
WORKING TOWARD JOBS

*The Delaware
First Step Program*



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND INSPECTIONS

MAY 1990

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This technical report was prepared to describe the operation of the Delaware First Step program. This technical report is part of a larger study which was conducted to describe the operation of a sample of mature, well-regarded and comprehensive work programs for AFDC recipients and the insights of the administrators of those programs.

This report was prepared under the direction of Emilie Baebel, Chief, Public Health and Human Services Branch. This project was lead by Suzanne Murrin of that branch.

Working Toward JOBS

The Delaware First Step Program

**Richard P. Kusserow
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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INTRODUCTION

This technical report is part of a series of profiles on the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) work programs participating in the *Working Toward JOBS* project.

Each profile begins with a categorized description of the subject AFDC work program, which is based on mail guides submitted by the program. Appendix A includes an overview statement written by the program manager. It describes the program, its goals, philosophy and lessons learned. Appendix B is a sample of documents used to conduct the program. Each program administrator was asked to submit sample documents which they felt would be useful to States and counties developing JOBS programs.

Data collection for this study was done from April to September of 1989. The information in the overview and technical reports is based on pre-JOBS work programs for AFDC recipients. As these programs have converted to JOBS, they may have made some changes to meet JOBS legal and regulatory requirements. Where possible, we have noted the changes the program administrators anticipated at the time of our data collection.

PROGRAM PROFILE

THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Population: 649,000
Major industries: services, manufacturing, retail trade
First quarter 1989 unemployment rate: 3.6 percent
1986 average annual income for a family of four: \$35,766
Percent of the population living below the poverty line: 11.3

THE DELAWARE AFDC PROGRAM

For Fiscal Year (FY) 1988:
Total cost: \$24,210,072
Federal share: \$12,463,008; State share: \$11,747,064
Average monthly caseload: 7,434
Client descriptors:
Average number of children in grant: 1.8
Average length of spell on AFDC: 30 months
Case closures: 6,095

THE DELAWARE AFDC WORK PROGRAM

General Background

Name: First Step

Operating Since: April 1, 1986. Delaware has been operating a Work Incentive Demonstration project since 1982.

Philosophy: The underlying philosophy of First Step is "People have the potential for self sufficiency, and given the appropriate resources can succeed in reaching that goal." The mission of the Department of Social Services (DSS) is to provide an integrated system of opportunities, services and income supports that enables recipients to develop self sufficiency and achieve and maintain independence.

Employment and training services are offered through the Division's First Step program. The ultimate goal of the program is two-fold:

- The placement of individuals in public or private sector employment that enables them to become self sufficient.
- The interruption of the intergenerational public assistance dependency cycle working through parents to promote education and skill training for their children, rather than the continuation of public assistance.

Program Administrator:

Rebecca R. Varella
 Chief Employment and Training Administrator
 Division of Social Services
 P.O. Box 906
 New Castle, DE 19720
 (302) 421-6776

Administrative Issues

Structure: The DSS administers the program's three local offices throughout the State.

Funding: In FY 1988:

	Federal	State	TOTAL
Program Costs	\$314,618	\$676,732	\$991,350
Supportive Services	124,223	184,226	308,449
TOTAL	438,841	860,958	1,299,799

Staff: There are six case managers who perform assessments, counseling and referral services, and offer support services and case management. There are two supervisors who oversee the case managers, compile reports, relay administrative instructions and coordinate all First Step activities.

Success Measurements: Delaware measures First Step's success by tracking the number of clients who: participate in First Step; participate in Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs and other educational and training programs; become employed; leave welfare; receive their General Equivalency Diploma; and/or make grade level improvements.

Recordkeeping: The DSS is in the process of developing a comprehensive automated monitoring/tracking system which enables service providers to directly link with the employment and training system for referral information, status reporting and expenditure reporting.

Provision of Services: The DSS contracts with community based agencies to provide basic life skills (academic and life management) and self-directed job search instruction. As part of the selection process competitive bids/proposals are solicited from community agencies and a committee reviews and rates proposals based on established criteria.

Outside Resources: The DSS works closely with the State Departments of Education and Labor in order to provide education and job placement services to First Step participants.

Evaluations: An internal evaluation is being conducted to determine retention rates for participants entering employment in 1986 and 1987. This evaluation should be completed in April 1990.

