

**County** Brunswick County  
**Department of Social Services**

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**Project Title** Leads to Specialist: Bridging the Gap between Policy and Processing

**Category** Advancement in Staff and Leadership Development  
(Please select one)

### **Project Description and Summary**

**What did you do?**

**Describe your program or project. What did you do? What is the history behind the program/project? What did you hope to accomplish? What was your timeline? Your budget? How did you identify your objectives? How well did you use available resources?**

Due to turnover, challenges with NC FAST, increase in the number and frequency of audits and focus on timeliness and quality our county identified that a gap existed between caseworkers, policy, procedure, and processing. Although we were receiving communication from OST and NC FAST, keeping up with these changes and communications was challenging at best. Thus this caused errors, created delays, and overall frustration for staff and clients. In addition, several years ago we

transitioned from single program caseworkers to modified universal IMC's. Staff work FNS and either Adult or Family and Children Medicaid. This transition has allowed us to meet timelines, however staff still struggled with processing the program that was new to them and following the job aides in NC FAST.

We recognized the need for a single and simplified interpretation of policy, postcards, and job aides as well as training. We studied our staffing patterns, needs, and workload to determine the best method for meeting the staff's needs which in turn would allow the county to improve accuracy and timeliness. We found that it was taking staff hours to interpret NC FAST job aides and communication. In addition, not only did staff have multiple interpretation the supervisors did as well.

We already had 3 lead workers whose job duties didn't fit with the new way of business. We decided to change the job descriptions and titles of our IMC III/Lead Workers to Program Specialists. Each program specialist has an assigned area of expertise in both intake and ongoing for either FNS, Adult Medicaid, or Family and Children Medicaid.

Each Program Specialist is responsible for training new staff, ongoing training, point of contact for OST, process ticket resolutions before forwarding to staff to ensure that they work, break down of job aide and postcard (send specific information to staff), and troubleshoot cases for their assigned program area. The number of help desk tickets have decreases as program specialist troubleshoot cases before sending tickets to the help desk. New staff members are trained correctly. This allows for one policy interpretation and allows supervisors time to review 100% of new cases.

Program specialist also review a sample of cases each month and work with program integrity staff to identify error trends and train on those topics.

The transition from Lead workers to Program Specialists did not increase cost to the county however it has met staff needs, improved policy/postcard interpretation consistency, decreased number of tickets

sent to Help desk, and most importantly improved benefit processing time.

### **Project Success and Impact**

**What was the outcome?**

**Was your program/project a success? What was the impact? How did you measure the impact? How widespread is the impact of your program/project? How were you able to overcome obstacles and challenges? Did your program/project meet your established objectives?**

Transitioning our Leads to Specialist has bridged the gap between policy and processing. We have found that our errors have decreased, staff training needs are being met, there is a decrease in processing times for all programs. Our ongoing family and children Medicaid caseworkers are able to work a month ahead now. Staff have time to focus on processing, knowing that they have the support and guidance from their program specialist who will keep them abreast of all changes. The transition has assisted with teaching staff the new business process and time management skills.

The improvements are seen across all of the economic service programs. Our processing times improved, customer satisfaction surveys have been positive, staff training needs are being met consistently, error trends have decreased, and our county has a uniform way of processing application and recertification.

The greatest challenge was getting all staff including supervisors on the same page by (1) following the same procedures to obtain the correct outcome the right way and (2) increasing knowledge base to allow staff to be modified universal worker which in turn allows clients to tell their story one time.

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