



STOKES COUNTY

WORK FIRST PLAN

Fiscal Years 2010-2011

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I. Conditions within the County

Stokes County is a rural county of 46,000+ population. The county is divided by a small mountain range which makes transportation challenging. There is no public transportation; however, the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) will soon be offering public transportation from the city of King to Winston-Salem. Stokes County's unemployment rate (July 2008, ESC) is currently 6.3%. Surrounding counties have experienced recent layoffs at RJ Reynolds, Hanes Brands, beer, and plastics plants. These layoffs have impacted Stokes County as many residents who live in Stokes County maintain employment in surrounding counties. The surrounding counties of Surry, Rockingham, Forsyth, Guilford, and Yadkin average a higher unemployment rate than Stokes. According to the Employment Security Commission, in July 2008, the average rate of these surrounding counties was 7.14%. See attachment "Labor Market Information Update" provided by the Northwest Piedmont Workforce Development Board.

The county manager of Stokes, Bryan Steen, who also serves as the Economic Development Director, when asked to give his opinion of the condition of the county, stated the following in August 2008:

"There are no indications of any plant closings at this time, but economic circumstances can change rapidly and many companies are reluctant to inform third parties of such information. Additionally, information related to expansions are also closely guarded to prevent competitors from obtaining information that may have a negative impact on the expanding company. At this time, I'm not aware of any imminent expansions or location of new businesses to Stokes County in the foreseeable future.

Economic trends are questionable at best due to instability in fuel prices, real-estate market and the banking/lending industry. All factor into an uncertain future for business and customer demand for products over the next several business quarters. The impact of inflation on middle and low income households as well as the possible excess use of credit to obtain products and goods may become apparent over the next few months and significantly weaken demand for goods and services and thus place additional drag on a slowing national economy. Only time will tell."

In 2002, a Forsyth Technical Community College satellite campus was established at the Government Center in Danbury. The media center and classrooms provide a variety of classes as well as GED preparation in the center of the county. In 2008, Forsyth Technical Community College opened a campus in Tobaccoville which borders King and is very close to Stokes County residents. This campus focuses mainly on law-enforcement training, but other courses are available to the public as well.

In Stokes County, the current Work First caseload composition consists of the following:

Of the 88 cash assistance cases (August '08), 1 is caring for an infant 12 weeks of age and under. 51 are child only cases with a majority of grandmothers caring for grandchildren and 14 are disabled parents who receive SSI disability.

Of the 88 caseload, 25 are job ready and 11 are dependent on welfare and need more training. Most have limited education. 14 are deferred from the work requirement at this time because of medical reasons.

II. The Planning Process

A. Planning Committee

Janice Spencer – Director – Stokes County DSS

Ann Vance – Goodwill Industries

Kim Christie – Joblink

Jerry Mitchell – Board of Health

Lynn Martens – Stokes County Senior Services

Ernest Lankford – Board of Commissioners

Roger Tucker – Local School System

John Lagergren – Farm Bureau – business community

Angie Cullen – Healthy Carolinians – Area Mental Health Board

Jan Culler – Stokes County Board of Social Services

Kristy Preston – Social Work Supervisor – Child Welfare

B. Public Comment

A notice will be posted on the Stokes County web site and in the local paper that the plan will be available for inspection at the Clerk to the Board's office and the county libraries and that public comments would be accepted at the October 13, 2008 meeting of the Board of Commissioners in Danbury, NC.

C. Planning Development

Stokes County Social Services staff gave the committee an overview of the current Work First program, the way it is administered and the statistics relating to Stokes County Work First. Printed materials about the Work First program were given to the Committee members. Provided to the committee were the County Work First Plan Outline for 2010-2011, the Stokes County Work First Plan 2007-2009, information from the manual regarding what Work First is, information regarding family-centered practice, the Work First Performance Report for June 2008, unemployment rates, graphs regarding Work First caseload composition, census bureau information for Stokes County, the Work First Able Bodied Report for August 2008, and an e-mail from the county manager regarding conditions within the county.

The diversity of the planning committee members allowed for a thorough thinking through of ideas and details. Contributions from the business community, DSS, Health Board and mental health representatives were very helpful with innovative ideas and were valuable for their experience in working with people.