Participation Issues

Participant Descriptors: All AFDC recipients are registered for First Step. However, only the WIN mandatory participants and those who choose to volunteer are referred for active participation in First Step. There are approximately 1,600 registrants each year. Seventy-nine percent of participants test at third grade or below in math skills. Fifty-two percent of participants test at fifth grade or below in reading. In addition, they are deficient in life management skills.

Target Groups: First Step targets long-term welfare recipients (defined as receiving AFDC for 60 months or more) and the hard to serve. Targeted groups receive priority service in the program components and supportive services.

Mandatory Activities/Sanctions: All non-exempt AFDC recipients must participate in appraisal and assigned program components. In FY 1988 the State imposed 160 sanctions on AFDC clients who did not comply with the mandatory activities in First Step.

Volunteers: Eighty-three exempt AFDC clients volunteered for First Step in 1988. The DSS encourages voluntary participation by: distributing literature; holding recognition ceremonies; encouraging current participants to contact potential participants; having eligibility workers inform clients of First Step services and the future benefits of participation; airing a public relations tape on seven local television stations; showing a video tape at community organization meetings; encouraging newspaper coverage; and emphasizing First Step in the case management project.

Employment Placements: In calendar year 1988 First Step placed 128 participants into part-time employment and 319 participants into full-time employment.

Seventy-four of those part-time placements resulted in a case closure, while 191 of the full-time placements resulted in a case closure. Typical placements were in the service, clerical and administrative support positions. The average starting wage is \$4.52 per hour.

Program Activities

Models: Each of the program administrators was asked to describe a model activity or service. The First Step program administrator chose to describe the Brown Bag Club.

Some First Step participants belong to co-op club, called the Brown Bag Club. These clubs help participants learn decision-making skills and budgeting techniques. Participants contribute \$3.00 per month to their group's "purchasing power bank." Products are generally available by the case and include such items as dish detergent, spaghetti, fruit juice, and personal care products. Each Brown Bag Club group reviews a list of products available, evaluates their personal needs, calculates the cost savings of products, and democratically determines what are the most cost-effective product purchases for the group to make for the month. A number of the groups have expanded this activity to include reviewing supermarket and bread thrift store circulars to determine additional purchases of items not included in the official Brown Bag Club list. If necessary, they will contribute a few more dollars to make these purchases.

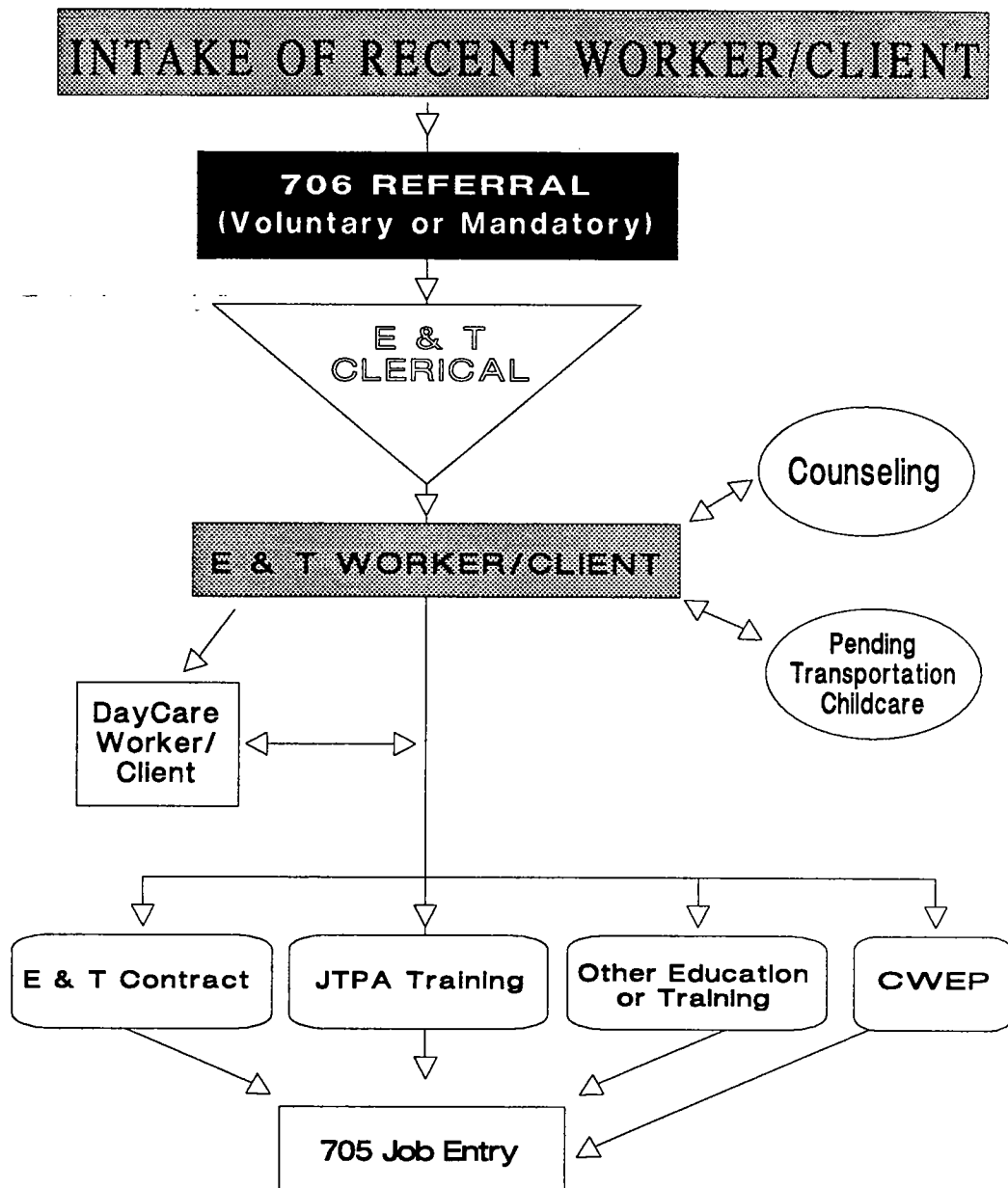
Participants enjoy being a part of this activity and consider their experience to be extremely beneficial.

