

# REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION / CONTRACT CONTROL FORM

**Tracking Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ 7

**Date of Request:** October 13, 2008

**Date Request Received:** October 13, 2008

**Board Meeting Date Requested:** October 20, 2008

**Board Meeting Date Assigned:** October 20, 2008

**Short Title:** Resolution To Adopt The 2010-2011 Work First Plan.

**Request Status:**

- Request is proceeding to Board of Commissioners
- More information is needed – see attached
- Request on hold – no further information needed
- Other:

**Background:** During it's August 18, 2008 meeting, the Pender County Board of Commissioners voted that Pender remain a Standard County for the Work First Program for 2010-2011. The Work First Planning Committee met during the months of September and October 2008 to discuss items that needed to be included in Pender County's Work First Plan for the period 2010-2011.

*(Administrative Use Only)*

**Specific Action Requested:** The Board of Commissioners is requested to adopt the 2010-2011 Work First Plan.

**CONTRACT TYPE**

**Requested by:** Reta M. Shiver  
**Department:** Social Services  
**Title:** Director  
**Contact Phone:** 910.259.1240  
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- Renewal
- For Service(s)
- Intergovernmental – County as Grantee
  - Federal Grantor
  - State Grantor
  - Grantor
- County as Grantor
  - County Funds
  - Other Funds:
- Revision
- For Equipment

**PURCHASING** Budgeted Item:  Yes  No  
Date Rec'd:  Reviewed and Approved  
 Comments on Reverse

Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTORNEY**  Reviewed and Approved  
Date Rec'd:  Legal Problem(s)  
 Comments on Reverse

Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**FINANCE** Sufficient Funds  Available  
Date Rec'd:  Not Available  
 Budget Amendment Necessary  
 Budgeted Amendment is Attached  
 Comments on Reverse

Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**CLERK** Signature(s) Required:  
 Board Chairman/County Manager  
 Other:

Date Rec'd Approved by Board:  Yes  No  
At meeting on



**PENDER COUNTY  
WORK FIRST PLAN**

**FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS  
2010 AND 2011**

**OCTOBER 20, 2008**

**DR. RETA M. SHIVER, DSS DIRECTOR  
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## **Pender County Work First Plan Federal Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011**

North Carolina operates its Work First Program through a partnership between the State and counties. By unanimous vote during its August 18, 2008 meeting, the Pender County Commissioners opted to remain 'Standard'. The primary difference between 'Standard' and 'Electing' counties is that in Electing counties the Board of County Commissioners serves as the lead agency and sets forth eligibility criteria for cash assistance, determines who gets what and how much, and sets time limits and sanctions. While in Standard counties the Department of Social Services is the lead agency with DSS Board oversight. In this arrangement, the State sets forth rules governing Emergency Assistance, Program Integrity and Work First Services (Day Care, Transportation, Substance Abuse Counseling, Case Management, Community Work Experience Employment other than registration), and other supportive services. Having operated successfully as a Standard County since the inception of Work First, members of the Work First Planning Committee are pleased with the decision to remain 'Standard'.

As a result of Welfare Reform the Division of Social Services shifted from a benefit delivery system to an employment-focused assistance system. Essentially, emphasis shifted from serving clients through the provision of public assistance, to empowering families to achieve self-sufficiency by becoming gainfully employed. To achieve this outcome, the Division of Social Services assigned to counties the task of developing a plan specifically designed to meet individual county needs; allowing flexibility for creativity and innovations in the process.

In recent months, Pender County's Work First Planning Committee embarked on a venture to re-write a plan that integrates family centered policy language/practices as we involved ourselves in the process of broadening efforts for supporting and empowering families to be included as key participants in each phase of planning for their well-being. Our effort to ensure that contents of the plan embrace the six (6) principles of partnership---respect, being non-judgmental, power-sharing, recognizing strengths, listening to everyone, and following a process---engaged committee members to work individually, and collaborate collectively to produce a comprehensive, challenging plan. Representatives from various agencies and disciplines have collaborated continuously. The committee began to tackle its assignment on September 11, 2008.

Pender County's Work First Planning Committee looked at options of common approaches that can be utilized by families to manage household budgets: (1) Striving to reduce costs by choosing less expensive housing and reducing

commutes as much as possible (2) Minimizing costs of child care by relying on relatives when possible (3) Avoiding making debts by sacrificing in order to save for purchases rather than paying interest on unnecessary debts (4) Attempting to increase family income by getting a second job or working longer hours (5) Prioritizing spending such as making vehicle repairs versus purchasing a new TV. By Friday, October 17, 2008, the committee had formulated the body of the plan as it is hereby presented.

