

**North Carolina Association of County Commissioners
2004-05 Ralph W. Ketner Employee Productivity Awards Application**

County:	Rockingham	Employee:	Toni C. Fain	Email:	tfain@co.rockingham.nc.us
County Department:	Social Services	Employee Title:	Eligibility Director		
County Phone:	336 342-1394	County Mailing Address:	371 Hwy 65, Wentworth, NC 27375		
Is this project being submitted on behalf of two or more employees?				No	Yes XX

If yes, please provide below a listing of all project employees in Number 6. Employee & title as listed above should be for lead team member.

Fair Labors Standards Act Designation: In order for your project to be eligible, you MUST indicate one of the following. If you do not know, please contact your personnel director

EXEMPT: **NON-EXEMPT:** **BOTH (if applicable to team):** **XX**

1. Productivity Improvement Title:	Intake Triage
2. Implementation Date (must be between January 1, 2004 and December 31, 2004)	January 12, 2004
3. Please describe the productivity improvement. (Please limit response to these 2 pages.)	<p>Intake Triage is a system in which a single screener interviews potential claimants and completes a series of on-line application forms for Family Medicaid, Work First Family Assistance, and Food Stamps.</p> <p>The process is facilitated by a set of interactive eligibility forms developed by county staff from existing paper forms. These are completed on-line by screeners during the application interview, printed, and delivered to the appropriate case processor, who determines eligibility, processes the application(s), and turns the case over to an ongoing case manager.</p> <p>Beginning in May of 2003, development of the Triage process was a flexible one, with caseworkers and supervisors meeting weekly to review and change the process as needed. Staff started the development process with paper forms, on which needed changes were marked by line staff interviewers. When the forms were deemed satisfactory by line staff, Department IT staff created them on-line.</p> <p>Management re-allocated positions in the Workfirst, Medicaid, and Food Stamps units into screener, processor, and ongoing caseworker positions without adding personnel. By leaving each worker in the same unit (not creating a new, additional unit) they also avoided adding another supervisory position.</p>
4. Please describe why this project was initiated or what problem it addressed:	<p>The Rockingham County Department of Social Services provides intake and case maintenance in all Public Assistance programs. Prior to Triage, Intake Specialists in four units interviewed applicants to determine their eligibility for a variety of programs. This application process required interviews with up to three case workers (for Food Stamps, Medicaid, Workfirst) depending on the type and number of programs desired. Wait times of one-two hours before and between interviews could stretch the application process into a day-long affair. The multiple interview process also raised concerns that clients may not be applying for all benefits they qualified for as some left before applying for all programs.</p>

5. Please quantify the improvement's results in terms of cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of services provided.

Cost avoidance:

1. The interactive eligibility forms developed from existing paper forms were developed by county staff and converted to digital format by DSS IT staff. The only cost to the Department was the \$5700 annual lease cost for six printers, one for each screener's office.
2. In a two-year period, Rockingham County DSS has seen application numbers grow from the 572 Workfirst, Medicaid, and Food Stamps applications taken in December of 2003 to a high of 900 taken in August 2004 to the 773 taken in March 2005. Due to the great efficiency realized by the Triage system, the Department has kept pace with this 46% workload increase without additional staff.
3. In implementing the system, no organizational changes were required and no additional staff needed. Changes were made using existing personnel and re-aligning their job duties.

Higher level of service:

1. Under the new system, the process is reduced to a single interview taking no longer than 90 minutes. Interactive eligibility forms are completed on-line by screeners during the application interview, printed, and delivered to the appropriate case processor, who determines eligibility, processes the application(s), and turns the case over to an ongoing case manager.
2. Lobby wait times are reduced from as long as all day (depending on the number of programs applied for) to no longer than 90 minutes under the new system.
3. In making screener and case processor assignments, the Eligibility Director took personality traits of existing staff into account. As a result, those workers with better communication skills received the screener slots, while those with lesser "people skills" but better data processing and management skills were placed in the processor jobs. They also made certain that both positions had the same salary grade level to avoid pay inequalities.
4. To improve client confidentiality, each applicant was given a slip of paper with a number on it upon entry to the lobby. When their screener came to the lobby for them, instead of calling them by name, each applicant was called by number.

6. Please provide any other descriptive information you would like to be considered by the review committee.

On June 29, 2004, Wilbert Morris, Associate Director of the N. C. Department of Health and Human Services, completed a tour of the Intake Triage process. Morris requested the tour so that he could see how the county has improved the process for taking applications for Medicaid, Work First Family Assistance, and Food Stamps.

To date, three other counties have requested tours of Rockingham County's intake process, and the Eligibility Director and Staff Development Specialist have presented the program at regional and state conventions.

Team Leader, Toni C. Fain Other Members: Kathie Winn, Judi Jones, Cheryl Bunton, Sheila Thompson, Diane Corum, Karen Cayton, Betsy Watlington, Priscilla Modesitt, Tammy McDaniel, Cindi Everett, Sharon Cain, Connie Ramsey, Becky Church, Kathy Chase, Angela Wilson, Terri Parker, Karen Caple, Aimee Hairston, Diane Preddy, Kathy Nelson, Susan Crutchfield, Barbara Graves, Marsha Strickland, Jackie Beaver, Debra Gelinias, Amy Tuttle, Kathy Gentle, Becky Brim, Tammy Wyatt, Lisa Chaney, Renee Wright.

County Manager's Name:	Thomas B. Robinson	Supervisor's Name:	Larry K. Johnson
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Return by **JUNE 1, 2005** via email Rebecca.Troutman@ncacc.org or fax to (919) 733-1065