

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: October 18, 2006

SUBJECT: Approval of FY 2007-2009 Henderson County Work First Block Grant Plan

ATTACHMENTS: Proposed FY 07/09 Work First Block Grant Plan

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

In accordance with the State biennial planning schedule, Henderson County Department of Social Services has prepared a recommended Work First Block Grant Plan for FY 2007-2009. The State requests the plan be submitted on or before October 31, 2006.

Henderson County's Work First Planning Committee has worked on and reviewed the plan. The Board of Social Services will formally review the plan at their meeting on October 24, 2004 prior to being submitted.
No fiscal impact.

Requested is: (1) Certification of the Board of Commission's majority approval of the plan; and (2) Chairman's signature.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

Staff recommends that the Board approve this plan and authorize the Chairman to execute the necessary documentation.



HENDERSON COUNTY WORK FIRST BLOCK GRANT PLAN FY 2007-2009

Submitted: October, 2007

Name of Contact Person:

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Vision Statement

To increase opportunities for people who want to work and to provide support, assistance, and incentives to move them from welfare to sustained employment.

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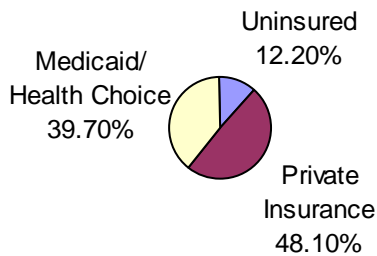
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I. Conditions within the County:

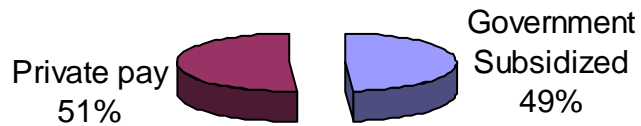
Though Henderson County and the State are experiencing an economic rebound...not all families are benefiting. Factors preventing some families from benefiting from the rebound include:

- Economic transformation: manufacturing jobs have decreased 15% and represent 72% of all jobs lost in Henderson County¹; Over 50% of new jobs available are service economy or construction jobs with low wages²
- Wage/income stagnation: discounting inflation, real income fell 3%³
- Rising basic costs: housing, medical care, and child care costs continue to rise

52% of Henderson County Children are Uninsured or Receive Government Insurance^{4 &5}



49% of Children Age 0-5 Attending Regulated Day Care Receive a Government Childcare Subsidy⁶



Living Income Standard:

An estimated 30% of Henderson County families survive on revenue less than the 2005 Living Income Standard.

Henderson County 2005 Living Income Standard ⁷		
<i>Monthly Expense</i>	<i>Family of Three (3) (One parent & two children)</i>	<i>Family of Four (4) (Two parents & two children)</i>
Housing	\$513	\$682
Food	\$359	\$617
Child care	\$932	\$932
Healthcare	\$319	\$430
Transportation	\$317	\$445
Miscellaneous	\$270	\$403
Taxes	\$355	\$222
Home/rent	N/A	N/A
Monthly total	\$3065	\$3731
Yearly total	\$36,780	\$44,772
Federal poverty threshold	\$14,824	\$21,959

Growth Rate/Demographic Shift:

Henderson County has a dramatic population growth rate, as well as demographic shift, that is outpacing the State and region. 96% of the growth is in-migration⁸. Two population changes are accelerating the growth rate:

- Retirees: Henderson County is a retiree “magnet” with one of the top five in the State growth rate.
- Latinos: Henderson County has the fastest growth rate in Western NC (conservative estimate of 58% population increase since 2001)

Henderson County is one of seventeen North Carolina counties with the population age 65 and older (22%) greater than the population age 0-17 (21%). The Latino population has surpassed African American as the largest minority.

