### Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force

6/25/2020 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM

[Virtual Meeting](https://watech.webex.com/watech/j.php?MTID=m77557bc3ba380e7a99e2681452ce9cb3)

# Minutes *(for review and confirmation at next meeting, June 2020)*

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

*Meeting convened by Senator Hans Zeiger and Dept. of Social and Health Services Secretary Cheryl Strange*

**Quorum met by task force members (or designee) in attendance as follows**:

*Cecil Daniels for Diane Klontz, Sen. Jeannie Darneille, Sen. Manka Dhingra, Erin Frasier, Rep. Mia Gregerson, Rep. Christine Kilduff, Haley Lowe, Mark Kucza, Daisye Orr, Tim Probst, Babs Roberts, Nichole Rose, Maria Siguenza, David Stillman, Cheryl Strange, Rep. Maureen Walsh and Sen. Hans Zeiger.*

**Guest Presenters & Additional attendees**:

*Donna Christensen, Bob Cooper, Brad Forbers, Sarah Garcia, Nova Gattman, Susan Kavanaugh, Lianna Kressin, Bethany Levy, Laurie Lippold, Alexis Marx, Alison Mendiola, Anna Minor, Liz Olson, Lori Pfingst , Devin Proctor, Shellea Quillen, Grete Schultz, Melanie Smith and Marisol Tapia Gonzales*

1. **Task Force Business**
   * **Confirm prior meeting minutes**
   * *Minutes from February 25, 2020 were reviewed, motion to approve from Cheryl Strange, seconded by Erin Frasier, motion carried, minutes approved.*
   * **Membership discussion** 
     + *Mark Kucza replaced James Harms as Department of Corrections taskforce member*
     + *Noted need to work towards identifying and onboarding new Task Force members. In the near future, seats will be vacated by Sen. Zeiger, Sen, Walsh and Rep. Kilduff. Sen. Zeiger’s departure which also means we will soon need a new legislative co-chair.*
2. **TANF Fiscal Update**

