Quarterly Progress Report  
Welfare Reform Liaison Project  
*March 2000 Class.*

Item 1. Describe the major activities initiated as part of the pilot project during the last three months. Include dates as necessary.

During the last three months, the major activities initiated as part of the pilot project include the opening of Liaison, the graduation of our third training class, the beginning of our fourth class, and meeting with Department of Social Services.

The past three months kept us very busy. To begin with, Welfare Reform Liaison Project, Inc. began the operation of Liaison. Liaison is a 16,000 square foot warehouse located at 610 S. Eugene Street in Greensboro, North Carolina. After partnering with Gifts In Kind International, we realized that the community needed more merchandise than our smaller warehouse provided. In response to the need of the community, Liaison officially opened its doors on May 4, 2000. With invitations to the ribbon-cutting ceremony extended to community leaders and corporate executives alike, attendance at the ceremony surpassed our expectations. Community leaders such as Mike Weaver of the Weaver Foundation, Neil Belenky of the United Way of Greater Greensboro, and Rev. George W. Brooks of Mt. Zion Baptist Church witnessed the expansion of the Gifts In Kind Distribution hub provided by Welfare Reform Liaison Project, Inc.

At the heart of our program beats the Distribution Job Training Program. This gateway provides a door and a pathway from welfare and poverty to economic self-sufficiency. On Sunday, April 30, 2000, Welfare Reform Liaison Project, Inc. enjoyed observing our third Distribution Job Training Class graduate. Armed with the knowledge that they can accomplish anything that want to accomplish and the skills needed to pursue such dreams, twenty students now actively pursue their desire to “stand on their own two feet.”

With our third Distribution Job Training Program graduated, Welfare Reform Liaison Project, Inc. began our fourth class on June 5, 2000. With a prospective graduation date of August 6, 2000, we train our students on how to get a job, how to keep a job, what job skills are needed, and how to stay healthy enough to work effectively. We look forward to observing this class graduate and pursue economic self-sufficiency as well.

People perish due to a lack of knowledge. Programs perish due to the same mistake. When attempting to effectively work with WorkFirst participants, we must confer with the department of social services. Therefore, Welfare Reform Liaison Project, Inc. and Guilford County Department of Social Services meet periodically to plan the most effective way to help WorkFirst clients.

Item 2. How many individuals has your pilot project served during the last three months?  
During the first quarterly reporting period, Welfare Reform Liaison Project held its nine-week welfare-to-work training session. The class consisted of 20 participants, 7 of whom were active
TANF recipients and one had the clock off (2-year TANF time limit expired) The specific outcomes in this report will reflect progress of those eight individuals. The broader issues outlined however are very relevant to the other participants in the program as well. This is the 3rd training class for Welfare Reform Liaison Project. There was a general perception from the staff that this class, particularly the active TANF recipients, brought to the training, more structural problems like the inability to obtain affordable housing, reliable child care, or dependable transportation. The perception from staff was that this group also brought more personal problems to the training sessions than members of other classes. Such problems included: lower educational levels, being victims of domestic violence, substance abuse problems, and poor crisis management skills. This perception “fits” with the national, state, and local data, which suggest that the current population of TANF recipients consists of people who have to overcome multiple barriers to secure and retain long term employment.

As a consequence of the “practice wisdom” forming the basis of staff perceptions, the case planning efforts for these 8 TANF recipients focused on developing individualized goals and particular interventions that zeroed in on overcoming the combination of the structural and personal barriers that stand in the way of each person being able to secure and retain long term employment. The framework around which a standard case plan is built for short term training in welfare to work programs is generally: (1) Successful classroom training with a focus on esteem building, appropriate workplace comportment, and development of computer skills; (2) Job placement and short term job retention with follow-up.