Sequencing: Figure 1 shows the typical sequence of activities for First Step participants.

Program Activities Listing: What follows is a listing of the program services of First Step. Costs and participation figures are for FY 1988.

Figure 1

AFDC EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING



Assessment

Activity: Within a reasonable time period prior to participation the DSS case manager must make an initial assessment of employability based on: (1) the participant's educational, child care and other supportive services needs; (2) the participant's proficiencies, skills deficiencies and prior work experience; (3) a review of family circumstances, which may include the needs of any child of the participant; and (4) other factors that DSS determines are relevant in developing the employability plan.

How Provided: Individual meetings between case managers and participants. Provided by DSS and community based agency contractors.

Participants: Approximately 1,500; all First Step participants receive assessment.

Employability Planning

Activity: Consists of instruction in self-assessment, self-image improvement, decision making, networking, peer counseling, communication skills, affective development and appropriate work place behavior. These skills will enable the client to make more realistic decisions in the employability planning process.

Employability planning also includes evaluation of the participants intrinsic abilities, cognitive functioning, motivation and vocational interests.

The employability plan must: contain an employment goal for the participant; describe the services to be provided by DSS, including child care and other supportive services; describe the First Step activities that will be undertaken by the participant to achieve the employment goal; describe any other needs of the family that might be met by First Step; and emphasize placement in a component which will assure the participant's success. The employability plan shall take into account: available program resources; participant's supportive services needs; participant's skill levels and aptitudes; local employment opportunities; and, to the maximum extent possible, the preferences of the participant.

How Provided: Provided by DSS staff in one-on-one meetings.

Participants: Appropriate for all participants.

Supportive Services

Activity: Transportation, child care, supplemental non-medical benefits (i.e., hard hats, goggles or other supplies required for training or work under safety regulations), remedial medical (optical and dental services).

How Provided: Need for assistance determined on an individual basis by case manager.

Transportation: The DSS may utilize van service. Clients using public transportation or their own vehicles are generally limited to \$65.00 per month.

Child Care: The DSS will arrange care through purchase of service contracts, in-home care, or care provided by a caretaker relative, or child care center.

Supplemental non-medical: Done on a one time only basis. Generally limited to \$100.

