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*PROGRAM CATEGORIES:

<input type="checkbox"/> AS	<input type="checkbox"/> FM	<input type="checkbox"/> ML	<input type="checkbox"/> TR
<input type="checkbox"/> CC	<input type="checkbox"/> FL	<input type="checkbox"/> NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W-2
<input type="checkbox"/> CS	<input type="checkbox"/> IT	<input type="checkbox"/> RA	<input type="checkbox"/> WIA
<input type="checkbox"/> CF	<input type="checkbox"/> JC	<input type="checkbox"/> TC	
<input type="checkbox"/> CR	<input type="checkbox"/> LM	<input type="checkbox"/> TA	

To: W-2 Agency Administrators

From: Bill Clingan /s/
Division Administrator

RE: Strategic Focus in Community Service Jobs

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Administrator's Memorandum is to clarify DWS expectations with respect to W-2 agency administration of the W-2 Community Service Job (CSJ) employment position and to suggest strategies for maximizing the effectiveness of CSJs in attaching participants to Wisconsin's workforce. Although the recommendations outlined in this memo will be of greatest interest to agencies with large CSJ caseloads, all agencies are expected to consider the possible relevance of those recommendations to their local practices and needs.

This memo is also being issued to stimulate discussion of "best practices" in W-2 CSJ development and administration. Agencies that have met with particular success in the areas outlined in this memo are encouraged to contact the DWS Administrator so that these practices can be shared with other agencies through the W-2 Contract and Implementation (C&I) committee and other means.

BACKGROUND:

As the single most prevalent W-2 placement statewide, and as the placement serving participants with more manageable employment barriers, the CSJ position may offer many agencies some of the most promising opportunities to move paid W-2 participants quickly into unsubsidized jobs.

From several standpoints, therefore, aligning CSJs closely with an accelerated employability focus is key to maintaining W-2's effectiveness as a workforce attachment program. DWS has

* PROGRAM CATEGORIES:

AS--Apprenticeship Standards	FM--Financial Management Requirements	ML--Migrant Labor	TR--Transportation
CC--Child Care	FL--Foreign Labor Certification	NA--Native American Services	W-2--Wisconsin Works
CS--Child Support	IT--IT Systems	RA--Refugee Assistance	WIA--Workforce Investment Act
CF--Children First	JC--Job Center	TC--Tax Credit Programs	
		TA--Trade Assistance	

identified four general areas of strategic focus for ensuring that CSJs support these broader programmatic goals. The strategic areas include:

1. Structure and variety in CSJ placement options.
2. Targeting and planning of CSJ placements.
3. Case management and monitoring of CSJ participants.
4. Integration of job search efforts into CSJ participation.

The shared concern of all four areas is to translate CSJ participation as efficiently as possible into sustainable unsubsidized employment. Although intensified efforts across all four areas may be especially critical for agencies administering large numbers of CSJs, focused efforts in selected areas should be of value wherever CSJs form a substantial portion of an agency's caseload. Furthermore, DWS expects that all W-2 agencies will, at a minimum, re-examine their practices in each area, either to confirm the appropriateness of those practices or to identify steps toward improvement.

The remainder of this memo outlines these four strategic areas in greater detail. With respect to each area, the memo identifies a number of general administrative components the Department considers essential to a serious effort in that area and lists particular practices that exemplify each component. Agencies are encouraged to use this outline to organize a systematic evaluation of their CSJ programs and, in particular, to ensure that they are taking appropriate steps to address each administrative component, either through the practices offered as examples or by comparable means.

POLICY

DWS has identified four areas of strategic focus with respect to W-2 agency administration of CSJs. While both the emphasis among these strategies and particular measures for pursuing them will differ from agency to agency, all agencies are expected to assess the potential value, based on the characteristics of their CSJ caseloads, of improvements in these areas:

1. ***Structure and variety in CSJ placement options.*** In order to provide efficiently targeted services to CSJ participants with diverse employability objectives, W-2 agencies should design their CSJ programs to address, in a systematic and manageable way, a variety of different employability needs and strategies. This includes, to the extent appropriate to each agency's CSJ caseload:
 - a. Developing a *defined set of alternative types of CSJs* that differ by target population, duration, activity mix, and employability objective. Examples of such specific types of CSJs might include:
 - Short-term part-time CSJs designed to support a transition from W-2 T to a full-time CSJ.
 - "Work experience" CSJs focused mainly on developing participant soft skills.
 - "Apprenticeship" CSJs specifically designed to build skills, a work history, and credentials in a particular occupational area.
 - "Education-oriented" CSJs designed to accommodate aggregated education and training provisions of the W-2 program, with required work experience activities designed to reinforce the education and training program.
 - b. Exploring *expanded use of pro-rated CSJs* to function in specific ways with part-time employment as part of a defined employability strategy. This could include:

- Actively developing part-time employment opportunities specifically to be paired with pro-rated CSJs.
 - Deliberately designing pro-rated CSJs to provide, on a temporary basis, the education or training components of an unsubsidized job.
- c. Providing for *structured development and administration of CSJs*, through such mechanisms as:
- Within the statutorily-defined time-limit provisions and provisions for six-month review, *shorter-term target completion dates* and *interim benchmarks* to reinforce goal-oriented planning and tracking of participant progress in each CSJ.
 - *Specialized case management protocols*, supported by specialized FEP training, associated with different types of CSJs.
 - *Specialized worksite recruitment and job development* strategies and processes, geared to different types of CSJs.
 - *Outcome-oriented evaluation* of CSJ practices and employers on a continuous basis.

