

Promising Practice: WIA and TANF Collaboration
Suffolk County Department of Labor

The Suffolk County Health Occupational Opportunity for Learning (SCHOOL) HPOG program has been successful in identifying, recruiting, and training TANF recipients because of the foundation provided by the strong institutional relationship between the Suffolk County Department of Labor (DOL) and the County Department of Social Services (DSS).

All employable individuals who receive services through DSS, including many TANF recipients, are referred to the Suffolk Works Employment Program (SWEP), the County's welfare-to-work initiative. The SWEP program, which administers work requirements for DSS, is housed and operated at DOL. DOL and DSS use a system of assessment, referral, and tracking to coordinate the program. This has led to a strong institutional relationship between the two agencies and a shared knowledge base among their staffs. SCHOOL staff are cross-trained to understand both TANF and WIA regulations. They bring prior experience as TANF case managers and job specialists with awareness of the capacities and limitations of the population served under HPOG. Additionally, this cross-training lends itself to providing participants with the range of support services that are needed for retention and completion of the SCHOOL program.

With this pre-existing relationship, SCHOOL staff can draw upon a broad range of training providers for HPOG participants who have worked with TANF recipients previously. This range of trainers includes Eastern Suffolk BOCES, Western Suffolk BOCES, Suffolk Community College, Hunter Business School, and Long Island Education Opportunity Center.

An additional resource of the SCHOOL program, as a result of this interagency coordination, is the ability of SCHOOL participants to utilize the county's One Stop Centers which can offer job placement assistance and career guidance by SCHOOL and DOL staff. These joint sets of services between DOL and the local TANF office are also effective in leveraging HPOG funds against other community resources.

The SCHOOL program credits clear communication in both directions between DSS and DOL, and clear mutually agreed on objectives and processes with the success of the relationship, which has helped the program effectively serve its HPOG participants.