

Agency for Workforce Innovation

Monthly Accomplishments for November 2008

November 26, 2008

This monthly report is the culmination of activities at the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) for November 2008. 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 fully integrates all of our Agency services

Workforce Services

- **Direct Services** - Workforce Services' staff continued to work with Regional Workforce Boards (RWBs) in November to modify local requirements as a result of the RWBs electing to provide direct services, as outlined in SB 428. (SB 428 was passed in the 2008 legislative session and allows RWBs to directly administer workforce services at One Stop Career Centers.) Prior to SB 428, such services were provided by private vendors. The review of plan amendments/modifications was coordinated with Workforce Florida, Inc.

Unemployment Compensation (UC) Services

- **Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program** - On June 30, 2008, President Bush signed H.R. 2642 creating Public Law 110-252, establishing the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program which provides up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment compensation benefits in all states to qualified individuals. Individuals can apply for EUC until March 28, 2009. The last payable week is July 4, 2009.
- **Emergency Unemployment Compensation Stats** – Between July 1 - November 20, 2008, Unemployment Compensation Services has:
 - Processed a total of 200,037 EUC claims
 - Issued \$313,685,138 in benefits to 163,477 qualified individuals
 - Provided EUC applications to 470,124 potentially eligible individuals
 - Responded to 10,000 telephone inquiries each day
- **Unemployment Compensation Extension Act of 2008** – On November 21, 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law H.R. 6867, providing for an additional extension of unemployment benefits.

- Effective Sunday, November 23, 2008, the law expands the amount of benefits that can be paid under Emergency Unemployment Compensation and provides for First-Tier and Second-Tier extended benefits.
- UC Services identified business and programming requirements needed to begin processing the extended benefits to all qualified individuals.
- Additional implementation information is forthcoming from the US Department of Labor.

General Counsel

- The Office of General Counsel staff (OGC) reviewed the Agency's Affirmative Action Plan.

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

Workforce Services

- Job Corps staff coordinated the scheduling and hosting of the Florida Consortium Meeting and a Capitol Event to dedicate four trees, representing Florida's four Job Corps centers in commemoration of Job Corps' 40th Anniversary.
- Florida was represented at the Multiple Education Pathways Learning Exchange Forum hosted by the United States Department of Labor. AWI staff spoke on Florida's Okaloosa CHOICE model which helped pave the way for the Florida Career and Professional Education Act as well as the innovation of Florida's Banner Centers.
- Welfare Transition and Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) staff attended and participated in the FSET Workgroup and Participation Rate Workgroup partners' meeting. The meeting was to discuss FSET program Administration for the upcoming year and strategies for increasing and meeting Welfare Transition (WT) Work Participation Rates.
- Welfare Transition staff hosted an internet-based web training on the recently approved Work Verification Plan. The training included minor technical assistance for implementing new plan elements as a result of the release of the final federal regulatory rule.
- Automation projects for the FSET program continue; the latest priority includes case closure logic and the requirements for closing cases as a result of sanction, no longer receiving benefits, or have becoming exempt.

Office of the Director

- **During November, Director Brown:**
 - Was the featured speaker at the Florida Commission on the Status of Women's Florida Achievement Awards Ceremony. The awards recognized meritorious women and men who have improved the lives of Florida women and/or who have served as positive role models for women and girls in their communities.
 - Was recently appointed to the Board of Directors for the Florida Endowment Foundation for Florida's Graduates. The Foundation believes in collaborating with education, workforce and economic development in an effort to improve academic, work, life and economic opportunities for students with an untapped potential to contribute to a robust Florida.
 - Participated in the National Governors Association's State Workforce Liaisons' conference call. Dr. Raymond Scheppach, Executive Director of the National Governors Association and an economist, discussed the economic downturn, the election results and the state and national implications.

Legislative Affairs

- The Office of Legislative Affairs conducted seven visits to legislative offices in an effort to increase awareness of the Agency's services and update legislators on current Agency news. Those visits included six meetings with state representatives and one meeting with a state senator.

