

**An Evaluation of the
Non-Custodial Parent Employment Project (NCPEP)
GREATER TAMPA BAY PROGRAM
July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020
With Illustrations and Personal Testimonies**

By

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March 15, 2021

NOTE

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Acknowledgements

The author is deeply indebted to the Director and staff of the Greater Tampa Bay NCEP program and those of the Gulf Coast JFCS Staff directly involved, without whose gracious assistance and support this report would not have been possible. Special thanks goes to Shirelle Simmons-Hudson Program Director.

**An Evaluation of the
Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP)**

GREATER TAMPA BAY PROGRAM, Florida

July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an evaluation of the Greater Tampa Bay, FL Non-custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP). Unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents who are not making their child support payments, and who have children who are eligible to receive assistance, are court-ordered or self-refer into the program. The Program is operated by Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services, and is contracted under the umbrella of CareerSource Pasco-Hernando. The Program is coordinated with the Department of Revenue's Division of Child Support Enforcement and the Courts.

For the last few months of this period, the Courts were minimally active because of the Pandemic and thus referred no one to the program. This forced changes in the day-to-day functions of the Employment Specialists- increasing their recruitment activities. Thanks to their efforts, the program continued to be successful. Volunteers now make up 53% of the total. We expect that to increase as the Pandemic continues.

- In these 12 months, 687 individuals were referred to or volunteered for the program; 78% or 536 of whom arrived at the office and were eligible to participate in the program.
- NCPEP successfully entered 100% of those who reported and who were eligible into the program.

Due to the Pandemic, staff made additional efforts to encourage volunteers to come into the NCPEP Program with referrals and outreach efforts. 53% (364) came into the program this way.

The client base remains 80% male, is spread throughout 20 to 50 years of age, with a dominance of the 30-40 age group, is typically unmarried and ethnically diverse (57% African American, 30% Caucasian and 12% Hispanic).

- The majority of those employed work part time (71%), little changed from previous years. A large proportion of clients stay on the job more than 90 days (61%).

- Using the DOR website via Avatar, a pattern identified some years ago continues when comparing the cost of operating the program to the moneys collected by the Department of Revenue (DOR).

Those clients entering the program during this period are already “paying back” the State (via payments to DOR) for 8% of all of the costs of running the program (see Table 3).

Further, the payments by ALL clients active in the program during this fiscal year returned over four times the program costs (see Table 3). Put another way, for every dollar spent operating NCPEP, \$4.61 was returned to the State in the form of child support payments. That equates to some \$3,016,228 for the year

Many of the clients who have completed the program also continue to make payments. However, COVID and stimulus checks simply made any accurate assessment impossible. What is reflected is \$2,991,750 paid to DOR by former clients. Thanks to DOR including the stimulus checks with earned income (reflected in the \$2.99 million figure), NCPEP made a huge profit this year in spite of having fewer clients.

- Again, NCPEP has proven that this social program cannot only be cost effective but can also provide a new revenue stream for the State.
- Personal Testimonies provide additional evidence that the NCPEP program continues to be successful in both human terms and fiscal terms and promises to continue to be a definite asset to the participants, the criminal justice system, the community and the State.

Introduction:

This evaluation of the Greater Tampa Bay Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP) covers the twelve months from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 (fiscal year 2019/2020). Specifically, this evaluation concentrated on:

1. The number of referrals and the number of placements for the above period
2. A cost-benefit analysis of the Greater Tampa Bay NCPEP to include (a) the amount of funds expended in NCPEP client services (program costs), (b) child support dollars collected by the Department of Revenue from current NCPEP enrollees and (c) the extent to which program enrollees continued to pay child support after they leave the program.

3. NCPEP client demographics
4. Recommendations regarding the program

Before going further, we present a brief overview of the program, its organization, function and purpose.

Program Description

The 1995 Florida Legislature through Florida Statute originally established the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP) as a pilot program. Unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents are assisted in establishing a pattern of regular child support payments by obtaining and maintaining unsubsidized, competitive employment. The program bypasses traditional education and training programs, and requires participants to obtain paid employment as quickly as possible by providing job placement and close monitoring.

The NCPEP program is operated by Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services and is coordinated with the Department of Revenue's Division of Child Support Enforcement and the Courts, and enjoys the strong support of both. The program serves the 13th Judicial Circuit (Hillsborough County) the 6th Judicial Circuit (Pinellas and Pasco Counties), the 5th Judicial Circuit (Hernando County) and the 11th Judicial Circuit (Miami-Dade). Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services, Inc. is a nonprofit agency with over 50 years of service to humanity.