The framework employed in case planning with these eight recipients (and all the members of this class regardless of their “Public Assistance status”) was different. The goal setting process that underscores case management was more complex. For example, one person may have had to admit to a substance abuse problem, address that problem, and start to make it to class on time before a job training plan could be envisioned by staff or participant. For another participant, the goal may have been to secure reliable transportation and get help regarding the domestic abuse she was facing so she could make it to the training regularly. For another, the plan may have been to learn how to plan better so that every life event did not turn into a crisis. With this case model as the backdrop, the goals were quite often remedial in that many clients had to get onto the first rung of the long welfare-to-work ladder before they could ever secure, let alone retain permanent employment and maintain a solid degree of self-sufficiency.

Item 3. Briefly describe the outcomes observed for these individuals.

Of the eight TANF recipients: Five (5) successfully completed the Guilford Technical Community College certificate program. Four participants found full time jobs and one is currently working in a part time job. Six of the eight participants participated in the sheltered workshop aspect of Welfare Reform Liaison Training. The one participant who found a full time job was not a workshop participant. One of the participants who had child care problems has now cleared them up and will enroll in the workshop training.

Even with these successes in attaining employment, the situations of these women are somewhat delicate. Of the eight TANF participants, 5 had experienced problems with transportation, and through program efforts or good problem solving skills; each person was able to do somewhat
better with her transportation concerns. Two participants had health problems that were barriers to completing the program successfully, while one of those participants also had a child with health problems as well. Welfare Reform Liaison Project was successful in reducing overall health problems through the instituting of a health component in the training curriculum. This project was supported with private funds. Neither of those people gained a Guilford Technical Community College Certificate, but staff reported that each had low educational skills. One of these two people had a substance abuse problem, which may have been a contributing barrier as well as her poor health status.

Three of the eight participants reported being victims of domestic violence, while five of the eight were perceived by staff as not very skillful in crisis management. One person was reported to have problems with anger management and another was reported to have a very negative attitude when the program started. Early intervention, close monitoring, regular review of case goals between staff and participant enabled success, despite the complex intertwined barriers.

4. Describe how these outcomes are in line with the goals and objectives of your pilot project?

Welfare Reform Liaison Project’s major goals center on assisting the families with special problems that prevent them from obtaining immediate employment or long-term employment. This is accomplished by helping them develop the skills and work habits necessary to succeed. Welfare Reform Liaison Project ensures the progress of families, by stressing the combination of education, training and intensive case management. Such families often have the potential for gainful employment, but because of a combination of complex barriers like the lack of transportation, and poor crisis management skills for example, they don’t stay long in the job market or cannot gain the confidence to secure initial employment.

The outcomes are very much in line with the goals. Of the 5 people who completed the Guilford Technical Community College certificate program, four of them have found full time jobs. One of the participants, whose clock stopped, is currently working in a part time job and gained enough confidence and the skills to secure and maintain that job. Six of the eight participants took part in the sheltered workshop aspect of Welfare Reform Liaison Training. This part of the program is believed by staff and participant alike, to be a strong component of the program. Combine the workshop effort with Welfare Reform’s education, training, self esteem building programs, and referral to complimentary services designed to eliminate barriers to compliance, and success is happening with even the most difficult to place people. It must be emphasized that close monitoring is essential.

5. List any changes or modifications to the services you provide or the manner in which services are delivered as a result of these outcomes.

Staff has reviewed the differences among the early classes that graduated from Welfare Reform Liaison Project, the class that this report is describing, and the current class. As a result of the review process, staff has begun implementing and considering the following changes and modifications. As noted above, a health component was implemented with the assistance from a
local foundation and consultation from a local health educator. A weekly case recording system is currently being developed and tested so that participant growth and development can be charted, monitored, and changed in a systematic and unobtrusive way. Consideration is being given to developing a way to add a crisis management component to an already tight curriculum. A Social Work intern will be placed in the social service division of the program to help with the intensive case management required.

A plan is being developed at the administrative level of the program to introduce prospective employers to the program and the Welfare Reform Liaison participants, as well as the introducing the participants to the prospective employers. Developing a long term relationship while prospective employees are in the sheltered environment may go a long way in informing both populations of each other’s complex concerns regarding securing and maintaining long term gainful employment.

**Item 6. What percentage of your project funds have you expended during the last three months?**

26%