

Areas of Inquiry-ASPIRE Interviews

What we mean by special needs- We will be using a broad definition in order to include children with medical, behavioral, sensory and cognitive impairments. Therefore examples could range from chronic asthma, ADHD and severe allergies to cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and autism.

Confidentiality

Tape Recorder

We'll be taking notes

Role

How did you get into this job?

Could you describe your current job, what you do? *Roles and responsibilities of workers re eligibility, employment services*

How are clients assigned to workers?

How often clients do change caseworkers, why?

What is the average size of your caseload?

What would be an ideal caseload?

Please describe the general population of clients you serve and the most prevalent problems you see in their finding and keeping work.

How often do you communicate with families, in what ways?

How often do you meet with your supervisor, one on one or in a group? What types of things do you discuss? *Role of supervisor*

Do you communicate with other TANF offices or the main office, how often, regarding what types of issues?

Application/Development of ASPIRE Employment Plan

Who has authority to grant any alterations in the work requirements?

How does information about having child with special needs come up?

Once this info comes out, what happens?

In your experience, what factors would you say present the biggest barriers to parents of children with special needs being able to work?

If the client says special needs of child will affect her ability to work what questions are asked?

- a. Parent doesn't want to work because child has special needs and feels they can best care for them or that appropriate child care is unavailable

What types of documentation are required concerning the special needs of the child, disruptions to the parent's day, etc.?

What type of consultation, if any, do you have with the family's CDS case manager?

What about families who are determined exempt from work requirements, do they receive support services? (literacy, job training, etc.)

Do you think as many cases would be internally closed if caseloads were lower?

What happens when you review a case that has been internally closed?

If the case is internally closed because a child has special needs, does that change when the child reaches school age?

What about when a child is attending school, is it automatically assumed that work is possible during school hours?

Do any parents of children with special needs participate in the Parents as Scholars program?

What do you see as particular challenges facing parents of children with special needs living in rural areas?

Referral System

If a family says they have a child with special needs, what referrals, if any, are made? knowledge about/contact with special education, CDS, Healthy Families, etc.

Do you follow up on those referrals?

What services are needed in greater quantity or quality?

How easy or hard is it for clients to find access to these services? Transportation, location, hours of service, child care

How/when do you work with the multi-barrier agencies?

How often do you have contact with the multi-barrier caseworkers?

Questions regarding dual disability (parent and child)? Their observations about stress on parents, mental health issues, health problems, if any.

Questions getting at any economic, demographic aspects of the areas/populations they serve that might affect their work in serving families. New immigrants?

Issues That Arise When a Parent Works.....

Do you find that parents of children with *physical or behavioral* special needs have a harder time finding and keeping work or face different issues?

Are the policies concerning work responsive to the needs that you see among parents with children with special needs?

What strategies are employed when a parent has difficulty balancing needs of child and work?

- b. Family looks for childcare, finds an arrangement is available but mother feels it isn't going to work for the child's special needs / or goes for a few weeks and decides it doesn't work
- c. Arrangements are all set up and working but suddenly child care falls through due to issues with child's special needs
- d. Arrangements are all set but parent's work day disrupted so often by special needs of child that she is in danger of losing job

Child Care for Children with Special Needs

What help is given in finding child care? What is the level of interactions with the RDCs?

Are these families given a higher priority in finding child care? If so, in what way?

Is a family able to get child care assistance before they have a job?

What if parent says he or she can't find a child care provider who will take her child with special needs? What happens?

Are referrals made to any services that might help provide support to child care provider? knowledge of services like Child Care Plus ME

If a child is asked to leave a child care program and parent calls to report this, what do you do? Is there a grace period? What if she loses her job as a result? Do you ever intervene with the employer in that case?

Do you have parents who must transport a child to special services during work hours (speech, OT), if so, how does this affect their ability to find and keep a job?

Is finding child care for children with special needs during non-traditional work hours an issue?

If the child with special needs is on SSI and the mother is required to work, is the child eligible for child care subsidies? If not, are there alternative sources of help for that family to pay for child care?

Good Cause for Non-Compliance due to Child's Special Needs

Are parents told about good cause prior to any problems or is this only raised when they have been found to be out of compliance?

How is "illness or incapacitation of a dependent child" for purposes of good cause interpreted? Are there internal policies that provide guidance on this? What about older guardians such as grandparents-what is the definition of "advanced age"?

How do they determine what is lack of “appropriate” child care for finding “good cause” and what is not? Are there any internal departmental policies to provide guidance about this?

What if parent finds a child care provider who will accept child but parent feels provider can’t meet all of the child’s special needs (e.g. refusal to do catheterization), does that meet the good cause standard?

How often does the granting of good cause have to be reviewed? What is acceptable documentation of good cause (doctors, CDS, providers?) Does all the documentation have to be updated?

If a worker decides to sanction a family with a special needs child for noncompliance is the approval of the supervisor required? What is involved in that process?

Other questions

Questions that get at what they see as the primary goal/purpose of their work as reflected at DHS as a whole and within their district office.

Do you feel supported in the work that you do?

What help would you want to have, if any, from other state agencies in serving these families? (CDS, Office of Child Care, etc.)

Has there been any specific in-service training of workers about serving families with children with special needs? Describe.

What other kinds of assistance would be helpful to you in serving these families?

What have you found to be the hardest aspects of serving these families?

What changes, if any, would you want to see in the TANF Program itself or in how it is implemented in Maine in order to better serve families with children with special needs?

Overall Organization

Do you have a copy of policies/laws/regulations or do you know where they are kept?

Could we have a copy of forms (used with clients, used to record case info that affect this population) and policies we refer to in our discussion today?