Remedial medical: The DSS will provide up to \$100 on a one-time-only basis for an eye examination and glasses. The DSS can waive the \$100 limit if a participant has a vision problem and the necessary correction costs more than \$100. Authorization for a dental exam can be granted by a First Step supervisor. All remedial medical payments are issued directly to the vendor.

Participants: On average 132 participants receive child care services each month.

Cost: Transportation costs were \$43,539 and child care costs were \$264,910. Cost figures on the other services are not available.

Self Directed Job Search Training

Activity: Designed to equip the client with life-long job hunting skills. These skills include resume construction, resume updating, career planning, and appropriate work behavior. Self-directed job search develops intrinsic abilities for individuals to avoid relying on outside support during job transitions, thus preventing the possibility of recycling into the public assistance system.

How Provided: Provided in a classroom setting through contracts with community based agencies.

Participants: 435; appropriate for participants who lack job seeking skills.

Costs: \$588,626

Post Secondary Education

Activity: Upon reaching a mutually agreed upon career goal that involves post-secondary education, DSS will fully substantiate the client's skill level. These predictive success qualifications, along with support services, will enable the client to pursue and qualify for outside financial aid.

How Provided: The DSS will offer management and support services in conjunction with financial and educational services provided by the post-secondary education institution and outside sources.

Participants: Appropriate for those whose employment goal requires post secondary education.

Vocational Skills Training

Activity: Training designed to prepare a participant for a specific vocation.

How Provided: The training is generally provided by JTPA contractors. The DSS will provide case managed referrals and monitor clients progress while in training.

Participants: Appropriate for those who lack specific vocational skills.

Community Work Experience

Activity: A work experience in a public non-profit organization which enables a participant to explore their interests and abilities.

How Provided: Arranged by DSS in one-on-one meetings with clients. Employment is in public non-profit agencies.

Participants: 5; appropriate for those needing a work experience setting to enhance their job skills.

On-the-Job Training

Activity: Provides clients with specific job skills training in a work place setting. Length of time that a client may remain in on-the-job training (OJT) is determined by the contractor and the employer. An OJT participant will receive the same compensation as a provider's regular employees.

How Provided: Provided by DSS through an interagency agreement under which the Delaware Department of Labor refers clients directly to OJT providers who may be funded by JTPA.

Participants: Recommended for job ready individuals.

Job Development/Placement

Activity: Contracted job developers work with prospective employers to create or modify a position to meet a participant's skills. Job developers also refer clients to job openings appropriate for their work skills.

How Provided: Delaware's Department of Labor JTPA programs provide this service through their contractors.

Participants: Recommended for participants who are job ready.

English As A Second Language

Activity: Training in the English language for literate and non-literate Spanish speaking participants.

How Provided: One community based organization works to help clients gain proficiency in both languages, while participating in work related training. Another community based organization offers a submersion approach to English speaking. English as a second language (ESL) training is provided by DSS contracted services through community based educational and social services organizations. The JTPA funded providers offer ESL to participants with relatively high literacy functioning.

Participants: Recommended for those with low English proficiency.

Basic Life Skills Enrichment

Activity: The primary purpose of this activity is to provide individualized academic instruction to individuals with academic and life management skills deficits. These deficits pose a significant barrier to employment and/or prevent access to other training programs due to the participant's inability to meet minimum entrance standards.

How Provided: Provided in classroom settings through contracts with community based organizations. Instruction is based on the individualized and small group approach.

Participants: Recommended for participants with academic and life management skills deficits which pose a significant barrier to employment or education. These deficiencies include: illiteracy, mental health, specific learning disabilities, social and emotional developmental lag, lack of motivation or work ethic, personal time management and chemical dependency.

Self-Initiated Education Or Training

Activity: Post-secondary or vocational training which was begun by the participant outside of First Step. Such programs must be at least half-time, and the participant must be making satisfactory progress. The participant must undergo First Step assessment and employability planning. Self-initiated education or training is funded by outside sources, but First Step will provide supportive services as appropriate.

How Provided: Outside agencies will provide classroom training. The DSS staff will arrange for supportive services.

High School Diploma/General Equivalency Diploma

Activity: This component involves participation in general equivalency diploma classes in conjunction with skills training.

How Provided: These services are provided by DSS contractors. Additionally, through formal agreements, JTPA, and the Department of Public Instruction's Adult Basic Education program provide services.

Participants: Recommended for any client in need of high school certification.