High retiree and Latino growth are significantly raising level of service demands and challenging county government:

- Education is challenged to build schools and maintain teacher/child ratio standards (Latino children in public schools have increased to 13%)⁹
- Public Health is challenged by services without revenue to uninsured county residents
- Social Services is challenged by the overwhelming costs of Medicaid (close to 60% of all county funds for Social Services supports Medicaid funded services)

Child Protection:

Protecting children continues to challenge Social Services and community services. Specific to Work First, available funds continue to shift from employment and support programs to child protection and foster care programs:

- The percentage of child protection children receiving subsidy assistance has increased from 12% to 17%
- The monthly average of children in foster care has increased 142% over the last five years
- Child protection reports investigation is 93.9/1000 children in Henderson County...compared to 53.6/1000 children statewide

Sources:

1. North Carolina Employment Security Commission
2. Western North Carolina Regional Outlook Center for Regional Development, Western Carolina University
3. Asheville Business Research Center, 2005
4. *Action for Children 2006*. NC Child Advocacy Institute (chart: Henderson County Social Services 2006)
5. *Expanding Health Insurance Coverage to North Carolinians 2006*. North Carolina Institute of Medicine (chart: Henderson County Social Services 2006)
6. *Action for Children 2006*. NC Child Advocacy Institute
7. *Falling Jobs, Falling Wages: The NC 2005 Living Income*. NC Budget & Tax Center
8. *Regional Vision 2010*. Land of Sky Regional Council
9. *The Economic Impact of the Hispanic Population on the State of North Carolina*. Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, UNC-Chapel Hill, January 2006

II. Planning Process

During the planning process the committee did not create plans that include electing criteria. On July 19, 2006 the Board of Commissioners voted to remain a standard county.

A. Planning Committee:

On August 16th, the Work First Planning Committee for Henderson County was convened. The committee included representatives mandated in the Plan Model as well as other appropriate or involved community members. The Planning Committee for 2007-2009 is as follows:

Name	Agency Represented
Keith Dale	Board of Mental Health Authority
Bill Moyer	Henderson County Board of Commissioners
Carolyn Tomluk	Current Work First Participant
Rob Curtis	Henderson County Public School System
Beverly Kelly	Interfaith Assistance Ministry
Pat Malinak	Western Carolina Community Action, Inc.
Cissy Rogers	Hendersonville Chamber of Commerce
Julie Thompson	Job Link Career Center
Lee Luebbe	DSS Board
Sandy Morgan	Department of Social Services – Income Maintenance Program Administrator
Karen Couch	Department of Social Services – SW Program Services Administrator
Patti Leonard	Department of Social Services – Work First Supervisor
Liston Smith	Director – Department of Social Services
Noah Rose	Work First
Deborah Austin	Work First
Katey Williams	Work First
Mack Hart	Faith Link Volunteer
Grace Poli	Community Volunteer
Betsy Alexander	Henderson County Health Department
Beverly Richardson	Work First
Frank Verhaeghe	Work First
Roberta Swanson	Faith Link Volunteer
Mark Stanley	Trinity Presbyterian Church

Sub committees were formed and the large group met again on August 31st to compile information from the groups.

B. Public Comment

It was announced in the local newspaper, The Hendersonville Times-News, that the Plan could be viewed at the Department of Social Services, the Public Library, and on line at Henderson County's Website. Comments were to be received through October 20th by Karen L. Couch, Social Work Program Administrator.

C. Planning Process

The first meeting was held in room 215 of the Patton Building at Blue Ridge Community College on August 16, 2006. Patti Leonard and Liston Smith welcomed the participants and explained the task at hand. Liston summarized the challenges and opportunities for the committee. Discussions were held with questions and answers. Issues important for Work First in Henderson County were determined. Work First employees present agreed to work on amending and correcting the current plan along with volunteers from the committee. Revisions were to be returned at the second meeting scheduled on August 31st. At the second meeting, one subcommittee returned a "team approach" system for working with clients with disabilities and another requested the creation of a "job readiness" class. The committee approved the ideas and they have been added to our local program. (See innovative county strategies)

III. Outcomes and Goals for Henderson County

A. Statewide Work First Goals for Henderson County

1. Employment

Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First clients. Local Goal: 80 Work First clients will enter employment.

