



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

### AGENDA ITEM

**DATE:** March 23, 2004  
**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**SUBJECT:** WORK ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT CENTER(WASC) (District: 1)  
**SUMMARY:**

#### **Overview**

Approval of these recommendations will authorize the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency to partner with the Workforce Partnership, MDRC, various foundations, and state and federal agencies to collaborate on job retention and work advancement skills for low-income workers.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

##### **SUPERVISOR GREG COX AND SUPERVISOR RON ROBERTS:**

1. Direct the CAO to allow Health and Human Services Agency staff to participate in the demonstration project, and to work with MDRC, the One Stop Shop, and state and federal agencies on pilot activities, including the identification and implementation of simplified application/reapplication and verification procedures for "work supports."
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to outstation Health and Human Services Agency staff and co-locate them with One-Stop Shop staffs that are providing the job retention/advancement services.
3. Direct the CAO to use other Health and Human Services Agency staff as needed, including management staff, to manage and oversee the county's participation in demonstration project activities in order to ensure project success.

#### **Fiscal Impact**

There are no current fiscal impacts associated with these recommendations.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The County of San Diego has saved over a billion dollars since implementing the Work Pays/Work First approach to family self-sufficiency. Prior to welfare reform being implemented at the federal level, San Diego County began the Work Pays approach in 1995, when the welfare caseload was over 70,000 families. When Welfare Reform was signed into law in 1996, San Diego County caseloads had already dropped to approximately 64,000 families and with the implementation of welfare reform, the caseload has declined significantly and is now approximately 24,184.

Unfortunately, the labor market is projected to produce more low-wage, entry-level jobs than high-end jobs in the coming years. Many of these jobs will offer few opportunities for advancement, and a majority will not provide medical insurance. MDRC is a non-partisan social policy research firm that targets low-wage workers with a goal of raising their income by addressing high rates of job turnover and low rates of advancement, resulting in improved employment stability, higher rates of advancement and an increase in income. MDRC visited over 24 programs nationwide to explore the feasibility of including these sites in the research pilot program. It is estimated that six to eight sites will ultimately be selected and San Diego has already been chosen as one of the first sites.

The San Diego South Region Health and Human Services Agency Family Resource Center and the San Diego Workforce Partnership work collaboratively on a number of programs and because of this as well as their close proximity, the San Diego South Region One Stop Shop has been chosen by MDRC as one of the first nationwide sites for a Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) pilot program.

Recent research shows that work supports contribute to the reduction of poverty and domestic violence, as well as improved behavior for young children whose homes are more stable. While most employment programs emphasize job search and this has been shown to be a very effective approach to reducing the numbers of individuals and families who rely on public assistance, families with multiple barriers are becoming increasingly difficult to place quickly in jobs. In addition, financial work supports other than EITC have low participation rates among this population. Work Support and Advancement Centers will be able to serve as single centers where low-wage workers can have easy, user-friendly access to the services and supports they need as they move up the career ladder.

The success of the project depends on the dedication of a number of partners including MDRC, San Diego Workforce Partnership, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, the state, federal agencies and foundations.

MDRC will provide overall demonstration project management, funding, research-related activities, and technical assistance. San Diego Workforce Partnership will provide the site and employment related services/programs, included employment staff, and may be providing some funding for retention/advancement services as well. The Health and Human Services Agency will provide co-located staff on site to provide simplified work supports

application, documentation, and recertification processes. It is expected that state and federal agencies will commit resources for the project as their legal and fiscal abilities allow.

San Diego County has been and will continue to be on the cutting edge of welfare reform and the movement to assist families in their efforts to become self-sufficient. Approval of today's recommendations will ensure that creative and cost-effective methods are pursued to provide families with the support necessary to become self-sufficient. When the research pilot is complete, the County and its partners will have current research data on which to base future.

Respectfully submitted

GREG COX

Supervisor, First District  
Fourth District

RON ROBERTS

Supervisor,

**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**CONCURRENCE(S)**

**COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW**

Yes

Written Disclosure per County Charter

Yes

No

Section 1000.1 Required

**GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR**

Yes

N/A

**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Yes

N/A

Requires Four Votes

Yes

No

**GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION**

**TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR**

Yes

N/A

**COUNTY TECHNOLOGY OFFICE**

Yes

N/A

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

Yes

N/A

**Other Concurrence(s):**

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** First Supervisorial District

Fourth Supervisorial District

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