. Many of these members are also members of the Committee formed for the *Success for Families at Risk Initiative*. This

committee had been meeting to develop coordinated plans for some particularly difficult Work First cases. These committee members have shown a great deal of interest in outcomes and are committed to their respective organizations and to helping families.

Betty Wilson, Chair of the Chatham County Department of Social Services

Kristine Pellertier-Garcia, Chatham County Health Department

Cindy Snipes, Chatham County DSS

Jeff McKay, Therapeutic Alternatives

Connie McAdams, Child Care Networks

John Scotton, Vocational Rehabilitation

Helen Stovall, Chatham Transit Network

George Gregor-Holt, Chatham County Public Schools

Steve Farley, Joint Orange Chatham Community Action

Edith Edmond, Employment Security Commission

Sara Lambert, Central Carolina Community College

Miranda Moore, Work First Supervisor, DSS

Jennie Kristiansen, Family Services Program Administrator, DSS

Jody Kotoris , Child Support

Jo Sanders, Family Violence Rape Crisis

Jean Sutter, Chrysalis Foundation

Charles Johnson, Business community

In addition to these, there is a requirement to have a representative from the Board of Commissioners. We are requesting that Sandy Coletta serve as the Board of Commissioners' representative to the Work First Planning Committee.

B. Public Comment

The plan was posted on the Chatham County's official web site on September 26, 2008. The plan was also posted in the lobby of the Chatham County Department of Social Services. The Chatham County public was encouraged to review the plan and share their comments with the Chatham County commissioners through the Chair of the Work First Planning Committee by October 6, 2008.

C. Planning Development

A meeting of the Work First Planning Committee was held. The members of this committee have agreed to continue to meet on a less frequent basis to provide input on service plans and information about other sources of assistance and support. During the first meeting, the goal was to examine the statewide goals for the program. During this

discussion, many areas of concern were raised. Discussions centered on the needs of low-income families and interventions that would help to break the welfare cycle. This plan represents many of the discussions of committee members. Committee members discussed methods to address identified barriers to self-sufficiency. Committee members and the agencies that they represent have been very supportive throughout the year to provide low-income families resources that have assisted the family to work towards self-sufficiency.

On August 16, 2008, the Chatham County Commissioners voted to continue the Work First program as standard status.

III. Outcomes and Goals for the County

A. Statewide Work First Goals

1. Employment. Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First clients.
2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates. Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment. Chatham County's participation rate for the previous 12 months is as follows:

September 2007 – 21.42%

October 2007 – 52.94%

November 2007 – 50%

December 2007 – 43.75%

January 2008 – 50%

February 2008 – 43.75%

March 2008 – 46.15%

April 2008 – 61.53%

May 2008 – 57.14%

June 2008 – 52.94%

July 2008 – 52.63%

August 2008 – 50%

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

4. Benefit Diversion. The most successful outcome possible is for an applicant to avoid the need to become a recipient.
5. Staying Off Welfare. Efforts to reduce welfare rolls, help adults find jobs, and increase self-sufficiency are undermined when families return to welfare. Families leaving Work First because of a job are tracked to determine if they return to cash assistance.
6. Job Retention. Families who leave Work First for employment and continue to be employed 6 to 12 months after leaving the program show evidence of keeping their income and increased job stability, which impacts a family's well being. This measure will be based on the number of responsible adults that leave Work First Family Assistance for employment who are still employed at 6 and 12-month intervals following termination.

B. County Developed Outcome Goals

Chatham County will parallel the goals set by the State of North Carolina and not construct its own Outcome Goals at this time.

IV. Plans to Achieve and Measure the Outcomes and Goals

When applications and reviews are taken and processed and when cases are staffed, all workers focus on strengths rather than weaknesses. A successful family (child only, two-parent or a one parent family) and/or a successful Work First Plan must include team members that embrace the Principles of Partnership. All interactions with families (cash assistance, emergency assistance, 200% services, domestic violence, employment services MRS, CPS etc.) and community partners involve the six principles of partnership.

We believe in and promote the family centered approach that enables and empowers families to have a voice in their success and future by focusing on the six principles of partnerships which are:

1. Everyone desires respect;
2. Everyone needs to be heard;
3. Everyone has strengths;
4. Judgments can wait;
5. Partners share power;
6. Partnership is a process.