Pender County's Planning Committee is comprised of individuals representing the community and public and private agencies who are involved with the Work First population through numerous venues of daily living. The Planning Committee focused on key factors affecting the quality of life in Pender County, which the committee believes to be most salient in assisting Work First families achieve self-sufficient status.

Over the past twelve (12) months, Pender County's economic condition has been on a downward spiral. Pender County's Work First staff found, through interviewing Work First Participants, that actions which would have seemingly made conditions better for families really had an adverse impact. For instance, earning higher wages does not necessarily increase disposable income because public assistance programs that support families are systematically torn apart with each minor pay raise. Families begin to lose health insurance benefits, child care becomes more costly, food benefits are lost, and with these losses, so is the family's hope of attaining self-sufficiency. It becomes more difficult for families to see any real benefits to continuing and increasing their work effort. The economic slowdown, housing meltdown and rising fuel and food prices overwhelm middle income families and nevertheless devastate low income families. However, with ongoing counseling and encouragement Pender DSS hopes to restore clients' hope.

Pender County's unemployment rate in June 2007 was 4.5%; by September 2007, the unemployment rate had improved to 3.9%. In December 2007 the unemployment rate edged upward slightly to 4.4% in Pender County and increased to 5.4% by January 2008. Over the next quarter the unemployment rate had begun to drop again and by April 2008 had decreased to 4.8%. (According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Wilmington area's unemployment rate rose to 5.1% in May 2008. A significant number of Pender County citizens commute to Wilmington and its vicinity for employment). By June 2008, Pender County's unemployment rate had risen to 5.8% and climbed to 6.5% in July 2008.

Pender County officials continue to recognize the need to attract industry and create jobs for its growing population. Three (3) new businesses have plans underway for establishment over the next few months: Kentucky Fried Chicken

and Lee's Tackle are locating in the town of Burgaw. Atlantic Barn and Timber will set up in the town of Hampstead. However, there has been no significant industry nor companies established in Pender County during the past two years except a *Lowe's Store* in Surf City. Some small *mom and pop* type businesses have begun operating and a *Family Dollar Store* has opened in the town of Atkinson in western Pender County. Because Pender County remains among the fastest growing counties in the state, the county cannot afford to decelerate ongoing collaborative efforts to recruit businesses and industries.

Pender County is continuing to develop its utility infrastructure system in preparation for continued strong development growth with the planning and construction of a County-wide water system. In 2006, Pender County took action to delineate six (6) separate water and sewer service districts to ensure the most efficient and cost effective level of service for each area of the County. The Maple Hill Water and Sewer District currently serves approximately 350 residential and commercial customers with public water service. A wastewater collection and treatment system is currently being investigated and designed for the area. In the Rocky Point and Hampstead areas (known as the Rocky Point/Topsail Water and Sewer District), four (4) phases of construction have been completed with a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) phase due for completion by early 2009, according to Pender County's Public Utilities Director, Michael Mack. Once complete, the County will be serving over 4,500 residents and businesses with safe drinking water. In addition, design and permitting are currently underway for the construction of a two (2) million gallon per day (expandable to 6 mgd) water treatment plant to serve the entire County and assist in attracting more industry and commercial businesses. Construction is scheduled to begin in the Spring of 2009 and take 18 to 24 months to complete. The town of Atkinson is developing a new Water System and has applied for and received several grants, but is waiting for one additional grant which the town anticipates receiving in December 2008. This is good news for Work First Participants in terms of there being a secondary benefit accompanying the growth of additional industrial, commercial, and residential job opportunities.

Discussions are also underway with New Hanover County and Cape Fear Public Utility Authority to work together on the construction of a wastewater treatment facility on or near Pender County owned property on U.S. Highway 421 at the New Hanover-Pender County line. This facility would be constructed to serve industrial and economic development along the corridor with an initial capacity of one (1) million gallons per day expandable to four (4) million gallons per day or larger. Currently, new residential and commercial subdivisions are being planned and developed along all three (3) major Highway corridors that traverse Pender County (U.S. Highway 17, U.S. Highway 421, and Interstate 40). *Mack 8/08.*