The program originally began in June 1996, and has maintained full-time program offices in Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough and Miami-Dade Counties. Since its inception, funding for the NCPEP program has flowed through various state agencies, including the former Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, the Florida Department of Labor and the former Pinellas WAGES Coalition. The Department of Economic Opportunity (formerly the Agency for Workforce Innovation) and CareerSource Florida through CareerSource Pasco-Hernando currently fund it for all four counties.

Program Process. The NCPEP program targets all public assistance child support cases in Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough, Hernando and Miami-Dade Counties. Unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents who are not making their child support payments, and have children who are receiving or are eligible to receive assistance, are court-ordered into the program. The program also accepts volunteers who meet the eligibility criteria.

An Employment Specialist is assigned to each participant enrolled in the program. The Employment Specialist supervises participants in their job search, tracks progress

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toward obtaining gainful employment, monitors the participants while employed and, as appropriate, provides support to help remove barriers to employment and/or visitation. Internally, in order to comply with safety concerns and CDC Guidelines, paperwork is done via email or regular mail, Doc U Sign was activated, and Face time and Zoom were used on the Specialist's phones in order to minimize face-to-face contact.

The Department of Revenue is regularly informed of participants' employment status. Intensive contact is maintained with all participants during their job search. Once employment is obtained, participants are seen on a weekly basis during their first month of employment, and bi-weekly for five additional months. To complete the program participants must be continuously employed for six months, allowing a break in employment of no more than 30 days, and make consistent child support payments. If the time of unemployment exceeds the 30 days, the participant is required to restart the program.

Efforts to encourage volunteers (a.k.a. self-referrals)

As the number of enrollments from court referrals continued to be lower and eventually non-existent (as a result of COVID), Gulf Coast Staff dramatically increased their Community Outreach to encourage and support volunteer entry into the program. 'Voluntary' entry into the program was accomplished by physically visiting partners and making individuals aware of the employment assistance benefits provided by the program. Flyers were sent out or left in places where potential clients would see them and all partners were continually contacted and encouraged to identify potential clients.

Further, Gulf Coast Staff signed up clients for all virtual job fairs.

Additionally, due to the fierce competition for the available jobs, individuals who had heard about the program through word of mouth (often from current and previous clients) sought the program's assistance and enrolled as volunteers.

The Volunteers came from Outreach efforts conducted at:

1. CareerSource Centers
2. Housing Agencies
3. Non- Profit Agencies
4. Probation Agencies
5. Job Fairs

The NCPEP program provided the following services:

Job development
Supervised job search
Job placement
Case monitoring

Educational assessment
 Educational referrals
 Vocational assessment
 Parenting training
 Financial literacy referrals
 Peer support group referrals
 Contingency funds for:

- transportation
- work attire and other work related items
- vehicle maintenance
- personal hygiene
- car insurance

Short-term trade/skills training: i.e. construction trades helpers,
 Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), etc.

Support service referrals (mediation, substance abuse counseling, etc.)

Vocational and educational testing is given to participants. Those individuals who have clear deficiencies in job-seeking and job-keeping skills are required to attend an employability skills training component. Funds are available to assist participants in eliminating obstacles to search for or accept employment such as providing for bus passes, gas cards, paying for car repairs or buying required work clothes and/or tools.

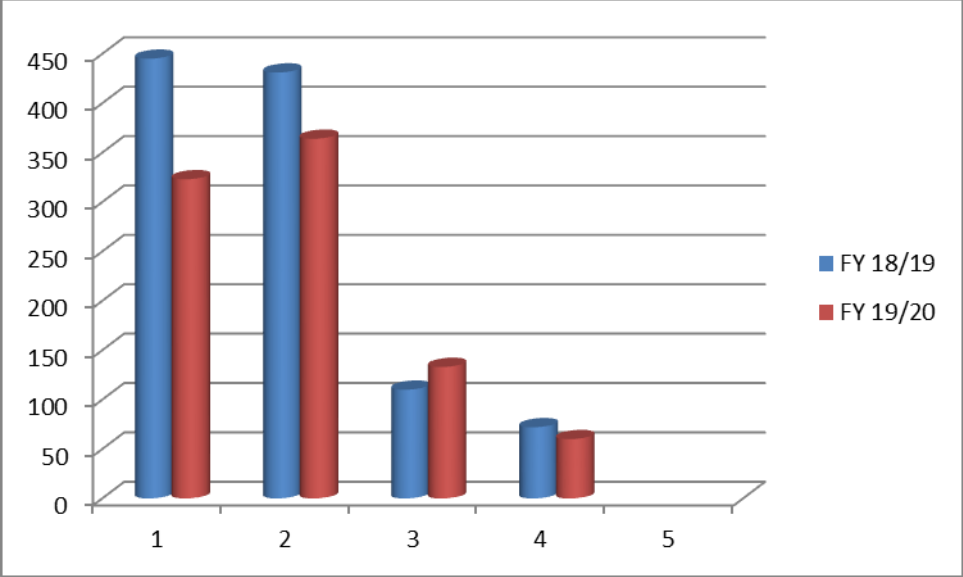
Participants who fail to cooperate with the program are referred back to the Department of Revenue and the Court for further action.