The planning process stayed focused on four aspects of reform that we felt were essential.

- ❖ The goal of expecting each member of our community to be a contributing, self-supporting individual with self-respect and dignity.
- ❖ To develop a system of supporting services and programs, using every available resource, to encourage, motivate and empower all members of our community to move from dependency and move into self-sufficiency.
- ❖ To treat all members of our community, whatever their current situation may presently be, with the respect, courtesy and dignity that they deserve.
- ❖ To keep in mind always that the citizens of our county pay the Federal, State and local taxes that we are spending in this plan and to spend this money wisely, with specific goals in mind without wasting money or resources to serve the citizens of Stokes County.

In addition to these four aspects, the planning committee agreed to incorporate the “Six Principles of Partnership” of family centered practice throughout the plan. These 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.

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. Participation rates for Stokes County for the past twelve months are as follows:

All Parent Rate

Two Parent Rate

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| | |
| August 2007 | 29.63 |
| Sept. 2007 | 15.63 |
| October 2007 | 20.51 |
| Nov. 2007 | 21.74 |
| Dec. 2007 | 27.27 |
| January 2008 | 12.20 |
| February 2008 | 20.45 |
| March 2008 | 15.15 |
| April 2008 | 21.05 |
| May 2008 | 25.00 |
| June 2008 | 24.14 |
| July 2008 | 18.42 |
| August 2008 | 22.22 |

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| August 2007 | |
| Sept. 2007 | |
| October 2007 | 0.00 |
| Nov. 2007 | 0.00 |
| Dec. 2007 | 50.00 |
| January 2008 | 0.00 |
| February 2008 | 25.00 |
| March 2008 | 0.00 |
| April 2008 | 0.00 |
| May 2008 | |
| June 2008 | |
| July 2008 | 0.00 |
| August 2008 | |

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. 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.

5. 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.

6. Benefit Diversion. The most successful outcome possible for an applicant for public assistance is to avoid the need to become a recipient. This is also recognized in the federal law, which specifies diversion from public assistance as a desired outcome. Use of Work First Diversion Assistance for a specified percentage or number of Work First applications will be established as a goal for each county.

B. County Developed Outcome Goals

Stokes County adopts the state goals and has not established any additional goals. For fiscal year 2007-2008, the goals were:

| | Goal | Actual on 6/30/08 |
|--|------|-------------------|
| Adults Entering Employment: | 22 | 61 |
| Remaining off Work First for Employment: | 90% | 100% |
| Providing Diversion Assistance: | 96 | 97 |
| Providing Employment Services: | | |
| All Parent: | 80% | 92.24% |
| Two Parent: | 100% | 73.33% |
| Meeting All Parent Participation Rate: | 50% | 21.15% |
| Meeting Two Parent Participation Rate: | 90% | 10.71% |
| Employed 6 Months After Leaving Work First: | 60% | 54.69% |

IV. Plans to Achieve the Outcomes and Goals

A. Activities

Stokes County takes an aggressive approach toward employment. Our focus is on immediate full-time employment, if at all possible. Depending on the job readiness level of the client, referrals are made to short-term skills training programs offered at Forsyth Technical Community College, JobLink Center, or Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina. If short-term skills training is not needed, clients are immediately placed in work experience. Individuals with disabilities will be encouraged to participate in all programs and services and not those designed solely for individuals with disabilities. Accommodations needed

to support these individuals will be reflected on their Mutual Responsibility Agreement. We will continue to use all existing programs and new programs as they emerge to meet the Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) Employment Program goals.

Most activities are performed in-house and include eligibility determination, employability assessment, in-house job readiness, referral to supportive services within the community, and referral to a contractor who provides in-depth job readiness and job placement services.

For the FY 2008-2009 program year, the Work First program has a contract with Goodwill Industries who offers employment-related services. They are an experienced provider and offer a wide array of services. They also offer short-term vocational training in partnership with Forsyth Technical Community College for some courses.

We will explore the option of work supplementation or on-the-job training in Stokes County as well.

