ETA Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative:

BEST PRACTICES:
CAREER ADVANCE - TULSA, OKLAHOMA
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INTRODUCTION

This case study was originally written as a part of the Workforce Systems Sector Strategies Guide, a document created through a partnership of Maher & Maher and the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, as a part of the USDOL Employment and Training Administration’s multi-year Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative.

The Guide focused on innovation employed in the design and implementation of sector strategies within workforce development over the last two decades. The programs included in the case study portion of the guide demonstrated advanced thinking in one or more of the five elements of ETA’s Sector Strategies Framework: Data-Based Decision Making, Industry Engagement, Organizational Capacity and Alignment, Sector-Based Service Delivery, and Sustainability and Continuous Improvement.

CAREER ADVANCE - TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Interview with Monica Barczak

SECTOR STRATEGY OVERVIEW

CareerAdvance®, administered by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP Tulsa)¹, is a program for training parents of Head Start and Early Head Start children. It is part of an explicit two-generation strategy focused on promoting family economic security by developing the human capital of parents while their preschool children are achieving in a resource-rich learning environment. CareerAdvance® builds on CAP Tulsa’s strong system of Early Head Start and Head Start centers by adding high-quality career-oriented training for parents in occupations that offer family-supporting income, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement primarily in the healthcare

¹ For more on the program, see the latest implementation study report available on the Ray Marshall Center website: Tara Smith, Kristin, Christensen, and Christopher T. King, CareerAdvance® Implementation Study: An Update through July 2014, Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center, The University of Texas at Austin, 2014.
sector.

The program began in 2009 as a career pathway program for parents interested in pursuing nursing occupations in the growing healthcare sector. After the initial pilot year, CareerAdvance® moved into regular operations and was subsequently (September 2010) awarded a 5-year expansion grant through the Health Profession Opportunities Grant Program (HPOG) from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This grant has enabled the program to serve more parents by expanding its training options into other healthcare career pathways, including health information technology and other allied health professions, e.g., medical assisting, pharmacy technician, dental assisting, radiography, and physical therapy assistant.

CareerAdvance® enrolled its eleventh cohort of nursing, allied health, and other participants in early 2015. By September 2015, the program will have served almost 400 families.

DATA-INFORMED DECISION MAKING

The program has produced solid initial results in terms of persistence and credential completion in its healthcare career pathways to date. Of the 92 participants served in cohorts 4-7, 76% earned at least one certificate by 16 months regardless of whether they remained active in the program or not. Nearly three-fifths of the participants in these cohorts remained active in the program at 16 months. More than four-fifths of active participants and nearly three-fifths of participants who stopped out of the program obtained at least one credential at 16 months. Initial program impacts will be available in 2016.

In addition, 70% of participants who exited the program at a graduation point (i.e., certification) secured employment, 77% of them in a healthcare occupation; 58% of early-exiters also found jobs, fully 70% of them in healthcare jobs.

SECTOR-BASED SERVICE DELIVERY

Key components of the CareerAdvance® model include:

- **Sector-focused career pathways training** that is generally organized as a progressive, stackable series of trainings, with each step resulting in a credential valued by employers, e.g., CNA, PCT, LPN, RN. Tulsa Community College (TCC) and Tulsa Technology Center (Tulsa Tech) provide the training.

- **Career Coaches** serve as counselors, mentors, guides, and advocates for participants helping them learn to navigate the often unfamiliar world of postsecondary education. Coaches meet regularly with individual participants to develop goals and career advancement plans and connect them with support services and

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2 The evaluation began with cohort 4 and will continue through cohort 12 which will enroll in 2015.
other resources. They also facilitate partner meetings, which provide a forum for participants to reflect on their experiences, conduct group problem-solving sessions, hear guest speakers address a variety of topics, and practice other skills.

- **Peer support networks** are facilitated early in the program through weekly partner meetings and cohort-based instruction. Participants benefit from strong connections to other students who are in similar situations (i.e., parenting young children), form study groups, carpool, and encourage each other to persist.

- **Performance incentives** provide participants the possibility of earning up to $3,000 annually to help offset some of the costs of participation (e.g., foregone earnings). Participants can earn up to $200 per month for regular attendance, and bonuses of up to $300 for accomplishing specific milestones and maintaining at least a B average in all classes attempted per semester.

- **Support Services** including wrap-around childcare, transportation assistance, and contextualized adult education services (provided by Union Public Schools).

- **A Shared Expectations Participation Agreement** spells out the mutual responsibilities and commitments of the participant and the program to one another.

### SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

CareerAdvance® is the subject of a multi-methods quasi-experimental evaluation, the CAP Family Life Study, which includes implementation, outcomes, and impact analysis components being conducted by researchers at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University, the Ray Marshall Center at The University of Texas at Austin, Columbia University, and New York University. Northwestern University is also leading an experimental evaluation of additional enhanced adult education services being provided to a wider group of CAP families. The evaluations are supported by the USHHS as well as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Foundation for Child Development.