Referrals to the Program:

Table 1 & the figure, which follows presents the information concerning referrals and enrollments and compares fiscal year 2017/2018 with fiscal year 2018/2019. Notice particularly that as the referrals from the Court fell by more than 100 (122) as a result of Court closures, thus the staff efforts encouraging volunteers became the primary source of participants. Volunteers now represent just over half of all individuals entering the program (53%) This proportion is expected to increase in the 20/21 fiscal year as the Pandemic continues to impact the Court system. . .

Table 1				
	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
Program Referral and Enrollment Data	#	%	#	%
Court Referrals this period	445	50.80%	323	47.02%
Volunteers	431	49.20%	364	52.98%
No Shows	110	12.56%	133	19.36%
Not eligible	72	8.22%	60	8.73%
Enrolled (Completed Orientation)	694	79.22%	536	78.02%

% based on the number referred from the court + volunteers (Sum = 876 / 687)
% eligible who were enrolled = 100%



Axis code: 1=Court Referrals, 2=Volunteers, 3=No Show, 4=Not eligible

Efforts to recruit volunteers now consumes a good deal of staff time. Staff have reached out to their partners in other programs to assist in identifying individuals who might qualify.

“Not Eligible” should be interpreted to mean that the referred individual did not meet the TANF requirements associated with the NCPEP program. That is, the children in question were not eligible to receive public assistance and therefore the State had no open case concerning them, or the children lived in other counties/states, or the child was emancipated, or had reached the age of 18. Funding restrictions are such that the program can only accept individuals who meet all TANF criteria.

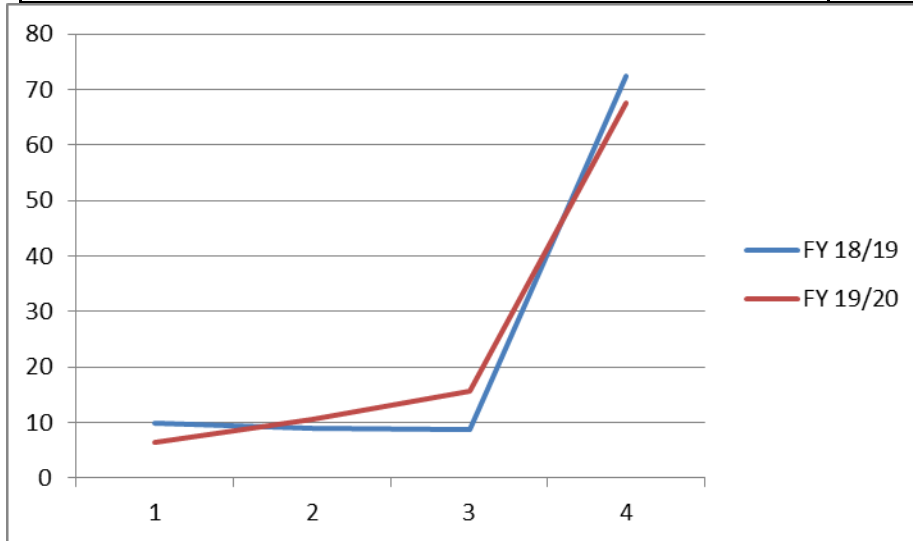
All individuals who were eligible successfully completed the orientation and were assigned an Employment Specialist. Thus, NCPEP continues to successfully enter 100% of those who report and who are eligible into the program. Once entered into the program, the Employment Specialist begins the process of facilitating employment possibilities.

