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## **OWF/PRC GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 40**

TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services  
Directors, County Public Children Services Agencies  
Directors, Child Support Enforcement Agencies

FROM: Tom Hayes, Director

SUBJECT: **PRC: ADULT LITERACY AND CHILD READING PROGRAM**

The purpose of this document is to provide the County Departments of Job and Family Services (CDJFS) agencies with guidance on implementing the Adult Literacy and Child Reading (ALCR) budget initiative. The guidance is not intended to hold the counties to any specific program design or strategy.

Ohio is among several states that have passed legislation to promote family literacy. Ohio's "Adult Literacy and Child Reading" (ALCR) program was established by the 124<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Amended Sub. H.B. 299. The legislation appropriated funds for counties to operate the program in State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2002 and 2003. (Refer to the September 21 ALCR County Allocation Letter for the individual county allocations). The ALCR funds are designated to be used to provide literacy benefits and services for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)- eligible individuals with incomes at or below 200 per cent of the federal poverty guidelines.

### **Adult Literacy**

The first component of Ohio's literacy legislation is adult literacy. Adult literacy is addressed in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services guide entitled "Helping Families Achieve Self-Sufficiency, <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/funds2.htm> ." According to the guide, it is an appropriate use of TANF funds to:

- Train employed recipients, former recipients, and non custodial parents in job-related vocational and literacy skills needed for regular, full-time employment.

## Adult Literacy & Child Reading Program OWF/PRC Guidance

- Fund education or job training activities at colleges and secondary and technical schools that promote advancement to higher paying jobs and self-sufficiency.
- Share with employers the costs of on-site education, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) or literacy classes.
- Provide classes for new, unskilled, and semi-skilled workers to teach new skills or enhance existing skills in order to improve their chances of job retention and advancement (DHHS, Helping Families Achieve Self-Sufficiency, page 15).

Based upon Ohio's "work first" philosophy, recipients of time-limited OWF cash assistance must be assigned to an allowable work activity within the first twenty-four months of assistance. Oftentimes this philosophy presents a problem for those OWF recipients who are faced with barriers to employment such as lack of education. In recognition of this issue, Ohio has included literacy education as an allowable work activity in its TANF State Plan. Some counties have redesigned their welfare-to-work programs to include literacy services to help recipients better prepare for the workplace and to retain employment. Literacy services can be provided in accordance with the recipient's self sufficiency contract as a regular work activity, developmental or alternative work activity.

### **Child Reading**

The second component of Ohio's literacy legislation is child reading. Child Reading literacy services include interactive literacy activities between parents and their children, training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children, and age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experience. (Toney Peyton, Family Literacy Legislation in Eleven States, page 2., <http://famlit.org/policy/states.html>)

### **ALCR Program Administration**

H.B. 299 gives the CDJFS the responsibility for administering the ALCR program. The counties may provide services directly or contract for services. However, it is the counties' responsibility to ensure that requirements are met regarding program eligibility, services, fiscal accountability, etc.

The legislation also specifies that ALCR benefits and services must be considered as "non-assistance". As "non-assistance, all programs must have objective criteria for delivery of services, eligibility determination and procedures for fair and equitable treatment of those who

apply to the program. CDJFS are to include ALCR services in their Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) plans. (Refer to Ohio Works First(OWF)/PRC Guidance Letter #1).

## **Reporting Requirements**

The ALCR program services are to be reported in the PRC-Web Reporting Tool under the category of Training, Employment and Career Advancement, subcategory: Education and Training. (Refer to PRC-WRT APM TL #224).

Counties are to report fiscal expenditures using JFS 02827 Monthly Financial Statement utilizing Program Code 188 and Class Code 30 or 53. Expenditures will go to Line Number 2-1260 and Funding Source 1019. (Refer to 9/21/01 ALCR Allocation letter).

The following appendices are attached to provide counties with additional literacy resource information:

Appendix A: ALCR Service Strategies

Appendix B: Local ALCR Partners

Appendix C: ALCR Resources

Please consult with your Regional Account Manager for further assistance on implementing the Adult Literacy and Child Reading initiative.

TH:gi

cc: OJFSDA  
PCSAO  
Assistant Directors  
OWD Deputy Director  
Children & Families Deputy Director  
TANF Fiscal/Policy Committee  
Regional Account Managers  
Deputy Account Managers  
Technical Assistance Managers  
Fiscal Supervisors  
OWD Bureau Chiefs

## APPENDIX A

### ALCR SERVICE STRATEGIES

Research studies have shown that there is a critical link between under education and chronic intergenerational welfare dependency. One of the leading research agencies, the National Center for Family Literacy, points out the fact that family literacy programs present a unique opportunity for states and counties to address welfare reform, school reform, parent involvement issues and early childhood initiatives. (Toney Peyton, Family Literacy Legislation in Eleven States, page 2).

Counties should consider incorporating literacy programs into their welfare-to-work programs by combining literacy with education/training and work. The following are a few examples of pre- and post-employment literacy program strategies the employed and unemployed job seekers.

**Pre-Employment Strategies** combine family literacy training with community work experience programs to prepare welfare recipients to take the next step to unsubsidized employment and get their child off to a good start. Counties may consider using this approach to serve welfare recipients with young children, individuals exempt from the time limits, or recipients who have some time remaining before they are required to work.

#### Innovative Pre-Employment Practices

In Rochester, New York, welfare recipients can attend a family literacy program in the morning and a vocational education class in the afternoon. Following completion of the short-term vocational education training, participants are placed in internships in their field of study with the goal of obtaining permanent employment in the industry.