2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates

Active participation in Federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment. Local Goal: 50% of Work First clients will participate, **90% of the two-parent families will participate.**

Participation rates must take into account severity of disabilities and multiple barriers of current caseloads (i.e. substance abuse, physical, mental and/or emotional problems, histories of abuse-physical, emotional and/or sexual), all of which have impact on mental functioning. This will affect their ability to sustain employment and reach State and Federal participation rates.

3. Providing Employment Services

Active participation in intensive employment services for all families is necessary in order to meet the participation rate and to ensure families are served adequately before the end of five years. One measure of success in Work First is the percentage of families who are subject to the work requirement that counties are assisting with job preparation and job placement. Local Goal: 80% of clients will receive employment services.

4. Benefit Diversion

The most successful outcome possible is for an applicant to avoid the need to become a recipient. Local Goal: 130 Families will be provided diversion assistance.

5. Staying Off Welfare

Efforts to reduce welfare rolls, help adults find jobs, and increase self-sufficiency are undermined when families return to welfare. Families leaving Work First because of a job are tracked to determine if they return to case assistance. Local Goal: 90% of families who leave the program due to work will remain off welfare.

6. Job Retention

Families who leave Work First for employment and continue to be employed 6 to 12 months after leaving the program show evidence of keeping their income and increased job stability, which impacts a family's well being. This measure will be based on the number of responsible adults that leave Work First Family Assistance for employment who are still employed at 6 and 12 month intervals following termination. Local Goal: 60% of Work First clients who leave for work will still be working at 6 months and 50% will still be working at 12 months.

B. Henderson County Developed Outcome Goals

As a standard county, Henderson County opts to not establish additional county outcome and performance goals, other than those provided by the State and Federal government, but rather to concentrate on strategies to accomplish these goals.

These goals are measured by the XTPR report provided by DHRWRA Work First performance report. One of the difficulties in the plan process is the ability to obtain unduplicated numbers from the current State system.

For example, we are not currently able to collect data from Child Support orders regarding Work First clients or Benefit Diversion clients who return to the Work First rolls within the 12-month period. We also do not have complete data of job retention for Work First clients for a 12-month period.

IV. Plans to Achieve and Measure the Outcomes and Goals (A&B)

**HENDERSON COUNTY WORK FIRST PLAN
ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES
TO MEET STATE-WIDE GOALS**

ACTIVITY/ SUPPORT SERVICE	GOAL(S)	WHO	WHERE
Adolescent Parenting Program	1,5	Family Education and Support Program	Children & Family Resource Center, community sites
Adult High School / General Education Diploma	2,3,5	Blue Ridge Community College	On campus Off-site locations
Assistance with SSI claims	5	DSS, Social Security Administration Pisgah Legal	BRCC, Social Security Office, off-site locations as needed Pisgah Legal Services Office
Benefit Diversion	1,4,5	DSS	DSS
Child Care	1,2,3,4,5,6	Child Care Resource & Referral, community providers, DSS, Smart Start, Head Start	Child care providers selected by parents
Counseling services for domestic violence experienced by Work First participants	1,2,3,5,6	Mainstay	Mainstay
Emergency Assistance	1,2,3,5,6	Interfaith Assistance Ministry, DSS, Salvation Army, WINS program, Faith Link, Private donors	Interfaith Assistance Ministry, Community churches, Salvation Army, Children and Family Resource Center, DSS, Faith Link
Housing assistance (Subsidy and Rent Freeze programs)	5,6	Henderson County Housing Authority, WCCA-Section 8, Housing Assistance Corporation	Off-site locations
Human Resource Development	1,2,3,5	Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC)	On campus, off-site locations as needed.
Increase child support collections		DSS	Henderson County Courthouse
Increase number of child support orders		DSS	Henderson County Courthouse
In-depth assessment for development of participant work plan	1,2,3,5	Blue Ridge Community College, DSS, ESC, Vocational Rehabilitation, Haywood Regional Medical Center, and Private providers	On campus, community agencies, off-site locations as needed

