



State Policy Spotlight:

Statewide Program calling for Transitional Jobs Advances in Wisconsin

April, 2010

In the last year, many states and counties have sought to utilize funds available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to develop or expand Transitional Job programs that provide immediate wage-paid employment and supportive services to those who have difficulty finding and keeping employment. TJ programs have emerged through a number of programs that received increased ARRA funding this year, including the Community Service Block Grant, the WIA Green Jobs (particularly the Pathways out of Poverty) project, and especially the TANF Emergency Fund.

Recently, Wisconsin has signaled its strong commitment by creating Transitional Jobs programs as part of the state's economic support strategy. The state seeks to use federal ARRA funds during the current economic crisis to lay the groundwork for a sustained Transitional Jobs programs in the future.

As a result of strong state leadership and local advocacy, the Wisconsin Legislature adopted a Transitional Jobs budget provision in 2009 and is poised to expand that TJ program through stand-alone legislation. Based on the initial budget amendment and anticipating the expansion, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has advanced program-planning efforts to capture and effectively utilize federal ARRA funds to establish a significant permanent Transitional Jobs program.

In June of 2009, Sen. Spencer Coggs persuaded his colleagues to amend the state's biennial budget to create a two-part TJ program: (1) a new wage-paying "subsidized Private Sector Employment Program" as an additional option for the low-income custodial parents enrolled in the state's "W-2" work-oriented welfare replacement program; and (2), a 2,500-slot TJ demonstration project for low-income, unemployed adults who don't qualify for either "W-2" or Unemployment Insurance. DCF is now in the process of implementing this two-pronged initiative. DCF recently issued an [RFP](#) to administer the TJ demonstration, and the state has submitted a request for TANF Emergency Fund dollars to pay for it.

This spring, meanwhile, as the Wisconsin Legislature wraps up its session, Wisconsin state legislators Rep. Tamara Grigsby and Sen. Coggs introduced The Wisconsin Family Jobs Act (Assembly Bill 898/Senate Bill 653), a [bill](#) which will expand the state's Transitional Jobs program. In late March this bill passed out of both Assembly and Senate committees with

strong bi-partisan support. On April 15 it was approved by the full Assembly in a 87-10 vote, and passed with bipartisan support from the full Senate on April 21st!

The legislation represents a tremendous victory for the state's efforts to help thousands of people who are unemployed and face difficulties finding a job in the face of the nation's and Wisconsin's huge [job shortage](#). Wisconsin also plans to use federal fund dollars for this expanded effort.

David Riemer, Director of the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute, who worked closely with the offices of both Sen. Coggs and Rep. Grigsby in shaping their proposals, attributes Wisconsin's recent success to growing understanding of the magnitude of the job shortage; strong legislative leadership for Transitional Jobs programs; and creative departmental leadership in leveraging available federal TANF Emergency Funds. The Milwaukee TJ Collaborative—a new coalition staffed by Community Advocates and including leaders from Milwaukee's religious, community, social service agency, work force development organizations and philanthropic networks—intends to continue to work to promote TJ programs in the state through education, defending current programs, and statewide advocacy.

For more information on Transitional Jobs, visit; www.transitionaljobs.net.

For more specific information about efforts in Wisconsin, please contact David Riemer at DRiemerMil@yahoo.com or call (414) 270-2943



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