*Babs Roberts, DSHS*

* **Spending Plan review of reduction plan (see attachment)**
  + *OFM directed cabinet agencies including DSHS to propose a 15% cut to spending state funds.*
  + *Principles for proposing reductions: This was painful process, however DSHS focused on cuts that had the least amount of direct impact for those we serve. No recommendations to reduce grants, grant standards or eligibility criteria.*
  + *DSHS proposals for this reduction exercise included employee furloughs, delaying implementation of new programs, and, as you have probably been anticipating, reductions to WorkFirst services, including our WorkFirst partner contracts.*
  + *Administrative cuts – don’t show on the WorkFirst spending plan, but they include reduced spending on staffing (hiring freezes, furloughs and COLA), travel, training capital outlays*
  + *Other proposed reductions are:*
  + *Postpone start of legislative changes to TANF sanctions (HB 2441) and time limit extension criteria (HB 6478) from July 1 2021 to July 1, 2023*
  + *Reduce spending on WorkFirst services – for FY21 the cuts are deepest, but continue into the upcoming biennium*
  + *Local contracts and support services (like gas vouchers): Reduce 6.3%*
  + *LEP pathway: Reduce 5%*
  + *Transportation Initiative: Reduce 43%*
  + *Home visiting services contract with DCYF: Reduce 40%*
  + *WorkFirst partner agency contracts with SBCTC, ESD and Commerce: Reduce 15%*
* **COVID-19 policy changes (**[**see fact sheet**](https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Covid-19%20Response%20Overview%20%286.24.2020%29%20%28002%29.pdf)**)**
  + *BASIC FOOD:*
    - *Congress approved* [*supplemental funding*](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/os/office-communications/media-release/dshs-receives-supplemental-funding-boost-benefits-basic-food-recipients) *for recipients of food assistance in March through June 2020 due to the impacts of COVID-19 (extended monthly). Recipients will get the difference between their regular monthly benefit and the maximum amount for their household size.*
    - *Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) - All BFET programs and services continue to be available to clients and efforts continue to offer support remotely.*
    - *Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) - A stop to the new ABAWD waiver rules has been approved in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clients in all counties, including King County, have work requirements temporarily waived due to contracted services closures.*
    - *We continue to offer referrals to any ABAWD client who is not participating in work or work like activities. Most State Board Community and Technical College ABAWD navigators are continuing to work virtually with clients.*
  + *DISASTER CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (DCAP):*
    - *On April 17, 2020, DSHS began administering the Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP). The Governor’s declaration of a statewide emergency enables DSHS to offer the DCAP program to very low-income people who are not eligible for other cash programs. The one time per year assistance is available to all Washington families and people without children who meet the income and resource limits of the program.*
  + *TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)/WORKFIRST:*
    - *Time Limit Extensions – Effective April 1, 2020, DSHS expanded the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families 60-month Time Limit Extension to support families experiencing hardships due to the COVID-19 emergency. Families who exhausted 60 months on TANF cash assistance and are experiencing hardships due to COVID-19 will not be denied benefits.*
    - *Exempting WorkFirst Participation for Good Cause – Effective March 16, 2020, all WorkFirst participants are temporarily exempt from required participation. Clients can choose to continue participation, and to the extent possible, we will continue case management, but participation will not be required.*
    - *Suspending the WorkFirst Sanctions– Effective March 16, 2020, DSHS also temporarily suspended WorkFirst sanction reduction or termination penalties. This also suspends the need for a home visit by our staff as part of the sanction process.*
    - *Suspending Home Visits for the Teen Living Assessment – In compliance with federal law, DSHS conducts a Teen Living Assessment, which may include a home visit for all unmarried, minor parents applying for TANF cash assistance, to determine eligibility and offer support to the household. Effective March 16, 2020, WorkFirst Social Service Specialists are responsible to make their best effort to determine a safe living environment and situation, for the teen and their child, by completing all required assessment screening tools in the office or over the phone.*
    - *Telephone WorkFirst Orientations - All WorkFirst Orientations are being conducted via the telephone. This expands a process to conduct the orientations desk-side, which was piloted in a number of Community Services Offices.*
    - *Continuing Payment for WorkFirst Work-Study and Community Jobs Participants - Community Jobs through July 1st 2020 and WorkFirst work-study participants continue to be employed and receive payment even if they are temporarily unable to participate due to emergency operations changes or closures as a result of COVID-19.*
  + *AGED BLIND OR DISABLED (ABD)/HOUSING ESSENTIAL NEEDS (HEN) REFERRAL PROGRAMS:*
    - *Effective March 18, 2020, DSHS suspended treatment monitoring for participation in medical treatment for ABD, participation in substance use assessment and treatment and participation in vocational rehabilitation.*
    - *Effective March 26, 2020, DSHS postponed ABD disability reviews, modified HEN referral incapacity reviews and expanded medical evidence rules for eligibility purposes. Mental Incapacity Evaluation contracts have been amended to allow for telephonic psychological evaluations.*
  + *CLASSIC MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY:*
    - *Apple Health renewals that have not been completed for March and April are being extended for three months.  Benefits will continue for recipients of Apple Health unless the individual requests their benefits be terminated, the individual is no longer a Washington state resident or the individual is deceased.*
    - *Additional changes regarding Classic Medicaid eligibility to support clients include:*
      * *Reinstating Medically Needy coverage if closed for no renewal within the last 30 days.*
      * *Allowing a 30-day extension to provide verification of circumstances.*
      * *Accepting self-attestation of income and resources at application, renewal and change of circumstances.*
      * *Accepting self-attestation for medical expenses incurred needed to meet spenddown amounts for purposes of medically needy eligibility.*
  + *CERTIFICATION WAIVER FOR TANF, ABD, WFS AND FOOD ASSISTANCE EFFECTIVE APRIL 24, MAY and June 2020:*
    - *DSHS extended Eligibility Reviews due in the month of April, May or June for six additional months, extending these certifications through October and November 2020. This applies to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Aged, Blind or Disabled and Housing Essential Needs; Working Family Support; and all Food Assistance programs.*
* ***Caseload Trends: Increase in households seeking services****:*
  + - *Caseloads are increasing*
    - *75,000 applications for food were received in April of this year. That is twice as many as in any month during the prior recession.*
  + *Discussions* 
    - *Sen. Walsh- What are we hearing from clients as far as impacts? Have clients been able to access COVID UC and stimulus?*
    - *Babs Roberts- The stimulus payments were exempt income for CSD programs. We do count unemployment payments if they are in* paid *status, though not if the application is waiting in a queue.*
    - *Cheryl Strange- DSHS worked to get all exemptions possible from CARES Act and any exemptions or waivers from federal government. Unemployment payments were pulled for child support increase during this time: $7 million dollars per month up from $1.4 million.*
    - *There have been huge impacts on DSHS services, with big tasks ahead, thanks for all you do.*