Tennessee's Families First program contracts with several organizations that provide family literacy instruction. For example, the Nashville READ program collaborates with Head Start and senior citizen centers to offer family literacy education and promote intergenerational literacy learning.

**Post-Employment Strategies** include literacy services to extend learning so that job retention and self-sufficiency is enhanced.

#### Innovative Post-Employment Practices:

Canton, Ohio's Even Start program is focused on work-based education where welfare recipients must participate 30 hours weekly. The first 20 hours must be work or job readiness activities. The remaining 10 hours may be additional work or adult education. The program combines work and education into a 30-hour work-based learning site at the elementary school. Parents participate in real work experiences in and around the elementary community.

In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, a family literacy program offers a variety of services that aim to extend learning once students get jobs. These services include a "family night", with classes for parents and children; book events at the workplace for employees; and individual tutoring.

#### **Selected Former PRC-DR Literacy Initiatives**

##### Ashland County's Workplace Essential Skills Class (WESC)

West Holmes Career Center houses the Adult Basic Literacy Program, which operated the WESC. The WESC is a 12-week class dealing with essential like, workplace, and family literacy skills.

Canton Pre-School Child Care Center-Family Engagement & Support Project

The Child Care Center hired staff to provide mentoring, coordination, education, support, and encouragement of positive child development for pre-school children and their families.

Clark County's Springfield City Schools - Even Start

The Even Start program has provided ABL/GED instruction, parent education, early childhood education, parent/child interaction, home visitation, and support services to more than 60 families in its year-long program.

Trumbull County's Sylvan-Enhanced School Performance

Sylvan expanded its current services to improve the school performance of children by involving parents in their children's learning, offering exposure to career opportunities, and improving the parents' skill levels. Upon completion of the eight-week program, adults received six months of mentoring services from Sylvan.

**References**

NCFL, "Family Literacy Legislation in Eleven States", Toney Peyton, February 1999. Page 2, Available: <http://famlit.org/policy/states.html>

NGA Center for Best Practices, Employment and Social Services Policy Studies Division, Issue Brief (June 4, 1998): States Can Use Family Literacy Programs to Support Welfare Goals. Pages 4 and 5. Available at <http://www.nga.org/center/topics>

ODJFS, Reinvesting in Ohio's Communities: Prevention, Retention & Contingency Development Reserve (PRCDR) Summary of Reports, Volume 1: Description of PRCDR Projects by County, December 2000. Available at <http://www.state.oh.us/odhs/owf>

## APPENDIX B

### LOCAL PARTNERS

As you can see in Appendix A, there are a variety of agencies are involved in providing literacy services. At the local levels many agencies collaborate to fund and provide the comprehensive literacy services. It should be noted that the local literacy partners will differ by county.

The following is a brief list of the state-sponsored family literacy agencies in Ohio. Other local partners may include local public school systems, health departments (Welcome Home), community libraries, Ohio Reads, community action agencies, community colleges among others.

#### **Even Start**

Programs designed to help break the cycle of poverty by improving the educational opportunities of low-income families. Even Start contains components of adult literacy, parent education, early childhood education, interactive parent-child activities, and home visits in comprehensive, integrated programs. Even Start provides the financial support to operate a program that coordinates services that already exist and to develop those that are need. For example Head Start or Parents as Teachers and Adult Basic Literacy Education might provide the early childhood and adult education components, but the community would develop a parent education piece.

See [http://www.ode.state.oh.us/ece/programs/Family\\_Lit/family-literacy.htm](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/ece/programs/Family_Lit/family-literacy.htm) for a list of Even Start providers or contact the Even Start Office at (614) 466-0224. (Ed.: Web site has moved to [http://www.ode.state.oh.us/ece/superintendent/programs/even\\_start/Summary/](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/ece/superintendent/programs/even_start/Summary/))

#### **Head Start**

Head Start and Early Head Start are comprehensive child development programs which serve children from birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families. They are child-focused programs and have the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families.

See the Head Start Directory at <http://www.ohsai.org> or contact the Ohio Head Start Office at (330) 220-6410. Also see [www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/grantees/search/search.asp](http://www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/grantees/search/search.asp)

#### **Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE)**

ABLE provides educational opportunities for adults who lack a foundation of literacy skills needed for effective citizenship, further education, and productive employment. The ABLE programs are held in public schools, learning centers, community-based centers, homeless shelters, correctional institution, colleges, work sites, and institutions for the disabled. ABLE services include basic literacy, workplace literacy, family literacy, and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and preparation for the General Education Development (GED) test.

See the ABLE Program Directory at <http://archon.educ.kent.edu> or <http://literacy.kent.edu>, or contact the ABLE Office for a copy of the directory at (614) 466-5015.

## APPENDIX C

### ALCR RESOURCE INFORMATION

Ohio has a number of state-level organizations that provide support and resources for family literacy programs.

#### **Ohio Literacy Network**

Develops and distributes the “Directory of Ohio Adult Literacy Programs” which includes literacy programs by county.

Contact OLN at (614) 486-7757 to request a copy of the directory or a specific list of literacy providers in your county. For electronic search, see <http://archon.educ.kent.edu>.

#### **National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL)**

NCFL provides information and training to family literacy providers, funders, state and federal government on its family literacy model which integrates adult education, early childhood education, parent and child together time and parent groups into one comprehensive program.

See [www.famlit.org](http://www.famlit.org) for information on the NCFL family literacy initiatives.

#### **National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices**

Provides information on promising practices in welfare reform. See <http://www.nga.org/center/topics>