Placements, Duration of Employment and Average Rate of Pay

Table 2 and its figure presents the information concerning the number of clients who were placed in jobs, the duration of their employment and average hourly wage for both fiscal years. The percentages are remarkably stable and indicate staff have been able

to maintain the proportion of persons employed longer than 90 days; although this fiscal year showed a 10% drop in >90 days, undoubtedly due to fewer employment opportunities available as a result of the pandemic. That the number is this high is a credit to the job matching skills of the Employment Specialists.

Table 2				
Placements and Duration of Employment				
	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
Number of participants employed up to 30 days	48	8.81	65	12.97
Number of participants employed for 30 - 60 days	50	9.17	62	12.38
Number of participants employed for 60 - 90 days	61	11.19	66	13.17
Number of participants employed more than 90 days	386	70.83	308	61.48
Employed Part Time	348	62.93%	145	71.06
Employed Full Time	205	37.07%	356	28.94
Total	553	100%	501	100%
Average hourly wage	\$10.46		\$11.03	



Axis: 1=30 days, 2=30-60 days, 3=60-90 days, 4=>90 days

The average hourly wage reflected in Table 2 again exceed \$10.00/hour. Part time employment continues to dominate.

Cost Benefit Analysis

The issues here concern **(a)** the amount of funds expended in NCPEP client services (program costs), **(b)** child support dollars collected by the Department of Revenue (DOR) from current NCPEP enrollees and **(c)** the extent to which program enrollees continue to pay child support after they leave the program.

Issues (a) and (b): As mentioned in earlier reports, restrictions associated with the Department of Revenue database prohibit an exact accounting of moneys paid in by clients. Thus, while the dollars reported represent our best efforts to secure these data using the DOR website via Avatar, we consider the dollar amounts to be underestimated.

Given that caveat, Cost Benefit Analyses for this program indicated the program was generating considerably more money in Child Support Payments made directly to the State than it cost to operate the program on a day-to-day basis.

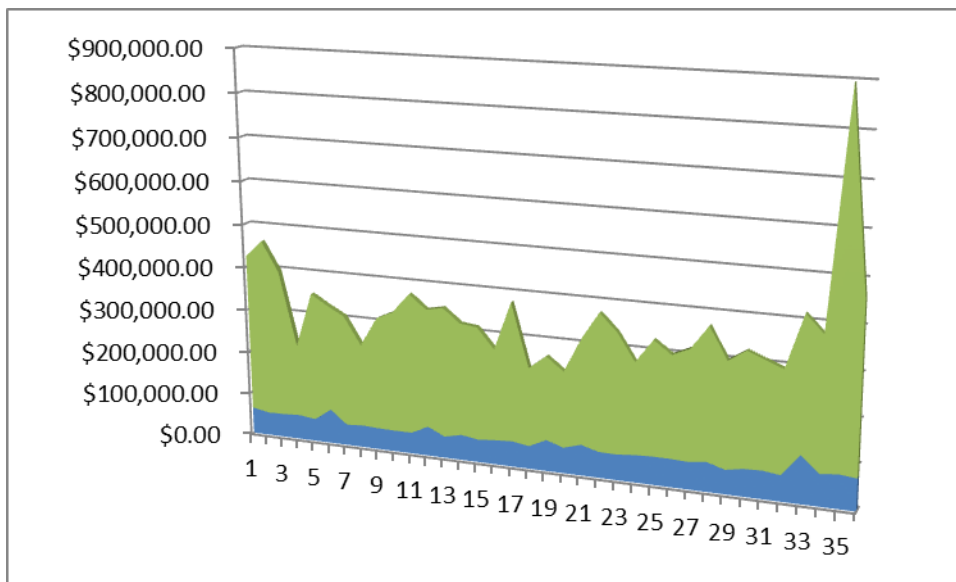
The data on Table 3 indicate this trend, and are consistent with previous years. The last two columns in Table 3 illustrate the importance of including all clients in the program. This table indicates that “new” clients (only those entering the program during the reporting period – the third column) were already paying 8% of the program costs to the DOR. (Column 2 / Column 1 x 100: 68,435.21 / 834,719.38 x 100 = 8.20 %.)