As of September 2007, over 10,400 building units have been proposed through subdivision applications at the Pender County Planning Office. Of these 10,400 units, approximately 2,000 have State approved water extension permits. At the present time, other than the new residential and commercial subdivisions being planned and developed along the three (3) major highway corridors, there is no immediate news anticipating new industries for the county. Two (2) existing industries that employ more than 100 people in Pender County are not planning major expansions. One industry, American Greetings, has laid off more than twenty (20) permanent employees and more than forty (40) temporary workers. *Del Labs* has not increased its workforce since 2006 and has not announced plans to do so. In general, lots of *construction workers* are unable to find work due to the decline in new construction. The impact of this decline continues to trickle down to other businesses such as lumber mills which impacts forklift operators, truck drivers, etc. The forecasted average annual growth over the period from 2000 – 2010 is 7 percent. This growth implies that the regional economy will double in size during this decade. However, the current depressed housing market tends to indicate that growth in the area might not be as rapid as originally predicted. Growth in Pender County, fueled in large part by the continued immigration of population, continues in Pender County because early-retirees and retirees find this area inviting. Additionally, a large increase in the number of troops moving into Camp LeJeune at Jacksonville in Onslow County has manifested a small construction boom in northeastern Pender County as many of the military families are attracted to this area of Pender County and have chosen to establish their residences in this area.

Economic activity is highly seasonal in the coastal counties of Southeastern North Carolina. One generally sees an increase in economic activity in Pender County during the months of the tourist season and a decrease in economic activity during the fall and winter months. In past years, weather conditions have taken a toll on a number of industries in Pender County. The destructive force of hurricane winds impacts a number of businesses on the beach that employ a substantial portion of Pender's workforce. During the 2007 *hurricane season* Pender County was, for the most part, spared any major damages. Thus far in the 2008 *hurricane season*, tropical storms have bypassed the southern coast of North Carolina for the most part except *Hanna* (September 2008) which did not wreak much havoc in Pender County.

Another pressing dilemma facing Pender County, as well as many other counties throughout the State and Nation is how to meet Federal Participation rates in a weakened job market. Moreover, counties are now dealing with the hardest to serve client population. Staff and participants face increasing pressures as many Work First clients are reaching the end of their 60-months lifetime benefit

maximum. Staff has to be both creative and resourceful as they interact with other agencies to develop plans designed to move clients from welfare to work.

In July 1995 Pender County had 611 families in its Work First (AFDC) caseload. As of July 2006, the number of Work First families had decreased to 258, a reduction of more than 78.2%. As of August 2008, 218 families are receiving Work First benefits in Pender County representing an overall reduction of more than 70%. During the past eighteen months there have been no significant layoffs among the larger industries that employ Pender County residents.

On November 7, 2006, Pender County citizens voted for water bonds totaling \$17 ½ million dollars. The measure passed, enabling Pender County to build a state-of-the-art water treatment plant with the capacity to treat 2 million gallons per day (referenced in preceding paragraphs). This plant is currently under construction with plans for completion in 2010.

Currently, because of infrastructure development/expansion in Pender County, new subdivisions are being developed along the Highway 210 corridor, sixteen (16) additional businesses are geared up to locate along the Highway 17 corridor, and three (3) new strip malls are under construction in Pender County. A new *medical mall* opened in Rocky Point in 2007 along with several strip malls. A new *Lowe's Store* opened in eastern Pender County in the town of Surf City in 2007 employing more than 200 workers. The Work First Planning Committee is excited about total growth in Pender County as this means more jobs for Work First Participants.

In July 2002, Pender County was awarded a grant from The Duke Endowment's Program for Rural Carolinas. The program's goal is to encourage rural counties to develop ideas that will promote economic growth and strengthen sustainability of small businesses. Pender County has utilized the grant to improve the quality and quantity of employment and wealth-building opportunities for those citizens that have been left behind by the economy. This plan includes Work First Participants. Currently, through the Endowment's funding, Pender County has developed a Small Business Center at Cape Fear Community College in Burgaw. An instructor provides training that is designed to help participants develop business skills, expand their knowledge about operating a business, and assist in creating tangible products or services, including new enterprises. Another project underway is the development of an agri-tourism site. This project has already provided multiple ways for citizens to learn crafts and sell their products.

The "agri-tourism" concept has manifested the Annual North Carolina Blueberry Festival in Pender County. Over the past five (5) years festivals have been held on

the last Saturday in June. The major crop in Pender County is blueberries, so it is quite fitting that the North Carolina Blueberry Festival originated here. From the sale of blueberries, arts & crafts, home made delicacies, baked good, etc., the 2008 N.C. Blueberry Festival generated \$300,000 from more than 20,000 local participants in the region. Grower sales alone exceeded \$35,000. The market provides many opportunities for entrepreneurial expansion. It is hoped that the number of new jobs/new employment opportunities evolving from this venture will continue to grow and expand each year. All of these programs offer the possibility of more jobs for Pender County residents, spanning the gamut from low-income families to families with higher income levels.