Office of Early Learning

- **World Congress on Disabilities (WCD) Expo** - On November 21 and 22, the Office of Early Learning (OEL) was one of more than 80 exhibitors at the World Congress on Disabilities Expo in Jacksonville. The OEL disseminated information on the School Readiness, Child Care Resource and Referral and Voluntary PreKindergarten programs, as well as the Disability Program Navigator Initiative. Staff also shared a publication with families titled "*Understanding Inclusion and the Americans with Disabilities Act.*" The WCD Expo had more than 4,000 estimated attendees who came to learn about products and services available for individuals with disabilities. AWI was featured on the WCD Expo website as one of the sponsors for this event.
- **Early Learning Fact Book** - The Early Learning Fact Book, a web-based information resource about the early learning programs administered by the Agency for Workforce Innovation, was developed. The Fact Book website includes answers to frequently asked questions about providers and children who participate in the School Readiness and VPK programs. Information is available at the county, coalition, and state level. The Fact Book is updated on a monthly basis and includes information starting from July 2005. It can be accessed from the OEL homepage, at: www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/index.html

- **Ribbon Cutting** - Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator Steve Gardner represented the Agency at a ribbon cutting ceremony at the ELC of Florida's Gateway on October 1st. The event was put on by the Lake City-Columbia County Chamber of Commerce to commemorate the grand opening of the Coalition's new main office on SW Main Boulevard in Lake City.

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

- OGC staff attended the Commission on Open Government meeting and conducted public hearings on proposed rules for the Early Learning program.

3. Eliminating duplicated services, improving partnerships

Workforce Services

- Job Corps staff began coordination with the New Job Corps contractor to close out the State Contract and transition to the new contractor, Jackson Pierce Public Affairs, Inc. to be effective December 1, 2008.
- Agency representatives attended the Workforce Florida, Inc. Workgroup teleconference to discuss the second distribution of Reed Act funds to the Regional Workforce Boards.

Labor Market Statistics

- **During October, the Labor Market Statistics Center:**
 - Prepared an in-depth report for the Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development (OTTED) on target industries meeting wage criteria for the Qualified Target Industry (QTI) program; provided a biotech industry profile for OTTED; and participated in the first meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Biotech Competitiveness.
 - Provided industry profiles on aviation and aerospace, manufacturing, and construction and an energy jobs update, as requested by Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI).
 - Produced a special report on employment demand for college level occupations by eight economic development regions for Department of Education, Division of Community Colleges.
 - Prepared employment projections data on occupations in biotechnology and information technology for industry profile reports.
 - Prepared an analysis of claimants for the Reemployment Analysis initiative.
 - Provided statistical data, career publications and Census information to local school districts, community colleges, workforce boards and the general public.

Office of Early Learning

- **Rulemaking** - The Policy Unit, in conjunction with the Office of General Council, held a rulemaking workshop on three school readiness rules on November 13, 2008. The workshop was held in conjunction with the monthly meeting of the Association of Early Learning Coalitions to ensure optimal input was received from stakeholders. The rules discussed were:
 - **Performance Standards and Outcome Measures:** The proposed rule addresses performance standards and outcome measures for school readiness programs. Florida Statutes require the Agency to adopt performance standards that address age-appropriate progress of children in the development of the school readiness skills. The performance standards are to be integrated with those adopted by the Department of Education for children in the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Education Program.
 - **School Readiness Plan Requirements** - The purpose of the proposed rule development is to establish the criteria for approval of school readiness plans and the format and procedure for submission of early learning coalition plans to the Agency for Workforce Innovation for review and approval.
 - **Early Learning Coalition Composition** - The purpose of the proposed rule is to promulgate Early Learning Coalition composition, membership standards and criteria for appointing private sector business members in accordance with Florida Statutes.
- **Infant Mental Health Strategic Plan** - On November 7, several OEL staff met to discuss the Office's role as lead agency for certain tasks contained in the State of Florida's Infant Mental Health Strategic Plan, developed by the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Building State Advisory Team meeting, of which OEL is a partner.

General Counsel

- OGC staff met with staff from other agencies to discuss and develop interagency data-share agreements, and legislative proposals. Staff also met with representatives of the Department of Children & Family Services and provided guidance to Office of Early Learning (OEL) program staff regarding protective services referrals.

4. Enhancing accountability and integrity

Workforce Services

- **Data Validation Review** - Each year, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) requires the state to conduct a data validation review of its workforce files, which includes a review of certain data elements in the case files of participants exiting from the workforce programs statewide. In November, Workforce Services staff prepared a work plan, coordinated review

dates and prepared the Regions for the review. The records must be validated and submitted to USDOL by February 1, 2009.

- **Food Stamp Program Review** - Agency representatives assisted Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) auditors with a federal review of the Food Stamp program. The review consisted of reviewing information related to the FSET Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) population, and FNS auditors reviewed information in the One-Stop Service Tracking System (OSST), which is the management information system for FSET program participants.