B. Supportive Services

When an individual applies for Work First, a worker respectfully engages them in a discussion about available jobs. Stringent work requirements of our current program are emphasized and the individual is referred to the Employment Security Commission to register for First Stop. If appropriate, the information is passed on to a Child Support Agent, with the name of the absent parent of the child and the Child Support Agent sets up a case that pursues the absent parent and enforces child support.

From the time applicants present themselves for services, the focus is on helping meet the family's needs through employment, child support, childcare, benefit diversion or cash if necessary. It is not cash assistance first or only. All applicants must register for employment with the Employment Security Commission and see the QPSA from the Area Mental Health Authority or the application for assistance will be denied on or before the 45th day. Relatives who request child only assistance will be supported by the case manager making appropriate referrals for needed services.

Case Management is provided by Social Services Staff - assessing the needs and strengths of all applicants/recipients, developing and supporting the participant's Mutual Responsibility Agreement part A & B. The participants will be connected to appropriate supportive services such as transportation, child support, substance abuse screening and treatment, and networking with the faith and business community. As soon as the applicant/recipient indicates a need for childcare, the client will be connected with a childcare worker. All applicants/recipients will be encouraged to express their needs and provide input

as to what is important for their family to be self-sufficient.

Job Development and Placement are provided by the Employment Security Commission (ESC) and through a contract with Goodwill Industries. Currently, we have two Goodwill employees (one part-time and one full-time) working each week at Stokes County DSS. A full range of services exists at the Employment Security Commission in Winston-Salem. Clients are encouraged to utilize that office if necessary. One of the employees through Goodwill is able to assist clients who come in with specific job numbers from Employment Security Commission and can tell them where to go to apply for specific jobs. Also available at the DSS office is a Job/Computer Lab. Clients, or the general public, are welcome to use the lab to look for jobs or create resumes. Currently, the lab is open for clients Monday through Friday during regular office hours. The lab is open to the general public on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Child Day Care and Transportation are two of the most common types of supportive services that we provide. As long as funding is available, child care arrangements can enable participants to obtain and/or maintain full-time employment or to participate in the employment program and its components. After leaving Work First Family Assistance (WFFA), child care can continue based on income and needs. Transportation services can be available for any necessary transportation to work including paying the local transportation provider and providing vouchers for gas to clients or the person who transports. Transportation services can be provided as long as the participant is eligible for and involved in employment programs.

The Stokes County Department of Social Services has a good working relationship with the following programs and organizations: Workforce Investment Act, Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Security Commission, Forsyth Technical Community College, JOBLINK, YVEDDI, J. D. Cruise Transportation Services, Centerpoint/Qualified Professional of Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence Program, and the local school system. These community resources play a vital role in preparing and placing clients in employment.

Stokes County has work experience agreements with local businesses and non-profit organizations and will continue to increase the number of work experience sites as needed.

Full-time employment will be the focus and goal from beginning to end. On the day of application, the Case Manager will begin laying the foundation and ground rules for this program. The client will be clearly informed that Work First assistance is short term and full time employment is the goal of the program. The client will be referred to Employment Security Commission, Job Link, Goodwill or other appropriate agencies. A full range of employment services will be provided to assist the client in moving to employment. Continuing education and training will be encouraged even after employment is secured.

A “job ready” applicant will be referred immediately for job placement. Applicants assessed as needing training will be referred immediately to training programs. Any barriers to employment and or self-sufficiency will be addressed. Childcare, Transportation, Child Support, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence or any other barrier will be addressed promptly. Accommodations required for individuals with disabilities will be identified and implemented.

We will supplement part time job wages with work experience hours.

Any participant who does not have a High School or Equivalent Diploma will receive \$150 for successfully receiving a High School or GED diploma.

When the head of household gets a full-time job, they will be paid incentives of \$500 at three months, \$500 at six months, \$300 at nine months, and \$150 at twelve months of continuous employment. Clients are required to provide wage stubs to prove that they have worked 35 hours per week or more during the time period in order to receive the bonus. We feel these bonuses will help with unexpected expenses incurred as a result of employment. Transportation (car repair or gas for example), work clothes and childcare are some examples of work related expense that may be higher than when unemployed. This is a once-in-a-lifetime incentive.