The Work First program will empower and engage families and promote that everyone desires respect, everyone needs to be heard, everyone has strengths, judgments can wait, partners share power and partnership is a process.

The Work First program will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and will not discriminate for or against persons on the bases of race, color, national origin,

religion, sex, age or disability. We use Form DSS-8228 which offers the applicant the opportunity to state that they have a disability and ask for accommodations.

A. Activities

- 1. Bi-weekly face to face contact with job seekers:** Participants are required to meet with their employment case manager on a bi-weekly basis to review progress and address any concerns. This constant contact with job seekers helps to make sure that participants have the resources that they need to meet the goals of their contract and also to achieve self-sufficiency.
- 2. Work experience:** The Work First staff develops and uses Work Experience sites to ease participants into paid employment. With the job outlook at this particular time, the development of work experience sites is more important to the participants and the program. Through the Work first Demonstration Grant, Chatham County is able to provide work first participants in work experience an incentive payment if they meet qualifying hours. This helps to meet the employment as well as the participation goals.
- 3. Financial literacy classes:** Classes will be offered to teach basic money management and household budgeting. Eventually this will develop into classes directed at those families who want to purchase their own homes. The Agriculture Extension Service and the Housing Coalition provide these services. This helps in Job Retention and Caseload Reduction.
- 4. Organized job search:** Work First has prioritized employment as the top strategy for family self-sufficiency. On the day of application for Work First assistance, a Work First coordinator begins laying the foundation and ground rules for this program. The citizen will be clearly informed that Work First assistance is short term and full time employment is the goal of the program. The qualifying participant will be instructed to register with Employment Security Commission before any assistance can be received. This helps with employment and participation rate goals.
- 5. Parenting:** The Health department offers several programs that focus on building parenting skills. These include Round Table, Circulo de Madres, an Adolescent Parenting program, Child Service Coordination, Focus on Fathers, We CARE program, and a Parenting education program. Kids Scope and Family Resource Center offers parenting classes within Chatham County. Parenting skills can contribute to better job retention and assisting parents with self-sufficiency.
- 6. Substance abuse counseling:** Provided by Chatham Counseling Center, Therapeutic Alternatives, Family Wellness Recovery, and Chatham County Schools-Substance abuse prevention. This supports job retention and employment.
- 7. Counseling –domestic violence** Provided by Rape Crisis and Family Violence, Coalition for Family Peace, Therapeutic Alternatives and Chatham Counseling Center. This supports job retention and employment. Policy is in place to protect client confidentiality.

8. **Residential treatment for substance abuse-** Family Wellness Recovery is a residential facility for pregnant women, which supports job retention and employment goals.
9. **Various educational opportunities-** Central Carolina Community College, H & R Block, and Chatham County School System. Clients receive their GED, High School Diploma, and general vocational training that leads to increased job opportunities. This supports all of the goals.
10. **Participation in DSS agency staffing:** Representatives from all DSS program areas meet on a regular basis to discuss cases-to problem-solve and generate useful ideas that may help the family to identify potential resources. This supports the family in their efforts to achieve their goals. Policy is in place to protect client confidentiality.

B. Supportive Services

1. **Day Care:** Childcare will be provided to Work First participants based on the following priority: Protective services situations, child welfare cases, and Work First employment related situations. If a participant has childcare needs, they will be referred to Child Care Networks for assistance.
2. **Transportation:** Transportation will be offered to Work First participants in employment services as funds permit. Each Work First applicant is assessed by employment services for their personal resources as they relate to transportation. When participant transportation resources are inadequate, then transportation services can be sought through Chatham Transit Network (CTN). Chatham Transit Network is a nonprofit agency in Chatham County that serves transportation needs of Social Services clients. The CTN provides public transportation that will help Work First clients. In addition, the CTN will plan with Work First employment services new transportation resources such as van pools to surrounding counties for employment, ride-sharing, and fixed route public transport. CTN will also publish van routes, which can be used by the Employment coordinators to help employed participants to make use of this transportation as they transition off the Work first program. In addition, there is a Trail ways route along Highway 64 through the county.
3. **Employment Services:** Work First employment services are offered at ESC and Social Services. Work First applicants can seek employment at the Employment Security Commission, and receive services. These services include job employability assessment, computer terminal access to available local employment opportunities, and referrals to job openings. Each citizen who applies for Work First assistance will be referred to Employment Security Commission for registration and job search within 10 days of application. Employment Security Commission is located in Siler City.
4. **Job development:** In addition a public relations effort targeting the business community will be continued in Chatham County. Social Services cannot have a successful Work First program without the support and cooperation of the local business community. Work First caseworkers will communicate to