It is the vision of Pender County's Work First Planning Committee that the plan developed for the County will continue to heighten awareness of the need for all facets of the community to become actively involved in innovative program development, enlisting the entire family in activities contributing toward the family's self-sufficiency (part time employment, after school employment for school-age children who are mature enough to assist with day care within centers where after school care is provided, etc.); that local government will continue to provide opportunities for work experience and/or on-the-job training through placements in County offices which potentially lead to employment; and that businesses and industries will continue existing partnerships that enable and empower families to escape the need for public assistance.

Pender County must comply with changing Federal and State guidelines while operating to break down existing barriers to achieving self-sufficiency. Achieving this objective will become increasingly more difficult as Pender County is now working with the hardest to serve of the Work First population. This fact manifests the need to address a multitude of barriers. Even though the Work First caseload is expected to decline at a slower rate, and perhaps plateau over the next several years. The only factors which might negate this projection are more services and/or more programs might be implemented for the hardest to serve population thereby attracting participants for a longer duration of time. The fact that Pender County is a rural-farm county, problems unique to the area include:

- (1) Lack of infrastructure for public water (partially complete) and sewer
- (2) Lack of Transportation
- (3) Inadequate Child Care Services
- (4) Insufficient Jobs
- (5) Job Available; but Inadequate Pay
- (6) Lack of Affordable Housing

Among other factors taken in account which will demand tremendous input on the part of all professionals serving the Work First population, a lack of employment skills, the educational level of Work First participants, physical and mental health

of participants, and lack of understanding of the problem(s)/changes associated with Welfare Reform Legislation rank high.

It is imperative that Pender County families understand that the Work First Program embraces the philosophy "that all people have a responsibility to their families and communities to work and provide for their children." To perpetuate this idea, a Mutual Responsibility Contract (Attachment A) must be signed by every client participating in the Work First Program. The Work First Planning Committee reviewed the Mutual Responsibility Contract with the understanding that the county's plan has to include enabling provisions for meeting the terms of the contract.

Currently there are 19 mandatory potentials. This refers to all participants included in the grant that do not have a child three (3) months of age or under. The difficulties Pender County foresees in obtaining employment for these individuals are centered around the availability of jobs and the willingness of employers to risk hiring individuals who are low-skilled, have poor work habits or have never before been employed, coupled with rural transportation problems.

Existing staff in Work First Employment Services can effectively manage a maximum 50 cases each. Current participants require more case management services than previous participants and ideally, the caseload should be smaller in order to maximize case management services. Another factor to be taken into consideration is Pender County has no employment retention program in place. If participants are to remain off the welfare rolls, a program of this nature must be developed and implemented. In order to achieve the State's current goal of 90% (two-parent) and 50% (single-parent) participation rates, Work First Social Workers must be more innovative and creative.

**II. Planning Process.** Pender County's Planning Committee is comprised of the following members:

Paul Parker, Assistant County Manager  
 Dr. Jack Griffith, Pender County Health Director  
 Natasha Nunes, Coastal Horizons Director  
 Rachel Yoder, Coastal Horizons  
 Rosemary Pittman, Employment Security Commission Director  
 Margie Parker, Cape Fear Council of Governments  
 Joyce Keith, Community School Coordinator Pender County Schools  
 Sandra Taylor, Pender County Schools  
 Virginia Rochelle, Community Leader  
 Connie Carr-Costin, Director of Pender Partnership for Children

Judy Cromer, Coordinator & PAS Transportation  
Rev. Elberta Pugh-Hudson, Chair of Board of Social Services  
Lateacha Key, Work First Participant  
Alecia Williamson, Work First Supervisor  
Patricia Walker, Income Maintenance Administrator  
Samantha Nixon, Child Protective Services Supervisor  
Dr. Reta M. Shiver, DSS Director

Members of the Planning Committee, appointed by the Pender County Board of County Commissioners, held its initial meeting on September 11, 2008. During that session, the committee collaborated to revise the Work First County Plan for 2010-2011. The committee's task was to review the draft and bring all revisions back to the next meeting scheduled October 9, 2008. All participants became actively engaged interjecting points and ideas to ensure that Pender's plan would meet all requirements. Realizing that the general public has a vested interest in successfully moving members of the Work First population from using the system to a point of contributing to the system, Pender County's Planning Committee enlisted the support of civic and service groups, ethnic organizations, religious organizations, and charities alike by appealing for input during the period set aside for public comments.