We will offer an incentive for clients who turn in their time cards and required information by the required date on their Mutual Responsibility Agreement. This incentive is offered for clients who are required to complete work related activities. We will provide these clients with a \$20 gift card to WalMart for turning in the required information by the appropriate date. We will offer this incentive for a six month period of time. This incentive will terminate when the client is no longer eligible for a Work First assistance check. This is a once-in-a-lifetime incentive.

We will offer an incentive for clients who complete short-term training such as cosmetology school or truck driving school. We will provide these clients with a \$100 gift card to WalMart. Client will provide a certificate as proof that they have completed the training. This will be a motivating reward that would result in continued support of positive progress.

A citizen may remain eligible for supportive services following the termination of their Work First benefits. Clients may contact Social Services at any time during this transitional period to request help with problems (information and referral, general problem-solving, financial issues, child-care issues, transportation issues, etc.)

We will network with the business and faith community to assist the participant in maintaining employment and self-sufficiency.

We recognize the most successful outcome possible for an applicant for public

assistance is to avoid the need to become a recipient. For many citizens in a short-term crisis, Benefit Diversion is an obvious solution. The change in philosophy and culture must be made at the point of entry for the citizen, and that is being accomplished. At Intake, these families are connected with resources that, with employment, can enable them to become self-sufficient such as childcare, food stamps and work registration. Other appropriate connections are made, such as referrals to Job Link, Goodwill, Mental Health, Employment Security Commission, and the Faith Community.

The citizen will be referred to a Child Support Caseworker if needed before, during, or after the Work First application process.

Children in Work First families, as in all families, must be afforded the maximum protection available. ALL Work First children who are receiving intensive Child Protective services will have safety plans designed for their individual needs. Child Welfare and Work First staff will collaborate by jointly staffing these cases.

The emphasis is on personal responsibility in both the financial and services sector. The law states that removal of a child from the home cannot solely be based on poverty of the parents. However, a lack of resources contributes to the likelihood that a parent would be unable to meet basic physical needs such as shelter, food, and clothing. If a parent has come to the point of being unable to meet these basic needs, it will be essential to determine if this occurred as a result of a series of informed, deliberate choices. If the parent has been informed of the consequences and continues to make choices that result in deprivation for his/her child, and health and safety is compromised, then that parent would be reported.

Parents will be empowered and expected to move toward self-sufficiency. We will be true partners with these families and as strengths are identified, we will build on those strengths. It is not acceptable for families to continue a lifestyle of dependency. For those who take advantage of Work First's training and educational opportunities, the economic situation of the family should improve and the children will see the positive value of education and the work ethic. In families where the adult members refuse to find or accept employment and are unable to meet the children's minimum level of care, based on current statutes, the children may require placement with relatives/foster care where the child's needs can be met. All children in the Work First program who are receiving Child Protective Services will have safety assessments and a subsequent safety response, if necessary. We will recruit additional foster homes to care for these children as necessary.

The following are services that can be provided to Stokes County Work First participants:

- NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – resource for in-depth job

preparation and support services for participants with physical, mental, and emotional barriers to employment.

- Work Experience/Community Service – provision of job preparation which places Work First program participants with non-profit, for-profit agencies, and government programs for the purpose of the participant gaining on-the-job experience in order to be more viable in the job market.
- Subsidized Employment – the Department will explore the use of part-time and full-time subsidized employment, resources permitting, both in the public and private sector particularly for individuals without extensive work experience. This may include wage supplementation.
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) – the Department will explore the use of OJT and will approach employers about developing OJT contracts for Work First participants.
- Vocational Education – short-term skills training to provide the participant with a specific job skill. Short-term trainings offered include and are not limited to: Certified Nursing Assistant, Chef, Computer Basics, Customer Service, Data Entry, Electrical, General Clerical, Forklift Operation, Heating and Air Conditioning Repair, Housekeeping Services, Hospitality Management, Introduction to Medical Terminology and Coding, Medication Training, Personal Care Assistant, Phlebotomy, Pharmacy Technician, and Plumbing. This training could be provided at Goodwill Industries or at Forsyth Technical Community College.
- HS/GED – This component is available through the school system and/or community college to obtain a high school diploma and/or GED used in combination with a work component. These courses are offered at the Stokes County Forsyth Technical Community College campus, at various Stokes County school locations, and at the Joblink Center.