businesses information about the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit, wage subsidies, the earned income tax credit, and other incentives to help businesses that hire Work First participants. Workfirst is an active member of the Chatham County Chamber of Commerce to introduce companies to the advantages of hiring Work first participants. Caseworkers will develop and use Work Experience sites to ease participants into paid employment. They will also focus on educating the business community about the value of the program and ask them for their support in areas such as:

- The hiring of Work First participants
 - Working with participants to cause flexible scheduling
 - Assigning mentors to assist Work First participants adapt to the demands of the work environment
 - Considering other options such as van pooling and child care assistance.
5. **Educational Services:** Work First will pay tuition, fees, books, or supplies related to an approved vocational training or educational endeavor not covered by Pell Grants as funds permit. Central Carolina Community College has two campuses in Chatham County, Siler City and Pittsboro. Broad arrays of educational and training opportunities are offered at the community college to improve opportunities for employment and life-skills development.
 6. **Emergency Services-**Emergency services will be offered through the Work First EA program, Salvation Army, Public Schools, Crisis Intervention, and Project Share. DSS Emergency Assistance has emergency funds for those who meet program requirements. CORA and the West Chatham food pantry provide emergency food.
 7. **Financial services-**Financial counseling will be offered through the Housing Coalition and the Extension Service.
 8. **Career counseling-** Central Carolina Community College
 9. **Job retention services:** - Work First caseworkers are developing a relationship with area employers so that employers realize that they have the support of Work First caseworkers to assist with problem solving for employees. Caseworkers also help working clients to avoid and resolve problematic situations that could potentially jeopardize employment. These services are available to assist the client in educational needs and additional skills training. DSS has implemented a job bonus for Work First participants who have remained employed at the same or greater income for 3 months and then at 6 months.
 10. **Substance Abuse Services:** It is estimated that a significant number of Work First participants have substance abuse problems that could keep them from finding and keeping employment. Chatham County plans to provide support to Work First participants with substance abuse problems, and assist them in becoming self-sufficient providers for their families. The Qualified Substance Abuse Professional is collaborating with Social Services to provide the screenings and treatments for Work First participants. In the absence of a QSAP, the area mental health program will provide counseling services-in private and group settings.

- 11. Mental Health services:** Chatham Counseling Center and Therapeutic Alternatives will provide individual and group counseling for those with problems with substance abuse and those with mental health issues.
- 12. Family Support services:** The Health Department offers many programs that are designed to strengthen and support families. DSS is in the process of developing a relationship with the faith based community to provide transportation, mentoring, emergency financial assistance, and other household needs.
- 13. Case management services.** Work First employment coordinators will provide intensive case management to participants who need it to prepare for and find employment. These services are also provided. The employment coordinator assists the Work First participants in making referrals to other community resources including Social Security.
- 14. Medicaid:** Chatham County will continue Medicaid following Work first termination. A participant may remain eligible for Medicaid for twelve months following the termination of his or her Work First benefits. All those expressing a medical need has the right to apply for Medicaid on the day they appear in the agency regardless to whether the client applies for Work First. If Work First applications are denied, they are evaluated for Medical assistance.
- 15. Child support services:** Chatham County encourages parents to be the main source of support for their children. This applies even if a parent is missing from the household. This applies even if a parent is trying to deny their responsibility to the child. Each month the Child Support Agent receives a list of Work First participants from the Work First Unit. The Child Support Program will interview every Work First applicant within 30 days of Work First application. Applicants who do not cooperate with child support can be denied assistance or face stiff sanctions. Child Support Services will initiate an appointment to absent parents within 2 weeks from the date of location. Every effort will be made to ensure parental compliance with child support orders.
- 16. Vocational Rehabilitation services:** Services to assist individuals with disabilities or impairments with obtaining or maintaining employment. Vocational Rehabilitation, Lee County Industries, Goodwill Industries, and CCCC provide vocational training for Work First participants with disabilities. Chatham Trades helps to evaluate Work First participants for employability.