1. **Budget Discussion**

*Babs Roberts, DSHS*

*Thoughts on principles for reductions? Opportunities to be part of economic recovery. Opportunities to adapt our services to better promote equity.*

* *Tim Probst- The pandemic and economic disruption are having a disproportionate impact on some communities. How we can focus on minimizing impacts in recovery and long term? Howe do we prevent those struggling from falling even further into poverty?*
* *Sen. Dhingra: Make sure budget reductions are done using an equity lens. Mistakes made during last recession took years to roll back. There are models available to look at long term-impact vs short term benefits.*
* *Babs Roberts: Agreed, some models and tools in the 5-year plan might help us.*
* *Sen. Darneille - We should be considering recovery - investments also have value, short term does not capture long term benefits, need to focus on solutions and sharing information. The 5- year plan has research that has already been done. We need to work on distributing info better, work on how we message work done. Shared information with Washington Association of Sherriff and Policy Chiefs.*
* *Rep. Walsh – We have a plan to focus on to address this.*
* *Cheryl Strange: As we address here and now issues, we need to look at future issues too. We need budget tools to deal with budget reduction in equity lens. May need to look beyond years listed in a fiscal note.*
* *Lori Pfingst - There are subgroups from the Poverty Reduction Workgroup 10-year plan looking at this with several community groups. What is an equitable economy and how to measure, efforts being made currently, focus on outcomes. Preparing brief for leadership on proposed measures the subgroup created.*
* *Sen. Dhingra – Have received an Oregon model from Lori; it seems fairly useable. Don’t need to reinvent the wheel if there are tools that can help with these budget exercises.*
* *Sen. Zeiger – Need to keep a focus on resilience (now that public health is a higher priority). Goal is to equitably invest in the long term.*

