

# TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project (TSDTP): Pilot Findings

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# Questions that emerged from Phase 1

- Are there effective ways to identify disabilities among TANF recipients and direct them to programs that will best serve them?
- How can SSA coordinate with TANF to ensure that eligible recipients are assisted with the application process?
- For TANF recipients who are not eligible for or not interested in SSI, are there promising strategies to help them become self-sufficient?

# Three Pilots

- Muskegon County, MI
  - Goal: Improve and expedite the state's TANF disability determination process; increase engagement in work for those deemed "work-ready with limitations"
- Los Angeles County, CA
  - Goal: Improve SSI advocacy program
- Ramsey County, MN:
  - Goal: Facilitate and encourage work among TANF recipients with disabilities

# Muskegon County Pilot

- Tested use of SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) model
  - Pilot staff helped participants claiming disability complete packet
- Staff uploaded SOAR materials, medical documentation, and Medicaid utilization report to secure website that Medical Review Team (MRT) accessed
- MRT deemed cases: “work-ready with limitations,” “disabled and potentially eligible for SSI or SSDI,” or “not disabled”
- Based on determination, pilot staff referred participants to: Goodwill for individualized employment supports, SSI, or regular welfare-to-work program
- Staff trained in motivational interviewing

# Results from Muskegon Pilot

- About half of the participants referred to the pilot made it through to the disability determination step
  - For others, medical documentation not submitted in time or participants did not submit SOAR packet
- Among determinations, most had disability or work limitation
  - 63% were “work-ready with limitations,” 27% were “potentially eligible for SSI/SSDI,” and 10% were “not disabled”
- While pilot attempted to expedite process, collecting medical documentation took much longer than projected
- Due to slow determination (avg = 105 days), few participants received Goodwill employment services during 6-month pilot
- The SOAR model received mixed reviews from staff

