

Agency for Workforce Innovation

Monthly Accomplishments for February 2009

February 27, 2009

This monthly report is the culmination of activities at the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) for February 2009. The accomplishments contained herein are directly linked to the Agency's Priorities as listed in the AWI Top-to-Bottom Review (May 2007). These priorities are as follows:

- 1. Building a culture that embraces and fully integrates all of our Agency services.**
- 2. Increasing awareness about all of the services we provide: "Telling Our Story."**
- 3. Eliminating duplicated services and improving partnerships.**
- 4. Enhancing accountability and integrity.**

1. Building a culture that embraces and integrates Agency services

Office of General Counsel

- In February, the Office of General Counsel (OGC) assisted with an amendment to the Military Spouse Career Advancement grant between the Agency and the United States Department of Labor (USDOL).

2. Increased awareness about services we provide: "Telling Our Story"

Director's Office

AWI's Interim Director, Deputy Director and other Agency staff participated in the following events:

- The Florida Chamber of Commerce Capitol Days in Tallahassee
- Workforce Florida Inc. Partner's Council Meeting, Strategy Council, Legislative Policy Committee and Board of Director's Meeting in Tallahassee
- Florida Retail Federation's Backyard Economics Press Conference in Tallahassee
- National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Winter Policy Forum in Washington D.C.
- Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development's Rural Economic Development Initiative meeting in Tallahassee
- State Unemployment Insurance (UI) Directors Conference Call on UI Modernization Act and Other UI stimulus matters
- United States Department of Labor's monthly Region 3 conference call
- Disability Program Navigators Semi-Annual Meeting in Tallahassee
- Vulnerable Population Workgroup Meeting via teleconference
- Workforce Florida Inc. Youth Opportunities Committee Teleconference
- Child Protection Task Force Meeting in Tallahassee

- The Word Garden Children's Library Grand Opening in Tallahassee
- United States Department of Labor Region 3 Stimulus Legislation Conference Call
- Children & Youth Cabinet meeting – workgroup sessions in Tallahassee
- WIRED (Workforce Innovation Regional Economic Development Initiative) Governance Council Teleconference
- Florida Department of Education's Partners Focus Group meeting on Adult Education with United States Department of Education
- Child Care & Early Education Audio Conference - Opportunities to Serve More Low-Income, Working Families
- Workforce Estimating Conference in Tallahassee

Workforce Services

- The Agency conducted a series of Internet-based training sessions for the Regional Workforce Boards (RWB) about the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) program as a part of the Agency's strategy to expand the program to all RWBs. Information about enhancements and updates to the One-Stop Service Tracking (OSST) system used by the FSET Program was provided in a PowerPoint format for managers.

Unemployment Compensation (UC) Services

- Unemployment Compensation Services continued to meet historic demand
- The number of claims filed in January 2009 set a new monthly record and totaled 315,441; this was a 314.7% increase compared to the January 2008 total of 76,057
- The amount of benefits paid in January 2009 set a new monthly record and totaled \$371,808,542. This was a 177.3% increase compared to the January 2008 total of \$134,051,896
- The amount of benefits paid during week ending February 21, 2009 set a new weekly record and totaled \$100,284,764
- Agency staff continues to work seven days per week to handle and process claims
- A new call center was established to address the growing number of calls by claimants either to the Director's Office, Legislative Affairs or to any other office located in the Caldwell Building
- Regional Workforce Boards are also providing assistance to claimants at the local One Stop Career Centers with filing claims and answering questions regarding specific issues

Legislative Affairs

- The Office of Legislative Affairs conducted seven meetings with state Senators and Representatives in an effort to increase awareness of the Agency's services and update the legislators on current Agency news. Those visits included meetings with the following:
 - Senator Mike Fasano

- Senator Ronda Storms
- Senator Stephen Wise
- Representative Steve Crisafulli
- Representative Lake Ray
- Representative Franklin Sands
- Representative David Rivera

Office of Early Learning (OEL)

• Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Word Garden Library

- Interim AWI Director Cynthia Lorenzo and OEL Director Brittany Birken, Ph.D. attended a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of the Big Bend Region on February 12th to commemorate the grand opening of the ELC's new "Word Garden" library. The event was attended by several local dignitaries including Rep. Loranne Ausley and garnered considerable media coverage. This new facility is a giving library, not a lending library. Thus far, 12,000 books have been collected for the give-away and \$9,000 has been raised to support the program.

