

# Cross Training Government Staff and Community Assisters on Multiple Benefits

While some approaches to benefits integration use technology to improve processes and user experience, other approaches rely less on technology or datasets and more on improving frontline staff's knowledge and capacity.

If benefits enrollment caseworkers and community organizations have supports in place to encourage them to learn about a range of public benefits, they can assist residents with the related challenges they face just as easily as they would with a single benefit program. Some ways to incentivize cross training include:

- + Realigning agency goals and metrics to include cross training and referrals to other programs
- + Funding the development of curricula, resources, and cross training delivery
- + Addressing real or perceived funding restrictions or reporting requirements that cause caseworkers and community organizations to overlook other public benefits.

The examples below describe how peer-to-peer training and updated interview scripts can connect residents to the benefits they are eligible for.



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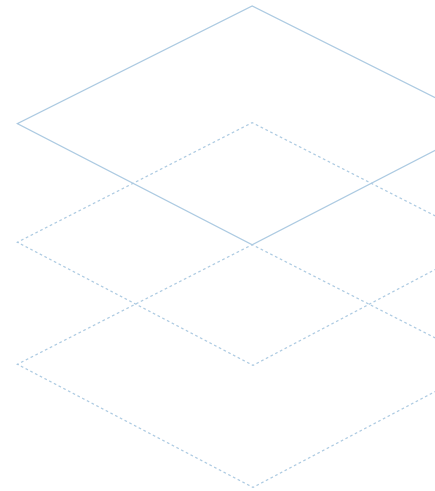
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When it comes to treating the whole person and leveraging the relationships that we have with our clients, the frontline caseworkers are really key to that. They tested and rolled out just one little question that they add to the end of their conversation with clients: ‘Is there anything else going on in your life that I might be able to help you with?’ Previously if a person called in and said, ‘I want to apply for SNAP,’ the person just applied for SNAP and that was the end. But in this case we’re saying, ‘What else is going on?’ You might find out, ‘Well, my car is broken down, so I can’t really get to work.’ ‘Well, we actually have some funds available to help you repair your car and get you to work.’ But we didn’t know that in the past. We didn’t even ask until now. That’s a big part of what we’ve been doing.

**STEPH WHITE**

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From the Beeck Center event, “Integrated Benefits: Going Further With ARP” on August 4, 2021.



## Training Across Benefits, Peer-to-Peer

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services worked with non-profit human-centered design firm [Civilla](#) to design, pilot, and implement a redesigned, integrated renewal form that covered the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, cash assistance, and childcare assistance. During that project Civilla also worked with the department to develop and support a peer-to-peer training model.

This approach prepared more than 5,000 staff members in more than 100 offices, and more than 3,000 staff from 600 community organizations, to use the multi-benefit renewal forms. They also adapted the training to be remote at the onset of COVID-19.

## Updating Interview Scripts to Include Other Benefit Referrals

Michigan's SNAP and Medicaid benefit caseworkers added a new question to the end of the scripts for interviews that are required as part of the benefit application process. The updated script prompts caseworkers to ask applicants if there is anything else happening in their life that they need help with. As a result, applicants get referred to benefit programs that they may not have known existed, such as funding for transportation, childcare, or energy bills.<sup>1</sup>

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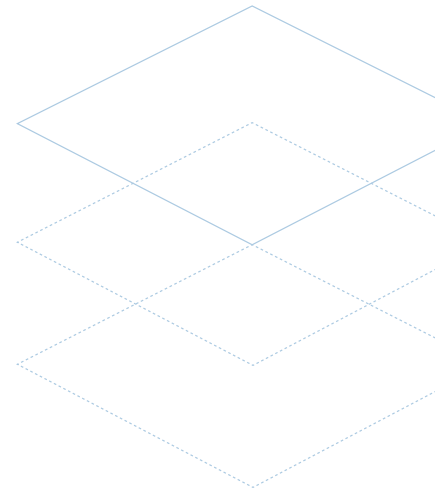
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Read more about benefit cross-training in Michigan:

- + [Project Re:New: Developing Simple, Intuitive Benefits Renewals.](#)
- + [Going Big with Human-Centered Redesign.](#)

Discover additional resources on benefit cross training:

- + [Blueprint for a Human-Centered Safety Net: Many Welcoming Doors.](#)



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### **i Get in Touch**

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Please contact us with any thoughts, questions, or potential collaborations via email at [digitalbenefits@georgetown.edu](mailto:digitalbenefits@georgetown.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> White, S. (2021, August 4). Integrated Benefits: Going Further With ARP. Hosted by the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation.