

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

201 E Washington Ave., GEF 1, Room D203

**July 18, 2008**

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

## **Welcome and General Updates**

Julie Kerksick explained her plan to establish a six month listening and planning period to outline short-term and long-term goals for the W-2 program. In the interim, C&I meetings will likely continue, but there may be a name change and a change in format and frequency of meetings.

## **W-2 and Related Programs and DCF Mission and Goals**

Julie led a listening session to gain input on how W-2 agency activities contribute to the goals of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). She also asked W-2 Agencies to provide input on changes DCF can make to improve services to W-2 applicants and participants.

Julie began by providing the DCF mission, which is to promote the economic and social well-being of Wisconsin's children and families. The Department is committed to protecting children, strengthening families, and building communities. The five overarching goals are:

1. Children are nurtured, safe and engaged;
2. Enhance prevention and early intervention efforts throughout Wisconsin;
3. Families will have access to quality early care and education;
4. Parents will secure and maintain meaningful jobs;
5. Fathers will be more engaged in the lives of their children.

W-2 Agencies provided the feedback listed below. Comments are grouped according to topic with a summary sentence in italic at the beginning of each grouping.

*Some W-2 policies do not match up with the overarching goals of DCF.*

- There is a disconnect between the guiding principles of W-2 and #4.
- The increase in child care co-pays has negatively affected #3 and child care providers are being driven out of business because of the subsidy.
- In the Eight Guiding Principles of W-2, sanctions are mentioned three times.
- The 24 month time limit conflicts with goals #1 and #4.
- Do the goals of W-2 conflict with DCF's goals? Can we reconcile Performance Standards and how they fit with DCF goals?

*Performance standards and contract structure do not always match the overarching goals of DCF.*

- Performance Standards drive agencies to get people into jobs quickly rather than to serve the family.
- Performance Standards don't reflect the quality of work that is being done. There is a perception that there are a large number of people on the program, and the performance standards don't reflect how well the agencies have performed in light of the decrease in funding.
- Those responding to the Customer Satisfaction survey don't know who (which worker) they are rating.
- Incentives are only for jobs and that is where our focus is, how do you measure services to W-2 Ts and the work of case management? This is not reflected in Performance Standards.

- Increase flexibility in contract funding; allow more flexibility in how funds are spent.
- We could look at NYC and Chicago: where they have separate contractors which are specialized in serving the different, especially challenging-to-serve, populations.

*The caseload has changed and some participants are not appropriate for work because they are pursuing SSI.*

- We now have significantly more W-2 Ts and fewer CSJs; how can we increase coordination with WIA for CSJ participants, so we can focus our efforts on W-2 Ts?
- Most W-2 Ts are pending SSI and the SSI system is flawed – SSI eligibility takes years and appears to be arbitrary.
- Regarding “meaningful” jobs, we must recognize that there are people who won’t find jobs in the amount of time and services provided by the W-2 program and maybe a goal could be income supports rather than employment.
- It is taking two years to get an SSI decision and there is no reimbursement to the agency for the W-2 cash assistance paid to the household when SSI eligibility is backdated to the SSI application date.
- W-2 was designed during a booming economy, declare victory and move on. Design a program to meet current issues.

*We need more coordination between programs.*

- Increase coordination with other Departments, such as transportation and housing programs and WIA programs to leverage funding to help meet our goals.
- Self-sufficiency goal of W-2 requires collaboration across many services.

*Other comments:*

- Fatherhood Initiative: Is there a way to expand the Children First program?
- Implement an earnings disregard for those who are working.

Julie asked what we are currently doing that addresses any of the five stated goals.

*There are programs and services which get at the overarching goals, however, agencies pointed out that much of this is funded outside of W-2.*

- Combining customized skills training with RWRP to get people into jobs that pay \$10.07 per hour rather than \$8.60 per hour.
- Funding the Talent Bridge Program which teaches soft skills, such as getting along at work and how to arrive on time and ready to work. Employers are willing to pay employees to get this type of training.
- Promoting healthy marriages, fatherhood and Children First program/services through the Latina Resource Center and the Healthy Families Initiative, using a family preservation model of prevention.
- The Early Childhood Initiative provides neighborhood early childhood programs.
- Many of the innovative programs that came out of Community Reinvestment funding did align with these goals and these programs could be started-up again or replicated.
- Through county levy funds, counties are able to provide parenting, in-home therapy, and child welfare services.
- The good things that are being done are being funded outside of W-2 funding.

*Challenges remain in connecting participants to relevant training and coordinating with WIA.*

- Customized skills training has its weaknesses because the skills learned are so specific that the training is not portable/universal.
- Increase coordination with the RISE Project.
- The wage goal for WIA is \$13.96; this is not realistic for the W-2 population; CNA training will not result in that high a wage.

*Concerns remain about the elimination of CMS.*

- The elimination of CMS has cost Kenosha \$200,000.
- We need a diversion program; a diversion program could serve those who would have been placed in CMS.

*Workload and costs associated with implemented policy changes are an ongoing issue.*

- There is a cost associated with every policy change.
- There is too much lag time in training new FEPs.
- In some agencies, workers are having a hard time managing workload and quality work.
- The policy changes over time have added to workload; workers are spending more time monitoring attendance reports. Policies are being made with out knowing how it impacts the local agency.
- The face-to-face Emergency Assistance requirement has resulted in more work for staff. This used to be completed by phone contact.
- W-2 has become an administratively burdensome program.
- A few large agencies put a customer service FEP in the lobby full-time to address customer service issues sooner, although the downside is that FEP's caseload was added to other FEPs.
- Acknowledge that new policies are often influenced by what is happening in Milwaukee County, but the problems are different in rural Wisconsin.

### **DCF Updates**

The new department appointees are:

- Lisa Patrick – Division of Prevention and Service Integration based in Milwaukee
- Dan Harris – Division of Early Care and Education
- Cyrus Behroozi – Division of Safety and Permanence
- Nancy Wettersten – Chief Legal Counsel

### **Suggestions on Agenda Topics for Future Meetings**

- Economic outlook and predicted job growth by regions, WDAs and counties across Wisconsin.
- More dialog regarding “where we are” and what are our opportunities.
- Dan Harris and Cyrus Behroozi will join us to share their thoughts regarding service integration across Divisions.

**Next Meeting Date:** August 22, 2008, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
Room D203, 201 E. Washington Ave., Madison, WI