• OEL Resources

- The Office of Early Learning has created several resources to provide information to families looking for child care options. The resources for families are distributed as parents search for quality programs, enroll in the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program, and utilize Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R). The available resources include the Family Guide for Selecting Quality Early Learning Programs, The Quality Checklist for Early Learning Programs, The Voluntary Prekindergarten Parent Handbook, two informational brochures on the VPK and School Readiness Programs. These resources are available on the Office of Early Learning website, located at www.floridajobs.org.

• Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning Annual Report 2007-2008

- The Agency is poised to release the 2007-2008 Annual Report on Early Learning in Florida. The annual report provides information about the state's efforts to provide early learning services and improve the quality of early learning experiences across the state. The report provides detailed information on the different funds supporting early learning and how those funds are distributed. The report also provides an overview of how early learning coalitions' accomplishments have positively impacted children and families in Florida.

• Brown Bag Lunch Conference Call and Meeting

- The Office of Early Learning's Quality Initiative team, Western Kentucky University Training and Technical Assistance, organized a brown bag lunch conference call this month. The purpose was to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to learn about the progress of the OEL's Professional Development Initiative which began in May 2007. The presenter described the overall scope of the project which includes the creation of a strategic plan with four major components: Core Competencies for Teachers, Articulation and Career Lattice, Quality Assurance and Access & Outreach. This was the first in a series of Brown Bag Lunch conference calls that will take place through June. Topics will vary and supportive materials are distributed following each call.

Office of General Counsel (OGC)

- In February, OGC staff responded to the following customer questions and/or requests for information:

- Information on how to find small business loans and/or research grants
- Several inquiries from employers and employees regarding the Fair Labor Standards Act and/or Florida's minimum wage requirements
- Procedures for requesting Agency records
- Verification of eligibility to work in the United States
- Applicability of public records law as it relates Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) provider records and transfer of records to a new provider
- The ability of a VPK provider to require payment for additional services
- Requirements of public records law for Regional Workforce Board (RWB) employee records
- Electronic record keeping

3. Eliminating duplicated services, improving partnerships

Workforce Services

- In February, the Office of Workforce Services:
 - Implemented automated closure processes on cases associated with the Food Stamp Employment and Training program in the One Stop Service Tracking (OSST) system. The system started closing cases on a daily basis, a task that was previously completed manually by program staff at the local level. On the first day "closures" were automated, more than 3,300 Food Stamp Employment and Training cases were closed in the OSST system. By the beginning of March, it is estimated another 3,000 Food Stamp Employment and Training cases will close via the automated system. The OSST system will have closed more than 6,000 cases via the automated process by March 2, 2009 saving countless work hours by regional staff who previously would have had to manually close those cases.

Labor Market Statistics

- In February, the Labor Market Statistics Center:
 - Prepared labor market information and housing data covering Ft. Myers for Governor Crist's press conference with President Obama
 - Assisted the Governor's Office and other agencies with analysis of job impact of the federal stimulus funds
 - Continued to work on the Governor's Task Force for Biotech Competitiveness
 - Prepared an analysis comparing unemployment compensation claims and total unemployment/unemployment rates for the Governor's Office
 - Provided preliminary data for sub-state allocations to distribute federal stimulus funds
 - Developed a list of investments in Labor Market Statistics Programs to be used at the national level for the transition for the new administration
 - Provided an analysis of unemployment compensation initial claims by occupation/training code for the Florida Chamber of Commerce
 - Provided an analysis of top occupations in demand in Florida to be used in a federal audit of the Agency's veterans' program