V. Administration

A. Authority for Administration

B. Service Delivery Organization

A potential applicant visits the Social Services office in need of financial assistance. At this time, the Work First coordinator explains the Work First program to the potential client. The client is also assessed for benefit diversion, Emergency Assistance or for help with employment related expenses. The delivery of services for each individual family is coordinated by one Work First coordinator—including eligibility for cash assistance, employment services, emergency assistance, and benefit diversion. The Work First coordinator screens the adults for possible substance abuse or domestic violence problems. All applicants must register at the Employment Security Commission within 10 days of Work First application. This can be done at the at the ESC office. ESC reports back to DSS the registration.

The present system provides Work First participants with employment and training opportunities. Work First coordinator at the Department of Social Services provides orientation, assessment of job readiness, appropriate referrals to education, training or employment opportunities. On-going counseling is provided to individuals to address any barriers they may face.

Coordinating services with linking agencies provides increased services with a minimum expenditure of funds. Also, services can be coordinated through the Workforce Investment Act programs. Private sector employers use the Joint Orange Chatham Community Action Agency to recruit and interview potential employees.

Central Carolina Community College offers training to Work First clients across the county. The Family Resource Center in Siler City offers mentoring, teen pregnancy counseling, transportation, and job placement. Childcare Network provides childcare provider lists and is a resource to providers and Work First families across the county. Vocational Rehabilitation provides training and work experience.

C. First Stop

All clients who are not exempt from work requirements must register at ESC. ESC will determine if there are any barriers to employment, and if so, refer to the appropriate agency for assistance. These agencies may include:

Community College
Chatham Transit or other transit facilities
Child Care Networks or directly to child care providers

Once the client has registered with the Employment Security Commission, electronic transfer of information will enable ESC and DSS to have the most current information to best serve the client.

A Memorandum of Understanding with ESC has been developed that defines the relationship with DSS, who will register and where Work First participants will be registered. (See addendum)

The Department of Social Services will continue to assess each Work First case for employment needs/activities through the Work First Coordinators.

D. Child Care

Fortunately, Chatham County parents of young children have a comprehensive system of child care resources available to them through the collaborative efforts of Child Care Networks, Chatham County DSS, More at Four Program, and the Chatham County Partnership for Children (Smart Start).

Child Care subsidy funds in Chatham County are currently available to eligible parents at one central location, Child Care Networks. Subsidy funds are provided through contracts with the Department of Social Services and the Chatham County Partnership for Children (Smart Start). Child Care Networks Family Services provide comprehensive resource and referral services as well as case management for subsidy eligible families.

Child Care resource and referral services are available to all parents, regardless of eligibility. Families are prioritized for subsidy based on the following criteria: CPS, Child Welfare cases, all Work First recipients, and Teen parents in high school level education. To be eligible for child care subsidy the family must need childcare because of Work, Education, Child Protective Services, Child Welfare Services, or Developmental needs of the child. They must also meet income eligibility standards for their family size.

The Chatham County Partnership for Children has built an extensive collaboration among many local family service agencies and organizations. Through Smart Start there is now a strong focus on the importance of the early childhood of our children. Smart Start in Chatham has put in place a number of programs that support parents need to work while ensuring quality childcare, accessible health care, and appropriate parenting for the young children. This framework for collaboration will provide an essential base for the development of a Work First plan that puts the needs of children first.

Although Smart Start programs only serve children 0-5 and their families, many Smart Start services also benefit school age children, especially if they have a younger sibling or are in a child care program receiving Smart Start funding to improve child care quality for the younger children enrolled. Of course, as a result of Smart Start, children are now better prepared to enter school. There are no comparable funds available for services and programs specifically for school age children and their families.

As a result of efforts funded through Smart Start and the Child Care Development Fund, the supply and quality of childcare in Chatham County has increased tremendously over the last three years. The regulated childcare spaces in the county are rated on a 5 star scale for licensing or accreditation standards for child care homes or centers. There is a

program funded through Smart Start to improve the quality of care offered by friends and relatives and to help those caregivers become registered.

Chatham County has two programs that serve only low-income families, the Chatham County Head start Program, and the More at 4 Program in various locations. Both currently operate only during the school year and close at 2:30 pm. Childcare will be available to citizens moving from welfare to employment to the limits of funding.