V. Administration

A. Authority

Authority for administering the Work First Program has been assigned to the Stokes County Department of Social Services by the County Commissioners.

B. Organization

All Work First services are offered at the Stokes County Department of Social Services building. The agency has two Community Employment Case Managers for Work First who provide intake, eligibility, and assessment. DSS also contracts with Goodwill Industries to provide two case managers to assist with employment services. These activities take place under the supervision of a Social Work Supervisor who also supervises the food stamp unit, adult Medicaid unit, family & children's Medicaid unit, child day care unit, and the adult services social work unit.

1. Intake

Intake functions are provided by the two Community Employment Case Managers that are DSS employees. Intake functions are also provided by the two case managers that we have a contract through Goodwill Industries. These four workers combined do intake for Work First as well as intake for emergency assistance and crisis situations. Interpreter services are available for those individuals that have the need. These services are provided through a contracted provider as well as an employee at the local health department.

2. Emergency Assistance

Emergency Assistance intake is shared by two Community Employment Case Managers, two case managers from Goodwill Industries, and five social workers who are in the adult services unit. The two Community Employment Case Managers carry all of the Work First cases including child only cases. The two case managers from Goodwill Industries are currently working with those clients who are deferred from work activities in any way to assist them with the disability process, etc. The social workers in adult services provide adult protective services, CAP case management, monitoring adult care homes, provide enhanced care services to adult care home residents, provide representative payee services, guardianship services, and other in home services as available. These services are provided under the supervision of a Social Work Supervisor III who answers to the Director.

3. Employability Assessment

This begins with an assessment by a Community Employment Case Manager to screen individuals for benefit diversion. It is during this time, that the case manager determines whether benefit diversion or ongoing Work First is appropriate for the client. We also have case managers available from Goodwill Industries who can assist with employment issues. Two Community Employment Case Managers are DSS employees. Two case managers are provided to us through a contract with Goodwill Industries. Clients who are referred to Goodwill Industries receive a vocational assessment to assist the client as well as the case manager in determining the areas of interest that the client has. This initial assessment sets the stage for ongoing partnership between the agency and the individual.

4. Employment Services

These services are provided by case management staff who assess the need for transportation, childcare, and other needs. Case management staff make decisions on how to meet transportation needs. They also refer clients, as

needed, to apply for child day care services in the same building.

5. Other Supportive Services

We work with other employment agencies such as Employment Security Commission, Vocational Rehabilitation, and JobLink. The Stokes County Governmental Complex houses the health department, the sheriff's department, and the administration department. The satellite office of Forsyth Technical Community College (FTCC) is also housed in the governmental complex. FTCC offers a variety of classes and workshops such as GED, Basic Computer and Keyboarding skills, Medical Terminology, etc. DSS staff and Work First participants have open access to this center.

The Stokes County DSS also offers a Job/Computer Lab in house for clients and for the general public. This lab is open Monday through Friday for clients and on Tuesdays and Thursdays for the general public.

Goodwill Industries provides training as well. They provide services such as job search, GED, basic computer and keyboarding skills. They can also offer workshops on job preparation, job training, money management, parenting, and other skills.

6. Eligibility Determination

Eligibility is determined at Intake through the Work First/Intake Unit. Two Community Employment Case Managers employed by DSS determine eligibility for the Work First program.

C. First Stop

At application clients are required to register with ESC for First Stop prior to application approval. ESC has been cooperative in making this service a priority for Work First clients.

D. Child Care

The Stokes County Department of Social Services has established the following guidelines in the prioritization of services:

- Children who need child care to support Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Children in DSS custody (foster care) who need child care to support the employment of the caretaker
- Children in DSS custody (foster care) who need child care for all other need categories
- Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) recipients who are employed or who are participating in approved activities or training
- Teen parents who need child care to complete their High School

- education or its equivalency
- Families who meet the criteria for Child Welfare Services (CWS)
- Families who need child care to support full-time employment
- Families who need child care to support part-time employment
- Families who need child care to support full-time training
- Families who need child care to support part-time training
- Children who need child care for developmental needs

E. Transportation

Every effort is made to ensure that clients have transportation to all program required activities.