- Prepared an analysis on the outlook for pharmacists in Florida for elected officials in the Florida House of Representatives
- Prepared a Prison Industry Enhancement (PIE) study on business competitiveness related to the impact of using prison labor
- Produced the preliminary 2009-10 Regional Targeted Occupations Lists linked to training programs for use as input files for the Regional Targeted Occupations web application system for the Regional Workforce Boards
- Prepared area profiles for elected officials based on their districts
- Prepared a special report for the North Carolina Wildlife Commission on wages for wildlife/fisheries occupations in various industries
- Provided census data to assist with grant applications for several municipalities and workforce regions
- Met with Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) staff to provide an update on the Workforce Estimating Conference and Regional Targeted Occupations Lists process
- Provided reports on health care occupations in high demand statewide and by regions for a job training stimulus package
- Released the revised 2008 occupational wages for Florida, all Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and all Workforce Regions based on the 4th quarter Employment Cost Index (ECI)
- Provided an overview of the employment projections program and information on the industry employment database for the Florida State University Healthy Communities Program
- Provided statistical data, career publications and census information to local school districts, community colleges, workforce boards, and the general public

Office of Early Learning

• Leadership Symposium

- The Office of Early Learning sponsored a conference in Orlando on February 9th and 10th to support local coalitions and their staff. The intent was to bring together coalition staff to share information and best practices related to various early learning topics including VPK enrollment and quality improvement, innovative fundraising strategies, and best practices in promoting inclusion. More than 100 coalition staff participated and Office of Early Learning staff contributed to overall discussions. This symposium was a great opportunity for coalitions to come together and share innovative practices, success stories and tips for others to learn from.

Office of General Counsel (OGC)

- In February, OGC staff reviewed a number of interagency agreements and assisted in drafting the following:
 - Data-sharing between the Agency, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Florida Department of Revenue
 - Data-sharing between the Agency and the Florida Department of Education

- OGC staff created a package of sample variance & waiver requests for VPK providers; completed a guidance paper for Regional Workforce Boards (RWBs) and Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) regarding recovery of stolen funds; and provided guidance to RWBs regarding implementation of new federal regulations governing alien labor visa applications. Staff also responded to questions raised by RWBs and ELCs regarding stability of public deposits and vendor bankruptcy.

4. Enhancing accountability and integrity

Workforce Services

- The Wagner-Peyser Complaint Resolution Handbook was finalized and sent out for comment. This handbook delineates AWI's responsibility for handling complaints regarding the violation of labor-related laws and regulations.
- Each year, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) requires the state to conduct a data validation review of its workforce files, including the review of certain data elements in the case files of participants exiting from workforce programs based on a statewide sample. Workforce Services staff completed all data validation record reviews and submitted the results to USDOL by the February 1, 2009 deadline.
- Federal law requires monitoring of all Regional Workforce Boards. Two on-site programmatic monitoring reviews and five special project reviews were conducted and or planned during February. The reviews are conducted to ensure the Regional Workforce Boards and other service providers operate in compliance with workforce programs' respective laws, regulations, state plans and contract and/or agreement terms. Technical assistance on program practices and processes was also provided during the on-site reviews. Monitoring staff also continued to conduct pre-monitoring desk review tasks in preparation for other scheduled on-site monitoring visits.
- To improve the security of the OSST system, the data entry system used by the Regional Workforce Boards for the Welfare Transition and Food Stamp Employment and Training programs, enhancements to the log in process were implemented on February 20, 2009. These changes also affect Food Stamp Employment and Training program participants who need to access the system to review information about the Food Stamp Employment and Training program, complete assessment and select a program activity. A detailed document was provided to the Regional Workforce Boards explaining the new log-in procedures.

Labor Market Statistics

- In February, the Labor Market Statistics Center:
 - Continued to work on draft legislation for accurate employment statistics relating to Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs).

Office of Early Learning (OEL)

Policies and Issued Guidance

- The Office of Early Learning has published a Notice of Rule Development for low performing providers in the VPK program. This rule will implement an improvement plan process for VPK providers who fail to achieve minimum statewide kindergarten readiness rates, will provide procedures by which coalitions and school districts approve the improvement plans, will place providers on probation and require corrective actions, and will remove providers from eligibility to deliver the VPK program due to remaining on probation beyond the time permitted.