Communicating the need for change and offering the opportunity for public input encourages public trust which is so vital when implementing new programs and/or ideas. Everyone brought back to the table more substance to add to the plan as a result of having communicated with a broader base of community stakeholders. This process enabled the Planning Committee to construct a suitable document to present to the Board of County Commissioners for its approval. The final draft of the plan was submitted to the County Manager on Friday, October 24, 2008 and approved by the County Commissioners on Monday, October 27, 2008. The approved plan was then made available for public review and comments at two (2) locations: The County Manager's Office and the Pender County Library.

### **III. Goal for Pender County**

**A.** To meet Work First expectations for SFY 2010-2011, the following goal has been established for Pender County:

**1. Meeting Federal Participation Rates.** In order to meet the Federal Participation Rates, Pender County conducts upfront assessments with participants. Clients are counseled to gain an understanding of the need for becoming employed as a first step to self-sufficiency. A thorough assessment is completed to identify potential barriers as well as emphasize family's strengths and resources. In addition to a thorough assessment, the Mutual Responsibility

Agreement-Plan of Action will be developed at the initial meeting with participant. Pender County will network with the Employment Security Commission and the faith-based community for locating job vacancy information. DSS encourages its participants to enroll into short-term occupational training programs to improve their employment outlook for jobs that will provide an income, which will allow participants to sustain themselves and their families. Additionally, Pender County plans to develop more volunteer work experience placements for countable participant hours to enhance job search efforts. The agency will increase the number of home visits and adjust Social Workers' schedules to meet the needs of participants. Moreover, Caseworkers/Social Workers will serve as "mediators" between clients and employers in an effort to assist clients in retaining previous employment. In addition, the agency will continue to strengthen its transportation coordination with the County's Senior Adults Services Program (Aging Services) and MV Transportation Company. Internally, Caseworkers/Social Workers will be provided training on updated assessment policies as well as barriers associated with a "harder to serve" client population. DSS will focus on accuracy of the denominator by verifying and ensuring accuracy of codes on the potential list. Caseworkers will offer Benefit Diversion Assistance as an alternative to ongoing cash assistance whenever appropriate, thus reducing the number of families in the denominator. Pender County will meet and hopefully exceed the Federal Participation Rates by utilizing the aforementioned methods for achievement. Participation Rate data from previous 12 months is included for review in the Appendix.

#### IV. The Following Performance Measures will be Achieved:

1. **Employment**. Pender County must engage support in order to meet the State Employment Goal for the county. The county will attempt not only to meet, but to exceed minimum requirements. Pender County will (1) utilize Employment Security Commission Resources, (2) Build good rapport with local employers, (3) Utilize temporary agency services, (4) Make appropriate referrals to community resources such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health--especially Substance Abuse and Drug Rehabilitation services and dealing with criminal histories, and (5) Utilize Employment Security Commission Resources, Job Link Center and Programs such as WIA (Workforce Investment Act).
2. **Providing Employment Services**. DSS will attempt to provide intensive employment services for 80% of single-parent families and 100% of two – parent-families. Active participation in these service components will be imperative in order to meet participation rates and to ensure that families are appropriately assisted before the end of five (5) years.
3. **Staying Off Welfare**. Pender County will strive to ensure that at least 90% of

families that leave welfare due to gainful employment do not return to cash assistance. Face-to-face interviews and/or forums will be held with participants to provide assurance that DSS and community members are available to assist with unforeseeable problems/inevitable barriers that may occur. These might include transportation, childcare, a sudden family crisis such as death of a household member, or medical emergency. Social Workers will provide counseling and role play on Crisis/Conflict Management and Job Retention Skills. In addition, the agency will emphasize the importance of becoming self-sufficient prior to the expiration of benefit time-clock limits.

4. **Job Retention.** Families that retain employment after 6 and 12 month intervals significantly increase the likelihood of attaining self-sufficiency. DSS will thoroughly explain and assist participants with the acquisition of Supportive Services in order to aid participants in retaining employment. These services may include transportation, child care, and work-related expenses.

5. **Benefit Diversion.** Pender County will offer benefit diversion as an alternative to ongoing cash assistance whenever appropriate, this avoiding the onset of benefit time limits.

**B.** In accordance with (108A-27.6), Pender County sets forth the following outcome goals.

- (a) To continue timely processing of cases within the 45-day time standard
- (b) To meet Federal standards for participation rates and
- (c) To continue to improve transportation services as a means of enabling participants to meet work requirements.