Labor Market Statistics

- Labor Market Statistics trained WFI staff on the labor market information program.
- Labor Market Statistics worked with the Florida Association of Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs) on proposed legislation to improve data reporting issues to enhance data quality of employment by industry and county statistics.

Office of Early Learning

- **Early Learning Coalition of Brevard-Technical Assistance Visit** - The Office of Early Learning, Child Care Resource and Referral staff made a visit to the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard. The coalition is planning to bring its Child Care Resource and Referral services "in house" effective December 1, 2008 and no longer contract with a local agency. OEL staff provided training and technical assistance to ensure minimal disruption to services to families. The training was also an opportunity for neighboring coalitions to attend, network and share success stories.
- **Birth-Five Learning and Developmental Standards** - The Office of Early Learning is working to revise the *Birth to Five Learning and Developmental Standards*. The Standards will provide a continuum of development for children in early learning programs by identifying and defining what children should know and be able to do as they move through quality programs. The Standards provide guidance for caregivers, and is a collaborative effort between researchers, practitioners and others who use them in their daily work.

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

- OGC staff provided a legal opinion regarding required provisions in a contract between an Early Learning Coalition (ELC) and a community college, and researched and responded to Early Learning program office staff regarding the following issues:
 - Composition of an ELC board, and composition of quorum
 - The ability of a coalition to compel a provider to submit periodic progress reports for review

- Continuing contractual obligations between coalitions and providers if program funding is reduced
 - Use of Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) students' names and release of identifying information
 - Use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to serve school age children
 - Ability of early learning providers to charge a differential
 - The Agency's responsibility for providing printed materials to ELCs
 - Permissible uses of grant funds by coalitions and sub-recipients
 - Allowable advertising & public relations costs for ELCs
 - Sunshine Law questions regarding the procurement process used by ELCs
- OGC staff drafted a Settlement Agreement between the Agency and a Regional Workforce Board (RWB), and provided guidance to Workforce staff regarding the following issues:
 - Release of alien labor documentation
 - Return of gifts offered by private organizations
 - Response to a complaint regarding a RWB's personnel actions
 - Data-sharing between the Agency and a community college
 - Use of National Emergency Grant funds
 - Electronic retention of records
 - Potential use of Reed Act funds
 - Collection of overpaid benefits
 - RWB's proposal to serve as a direct service provider
 - Request from USDOL regarding alien labor documentation
 - Required hours of operation for one-stop centers
- OGC staff provided a legal opinion regarding proposed repairs to space leased for Unemployment Compensation (UC) Call Center staff, and assisted UC program staff by responding to questions regarding:
 - Impact of extension of declared disaster period for Tropical Storm Fay on Disaster Unemployment Assistance program
 - Permitted uses of monies in the UC program's penalties & interest fund
 - Use of UC information by the Florida Department of Revenue and the Internal Revenue Service in relation to questionable employment tax questions

Unemployment Compensation Services (UC)

- UC Services is experiencing a record year in both claims filed and benefits paid. Below is an update to the enhancements the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation has recently made to our systems to meet increased demands:
 - Hired an additional 255 employees and will continue to do so, as required.
 - Added an additional 345 telephone lines, for a total of 1,012.
 - Extended the hours when customers can file for, seek or verify UC information over the telephone, including:

- Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

- Working 7-days-per-week to handle and process claims.
- Added two servers to increase performance of online claims systems.
- Continually monitoring all systems to ensure customers are able to utilize our services as easily and expediently as possible.

Inspector General

- The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) opened 12 new projects. From the initial assessment, the projects will result in two investigative inquiries, seven referrals to other AWI programs or other process partners, and three audit reviews.

- Investigations/Inquiries Reports:
 - The OIG completed one investigation, one investigative inquiry and two whistleblower determinations of complaints that were received and submitted to the Chief Inspector General's Office (CIG). A whistleblower investigation was initiated on one of the complaints and a review of the other complaint is pending review.

 - The OIG convened the Incident Response Team six times during the month to address issues that required immediate response.

 - OIG investigative staff participated in two accreditation meetings with other offices of inspectors general, which were coordinated by the CIG.

- Other Audit Activities:
 - Coordinated an exit conference with the Auditor General in connection with the Surplus Information Technology (IT) property audit.

- The Inspector General attended a national conference of Inspectors General during the month and participated on a panel with other Inspectors General from around the nation. The Conference workshops were centered on the theme of: "Thirty Years of Service Under the Inspector General Act". A wealth of information was provided to help support efforts to enhance excellence in the inspectors general community.

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