

SS



RECEIVED  
ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

1999 JAN -5 A 10: 54

## County of Erie

**DENNIS T. GORSKI**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

January 5, 1999

PHONE: 716-858-8500

The Honorable  
Erie County Legislature  
25 Delaware  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**RE: Department of Social Services  
Local Flexibility Pilot: Welfare Diversion**

**Honorable Members:**

The Department of Social Services, in its implementation of a Work First strategy designed to reduce welfare caseloads and insure self-sufficiency for the citizens of Erie County, has applied for and been awarded a State "Local Flexibility Pilot Program Grant" of \$100,000 from New York State.

As described in the enclosed legislation summary, this award is to enable Social Services to test a new welfare diversion program designed to assist people in meeting their short term needs, and to avoid the use of long term, ongoing public assistance. Through the use of this "diversion" approach, we believe that individuals can be helped to meet their immediate needs without becoming dependent upon government assistance.

The attached resolution establishes a grant for the period January 1, 1999 through December 31, 1999, creates two caseworker positions and appropriates funds to necessary accounts for program implementation. There is no local share funding required.

Please refer the attached Resolution to the appropriate committee of your Honorable Body. Representatives of the Department of Social Services will be available to answer any questions.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis T. Gorski".

Dennis T. Gorski  
County Executive

1E-30

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION  
ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
LOCAL FLEXIBILITY PILOT PROGRAM: WELFARE DIVERSION**

**WHEREAS**, the Erie County Department of Social Services has adopted a Work First strategy to focus on employment as the primary goal for all public assistance clients, and

**WHEREAS**, this Work First strategy is designed to assist people in maintaining their independence from government assistance, and

**WHEREAS**, part of this strategy will include an attempt to help people avoid becoming dependent upon public assistance by offering effective, short-term alternatives to welfare as part of a planned Front Door Orientation, Screening, and Diversion process, and

**WHEREAS**, this process will include intensive benefit counseling, case management, information and referral, and where necessary, one time emergency payments designed to avoid the need for ongoing public assistance benefits, and

**WHEREAS**, this project has been recognized by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance as worthy of funding as a "Local Flexibility Incentive Pilot Program", and Erie County has been awarded \$100,000 to support the program, and

**WHEREAS**, there is no local share funding required for this program.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that the Erie County Department of Social Services is hereby authorized to accept a Local Flexibility Incentive Pilot Program award of \$100,000 from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in order to operate a welfare diversion program, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the following grant budget is hereby authorized for the Local Flexibility Incentive Pilot Program for the period January 1, 1999 through December 31, 1999:

<u>Account</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Increase/ (Decrease)</u>
800	Personal Services	\$66,000
825	Fringe Benefits	18,000
824	Travel and Mileage	2,000
826	Other Expenses	6,000
932	Office Equipment	3,000
933	Lab and Technical Equipment	<u>5,000</u>
	Total Expenses	<u>\$100,000</u>
596	State Aid - Soc Serv Admin	<u>\$100,000</u>
	Total Revenue	<u>\$100,000</u>

and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that two (2) Senior Caseworker positions (JG 9) are hereby created in the Local Flexibility Incentive Pilot Program grant for the period January 1, 1999 through December 31, 1999.

(B-100's for above positions to be provided under separate cover)

and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that certified copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the Department of Social Services, and to the Division of Budget, Management and Finance.

**ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
LOCAL FLEXIBILITY PILOT PROGRAM: WELFARE DIVERSION**

**SUMMARY**

The Department of Social Services has been awarded a \$100,000 grant by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in order to operate a welfare diversion pilot program designed to determine whether or not certain strategies can assist people in avoiding the need for long term public assistance.

The Department of Social Services has adopted a Work First approach which encourages clients to take entry level jobs as the first step in long range planning for a career. As part of this approach, a new Front Door Orientation, Screening & Diversion process is scheduled to begin in December, 1998. In addition, we have now established a total of 18 Welfare To Work caseloads to serve Family Assistance (FA) recipients who are employed, and to insure their orderly transition off of FA.

From both these programs we will identify individuals for whom intensive benefit counseling, case management, information and referral, and, if necessary, a one time emergency payment, will avoid the receipt of ongoing FA benefits, and thus, reduce the individual's use of their 60 month lifetime limit on FA.

This program will also allow us to better serve a population we have not significantly focused on until now - people who are not in receipt of FA benefits. In addition, the project will involve a level of accommodation to meet these clients' needs - including flexible hours and follow up services to be provided on site (at client's home or place of employment) - not normally available from our department.

The program's results will be evaluated by tracking the receipt or non-receipt of FA benefits for clients served by the program, and comparing these results to a sample of applicants/clients to be drawn at random from individuals who do not receive the program services, but who did receive other Front Door Orientation and/or Welfare To Work services.

Costs associated with this program include salary and fringe benefits for two Caseworker positions, as well as office equipment, computers, travel and other expenses.

The proposed resolution authorizes acceptance of the grant award, the creation of necessary positions and the grant budget.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no County fiscal impact, as this is a 100% State funded pilot program.

#### REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Social Services has had significant success in reducing welfare caseloads over the past few years, but these results become more difficult to achieve as the caseload dwindles and becomes dominated by the harder to serve clients. Thus, new strategies are needed, and testing these new strategies before investing significant resources in them is a logical and prudent approach.

#### BACKGROUND OF PROPOSAL

The State of New York has encouraged individual counties to try new strategies by offering Flexibility Pilot Program grants, and, being aware of the innovative approaches being used here in Erie County, encouraged us to apply for these funds.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Our failure to access this funding will mean a lost opportunity to test new ways of reducing our welfare caseloads.

#### STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL OF MEASURE

The Department of Social Services will complete the program design, including an evaluation component, hire two Caseworkers to operate the program, and begin operations.

IE-30 (1999)

POSITION AUTHORIZATION OR CHANGE REQUEST

(BUDGET FORM-100 6-75)  
(REVISED 9-76)

DATA CONTROL #

3589

TO:  
BUDGET DIRECTOR  
COUNTY OF ERIE  
95 FRANKLIN STREET  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14202

(A) DATE SUBMITTED: 2/3/99

(B) REQ. EFF. DATE:

(C) FROM: Social Services 6010.00  
Department No.

TYPE OF REQUEST: (D)  ADD: 2 (E)  DELETE: (F)  CHANGE:  
No. of Pos. No. of Pos. No. of Pos.

	(1) TITLE OF POSITION	(2) TITLE CODE	(3) JOB GROUP	(4) FUNCTION	(5) BUDGET ACT.	(6) POSITION #	(7) APPROVED EFFECTIVE DATE
D E L E T E  O r  F R O M	1						
	2						
	3						
	4						
	5						
	6						
	7						
	8						
A D D  O r  T O	1	Sr. Caseworker	K-003	9	110/00		
	2	Sr. Caseworker	K-003	X9	110.00		
	3						
	4						
	5						
	6						
	7						
	8						

(G) REMARKS & JUSTIFICATION:

(H) REQUESTED BY:

Signature of Dept. Head: [Signature] DATE: 2/3/99

(I)  APPROVED ( ) DISAPPROVED - PERSONNEL DEPT.

Commissioner of Personnel: [Signature] DATE: 2-22-99

(J)  APPROVED ( ) DISAPPROVED - BUDGET DIV.

Director of Budget: [Signature] DATE: 2/24/99

(K)  APPROVED ( ) DISAPPROVED - LEGISLATURE

DATE: 3/3/99