

Position Statement

For 2023 Session

Pilot In-House Training for Public Assistance Programs

Proposal

Issue:

The impact from the pandemic and the current economic conditions have greatly impacted both the workforce and the workload in counties. Counties continue to experience staffing shortages and challenges while managing an increase in need from our communities. Hiring and training staff to do the work is impacted by the Department of Human Service's program training structure and limitations, including:

- Program training lacks the flexibility counties need when hiring employees. Counties must start new employees based on training dates set by the DHS. Training dates may not align with each county's needs. Trainings are offered on average one time per month based on a schedule set by DHS.
- Trainings are capped at 20 seats per class for all 87 counties and tribes. If a training is full, a county may need to delay hiring or may need to delay training newly hired staff.
- Counties can reserve five of the 20 training seats for most program trainings. Additional seats may be requested but they are not a guarantee. Counties may not be able to fill all vacancies based on training limitations from the DHS.

Counties are not able to hire and onboard staff timely due to constraints created by the DHS training schedule and classroom size limitations. Counties need the flexibility to manage their workforce needs, hiring and training new staff based on the county need and not around the DHS training schedule and classroom slots available.

The in-house training pilot is not intended to replace DHS training. County training and the fiscal cost of training remain the responsibility of DHS.

Implementation Strategy:

Allow counties who have the resources to provide in-house training for a pilot of one-year. Counties who do not have the resources to provide in-house training benefit from this pilot as larger sized counties would not take the limited DHS classroom seats, allowing small and medium sized counties to utilize the DHS training spots.

Systemic Priority Alignment (highlight all that apply and explain why)

- **Equity**
- **Integrated Services**
- **Fiscal Framework**

From the GARE Toolkit (See www.racialequityalliance.org): What are the racial equity impacts of this particular decision? Who will benefit from or be burdened by it? Are there strategies to mitigate unintended consequences?

Comments:

- Counties are often staffed by members of their own communities. Having trainers comprised of county staff may increase the likelihood that those trainers represent the diverse communities they serve, or at the very least have familiarity with the specific issues and challenges their customer bases may encounter.
- Moreover, Counties who are able to hire and train staff in a more timely manner are less likely to have to delay or pass on qualified candidates for positions simply because the timing didn't work. Given the staff working in these programs are some of the most racially diverse staff counties hire, this inability to move forward creates unnecessary delays which may discourage interest among candidates in these positions.

Relevant Committee (highlight all that apply and explain why)

- **Adult Services**
- **Behavioral Health**
- **Children's Services**
- **Equity**
- **Healthcare**
- **Modernization**
- **Policy**
- **Self-Sufficiency**

Why:

The focus of the pilot is on SNAP but could be expanded to healthcare programs. Counties need adequate staffing to provide timely and accurate program benefits to the public.

Rationale/Background:

The hiring and retention of financial workers has been a concern for many years, but this concern has grown with the increase in work counties have experienced during the pandemic; and with the restarting of annual renewals in public health care programs, the need for counties to be fully staffed is critical.

Under the current training structure, when a county hires a new financial worker, they are required to attend training through the DHS to learn the basics of program policy and to get case approval access in the state system. The training is offered typically one time per month by a schedule set by DHS and is capped at 20 seats for all 87 counties and tribes.

If a training is offered only one time per month, the training dates and available slots may not align with the county's hiring needs. This is a challenge when counties are experiencing multiple vacancies coupled with an unprecedented amount of work.

Many of the larger counties have the resources and interest to do in-house training and they already have an intensive county training program for new staff that is done in addition to the DHS training. Counties with program trainers should be allowed to train in-house for a one-year pilot. Allowing larger counties, the flexibility to train in-house will provide more training slots with the DHS for counties that do not have the resources to participate in this pilot.



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