Case Management

Activity: Applying a competency based approach, benefit assistance eligibility staff identify client's strengths, challenge self doubts and, working with the client, establish action steps leading toward self-sufficiency. Utilizing the competency based approach enables staff to instill a sense of empowerment in the participant. At this point, the client is referred to First Step.

First Step employment and training case managers combine the competency based philosophy with a holistic approach in their efforts to foster employability development as a means to achieve self-sufficiency.

How Provided: Provided by DSS staff in one-on-one and group meetings.

Participants: All participants receive case management.

OVERVIEW STATEMENT**DELAWARE'S FIRST STEP**

Delaware has operated a WIN Demo Program since April 1, 1982. Through a contract with the Department of Labor, employment and training services were provided to "job ready" AFDC recipients. In the fall of 1985, the Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Economic Services (renamed Division of Social Services effective 2/16/89) contracted with James Bell Associates to study welfare dependency in Delaware. The study entitled *Gaining Ground* documented that approximately 29 percent of Delaware's welfare recipients are long-term dependent. These recipients spend an average of 9 years on welfare and are characterized as persons with two children, who have never worked or worked very little, have never been married, have less than 9 years of schooling, have severe basic skills deficiencies and began to receive assistance as teenagers. Included in the study was the recommendation to design an employability development program to meet the needs of the long-term, hard to serve recipient.

In April of 1989, as a result of the Bell study, the WIN Demo program was restructured. After terminating the contract with the Department of Labor, the program design reflected an approach to providing employment and training services for recipients which centered around the holistic concept of dealing with the whole person. This encompasses improving basic skills performance and life management skills, without which there is a negative impact on the client's ability to attain self sufficiency. The new employment and training initiative was titled First Step (the hardest step to take) and includes such services as:

- Pre-assessment
- Community Academic/Life Skills Development
- Basic Academic/Life Skills Development
- Self-Directed Job Search Training
- Vocational Training Referral
- Other Education Referral

Basic Academic/Life Skills and Self-Directed Job Search Training services are provided through contracts with community based agencies. Support services are provided and include child care, transportation and remedial medical for dental and eye care services.

The ultimate goal of the First Step Program is two-fold:

- The placement of individuals in public or private sector employment that enables them to achieve self-sufficiency.
- The interruption of the inter-generational public assistance dependency cycle working through parents to promote education and skill training for their children, rather than continuation of public assistance.

Because of Delaware's strong economic development in the 1980's, our unemployment rate is approximately half of the national rate. Most people are under the assumption that welfare recipients *prefer* to stay on welfare, since job opportunities are abundant and the recipient is still receiving benefits. Counter-acting this assumption was extremely challenging. The Division of Social Services contracted with Susan Gray, M.Ed, Beechwood Consultants to conduct a pilot diagnostic testing program. The results indicated that more than 60 percent of the clients tested are performing below a 5th grade level. The Department of Labor's *Workforce 2000* report included the following as future labor market trends which currently are evident in Delaware:

- Majority of new jobs will be created in the service industries and will demand high skills.
- Those who cannot read, follow directions and use mathematics will have fewer employment opportunities.
- The most educationally advantaged will benefit significantly, since many of the new jobs will require post secondary education.

With the support of Governor Michael N. Castle, the Division of Social Services accepted the challenge of intensively working with our population. Coupled with this challenge was the task of influencing the rethinking of traditional assumptions related to the welfare population.

We have learned that through the continuum of services model involving a structured approach with informed client choices on an individual basis being the foundation, we are able to significantly enhance a client's ability to move off and remain off welfare.

States need to be well aware of the impact of the generally accepted assumptions related to the welfare population on their agency's ability to design quality programs that are geared toward individual client needs.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