2. Targeting and planning of CSJ placements. In order to maximize the value of each CSJ placement as a step toward employment, the initial CSJ placement decision should be thoughtfully arrived at, and the participant's progress through that placement carefully planned. This means, in particular:

- a. Establishing *clear guidelines for deciding who should (and should not) be placed in a CSJ* and for determining the type of CSJ in which a participant should be placed. Though local practices may differ, those practices should at least clearly define, for any given agency, a basis for such fundamental decisions as:
- When a participant should be in unsubsidized employment (CMS).
 - When a pro-rated CSJ is preferable to a full CSJ.
 - When a participant should be in W-2 Transitions (W-2 T) rather than in a CSJ.
- b. Ensuring a clear *linkage between each CSJ and the participant's Employability Plan*. A separate administrator's memo outlines the intensive up-front workforce attachment process agencies should be pursuing to better tailor W-2 placements to participant employability needs. One key objective of that up-front process is to develop an Employability Plan that can, in turn, serve as the foundation for the CSJ placement and for case management decisions with respect to that placement.

Examples of information that a detailed Employability Plan, supplemented as necessary by case comments or paper documentation in case files, should provide include:

- A clear rationale for placing the participant in a CSJ rather than some other placement.
- Specific reasons for the particular type and activity configuration of a participant's CSJ.
- Specific objectives against which the success of the CSJ in serving the participant's employability goals will be evaluated.

- 3. Case management and monitoring of CSJ participants.** In order to ensure that each moment of CSJ participation advances a participant toward an employability goal, agencies are encouraged to closely monitor, in a coordinated way, the work of all three major partners in the CSJ process: participants, FEPs, and worksite supervisors. In particular, this means:
- a. Setting *clear expectations for participant engagement*, geared toward ensuring that each participant comes as close as possible to 40 hours of combined activities per week. Specifically, agencies should consider:
 - Establishing—and requiring documentation of—clear rationales for fewer than 40 hours per week of activities.
 - Coordinating site locations and activity schedules to make participation as simple as possible for each participant.
 - Taking proactive measures to minimize sanctioning and to use the good cause process to identify and address obstacles to participation.
 - b. Setting *clear expectations for the nature and frequency of contact between the FEP and the participant*, geared toward ensuring ongoing substantive engagement. Agencies should consider specifying:
 - Schedules for various levels of FEP-initiated contact with each participant, as appropriate to the type of CSJ.
 - Routine schedules, irrespective of the particular type of CSJ, for face-to-face on-site meetings between the participant and the FEP.
 - Protocols for systematically documenting and confirming FEP contacts with participants.
 - c. Setting *clear expectations for the quality and intensity of on-site supervision* at CSJ worksites. Agencies should consider steps to ensure that:
 - Work-site supervisors understand the objectives of the CSJ placement and the function of that placement in a participant's Employability Plan.
 - Supervisors evaluate participant performance on a regular basis and at the level of detail appropriate to serve ongoing employability planning and job search.
 - To the extent appropriate, supervision includes on-site job coaching and career mentoring.
 - d. Establishing *regularly scheduled three-way face-to-face conferences* between supervisors, FEPs, and participants to discuss participant performance, progress, expectations, and needs.
- 4. Integration of job search efforts into CSJs.** In order to ensure that in the process of advancing employability goals, CSJ participation also translates as directly as possible into unsubsidized employment, agencies are encouraged to align job search efforts as closely as possible with specific CSJ placements (and vice versa). In particular this means:
- a. *Focusing the job search in the same occupational area or job market sector as the CSJ*, or in the target area or sector specified in the EP (and toward which the CSJ should be advancing the participant). For example:
 - The Employability Plan (or supplemental case comments or filed documentation) should clearly specify the job market sectors on which the CSJ-related job search activities will focus.

- Job search activities pursued in accordance with the Employability Plan should themselves be planned, tracked, and documented in detail by the FEP.
- b. *Approaching the CSJ deliberately as a job search mechanism*; that is, as a means of identifying and establishing contact with prospective employers in a given skill or occupational area, and as a means of building a resume and a meaningful work history with which a participant can approach such employers. For example:
 - Worksite supervisors should be aware of each CSJ participant's job search plans and encouraged to serve as a resource in refining and pursuing those plans.
 - CSJ-related job training should be geared as much as possible toward addressing specific skills deficits and to the establishment of specific credentials in the target skill or occupational area.
 - Agencies should make every effort to link CSJ participation to specific commitments by an employer to hire the participant as a regular employee or to refer them to other employers.

NEXT STEPS:

DWS expects to use future policy documents to further guide W-2 agencies in implementing these strategies. These additional policy issuances may:

- Identify and modify existing policy that undercuts efforts to make more effective use of CSJs.
- Specify areas with respect to which DWS will be monitoring W-2 agency effectiveness in implementing these strategies.
- Outline the types of program supports, such as training, that DWS can provide to agencies in implementing these strategies.

CONTACT: DWS Regional Offices