When possible, family members, neighbors and community/church volunteers are enlisted to provide transportation.

If necessary, transportation needs are met by contracts with a local community action program (YVEDDI) using their van service and J.D. Cruise Transportation using their van and automobile service. At present the county has a contract with these two services with a charge per mile that is paid by DSS to Yadkin Valley Economic Development District, Inc. and a charge per mile for J.D. Cruise for van transportation.

Stokes County will work with former Work First recipients who are working and no longer Work First eligible to find transportation for work when needed. Family members and car-pooling are most desirable, but J. D. Cruise provides fee for service transportation if needed. This can be provided under the "Services to Low Income Families" (under 150% of poverty).

It is estimated that \$60,000.00 of block grant funds will be used for transportation services for Work First recipients per fiscal year.

F. Substance Abuse Services

The Stokes County Department of Social Services has an ongoing working relationship with CenterPoint Human Services, the local management entity for mental health services. They manage mental health services, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services.

On Tuesdays of each week, a Qualified Professional of Substance Abuse employed by the WISH program, is available in our office to serve Work First participants. These duties include providing in-depth assessment for anyone who fails the drug screening (AUDIT/DAST) or anyone who the Work First Case Manager has referred due to repeated behavioral indicators. If the screening indicates the adult is at risk for substance abuse, then appropriate referrals are made. The QPSA also provides services for those individuals that child welfare

refers for assessments.

G. Family Violence Option

Stokes County will follow all of the recommendations in the North Carolina Work First Manual Section 104D.

Stokes County Family Violence Service is available Monday through Friday and as needed for emergencies. This agency can assist clients in obtaining 50-B orders as well as assisting them in getting emergency shelter and other services as needed.

The Stokes County Family Domestic Violence Plan is attached.

H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

2 Work First workers=\$52,869.00 15% of WF Supervisor=\$5,554.09

10% Director=\$6,375.50 8% of 8 Child Protective Service Workers=\$20,733.03

5% of 4 intake workers=\$5,415.67

Work First Participation Expense \$43,750.00

Client Fees \$13,000.00

Client Travel \$60,000.00

Emergency Assistance \$185,000.00

Day Care \$51,577.00

I. Child Welfare Services

15% of the Work First Block Grant will be devoted to Child Welfare Services

VI. Emergency Assistance

The eligibility requirements in the North Carolina Work First Manual Section 003, VIII will be used by Stokes County. Income limits are up to 200% of poverty. The Emergency Assistance program is funded through the Work First Block Grant funds. Stokes County's allocated amount for Emergency Assistance for 2008-2009 is \$185,000.00. Applications will be accepted/approved until the allocation amount is depleted.

The Emergency Assistance program provides cash payments and/or services to

families experiencing non-recurring emergency situations and who lack the immediate resources to alleviate the problem. Cash benefits will be authorized only in the amount needed to alleviate the emergency and is limited to a maximum of \$800 per household per year. Applicants may receive a total of \$800 twice within a twelve-month period. For example, if a client comes into the office on June 1st with a request for assistance with rent and meets the eligibility requirements, the client could be helped with \$500 to prevent an eviction. If the client comes back into the office on January 2nd with a request for assistance with oil for heat, the client would have \$300 left available for use if eligibility requirements are met. The client would then not be able to utilize emergency assistance again until after May 31st as the twelve-month period of time would be over. Another example would be if a client comes into the office on August 2nd requesting assistance with a mortgage payment and meets the eligibility requirements, the client could be helped with \$800 to prevent foreclosure. The client would not be eligible to receive emergency assistance again until after August 1st of the following year. We would expect that the person who benefits from the crisis or emergency assistance would not cause the emergency.

Stokes County will continue to address the emergency needs of families with a combination of resources. Non-profit assistance agencies have a long history of serving the needs of families in crisis: King Outreach Ministry, East Stokes Outreach Ministry and Salvation Army. A number of smaller programs and agencies also serve families in need: including, the Red Cross. Many area churches maintain crisis funds for families in need, in addition to supporting the efforts of the above-referenced Faith-based ministries. Stokes County DSS has a partnership with these agencies combining resources to offer Emergency Assistance to families in crisis.