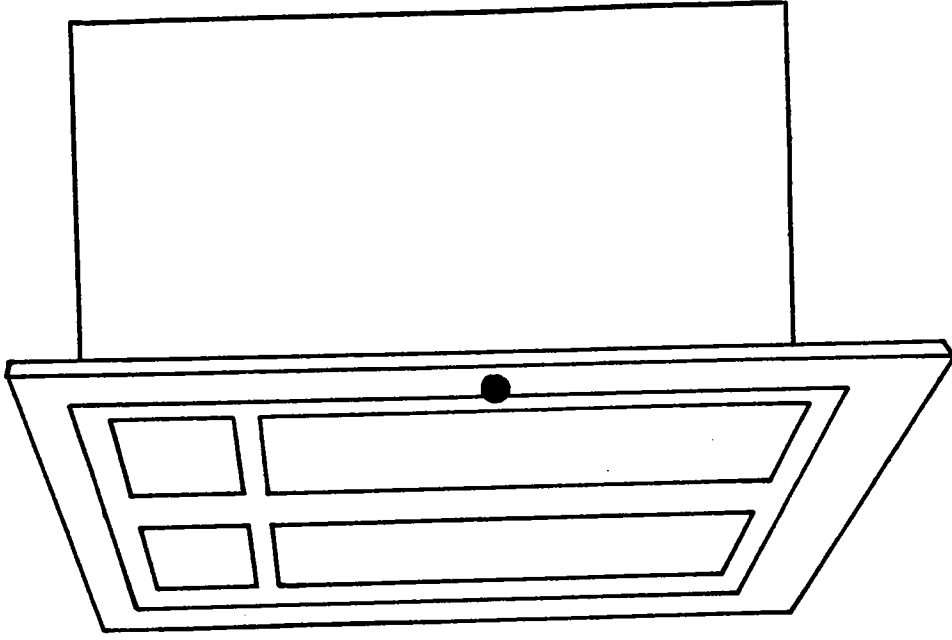
NAME _____
 SSN # _____

**DIVISION OF ECONOMIC SERVICES
 INDEPENDENT JOB SEARCH LOG**

Dates Covered: _____ to _____

EMPLOYER NAME ADDRESS/TELEPHONE	CONTACT PERSON AND TITLE	ACTIVITY (DATE)				OUTCOME
		Phone Call	Letter Visit	Appli- cation	Resume Interview	
Employer # 7						
Employer # 8						
Employer # 9						
Employer # 10						
Employer # 11						
Employer # 12						

FIRST STEP



N.E. St. Service Center
624 Jessup St.
Wilmington 19802
571-3101

16th & Thatcher Sts.
Wilmington 19802
571-3170

1715 W. 4th St.
Wilmington 19805
571-3600

Suite L-101
32 Lookerman St.
Dover 19901
736-5633

Georgetown St. Service Center
546 S. Bedford St.
Georgetown 19947
856-5450

Bridgeville St. Service Center
N. Cannon & Mill Sts.
Bridgeville 19933
856-5350

Porter St. Service Center
509 W. 8th St.
Wilmington 19801
571-3400

DeLaWarr St. Service Center
500 Rogers Rd.
New Castle 19720
571-3813

Hudson St. Service Center
501 Ogletown Rd.
Newark 19711
368-6770

Williams St. Service Center
805 River Road
Dover 19901
736-3351

Laurel St. Service Center
111 Mechanics St.
Laurel 19956
856-5223

Pyle St. Service Center
Rd. 2
Frankford 19945
732-9501

You will meet with the First Step staff who will help determine your needs and refer you to the program which best meets your needs.

Those who have completed the First Step Program are working as Account Clerks, Clerk Typists, Mail Sorters, and Machine Operators. They are on their way to independence from welfare.

Only people who get AFDC or Food Stamps.

Call your Social Worker to learn more about First Step and how to enroll. Soon you can get help to be independent, to be successful.



**DELAWARE HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

Division of Social Services

W

The First Step Program offers you many employment and training choices to help you obtain the skills you need to get and keep a job. The First Step staff will work with you to reach your goal. It is true that taking the first step is the hardest but once you do, you will be on your way to getting off welfare.

H

Supportive Services help you deal with some of the problems that keep you from going to education and training programs.

We offer:

- Day Care - We can help with the cost of care for your children while you go to school and, maybe, after you have found a job.
- Transportation - We cover the cost of transportation to and from education and training programs.
- Eye Care - If you are getting AFDC, you get a free eye exam and glasses.

E

Group Job Search - First Step will help you learn how to apply, how to interview and how to keep a job.

Community Work Experience-Will enable you to work in a public agency to get work experience and improve your skills.

Improve your reading, math and verbal skills which may lead to a GED or high school diploma. If you choose to continue improving your skills, you can be referred to a college level program.

Through referral to Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and other training programs you will learn a skill. Many kinds of training programs are available including office skills, construction trades, and banking.

FIRST STEP

