

WISCONSIN WORKS (W-2) CONTRACT AND IMPLEMENTATION (C&I) COMMITTEE

201 East Washington Avenue, GEF 1, Room D203

August 17, 2007

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome

Bill Clingan, Division of Family Supports (DFS) Administrator, welcomed all to the meeting. Bill presented a brief update on the Biennial Budget process. The Legislature Conference Committee is working on the Budget and there is no indication yet about their discussion on W-2 and Related Programs.

Bill presented an update on 2008-09 W-2 Contract allocations. Themes DFS considers include: budget amounts from the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC); weighting the caseload for the workload of various case types; minimum allocation level for small W-2 agencies; hold-harmless percent limit for any decrease or increase (-25% to +15%) in an agency's allocation; and making adjustments for the Biennial Budget reduction in July – December 2007 funding in the allocations starting January 2008. Also DFS is considering W-2 agency allocation amounts both with and without FSET for both possible outcomes from the Biennial Budget process.

A few W-2 agency representatives asked DFS to consider releasing W-2 agencies from the 120 days W-2 Contract termination provision because 2008-09 W-2 allocations are not issued yet, or adjusting the termination timeframe based on when W-2 allocations are issued. Another suggestion was to apply any unspent "surplus" in the 2006-07 W-2 allocations to any reduction in W-2 funding for July – December 2007 instead of starting January 2008.

Some W-2 agency representatives recommended the W-2 Benefits allocation be removed from W-2 Contracts and instead recommended DFS retain the Benefits allocation. One suggestion was DFS could impute a Benefits amount to a W-2 agency in order to calculate the W-2 agency's Administration and Services allocations. A W-2 agency representative stated W-2 agencies have less control over the Benefits allocation than ever before due to TANF Reauthorization requirements and W-2 policies, along with concerns about economic recession.

CMS Policy Change

Bill Clingan stated the state did hear agencies' comments recommending appeal of the court decision on CMS placements, although the state decided to take a different approach. A Milwaukee W-2 agency representative indicated in the past month their caseload has increased 80 cases, although they do not definitively know the cause of the increase. Another Milwaukee W-2 agency representative stated they identified 13 cases in the past week which would have been CMS and now are CSJ cases. Another Milwaukee W-2 agency stated they have significant increases in their caseload, although it's not clear what's causing the increase. This agency representative also expressed concerns about DFS retaining W-2 Benefits because that would be "migrating back to an old program approach."

Margaret McMahon, DFS/BW-2, reported on revisions made since the last C&I meeting in the upcoming Operations Memo on CMS Policy Change. The Memo will be issued on Monday, August 20, 2007. Bill Clingan noted DFS has requested Department Legal Counsel's response about whether applicants can decline W-2 Benefits and still receive W-2 services.

Margaret noted W-2 agencies must complete reassessment of existing CMS placements within 14 calendar days from August 20, 2007. Also W-2 agencies are to use a new activity code to track individuals in the new Job Search CSJ placement.

TANF Reauthorization - Updates

Nancy Buckwalter, DFS/BW-2, reported Wisconsin received the federal response to the latest Work Verification Plan (WVP) and it is "very close to approval". We are required to specify ten holidays, and some minor wording changes. Margaret McMahon reported an Operations Memo on the WVP is anticipated in the next few weeks.

Nancy reported on the gap in Wisconsin's Work Participation Rate (WPR) with one calendar quarter remaining. Bill Clingan noted our excess Maintenance of Effort (MOE) may provide a temporary reprieve for the WPR.

Nancy also reported there are some federal legislative proposals regarding TANF. Two of the proposals are: Senate Bill 1730 on engagement of individuals with disabilities, which would modify work participation requirements to deem full participation if the individual only is able to participate for reduced hours; and Senate Bill 1461 which would provide a grace period for a federal TANF penalty.

Training – Updates

Gerry Mayhew, DFS/BW-2, reported New Worker Training was revised to eliminate one week of training time. DFS will post Q&As through Agency Training Liaisons (ATLs). Three computer-based courses on case management special needs were finalized in the past month: Chronic Back Pain; Fibromyalgia; and Asthma. Courses on Cancer and HIV/AIDS also are being developed and will be ready approximately January 2008.

Discussion on the 2008-2009 W-2 Program

Bill Clingan stated DFS wants to begin a discussion about the 2008-2009 W-2 program, and asked that today's discussion focus on Performance Objectives and Workload Issues.

A W-2 agency representative expressed concerns about inaccuracy in the retention Performance Measure for border counties. Suggestions included using Federal new hire data, applying a multiplier to data for border counties, or removing out-of-state employment from the denominator. Another suggestion was data for the second quarter is not necessary for retention because retention data does not change significantly after the first quarter. Another W-2 agency representative expressed concerns the Performance Measures do not consider some W-2 participants only have part-time employment as their goal.

A W-2 agency representative recommended all Performance Measures be controllable by W-2 agencies and specific to W-2 workers. Another W-2 agency representative stated concerns that Performance Measures are based on too short of a wait time for SSI approval compared to the actual timeframe.

Agency representatives noted Performance Measures influence behavior, and suggested Performance Measures be focused on funding and process improvement, while other measures could be information-only. Bill Clingan stated the purpose of the Performance Measures Workgroup could be broadened to continue this discussion.

A W-2 agency representative made the following suggestions regarding Workload Issues: discontinue Learnfare; look at retention over a shorter timeframe; recognize a W-2 "fifth tier" of individuals with two or more extensions, because these individuals will not be employed (and SSI may or may not be a reasonable goal for them); address the huge workload based on discrepancies in screens for Unemployment Insurance (UI) data; and connect the system to other databases when possible to eliminate data verification by workers. A Milwaukee W-2 agency representative expressed concerns about some duplicative reporting and W-2 agencies generally recommended less reporting requirements.

Workgroups – Updates

Nancy Buckwalter provided an update on the Performance Measures Workgroup on behalf of Jane Kahl. The Workgroup discussed a Hmong translation problem in the Customer Satisfaction Survey that's been

resolved, and a Memo will be issued regarding this. The Workgroup also discussed: Entered Employment; considering a different measure for small versus large agencies; retention; and part-time employment.

Administrator's and Operations Memos - Updates

Nancy Buckwalter reviewed the Memos published since the last C&I meeting and upcoming Memos. Upcoming Memos include Electronic Case Files (ECF), and a Corrected Operations Memo on W-2 Temporary Absence Policy clarifications.

A W-2 agency representative expressed concerns about the volume of Memos in addition to the W-2 Manual, especially for new workers trying to learn the W-2 program. Agency representatives recommended DFS keep the W-2 Manual updated and designate each incorporated Memo as obsolete. Nancy noted work is in process to update the W-2 Manual and some updated chapters are scheduled for this fall.

Suggestions for Agenda Topics for Future Meetings

W-2 agency representatives asked to continue the topics and discussions from this C&I meeting at the next C&I meeting.

Recorder: Jude Morse, DFS/BW-2

Next Meeting Date: September 21, 2007, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
201 East Washington Avenue, Madison, WI, Room D203