#### **V. Plans to Achieve Goal and Performance Measures**

A. For a description of how Pender County will achieve the statewide goal, see III. A. 1.

B. A description of how Pender County plans to meet performance measures described in IV.above is as follows:

1. **Processing Cases Within 45 Days.** Pender County will periodically assess staffing needs to ensure that worker caseloads are within recommended State standards. Management reports and logs will be maintained for the purpose of monitoring time standards for completing cases. By conducting checks at 12-day intervals during the 45-day timeline, supervisors will be better able to guide staff in meeting the specified time standard.

2. **Meeting Federal Standards for Participation Rates.** Pender County will collaborate with local industries for job placement of Work First participants. The County will develop cooperative agreements and/or Memoranda of Understanding with other public and private non-profit agencies to offer work experience and where applicable, eventual employment to participants. Case Managers will provide support in securing childcare services, transportation services, Emergency Assistance, and other supportive services, which empower participants to continue their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.

3. **Improve Transportation Services.** Pender County will continue to improve transportation by assisting with the development of community carpools, and developing a more coordinated transportation program with the County's lead transportation agency, Pender Adult Services in conjunction with *M V Transit* and *WAVE Transit*. DSS will link to the County's GIS to review demographics and enhance the transportation system currently operating to serve Work First participants.

4. **Resource Management.** Pender County will monitor staff workload and productivity as a means of achieving optional performance. In the Work First Program there are tools used as a mechanism for checking applications, withdrawals, inquiries, reviews and quarterly report changes. The case management report is a tool, which is used to ensure case data has been keyed, and all forms properly accepted. In addition to the 'system checks', which are in place to ensure maximum utilization of worker time, supervisors conduct random checks on all ongoing cases for up-to-date maintenance. Second-party reviews are conducted by both supervisors and lead workers.

Pender County will measure the outcomes of each goal in the following manner: Management reports and logs will be maintained for the purpose of monitoring time standards for completing cases. This documentation will provide assurance that the 45-day time standard has been met. By conducting periodic checks at 12- and 20-day intervals during the 45-day timeline, supervisors will be better able to guide staff in meeting the specified time standard. Some improvements in trans-

portation have been made via coordination with Pender Adult Services and MV Transit. In terms of resource management, supervisors will work closely with lead workers to guarantee adequate monitoring of staff in terms of the scope of their management of cases.

## **V. Administration.**

- A. Authority.** The Pender County Commissioners have delegated authority for administration of the Work First Program to the Pender County Department of Social Services.
  
- B. Organization as related to Service Delivery.** Pender County Department of Social Services is organized so that there is a separation of duties between Work First Family Assistance Caseworkers and Work First Services Social Workers. However, WFFA and WFES, caseworkers and social workers respectively, report to the same supervisor. WFFA caseworkers continue to operate under the Income Maintenance structure and are directly responsible for administering welfare or public assistance through eligibility determination, while WFES is a service unit administered by social workers who ensure that all available supportive services are accessible to participants. Staff within the two sections have partners and together work as a team. Ongoing sessions are held between the two sections. ESC and Work Force Investment Act (WIA) programs are located approximately one (1) mile from DSS at the Job link Center which is housed at the Employment Security Commission. Joint sessions involving the respective agencies are held periodically. Thus far the distance between agencies has not posed a problem for clients.

As in the past, DSS will place Work First participants in positions to obtain unpaid work experience and/or on the job training. Some of the agencies which have assisted with DSS's placement effort include Pender County School System, Four County Community Services, Public Works Office, Register of Deeds, Health Department, Community College, Employment Security Commission, and others. After having worked in these various agencies as interns, many Work First participants have become employed by the agency providing the work experience/training. Pender County plans to continue this practice and to broaden the scope of participating agencies through aggressive recruitment efforts.

- C. First Stop Program.** In compliance with the State's welfare reform, Work First applicants who are not exempt are required to register for

the First Stop Employment Assistance Program with the Employment Security Commission (ESC) located in Pender County. If the adult fails to register within 12 days of application date, the family is not eligible for Work First. ESC has provided an automated solution for tracking First Stop registrants' progress toward employment. Pender County is not contracting with ESC for any additional services at this time.

- D. Child Care,** Pender County will prioritize its child care funds in accordance with existing policy which states that funding for child care services is provided to families on a first-come first-served basis with 2 exceptions: (1) Children of Work First Employment Program participants are not placed on a waiting list. (2) High School Students are not placed on a waiting list as a means of reducing the drop out rate. A waiting list is developed when either child daycare funding is not available, child daycare providers are not available, or the agency lacks sufficient staff to process all requests for child daycare services. All children in one (1) family are placed on the waiting list as one unit. As funds become more limited, daycare services are terminated in the following order: (a) Daycare to support Child Welfare Services will be terminated. (b) Daycare to support developmental needs will be funded over (c) Daycare to support educational training, and lastly (d) Daycare to support part-time employment will be given the highest priority for funding.