E. Transportation

The committee felt that there was no one transportation alternative to meet the needs of the working poor. With limited public transportation, each family is encouraged to look inward to make use of some of the participant's own resources and support mechanisms to solve long-term transportation needs. We have, therefore, developed several options, which may be used for a greater number of participants.

Chatham Transit Network is available to transport Work First clients for specific tasks—Job-skills classes, continuing education, some job search and some employment. CTN transports for these purposes are all short-term solutions—because of the costs involved. DSS has one transportation aid that can be used for Work First transportation needs on a very limited basis.

CTN operates a general public transportation route within the Siler City and Pittsboro areas.

Employers will be encouraged to give a transportation allowance as a fringe benefit. Employers can get a small tax credit per month per employee for giving their employees who ride mass transit to work a transportation benefit. The employee has to use their transportation money to pay for their transportation on mass transit and furnish the employer with proof that they are riding transit to work.

Vanpools are already in operation in Chatham County. It is very simple to form or join a vanpool. A new vanpool can be formed with a minimum of six people, two of which would have to volunteer to serve as driver and alternate driver. The vanpool can be ready to start within a week. These vans to form vanpools are available through the Triangle Transit Authority and would involve no expense to Chatham County beyond promoting vanpools and offering space for the involved parties to meet.

If participants own their own vehicles or have access to a vehicle, DSS can help participants with licensing and insurance. Funds will be available to repair participant owned cars through DSS and Chatham Transit. A mechanics report will be obtained before making any repairs.

F. Substance Abuse Services

- 1.) Screening is completed for all Work First applicants/recipients. For those who have positive screenings, a referral is made to Chrysalis Foundation and the Qualified Substance Abuse Professional (QSAP) for follow-up and possible monitoring to ensure compliance with their mutual responsibility agreement. Screenings will be performed as a part of the initial application interview.
- 2.) We believe those meaningful consequences in the form of benefit sanctions can be a very important ingredient in treatment success when used carefully, non-judgmentally, and fairly. When recipients fail to cooperate with treatment that benefit be promptly withheld (per sanction criteria) and promptly restored when allowed by regulation. Agency collaboration needs to be carefully planned to minimize the negative effects upon children
- 3.) The Chrysalis Foundation has taken steps to increase service capacity primarily through the increased use of groups, and will prioritize clients who are at risk of losing self-sufficiency. Given the numbers predicted, The Chrysalis Foundation should be able to absorb the demand, but some lower priority clients may have to be placed on waiting lists. In addition, services should be adapted to the needs of working people with on site support, convenient hours, or whatever service accommodations are needed to ensure vocational success. Coordination and cross training of personnel from allied agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation and DSS may help spot problems early so that interventions can be arranged.
- 4.) DSS will coordinate with the Public School system to refer children of families who have substance abuse issues. Through the Substance Abuse Prevention section with the Public school, the child could potentially receive counseling
- 5.) Many clients are referred from Family Wellness Recovery which is an intense drug and alcohol program that provides therapy and housing.

G. Domestic Violence Option

Family Violence & Rape Crisis continues to be a resource that is used by Work First coordinators for information and consultation. The Department of Social Services will determine if services can be provided with a determination that the family will either receive a Work First cash payment or if the family qualifies for Work First services (i.e., gross income at or below 200% of poverty, etc) The Work First Coordinators will screen individuals receiving Work First services to refer those who are experiencing domestic violence for counseling and supportive services. Family Violence & Rape Crisis counselors will be a source of guidance for DSS Human Service Coordinators who are conducting the initial screenings. Family Violence & Rape Crisis will continue to provide emergency shelter and counseling for victims of domestic violence.

In addition, coordination will be important for working jointly on relocation for victims of domestic violence and short-term emergency assistance.

H. Maintenance of Effort

1. Chatham County will provide an array of services to support employment and self-sufficiency. Job retention services, job development, job-readiness services and classes, training for participants, participant expenses that support employment, educational activities and classes, post-employment training, job coaching, job mentoring, and transportation.
2. Child Welfare Services will be partially funded through Maintenance of Effort funds.