1. **5- Year Plan Next Steps**

*Babs Roberts*

* **5 – Year Plan**
* *Following up on action planning to implement the 5-Year Plan that we approved in our last meeting.*
* *Our Five-Year poverty reduction plan closely aligns with the 10-year plan of the Governor’s Poverty Reduction Workgroup, and we hope to continue to collaborate when it comes to action planning for the reports.*
* *We have a document that provides a comparison of the two plans (see* [*Plan Comparison*](https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Draft_5year_10year_poverty_plan_comparison.docx) *document). But what we want to spend time on is beginning to move forward toward action.*
* **Next Steps**
* *As our action planning begins to take shape, we’ve drafted a “scorecard” format addressing Strategy 6 of the Plans, which is the strategy to build an integrated human service continuum of care that address the holistic needs of children, adults and families (see* [*Action Plan Scorecard*](https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/FiveYearPlan-Draft-ActionPlan.Scorecard.docx)*).*
* *We’re hoping to get feedback and input on this format. Are there suggestions to improve or change? Does this align with what this group had in mind, or are there other visions of how to effectively document our action planning in a way that will help prioritize and leverage combined efforts to make the recommendations a reality?*
* *Daisye Orr: Add what has been and is currently being done to current plan, updates about bills that were proposed. It will be helpful to know what is already done and what folks who are joining the work can offer support. Want an equity lens by next meeting, and thoughts for how we can use this for the interim and for next session.*
* *Erin Frasier: Human centered design team is already working on some of this. It would be nice to have a section to see who is already taking action, and who we can build off. The committee feels pressure of the whole recommendation, and wants help to direct focus on where the needs are and decrease duplication of efforts.*
* *Sen. Dhingra: It is helpful when an action plan lists RCWs that need to be addressed. How to divide work and which legislators should focus on what, legislators need to work out who does what (legislative program and fiscal).*
* *Cheryl Strange: Need to know where is the legislative component versus which part is a fiscal impact?*
* *Roberts: Work to add to document in next 30-45 days, and will consider Daisye’s idea of having a Dashboard to organize efforts, will connect on that.*
* *Sen. Darneille: Objectives may need to be more incremental to help create change in current/next legislative year. It’s a very comprehensive report; they need more specific steps to help guide legislation, need to prioritize due to demands on budget.*
* *Rep. Kilduff: Agree, this is an art and science, how to present issues, how many legislators will be working on it, make more clear and bundle when possible, like DCS bill. Wonder about impact of furloughs on timeline.*
* *Tim Probst: Support Rep. Kilduff’s points and can help where needed with staffing*
* *Next meeting will be in September. In the meantime:*
* *Sen. Dhingra: Can legislators go through and see where interests are so groups can connect to them and start drafting bills sooner to be ready in December? Can we meet before the September meeting?*
* *Sen. Darneille: Agencies have processes to send legislative requests. Legislators have more freedoms so agency recommendations may not be as helpful; Legislator turnover adds challenges.*
* *Sen. Zeiger: How about at call among legislators to discuss direction? Involve staff to help and legislators who are currently part of this work.*
* *Sen. Dhingra: Agree with legislative subgroup for next step*
* *Sen. Kilduff: Agree in starting the work and getting a head start, with mind to the systems agencies are working in.*
* *Sen. Zeiger: Can schedule a meeting for legislators/staff. Will start with legislators from this taskforce and invite caucuses and nonpartisan staff. Mentioned additional legislators including Rep. Senn, and Rep. Dent.*
* *Sen. Darneille: Special session will address COVID and emergency response. They want staff to help look at urgent items from this list in special session.*

1. **Economic Security for All Update**

*Tim Probst, Economic Security Department* (see handout)

* *Took input from 5- and 10-year poverty reduction plans to see what was allowable for federal funds and created pilot program to reduce poverty. Economic Security for All (EcSA) provides grants to local partnerships to reach these goals, with requirements focused on equity and poverty reduction as outlined in poverty reduction plans. The goal is to move SNAP users into permanent non-poverty, focusing on equity, and on replication if successful. Projects help to highlight barriers and show problems in systems. Programs are currently underway using grants, with participants using four different models. Slow progress due to circumstances.*
* *Each EcSA Pilot Model includes:*
* *People experiencing poverty in the design, planning, and implementation*
* *A focus on racial and cultural equity, based on needs identified in the target community*
* *Partnership between the WDC, DSHS Community Services Office, and local organizations serving individuals in poverty*
* *Mentors from the community, so individual success is seen as community success*
* *Consider personal trauma, historical trauma, and behavioral health to help individuals build the necessary foundation for success*
* *Assistance to help participants access all eligible benefits to build a financial foundation for success.*
* *Pulling PRWG steering committee members in to prioritize*
* *Using Federal funds in a new way. Will give updates as the work progresses.*
* *Discussion:*
  + *Sen. Darneille: Have programs started?*
  + *Tim: Yes, they are underway, people are enrolling in four different models. COVID virtual services have slowed the pace, but they have solved training issues.*
  + *Will share more information in coming meetings.*

1. **Public Comment**

* *Marisol Tapia Gonzales: Looking at opportunities to adapt services to promote equity. How can we access funds for emergencies? Can we divert prison funds to social programs?*
* *Melanie Smith: Thank you for all your amazing work. Hope outgoing legislators can work with advocates and draft bills for incoming members*
* *Laurie Lippold: Work with advocates on prioritization from 10- year plan, have top 10 priority recommendations from plan. Will send to the group.*
* *Need to work on institutional racism in child welfare and institutional racism, agencies are currently pushing for change in these areas*
* *Cheryl Strange: Thanks to everyone, hang in there. We are done with the pandemic but it’s not done with us.*