HENDERSON COUNTY WORK FIRST PLAN
FY 2007-2009

ACTIVITY/ SUPPORT SERVICE	GOAL(S)	WHO	WHERE
Transportation by public vans	1,2,3,4,5,6	DSS, WCCA (Apple Country Transportation)	Community sites
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	1,2,3	Vocational Rehabilitation	Vocational Rehabilitation office, Off-site locations as needed
Vocational Training	1,2,3,5	Asheville-Buncombe Tech, Blue Ridge Community College, Employers	On campuses Employment sites

V. Administration

A. Authority

The authority to administer the Work First Program has been delegated by the Henderson County Board of Commissioners to the Henderson County Board of Social Services through the Director of Social Services. Nothing in the Henderson County Work First Plan for FY 07-09 shall imply an entitlement to any resources or services at the disposal of the County in the implementation of this Plan.

B. Organization

1. Intake

Intake for the Work First Program is performed by the Family Assistance Intake staff located at the Henderson County DSS main office.

2. Emergency Assistance

Intake and processing for the Emergency Assistance program is performed by an Income Maintenance caseworker out posted at our local community joint faith effort known as Interfaith Assistance Ministries. This worker is a DSS employee that evaluates clients of the Ministry and those referred from other local agencies for Emergency Assistance eligibility. This worker is backed up by the Intake staff of the Family Assistance unit located at the Henderson County DSS main office.

3. Employability Assessment

In Henderson County, Employability Assessment will begin at Intake. When the family is referred to employment services, the information recorded at Intake will be mutually reviewed by the participant and the employment service worker. In-depth information will be gathered regarding barriers to economic self-sufficiency and the reasons that bring the family to the department for services. Goals will be established by the participant and the worker. The assessment in employment services will be ongoing, building on strengths to determine avenues of potential success. Henderson County often encourages psychological evaluations and adds recommendations of the psychologist to the pool of information used to create the plan of action outlined on the MRA II. Each MRA II will be individualized and comprehensive.

4. Employment Services:

Employment Services – In Henderson County, the Work First Employment Program Social Workers operate from their offices at Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC). The campus offers a pleasant, encouraging environment for carrying out their assessments and continued case management. The JobLink Career Center is located at the college and operates the WIA program from there. ESC maintains a worker in the JobLink (through a contract with DSS – see V.C “First Stop”). Although intakes for Work First are done at the main DSS building, maintenance is handled at the BRCC location.

5. Other Supportive Services:

Most supportive services used by Work First are described at IV.B. Blue Ridge Community College's continuing education programs are not mentioned specifically, but are often used by participants for short-term training.

6. Eligibility determination:

The Intake staff of the Family Assistance unit determines initial eligibility for the WFFA program. Re-determinations and ongoing eligibility are determined by the Income Maintenance caseworker stationed at Blue Ridge Community College with Work First Employment Social Workers.

C. First Stop

Henderson County contracts with our local ESC for the services of a worker to handle First Stop registrations at the Joblink Career Center where she is co-located with Work First staff. The worker also travels to the Department of Social Services upon request. A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement with the Employment Security Commission is attached as *Appendix A*.