Table 3 2019/2020			
Program Costs versus Child Support Payments			
Month	Program Costs	Payments only from those CLIENTS ENTERING the program this period	Payments from ALL CLIENTS active during this period
July 2019	\$64,844.88	\$6,107.96	\$261,866.24
Aug 2019	64,783.72	5,356.02	232,941.05
Sept 2019	62,777.56	5,024.05	253,226.89
Oct 2019	68,046.77	7,784.85	301,989.5
Nov 2019	55,460.38	5,999.88	243,345.62
Dec 2019	62,855.26	8,544.70	261,497.65
Jan 2020	64,340.65	4,800.05	244,006.70
Feb 2020	59,284.20	4,745.79	233,767.50
Mar 2020	108,840.23	5,252.85	307,953.68
Apr 2020	72,890.75	6,552.35	303,823.87
May 2020	77,267.08	6,523.74	818,946.38
June 2020	73,327.90	1,742.97	387,582.04

Total	834,719.38	68,435.21	3,850,947.12
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Further, the payments by ALL clients active in the program during this time (the last column in Table 3) returned over 4.6 times the program costs. Put another way, for every dollar spent operating NCPEP, \$4.61 was returned to the State in the form of child support payments. (Column 3 / Column 2: 3,850,947.12 / 68,435.21 = 4.61.)

This is a trend, which has maintained itself for several years as the following graph shows, and the return has been dramatic. The Blue area represents the costs of the program, while the massive Green area represents the moneys paid by ALL CLIENTS active at the time. NOTE: The spike in May 2020 is the result of DOR intercepting the stimulus checks paid to the clients. This was true last year as well, but as the stimulus moneys were smaller, the spike is not as noticeable.



The numbers on the Axis represent months. 3 years of data are reflected above

Issue (c): As was the case in earlier reports, “the extent to which program enrollees continue to pay child support after they leave the program” can only be estimated at this time. In the past, DOR personnel have been of great assistance in helping NCPEP staff identify dollars paid by NCPEP participants, before, during and after participation in the NCPEP program. That assistance is no longer available.

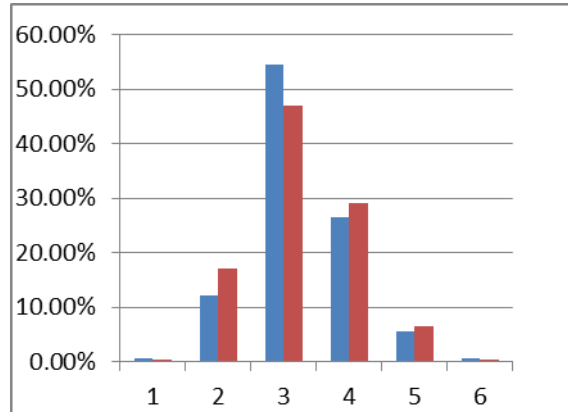
Even with the limitations, using NCPEP’s termination summaries, staff attempted to discover an answer to this question. However, DOR treating stimulus checks as earned income (which they were not) simply made any accurate assessment impossible. What is reflected is \$2,991,750 paid to DOR by former clients. Thus, NCPEP made a huge profit this year in spite of having fewer clients.

These funds are of course over and above those moneys reported in Table 3.

Client Demographics:

As Table 4 and the figure indicates, the ages of the clients have not changed, with the heaviest concentrations between the ages of 30 and 50. The overall client age range has remained stable at 20 – 50.

Table4				
Age Groups				
	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
Age	#	%	#	%
under 20	3	0.34	5	0.61
20-30	124	14.16	99	12.07
30-40	422	48.17	448	54.63
40-50	266	30.37	217	23.47
50-60	56	6.39	46	5.61
60-70	5	0.57	5	0.61
unknown				
Total	876	100%	820	100%

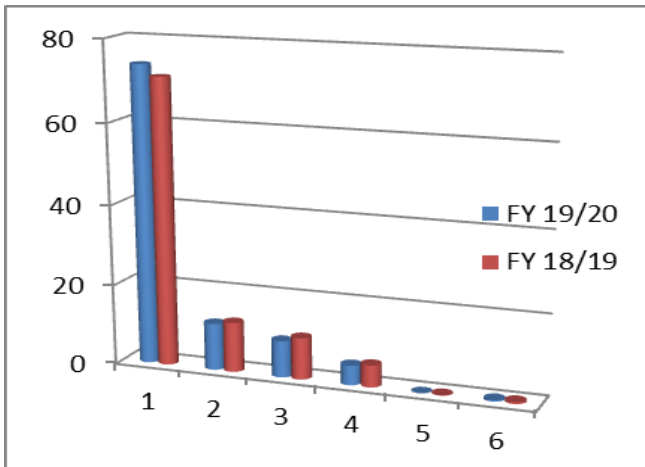


Axis codes: 1=under 20 years of age,, 2 = 20-30,

3 = 30-40, 4=40-50, 5=50-60

Table 5 and the corresponding figure, indicates no change in **marital status**. The “Never Married” group remains the largest demographic, followed by Divorced and Legally Married.

