

Potential Framing an EF-Informed Approach for Cash Assistance Programs with Mandatory Work Requirements

In order to be responsive to the needs of the families we serve, we have two different, but complementary purposes: (1) **stabilize families so that parents can regain their economic footing** and continue to provide for their children when they are facing an economic or personal or family crisis and (2) **provide parents access to economic opportunities and work supports** that can help them make progress towards realizing their full economic potential. Both purposes are critical to the work that we do.

We have learned from behavioral and brain research that we all have limited attentional capacity (i.e. bandwidth). Therefore, if parents are concerned about how they will meet their family's basic needs, the chances are quite low that they will participate and succeed in work activities. The research requires us to recognize that the path to work and economic stability will be different for every family. **While some parents may immediately be ready to engage in the work activities we offer – job search, work experience, education, training – others need help stabilizing their situations before they can take advantage of the services we provide.**

The research calls on us to build supportive, responsive relationships with parents, so that they see (and believe) that we are here to **reduce their sources of stress, listen to their hopes and dreams and provide them with support as they build skills.**

This approach is different than telling parents that they will only get assistance if they participate for 20 or 30 hours in approved work activities. That said, we can also nudge families to begin to participate in work activities by offering them possibilities they aren't aware of or they think are beyond their reach. Here is some language you can use to get started:

- **Program Description:** Our program is a program that joins families on their journey to overcome obstacles, explore opportunities, improve their finances and reach their personal and family goals.
- **Dual purpose:** We want to help you meet your immediate needs so you can regain your economic footing and provide for your children. We also are here to help you think ahead so that we can help you and your family permanently improve your circumstances.
- **Starting point:** *What would you most like to change to help you improve things for you and your children?* (Then use GPDR/R to work through this personal goal.)
- **After discussion of the starting point (including working out a plan and detailing the support you will provide):** Here are the services we offer that can help you to find a job or find a better job by increasing your education or completing a training program. *Which of these opportunities are appealing to you?* We offer these opportunities as a core part of our program to help you be the best parent and worker you can be. We'd like to have everyone participating in some activities that will help them improve their employment options within [XX] months. (If ready to participate now, use GPDR/R to work through establishing a goal and a plan.)