Definition of emergency:

- A crisis situation resulting from a catastrophic illness.
- A substantial loss of shelter, food, clothing, or household furnishings due to fire, flood, or similar natural or manmade disaster; or a crime of violence.
- An emergency situation over which there was no control and which left the family homeless or in immediate danger of eviction or foreclosure.
- A situation in which the child care assistance is necessary to avoid destitution of a child. The emergency situation which could lead to destitution and the destitution or need for a living arrangement did not arise because the child or a relative refused, without good cause, to accept employment or training for employment.
- Loss of a relative who had been responsible for support and/or care of one of his family members. This may include but is not limited to the death or separation.
- Mass emergencies.

VII. Services to Low Income Families

Stokes County will continue to address the emergency needs of families with a combination of resources. Non-profit assistance agencies have a long history of serving the needs of families in crisis: King Outreach Ministry and East Stokes Outreach Ministry. A number of smaller programs and agencies also serve families in need: including, the Red Cross. Many area churches maintain crisis funds for families in need, in addition to supporting the efforts of the above-referenced Faith-based ministries. Stokes County DSS has a partnership with these agencies combining resources to offer Emergency Assistance to families in crisis.

Stokes County also provides some work related expense assistance to families under 150% of poverty. Stokes County's focus will be on rewarding work and helping individuals with families stay employed or accept employment. Services will be provided if there is a precipitating event that jeopardizes the individual's employment situation or home situation. These services are designed to support job retention and advancement, strengthen the family, promote the healthy development of children and parents, and encourage the formation of two-parent families. Stokes County will follow the same policies for determining limits on services as those that are currently in place through WFFA-EA with the exceptions noted below. Services will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Transportation Assistance: car repairs (up to \$1000 in a 12 month period);
- Uniforms or clothing for work up to \$200 in a 12 month period;
- Part-time tuition assistance at the community college for individuals who maintain a 2.5 GPA;
- Special work equipment up to \$400 once in a 12 month period;
- Short term housing or utility payments; and
- Other services as needed, if services are allowable for funding, and funds are available.

VIII. Services to Non-Custodial Parents.

Stokes County will not provide services to non-custodial parents.

IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement

Stokes County will exempt single custodial parents of children under six (6) weeks of age from the work requirement. If a parent requires longer than the six week exemption, a note from the physician will be required. This exemption is limited to 12 months lifetime pursuant to the Work First Manual.

X. Innovative County Strategies

- The Stokes County Department of Social Services will continue to provide its program of awarding participants gift cards for reporting and meeting Federal Participation hours each month, for securing employment, and other achievements. We will also provide gift card incentives for the completion of short-term training.
- The Work First unit and the Child Welfare units collaborate closely. The agency continues to work on sharing information, case planning and resources with each other regarding cases in common. This approach has assisted the Work First/Child Welfare families in achieving self-sufficiency and prevents recidivism.

XI. Special Issues

Stokes County serves many families with barriers. Those barriers include:

- Approximately 16% of the Work First population has been deemed incapacitated for medical reasons. It is becoming more difficult to assist these clients initially and the disability process is cumbersome and lengthy. We have contracted with North Carolina Baptist Hospital to complete Quantitative Interdisciplinary Evaluations to determine an individual's capacity for work. If the participant is unable to work, this evaluation will also assist them with the Social Security disability process.
- There continues to be a high number of participants who lack their GED. Without a High School diploma or GED the participant lacks the ability to find employment to support their families' needs.
- There has been an increase in the number of participants with mental health and substance abuse issues that prevent immediate employment.
- There is an increase in participants with criminal histories that creates difficulty in obtaining gainful employment.

XVII. Certification

The Work First Plan for fiscal years 2010 – 2011 was reviewed by the Stokes County Board of Commissioners and approved for submission to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Approval of the Stokes County Work First Plan is hereby given this _____ day of _____, 2008.

Signed by: _____
Chairman of the Board of Commissioners

Date: _____