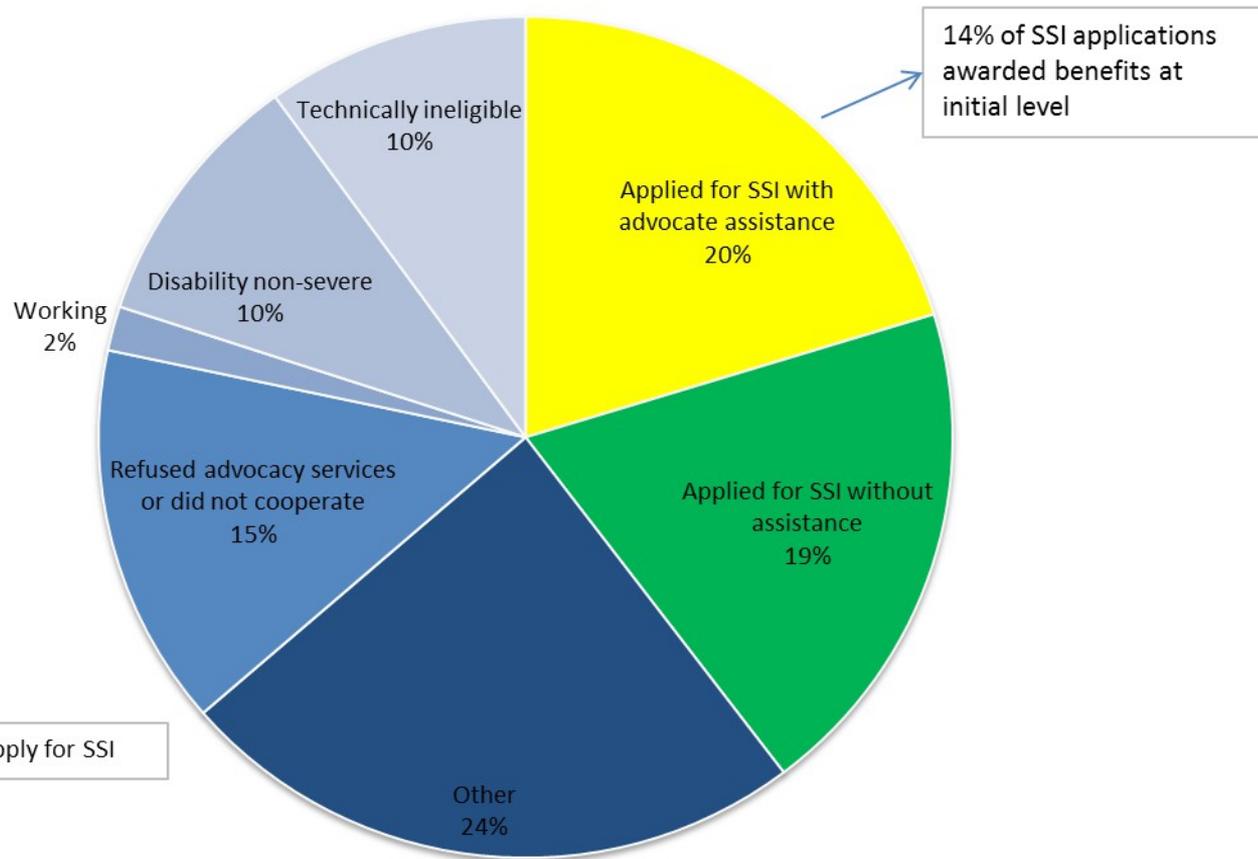
# Los Angeles County Pilot

- LADPSS, SSA, and DDS established clear lines of communication and authority for working with TANF participants
- SSA and DDS provided training to SSI advocates to improve applications
  - Provided feedback on applications submitted and rated quality on several factors: function reports, work history reports, medical records, and coordination
- SSI advocacy manager conducted presentations to TANF staff on SSI advocacy program and developed flyer to increase awareness

# Results from LA Pilot

- Improved communication and coordination between LADPSS, SSA and DDS.
- Advocates assisted most TANF clients referred to the advocates who wanted assistance with their SSI application
  - Advocates contacted roughly 70% of individuals referred
- The overall quality of the applications submitted during the pilot was satisfactory but did not improve substantially
- Most SSI applications submitted with the advocates' assistance during the pilot period were denied at initial level (86%); similar to pre-pilot rate (89%)

# Outcomes of Cases Referred to Advocates



# Ramsey County Pilot: Families Achieving Success Today (FAST)

- Integrated and co-located employment, mental health, and physical health services; focus on whole family, not just adult recipient
- Team from four organizations met weekly to review cases; staff conducted joint meetings with families
- Central to FAST: Individual Placement and Support (IPS) supported employment (SE) model
- Staff trained in motivational interviewing
- Evaluated pilot using random assignment design
  - Small sample (241 treatment cases; 148 control cases)
  - Control group required to participate in activities, but not necessarily meet federal work participation requirements

# Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment

- Developed to help individuals with severe mental illness achieve steady employment in *mainstream*, competitive jobs
  - Found effective in numerous RCTs
  - Now being tested with other populations
- Eight Core Principles
  - Focus on competitive employment
  - Eligibility based on client choice
  - Integration of rehabilitation and mental health services
  - Attention to client preferences
  - Personalized benefits counseling
  - Rapid job search
  - Systematic job development
  - Time-unlimited and individualized support

# Results from Ramsey County Pilot

- Only 63% of treatment group enrolled in FAST
- Participation levels for both the FAST and control groups were high
  - The FAST group was more likely to participate in job search and the control group was more likely to participate in education or training activities
- Despite challenges of implementing IPS within TANF setting, FAST received score of “fair” from IPS fidelity review which was considered good for an initial review

# TANF and Employment Outcomes

	FAST Group	Control Group	Difference
<b>Received TANF (%)</b>			
Quarter 1	81.4	88.1	-6.8 *
Quarter 2	75.4	83.9	-8.5 *
Quarter 3	70.3	72.0	-1.7
Quarter 4	61.9	65.0	-3.2
<b>Average TANF payments in Year 1 (\$)</b>			
Quarter 1	1,178	1,134	44
Quarter 2	1,079	1,021	58
Quarter 3	993	895	99
Quarter 4	823	728	95
Year 1	4,074	3,778	296
<b>Ever Employed (%)</b>			
Quarter 1	23.3	16.7	6.6 **
Quarter 2	24.8	19.8	4.9
Quarter 3	31.7	21.4	10.2 **
Quarter 4	30.0	23.5	6.5

# Lessons and Implications for Further Research

# Lessons

- From Muskegon pilot, gathering medical documentation and using SOAR model took considerable time during pilot period
  - Are there quicker ways to assess disability?
- Findings from LA Pilot suggest that the SSI application process is complex; advocates can provide varying degrees and types of services within TANF
  - Are there components that are critical to operating an effective program?
  - Are there ways to engage participants after the first meeting to follow-up with requests from SSA?
- FAST pilot suggests this initiative, and IPS model, is promising and should be studied further with TANF population
  - Can this be replicated in other sites with larger samples?

# Questions?

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