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Guest Blog: TANF Employment Services Help Parents Move to Self-Sufficiency

By Alvin Smith, Retention Case Manager, Grant Associates

As regular District's Dime readers know, DC is in the process of implementing improved [employment services](#) for parents on TANF, DC's welfare-to-work program. Early results are very promising with a little more than 1,050 parents securing a job and leaving TANF within the past six months.

Alvin Smith works for Grant Associates, one of the main providers of TANF employment services. He kindly shared the following stories of two of these successful TANF parents, both of whom received services from Grant Associates.

One of our first clients was Ms. M., a single mother of four children, including one child with a disability. Grant Associates was able to place her at a nonprofit organization as part of a work experience program, allowing her to develop skills and build experience in the workplace. The organization wanted to hire her on permanently but did not have the budget to do so. Although disappointed that the work experience would not lead to a permanent job, she continued to exhibit a fantastic work ethic and a commitment to excellence with the hope that she could leverage her experience to get a job at another company. She was able to do just that, securing a job in April 2012 that she continues to hold today. After just ninety days on the job, she received a favorable review and pay increase. She now makes \$8.25 per hour. She has found it difficult to concentrate at work given the difficulties of raising four children on her own, but has been able to reach out to our staff to find effective ways to create a positive balance between her work life and her personal life.

Ms. B. was referred to Grant Associates in March 2012. From the first day, she was a vocal advocate for herself, setting goals and then meeting them. Ms. remained encouraged despite facing obstacles, including care for a child with special needs. With staff assistance, she was able to obtain a position at a local airport, making \$6 per hour plus tips. She set a goal of securing a management position, and worked diligently to achieve this goal. Her hard work was recognized by management at another company, who offered her a management job at a wage four times what she was currently making. She was thrilled to get this opportunity but struggled with her new employer as they did not want to honor the higher wage they promised her. She decided to take a supervisory job at another company, a job she continues to enjoy. She currently makes more than three times what she was making in her first job at the airport. She has been willing to help other TANF parents, and because of her great reputation, she has helped others gain employment in her industry.

Ms. M. and Ms. B. are just two of our clients who have been able to achieve success. Their hard work and determination in the face of obstacles has been inspirational.