

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Orange County  
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Orange County responded to the welfare reform implementation challenge in a manner that reflected pro-activity, community involvement, informed leadership, innovations, and citizen concern. According to its leadership, welfare reform for Orange County has been a catalyst for expanding and redirecting services to the underemployed and citizens living in poverty. Evidence for this perception include the following:

1. Proactively anticipating and creating mechanism (i.e. Orange County Welfare Reform Task Force) for addressing the implications of both federal and state welfare reform legislation prior to their enactment.
2. Engaging the business, faith, and civic communities to be partners in welfare reform.
3. Forming coalitions and networks with existing resources.
4. Reorienting and reengineering the County's Department of Social Services to accommodate the mandated policy changes in welfare legislation.
5. Creating new service resources for preparing welfare recipients for labor market participation (i.e. The Orange County Skills Development Center).
6. Establishing a local policy of emphasizing welfare reform goals such as "ensuring the well-being of children", "reducing poverty", and "workforce participation" in place of reducing expenditures and welfare rolls
7. Increasing new and reallocated funding to address the barriers to individual and family self-sufficiency.

Leading indicators of welfare reform successes in Orange County include: fewer people on welfare, more people employed, more children in need of child care, more families with better child care, increased investment by County tax-payers, enhanced public awareness of families in poverty, and increased role of the faith community.

Along with the perceived successes, Orange County leadership shares a concern about the sustainability of welfare reform and its impact. Welfare reform is considered to be implementable during economic favorable conditions but has not been tested in an economic downturn. Welfare reform in the view of County leadership is not considered a "solution" that will eliminate poverty.