D. Child Care

The Child Care subsidy program is outsourced, along with the Child Care Resource and Referral Program, at the Henderson County Child and Family Resource Center. Priorities for childcare funds established January 18, 2002 by the Henderson County Board of Social Services are as follows:

Prioritization of Child Daycare Funds

A. Protection/Prevention Services

- *Families who need day care to support protective services may be prioritized over those who need day care for any other reason.*
- *Children in DSS custody who need day care may be given priority over other families needing day care.*
- *Teen parents who need child care to remain in high school or obtain their GED may be given priority over other families needing child care to support education. Priority will be given to Adolescent Parenting Program (APP) parents and these parents will be monitored by the APP program coordinator.*

B. Welfare Reform Support Services

- *Families needing childcare to support Work First employment may be given priority over other families needing childcare to support employment. Priorities will be given to the people who receive Benefit Diversions.*
- *Families who need day care to support approved Work First training may be given priority over families who need day care to support training.*
- *Families who have transferred to transitional Medicaid from Work First and need day care to support full-time employment may be given priority over other families needing child care to support employment.*
- *Families who need day care to support full-time employment and who are not Work First participants may be given priority over families who need day care to support part-time employment.*

E. Transportation

As the Mutual Responsibility Agreement II is drawn up, responsibilities of the participant and the DSS are clearly outlined. Transportation resources for the individual will have been identified and DSS will have agreed to cover the cost for such services. Transportation for approved Work First activities may be arranged via the local transportation system, Apple Country Transportation. Also, carpooling may be encouraged or Work First will agree to reimburse a friend or relative of the participant for the cost of getting to and from Work First activities. The majority of the participants have their own cars and Work First reimburses them for their transportation expenses as well as assisting with many auto repairs to keep them on the road. Occasionally, unique arrangements have been made such as requesting assistance from the FaithLink groups to provide transportation during a period of unavailable transportation. Work First has a van that stays busy moving participants to work and training activities. We do not plan to offer transportation assistance to former Work First clients.

F. Substance Abuse

As a Multiple Response System (MRS) County, Henderson County will provide substance abuse and related services, such as Qualified Substance Abuse Professional (QSAP) Services, as defined by state policy. Please refer to the May 27, 2004 Dear County Director of Social Services letter entitled, Use of QSAP's in Child Protective Services.

G. Family Violence Option

Currently Henderson County works with Mainstay, the primary provider of domestic violence services, and Pisgah Legal Services, the primary advocate and legal services provider, to coordinate assessment and follow-up services.

H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

Henderson County planned use of Maintenance of Effort funds:

- Work First staffing
- Social Work staffing
- Emergency Assistance
- Work First Employment Services (participation, transportation & education expenses)
- Contracts (See below)

Provider:	Service Activities:
Employment Security Commission	Job Search/Readiness
Interfaith Assistance Ministry	FaithLink/Work First Information & Referral
Mainstay	Domestic Violence Services
Child/Family Resource Center	Adolescent Parenting Program
Psychologists	Psychological Testing
Appalachian Counseling	Care Coordination
Haywood Regional Medical Center	Functional Assessments
Jane Dana	Job Readiness Class "Jump Start"

I. Child Welfare Services

Funds Earmarked for Child Welfare Services: **\$2,343,022**

Work First Employment Services and Children's Services are increasing collaboration monthly. Communication between Children's Services Staff and WFE staff is increasing and reported by members of both units. Plans are being made for several joint training/sharing sessions and the WFE Supervisor is attending Children's Services Supervisor's Meetings. Action Plans and MRA II's are compared and shared. WFE will attend Children's Services Team Meetings and they will be invited to attend WF Success Team Meetings as appropriate.

VI. Emergency Assistance

Emergency Assistance can be accessed at two locations in Henderson County - Interfaith Assistance Ministry and the main Social Services office.

Through full-time outposted Social Services staff at Interfaith Assistance Ministry, families can access (a) Emergency Assistance, CIP, NC CHOICE, and other Social Services benefits programs; and (b) private sector benefits. This arrangement creates a “single portal” for any Henderson County family to access in one place the majority of public and private emergency benefits available in Henderson County.

Intake staff at the main Social Services office also provides access for any Henderson County family to emergency assistance; but the primary purpose of Emergency Assistance at the main Social Services office is a resource alternative to Benefit Diversion and Work First.