**E. Transportation**

In terms of meeting transportation needs, DSS has entered into an agreement with Pender Adult Services and MV Transit Company to operate more closely in order to offer a more coordinated system of transportation county-wide. The County's Senior Adult Services (Aging Program) serves as the lead transportation agency. DSS assists with the development of community carpools. Plans for continued expansion of transportation services are ongoing. Reimbursement is offered as a supportive service for Work First Employment Services participants that are in compliance with their Mutual Responsibility Agreement—Plan of Action. Travel logs are completed by participant and submitted to Social Worker in accordance with guidelines outlined in the MRA—Plan of Action. Monetary reimbursement is at a rate of forty-five cents (\$.45) per mile with a \$400.00 per month maximum for participants providing proof of vehicle ownership. For carpooling individuals or those utilizing other's vehicles, the rate will be \$6.00 per day or \$30.00 weekly (3 or more days weekly participation). Pender County will provide "retention" transportation services for maximum of three (3) months to former Work First/ Employment Service

recipients in accordance with following guidelines: Client must be in compliance with Employment Services requirements and Work First ineligibility is solely due to earned income.

#### **F. Substance Abuse Services**

In order to better coordinate services with the area authority for local mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services for assessment and treatment, a memorandum of understanding has been formulated and implemented which states, in effect, that...Additionally, DSS will survey each applicant regarding usage of drugs and/or alcohol.

-Pender County now has a Qualified Professional of Substance Abuse (QPSA) co-located within our agency. All Work First Adults, included in grant, are screened by caseworker for risk of substance abuse using the standardized screening tool (AUDIT/ DAST-10) (See Attachment D) If an adult refuses to be screened, the family is ineligible for Work First but is evaluated for Medicaid.

- Work First Adults are offered opportunity by caseworkers to be screened for Mental Health issues by utilizing the Emotional Health Inventory (EHI) (See Attachment E). If screening is positive (Same as above info re: East Coast Solutions)

#### **G. Family Violence Services**

Family violence can be particularly damaging to persons in low-income families. The traumatic effects of domestic violence frequently interfere with victims' efforts to become self-sufficient. TANF Funds have been made available to provide Domestic Violence Services to families who have been determined eligible. The Work First caseworker conducts an initial Family Violence Screening. If further services are requested by the family, the Social Work Program Manager conducts a more in-depth Family Violence assessment. Upon conclusion that Family Violence is evident, other eligibility factors are determined. Families may be eligible if they are receiving a Work First cash payment or have monthly income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Families must also meet additional qualifications outline in Section 118 of the Work First Manual (i.e. Have a child under 18, kinship requirements, etc.). Immigrant families who have at least one member meeting the age, kinship, citizenship, and living with rules, may be eligible for services. When Eligibility has been determined, short-term services that may be provided are as follows:

- Transportation (repairs, insurance down payments, etc.)
- Relocation Needs
- Essential Household Needs

- Counseling Services
- Childcare
- Clothing
- Legal Services (attorney fees not to exceed \$125/hour)
- Domestic Violence Shelter Expenses (\$15/day, 30 day limit)
- Other services as approved by director or designee

Expenses should not exceed \$500 for any one service component, with the exception of relocation needs. Total maximum benefit level per family is \$1,000 and is contingent upon availability of funds.

## **H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE) (See Attachment)**

### **I. Child Welfare Services**

**Child Welfare Services** - Work First and Child Welfare Services are concerned with the physical, social, and psychological well-being of children; particularly children suffering from the effects of poverty or lacking normal parental care and supervision. It is Pender County's intention to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure the well being of children served by agency programs. Prior to Child Welfare intervention (See budget Attachment F).

**VI. Emergency Assistance.** Pender County plans to operate an Emergency Assistance Program based upon the guidelines under which the program has been administered in the past. In keeping with changes in the Work First Family Assistance program, Emergency Assistance will no longer be given to a parent for an unborn child. Essentially to be eligible, families must live in North Carolina with the intent to remain, be a U.S. citizen or legal alien, have one child under the age of 18 (a change from 21 years old) living with a specified relative. Additionally, families must be in an emergency situation and meet the income and asset guidelines.