- The Office of Early Learning has published a Notice of Rule Development for the Uniform Attendance Policy for Funding the VPK Program. This rule will revise rule 60BB-8.204, F.A.C., to incorporate recent legislative amendments by establishing a minimum requirement for student attendance of eighty percent of the total program hours for the program type in which a student is enrolled, redefining a student's absence for good cause, and providing for methods of payment depending upon student attendance.
- The Office of Early Learning has published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to establish the required qualifications of substitute instructors for the VPK program for the school-year and summer VPK program types and to define the circumstances and time limits for which a VPK provider may assign a substitute instructor to a VPK classroom.
- The Office of Early Learning disseminated a memorandum dated February 13, 2009, on variance request procedures for the early learning coalitions. The memo detailed the manner in which coalitions can request a variance from Rule 60BB-4.210(1), F.A.C. pertaining to a 30-day break in employment during which the payment of SR services will be covered. The memo also detailed a second variance of Rule 60BB-8.201(3), F.A.C., whereby coalitions could request to allow providers to register children for the VPK program. This memo further provided two examples of sample petitions that could be used by coalitions for requesting variances of these rules to the Office of Early Learning.

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

- In February, the OGC:
 - Responded to 55 public records requests; filed nine Motions for Protective Orders, and assisted with a request for mediation on a UC overpayment case. Staff also provided analysis on a number of legislative bills, reviewed three personnel actions, three Civil Rights matters, and 13 contracts.
 - Responded to ethics questions regarding gifts & conflicts of interest, and provided an opinion on the Agency's responsibilities related to communicable diseases
 - Provided assistance to Unemployment Compensation staff as follows:
 - Provided opinion regarding misdirected email sent to another state agency that included client information.
 - Provided opinion on options to address the solvency of the UC Trust fund.
 - Reviewed and provided recommendations on proposed legislation regarding drug testing for UC applicants, and impact on records exemptions statute if drug testing is implemented.
 - OGC staff assisted the Office of Early Learning with the following:
 - Numerous Early Learning Coalition desk reviews;
 - Opinion on the Impact of reduction in funding on the status of VPK statewide provider agreements;
 - Questions regarding the validity of local coalition's revenue maximization strategy for school readiness funds;

- Hearings regarding Child Care Resource & Referral rules, and submission of five rule development notices and a rulemaking notice for publication;
- Revised program guidance for Federal Poverty Guidelines.
- OGC staff advised Workforce staff on a number of issues, including:
 - Proposals designed to assist senior citizens find employment;
 - Competitive procurement process;
 - Continuation of the Health Coverage Tax Credit program;
 - The 2009 Florida Citrus Survey;
 - Project labor agreements;
 - Several alien labor certification matters.

Office of the Inspector General (OIG)

- In February, the OIG:
 - Opened 10 new projects that included two new audit projects, six referrals to AWI program areas, one incident report and one referral from the Chief Inspector General.
 - Investigations/Inquiries Reports:
 - The OIG issued one comprehensive investigative inquiry report on the breach of information incident.
 - The OIG continued work on a whistleblower investigation and conducted investigative inquiry activities for a complaint about an Agency contract.
 - OIG investigative staff consulted with the AWI General Counsel and the Chief Inspector General's office on active cases & referrals.
 - OIG investigative staff participated in accreditation planning meetings with other agency inspectors general offices.
 - The OIG called a meeting between the Office of Early Learning and AWI Finance staff to discuss appropriate tracking of restitution payments made as a result of Florida Department of Law Enforcement fraud referrals.
 - Internal Audit Projects:
 - Coordinated the response to the Auditor General's Preliminary and Tentative Findings for the Federal Awards Audit covering the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008.
 - Coordinated the entrance conference with the Auditor General in connection with their Operational Audit for the period 7.1.07 to 1.31.09 and the Information Technology (IT) audit for the fiscal year ending 6.30.09.

- Issued an engagement letter for the Internal Audit of Information Technology Security in the Workforce Services Program Area.
 - Prepared monthly reports of Tracked Audit Findings, Potential Audit Liability and External Reviews and Audits.
 - Issued Management Decisions (OIG written reviews of audit reports submitted by independent certified public accountants) for one Early Learning Coalition, three Regional Workforce Boards and one special agency sub-recipient.
- o Other Activities:
- The Audit Unit participated in 16 hours of Continuing Professional Education in the field of accounting and auditing (these hours were obtained from one training session, one audio conference and attendance at the Association of Inspectors General and the Association of Government Accountants' monthly meetings).

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