Other description of Emergency Assistance:

- Maximum assistance for one family is \$500 a year.
- Family income up to 200% of poverty level.
- Emergency definition is as broad as State TANF rules permit, with specificity to: (a) child at risk; and, (b) short-term acute situations.
- The family must have a child who lives with a relative as defined for Work First cash assistance and who meets the age limit for Work First cash assistance.
- Family members must meet the same citizenship requirements as for Work First cash assistance.
- Only short-term assistance may be provided. Short-term assistance is described as:
 - Non-recurring, short-term benefits designed to deal with a specific episode of need.
 - Not intended to meet recurring or ongoing needs; and
 - Not extending beyond four months.

VII. Services to Low Income Families (Under 200% of Poverty)

If funding is available, Henderson County reserves the option to use the 200% eligibility criteria for subsidized day care services especially in the event of a waiting list. This would increase opportunities for employment and training leading to employment. In FY 05/06, \$14,178 in Work First Block Grant Maintenance of Effort Funds, based on 200% Federal Poverty Level, supplements the contract with Mainstay (who provides domestic violence services).

VIII. Services to Non-Custodial Parents

Services to non-custodial parents will not be provided in Henderson County.

IX. Exemption From the Work Requirement

Custodial parents of children under age one will be exempted from the work requirement if parent has not already exhausted the 12 month limit.

X. Innovative County Strategies

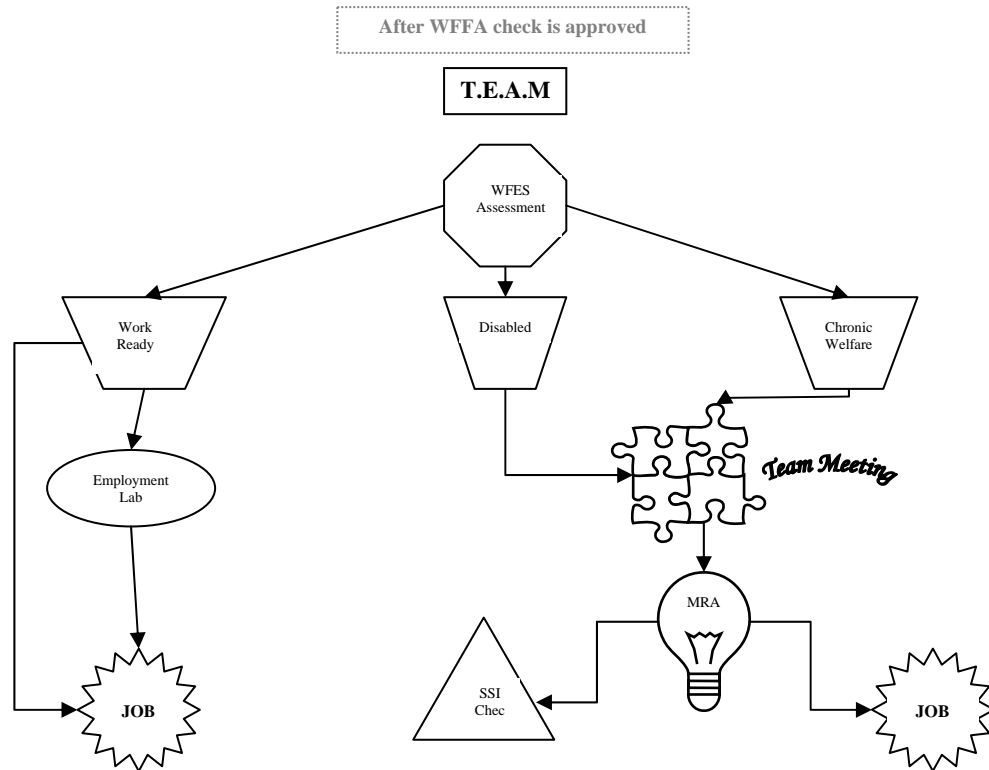
- A. **Faith Link** - An alliance between the faith community, Work First participants and staff, Faith Link is an ongoing arrangement which has been in place since 1998. With FaithLink, Work First families may partner with church mentoring teams, participate in a tutoring program, a family enrichment program and support group, receive counseling regarding finances and have ongoing mental health counseling. FaithLink has been successful in raising community awareness of issues surrounding Work First families. The FaithLink connection often offers innovative solutions to barriers faced by Work First families.