**VII. Services for Families with Income at or Below 200% of Poverty.** Pender County will provide services to former Work First families (families that have received Work First Cash Assistance, including benefit diversion, within the past 12 months) with children when the family income is at or below 200% of poverty, and in accordance with the policy outlined in the Work First manual. Services may be provided to enable families to participate in a wide range of activities that will prepare them to secure and retain employment or enrich their family's life. These services are as follows:

- Short Term Skills Training
- Job Readiness

- Various Counseling Components
- Transportation
- Work-related Expenses
- Child Care
- Job Search

Maximum benefit level per family under this component will be \$500.

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

Pender County will not provide services to this population. DSS has no direct contact with the State in this regard. It would be hard for DSS to monitor this population. DSS might explore the possibility of serving this population in the future.

**IX. Exemption from Work Requirement.** Single custodial parents of children under **three months of age** will be exempt from work requirements, provided they have not already used "S" code for maximum of 12 months.

The parents will lose the exemption effective the month after the child reaches 3 months of age.

- Special Considerations:

The parent may keep or reclaim the exemption once the child reaches 3 months if the following situations apply. (Exemption not to exceed 12 months, or past child's first birthday)

- A. The parent is unable to work for longer than 30 days due to health of the parent or child, verified by physician.
- B. County is unable to provide child care or transportation assistance to parent.

### **X. Innovative County Strategies**

Pender County will formulate a joint venture with the business community through the Chamber of Commerce to implement a First Choice Program. Employers will be asked to give first consideration for employment to Work First participants who have completed related skills training, whose time clock is approaching its limit, and/or who experienced recent changes in personal circumstances which have upgraded their status as a potential employee.

### **Success For Families At Risk Initiative.**

Employment Services Social Workers work intensively with the population of clients that have used 30 or more months of their 60- months benefit time clock. The "Success Team" meets at least quarterly to staff these cases. The Team is comprised of representatives from DSS, Community College staff, Mental Health Staff, and a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

**XI. Special Issues.** Pender County serves a Hispanic population which presents additional challenges. These include, but are not limited to, language barriers, unskilled/low skilled, and essentially hard to place. DSS has the language line that staff can call and request assistance from a qualified interpreter. Pender County also has limited industries within the County which broadens transportation needs to include out-of-county employment from a county that is largely rural, having no mass transit system, to the more urban surrounding areas where more jobs are available. Another apparent issue is that it is difficult to track employment due to the nature of rural, seasonal employment. In the Work First Program, Pender County is unable to count these hours because this type of employment is not traceable.

On an annual basis in the month of January Civil Rights training is held with every DSS worker. The training is conducted by the Security Control Officer. Each worker is provided a copy of the Civil Rights rules and regulations to use for reference.

Pender County adheres to policy under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure equal access to people with disabilities. Practices and procedures are altered for clients with disabilities when necessary. Pender DSS offers assistance in the application process by extending time frames, making home visits, and assisting clients with the completion of paperwork. Employment Service participants are offered the opportunity to participate in activities even if they are not required to do so.

For participants who are hearing impaired, the Division of Deaf & Hard of Hearing has ordered a Pocket Talker for the Adult Services Program in each DSS agency within the state. The State Office will provide training on how to utilize and maximize this tool to benefit hearing impaired participants during the months of September and October 2008.

**XII. Certification.**

The foregoing County Work First Plan was unanimously adopted by the Pender County Board of Social Services during its September 22, 2008 meeting.

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Rev. Elberta Pugh-Hudson, Chairman  
Pender County Board of Social Services

The foregoing County Work First Plan was unanimously adopted by the Pender County Board of Commissioners at its October 20, 2008, upon motion by Mr. and seconded by.

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David Williams, Chairman  
Pender County Board of Commissioners

## I. Summary by Category of Expenditures

### Expenditures

Direct Salaries & Fringe Benefits	578,913.00
Direct Travel	31,608.00
Other Direct Expenses	20,000.00
Payments to Recipients	639,927.00
Child Welfare Services	635,728.00
Domestic Violence	13,069.00
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Total Budgeted Expenditures	1,919,245.00
Budgeted Revenue	
State & Federal Funds	1,282,332.00
County Funds	636,913.00
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Total Budgeted Revenue	1,919,245.00
Direct Benefits to Recipients	
Work First Family Assistance	616,927.00
Emergency Assistance Payments	13,000.00
Work First Diversion Assistance	10,000.00
Domestic Violence	13,069.00
Case Management Activities	
Case Management with Eligibility	117,304.00
Case Management without Eligibility	461,609.00
Employment Services Activities	
Client Education/Training	10,000.00
Participation Expenses	10,000.00
Supportive Services	
Transportation	25,000.00
DOT-TANF Transportation	6,608.00
Child Welfare Services	635,728.00
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Total Budget	1,919,245.00