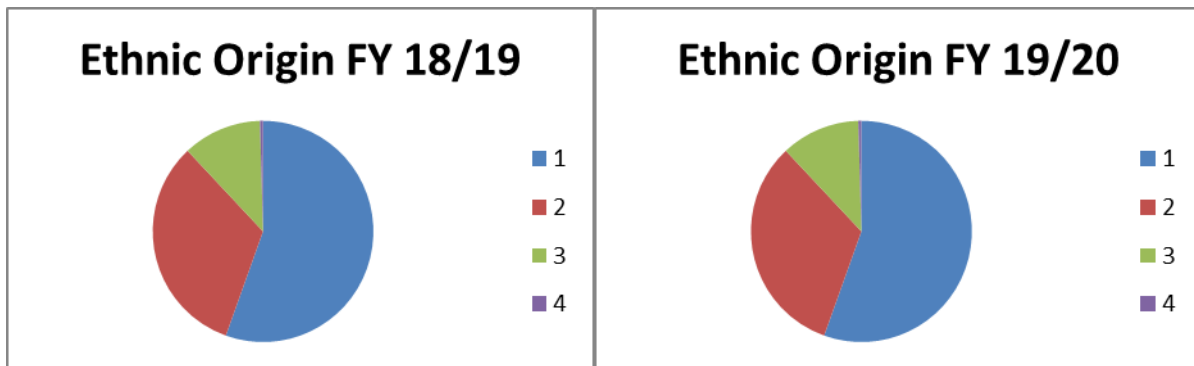
Table 5				
Marital Status				
	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019-2020	
Category	#	%	#	%
Never Married	623	71.12	606	73.9
Divorced	109	12.44	96	11.7
Legally Married	91	10.39	75	9.15
Separated	48	5.48	40	4.88
Widowed	1	0.11	0	0
Unknown	4	0.46	3	0.37
Total	876	100%	820	100%



Axis: 1=Never Married 2= Divorced 3=Legally Married, 4= Separated, 5=Widowed 6=unknown

Table 6 presents information on gender and **race** (note the pie charts below) indicates African Americans continue to dominate accompanied with an increase in Caucasians for FY 18/19 & a decrease in Hispanic clients. Males dominate **gender**

Race	FY 2018/2019		FY 2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
African American	486	55.48	471	57.44
Caucasian	285	32.53	244	29.76
Hispanic	101	11.53	103	12.56
Asian/Pacific	4	0.46		
Unkn./not reported	0		2	0.24
	876	100%	820	100%
Gender				
Male	750	85.62	701	85.80
Female	126	14.38	116	14.20



Color Code: Blue = African American/ Red = Caucasian/ Green = Hispanic

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In summary, the client base remains 80% male, is spread throughout 20 to 50 years of age, with a dominance of the 30-40 age group, is overwhelmingly unmarried and ethnically diverse (57% African American, 30% Caucasian and 12% Hispanic).

Personal Testimonies

“I greatly appreciate your help with assistance on my rent. I really fell on hard times during the Pandemic. I will tell my family and friends about the NCPEP Program so they can also get help. I was also informed that the program was helping with utilities bills. Because I am currently behind on my light bill, I could really use help with that. If not it is OK because I thank you so much for the rental assistance. Sincerely, “

Recommendations

- 1) Provide additional resources to maintain and enhance the current program, including their needs for more supportive services related to short-term vocation and certification. Currently NCPEP staff are limited in the type of supportive services they can provide.
- 2) Continue to review the program on an annual basis
- 3) Expand the program to Orlando, Sarasota, Jacksonville, Tallahassee and Broward County

Kudos to the Director and Staffers who continue to successfully respond to the changing environment.

Conclusion:

While much has happened in 2 years, which could be expected to adversely affect the program, the opposite appears true – it has remained stable and thrived even in an uncertain climate.

The NCPEP program continues to be successful in both human terms and fiscal terms and promises to continue to be a definite asset to the participants, the criminal justice system, the community and the State.