- B. **My Sister's Closet** – The First United Methodist church offers clothing “from the skin, out” to Work First Participants as well as other low income, job searching women in our community. The program is well run, organized and has quality products to offer the participants.

- C. **Young at Heart** - A program run by members of a Seventh Day Adventist Church that assists with transferring automobiles from donors to Work First participants. Their assistance allows the transaction to proceed immediately and Young at Heart is reimbursed at a later date by Work First funds for participation expenses.

- D. **Care Coordination** - Mental Health services, referrals for treatment and substance abuse care coordination will be enhanced via a contract with a local mental health provider who is familiar with addictions, mental illness and local treatment programs that will be of benefit to Work first participants.

- E. **Team approach to assessment** - In order to work more effectively with clients claiming inability to work based on medical/mental issues or those with a history of welfare dependence, we will follow the process outlined in following flow chart:



The team will consist of the client, Work First staff, human service workers, and other professionals as appropriate along with advocates the client chooses.

F. Jump Start

This 2 week class is designed to give the unemployed the motivation and desire to begin the search for employment on their road to self-sufficiency. Attitude, first impressions, strengths and needs of participants will be identified as camaraderie and support build through the group process. Those who successfully complete the class may move into other learning groups at BRCC.

XI. Special Issues – Optional

XII. Certification

This Henderson County Work First Block Grant Plan was approved by the Henderson County Board of Commissioners at a meeting on October 18, 2006.

Bill Moyer, Chairman
Henderson County Board of Commissioners

Attest:

Elizabeth W. Corn
Clerk to the Board

APPENDIX SECTION

Work First Plan FY 2007 – 2009

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
FIRST STOP EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Date: July 1, 2006

This AGREEMENT is entered into by and between the Employment Security Commission (ESC) of North Carolina and the Henderson County Department of Social Services (DSS).

Whereas, G.S. 108A-29 (a2) provides that the point of registration for the First Stop Employment Assistance Program may be agreed upon and designated by the Employment Security Commission and local department of social services in the event that the point of registration for the First Stop Employment Assistance Program is not to be located at an office of the Employment Security Commission; and,

Whereas, the Employment Security Commission (ESC) and the Henderson County Department of Social Services (DSS) have determined that the point of registration for the First Stop Employment Assistance Program Henderson County shall be located at a point other than an office of the Employment Security Commission.

Now, therefore, the Employment Security Commission and the Henderson County Department of Social Services agree as follows:

1. The point of registration for the First Stop Employment Assistance Program in Henderson County shall be located at the following site:

Blue Ridge Community College, College Drive, Flat Rock, N.C. 28731
Work space and appropriate computer equipment and linkages will be provided by the Department.

2. ESC shall accomplish registration as follows:

First Stop Registration
Assistance with Job Searching
Planning and holding regular job clubs
Coordination of services with DSS staff
Job Development and Placement

3. DSS shall provide to ESC compensation as follows for ESC's location of the worker at Blue Ridge Community College:

Although an employee of ESC, DSS will provide the funds for workers' salary and benefits in the total of \$61,578 per year.

4. The term of this Agreement shall begin on July 1, 2006 and shall expire on June 30, 2007. This Agreement may be re-negotiated at any time with the consent of the parties here to.

5. This Agreement is executed in duplicate originals.

Employment Security Commission of North Carolina

By: _____
Paul Keating, Manager

Henderson County Department of Social Services

By: _____
Liston B. Smith, Director