I. Child Welfare Services

Each week the agency holds case staffing. This is an opportunity for every worker from all program areas that are working with a family to meet, share information and work together as a team to secure needed resources for the family. This staffing provides a shared partnership between WFFA, Child Welfare services and all other programs. Also, with the help of the agency database that tracks case openings and closings for all programs, workers can determine if both the Work First and Child Welfare programs are serving the same children. At this point, workers seek out the coworkers who serve the family in other programs.

We estimate that approximately 49% of the Work first funds will be used to provide child welfare services. This percentage is based on the coding of time spent by Social Workers as they provide child welfare services.

In addition, the agency has implemented an agency-wide case staffing procedure in which staff from all program areas is present. Cases are staffed and information shared among all agency workers who are involved in providing services to the family. The Children's Services units and Work First unit are major participants. This coordination will result in better continuity of services. Policy is in place to protect client confidentiality.

VI. Emergency Assistance

This program assists families with children by alleviating crisis situations. This program assists families primarily in the areas of housing and utilities. It is the intent of the program to support employment and self-sufficiency.

The eligibility requirements for the program are as follows:

1. The family must have a child who lives with a relative as defined for Work First cash assistance and who meets the age limit for Work First cash assistance.
2. Total gross family income must be at or below 200% of federal poverty.
3. Family members must meet the same citizenship requirements as for Work First cash assistance.
4. Assistance may not be provided for any medical care, regardless of whether the participant is covered by Medicaid.

5. Only short-term benefits may be provided. Short-term benefits are described as:
- Nonrecurring, short-term benefits designed to deal with a specific episode of need;
 - Is not intended to meet recurring or ongoing needs; and
 - Not extending beyond four months.

The Emergency Assistance program will focus on family situations in terms of maintaining or reaching self-sufficiency. It is the intent of the program to support the employed. The program can be used to pay or help pay evictions, foreclosures, final notices or disconnected utilities when the usual means of payment has discontinued through no fault of the client or there was an unexpected expense that was in fact paid with funds usually used to pay for one of the above necessities. The program is not intended to subsidize those who have created their own emergencies. It is not intended for those who have experienced no change in income but simply failed to budget for routine household bills. Employment Coordinators determine if the emergency will place a child at risk of being deprived of basic necessities. If so, with the approval of a supervisor, the EA can be approved.

Time Frames and Benefit Levels

All Emergency assistance necessary to alleviate the crisis must be authorized within 10 days following the date of application for Emergency Assistance. Benefits can only be provided one time in a 12-month period.

Benefits are paid directly to the provider of the service for the amount needed to alleviate the emergency up to \$300. If a crisis cannot be alleviated with the maximum of \$300, no assistance is authorized. Referrals are made to other community resources.

Churches, community groups, non-profit organizations, and others provide emergency assistance in Chatham County. This emergency assistance may come in the form of cash, clothes, food, medicine, household furnishings, medical care, shelter, childcare, transportation, counseling, and appropriate referral. The list of organizations includes, but is not limited to the following:

Social Services offers a broad range of emergency services

Rape Crisis/Family Violence- shelter and support

Dispute Settlement- crisis intervention

CORA (food)

Family Resource Center-broad range of emergency services

Salvation Army- broad range of emergency services

Public schools- support for emergency services for children

Caring Family Network offers emergency counseling

Many churches provide emergency assistance

Chatham Transit Network emergency transport

Emergency Medical Services

Volunteer Fire Department

Zero Tolerance-Domestic violence

Local police and sheriff's department

Hispanic Liaison-limited emergency services

VII. Services for Families with incomes at or below 200% of poverty

This county will provide services through the Work First block grant to families whose incomes are at or below 200% of poverty level. Services will be designed to support those who have transitioned off of the Work First cash assistance program or those who are in need of support to maintain self-sufficiency and avoid becoming a Work First recipient. Services that may be provided include: Job coaching, crisis management, and referrals to other agencies, job retention services, and transportation services.

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

It is the intent of this plan to help families to become self-sufficient and one very important way of doing that is to increase the child support potential for many single parents. We are including employment services for non-custodial parents of Work First children; however, this group will have a lower priority for receiving services because of funding limitations.

IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement

While all adults are encouraged to look for work and maintain employment, most adults receiving Work First cash assistance are subject to the work requirements. These families are considered **mandatory** for Employment Services. Families for which any of the following situations apply are exempt from the work requirement:

1. Adults receiving cash assistance for a child only;
2. Single custodial parents with a child less than 6 months of age (lifetime 12 cumulative months of exemption). A parent's exemption continues through the end of the month the child reaches 6 months. For example, if a child (DOB January 15) reaches 6 months in July, the parent's exemption from the work requirement ends July 31. Individuals who are employed and working are not eligible for this exemption. The exemption may apply at a later date if the individuals lose their job through no fault of their own.

or

- 2a. Single custodial parents with a child less than 12 months of age, (lifetime 12 cumulative months of exemption) if they are a resident of a residential treatment facility.

A parent's exemption continues through the end of the month the child reaches 12 months. For example, when the child is born January 15, 2007 and will turn age 1 in January 2008 the parent's exemption from the work requirements will end January 2008. Individuals who are employed and working are not eligible for this exemption.

3. Individuals under age 18 (unless an emancipated payee).

X. Shelter Workshops

Chatham Trades is a valuable resource that is used by Work First coordinators for information and evaluation. The Work First coordinators will screen individuals who report physical, mental or other barriers to employment. Chatham Trades may provide 20 to 30 day evaluations to determine if the client is employable and what limitations they may have. Chatham Trades will be a source of guidance for DSS Coordinators who are working with the client to help them become self sufficient. In addition, coordination will be important for assisting clients with referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation if further assistance is needed.

XI. Work First Demonstration Grant

Our agency received funding through the Work First Demonstration Grant for a full time job coach, whose focus has been solely on moving the participant into paid employment, recruiting employers for paid employment and work experience placements. The job coach works intensively with our participants to become employed or placed in work experience sites. Through in depth assessment with the job coach, participants sometimes determine that they do not want to participate in Work First, but had rather pursue other options toward self-sufficiency.

We are able to offer a work experience cash incentive program that allows our participants to receive a weekly cash incentive payment of \$50.00 when they perform satisfactorily in a work experience position. Our job coach oversees participants in a work experience placement. The job coach provides supervision to the participant and evaluates the participant's abilities to follow direction and complete the assigned tasks. The number of work experience hours is determined based on Work First policy. This activity allows the participant to experience a real work environment in which he/she can observe and model good work behaviors. Not only does this work activity provide enough countable hours to increase our participation rate, but the job coach is more likely to be able to help the participant to find paid employment that is suitable for the participant.

XII. Certification

The Chatham County Board of Social Services certifies approval of Chatham County's 2010-2011 Work First Block Grant Plan.

Board Chair Signature

Date

Memorandum of Agreement

First Stop Employment Assistance Program

This agreement is entered into by and between the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, and the Chatham County Department of Social Services.

Whereas, G. S. 108A-29 (a2) provides that the point of registration for the First Stop employment Assistance Program may be agreed upon and designated by the Employment Security Commission and local department of social services in the event that the point of registration for the First Stop employment Assistance Program is not to be located at an office of the Employment security Commission; and,

Whereas, the employment Security Commission (ESC) and the Chatham County Department of Social Services (DSS) have determined that the point of registration for the First Stop Employment Assistance Program in Chatham County shall be located at a point in Chatham County shall be located at a point other than the Employment Security Commission.

Now, therefore, The Employment Security commission and the Chatham County Department of Social Services agree as follows:

1. The point of registration for the First Stop employment Assistance Program in Chatham County shall be located at the following site:

- **ESC, 205 Chatham Square, Siler City, NC
Monday through Friday**

2. ESC shall accomplish registration as follows: A designated ESC representative will input employment related data into ESC's client data computer system.

3. The term of this agreement shall begin on July 1, 2010 and shall expire on June 30, 2011. This agreement may be re-negotiated at any time with the consent of the parties hereto.

4. This Agreement is executed in duplicate originals.

Employment Security Commission of North Carolina

**By: _____
Manager Siler City Office**

Chatham County Department of Social Services

**By: _____
Director**

XIII. Addendum

Public Comment

State Law requires every county to develop a Work First Block Grant plan for the years 2010-2011. A committee, appointed by the Chatham County Commissioners drafted the plan.

A copy of the plan has been posted on the Chatham County Department of Social Services Website. The Chatham county public is encouraged to review the draft and share their comments with the Chatham County Commissioners through the Chair of the Work First Planning Committee by October 10, 2008.