



DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
DIVISION OF FAMILY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY  
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO SERIES

**DFES 21-10**

ISSUE DATE: 11/8/2021  
DISPOSAL DATE: 09/30/2022

- ACTION  
 NOTICE

**PROGRAM CATEGORIES:**

- W-2 - Wisconsin Works  
 RA - Refugee Assistance  
 CS - Child Support  
 CF - Children First  
 TJ - Transitional Jobs  
 TMJ - Transform Milwaukee Jobs

**EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately**

**TO: Wisconsin Works (W-2) Agency Directors**

**FROM: Connie M. Chesnik  
Division Administrator**

**RE: Living Independently through Financial Empowerment Program**

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this memo is to:

1. Notify Wisconsin Works (W-2) agencies of upcoming contract modifications related to the Living Independently through Financial Empowerment (LIFE) program, a cash assistance program for survivors of domestic violence created by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) using emergency funding allocated to the state through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021
2. Provide a high-level description of the LIFE program eligibility criteria; and
3. Alert W-2 agencies of upcoming training and implementation tasks related to the LIFE program funding

**BACKGROUND:**

ARPA established a new \$1 billion Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund to assist needy families impacted by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. States, the District of

Columbia, tribes operating a tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, and all five U.S. territories are eligible to receive funds.

The Administration for Children and Families awarded \$14.5 million of ARPA funding to DCF to assist needy families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The economic stress and social isolation brought by the COVID-19 pandemic increased the risk of domestic violence and limited the ability for survivors to escape unsafe situations. To support families experiencing crises resulting from domestic violence which may have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, DCF created the LIFE program using these funds.

## **POLICY**

The LIFE program will provide \$3,500 through short-term, monthly cash payments to families experiencing crises resulting from a domestic violence situation and will assist survivors in securing a safe environment for themselves and their children.

### *ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA*

Individuals who are eligible for the program must:

1. Be experiencing a domestic violence situation
2. Be a parent
3. Be 18 years of age or older
4. Be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen
5. Be a resident of Wisconsin (unless the applicant is a migrant worker); and
6. Have received at some point in the prior 12 calendar months or is currently receiving another public benefit OR has income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level

An Operations Memo will be forthcoming and will provide W-2 agencies more specific details regarding eligibility, processes, procedure, and Wisconsin Work Programs (WWP) entry.

## **CONTRACT AMENDMENT, REPORTING, AND MONITORING UPDATES**

Funding for the LIFE program will be available starting November 17, 2021 through August 31, 2022, or until funding is exhausted. W-2 agencies will receive contract amendments reflecting the LIFE program allocation amounts. Staff time spent determining LIFE program eligibility will be recorded under SPARC line 1775. SPARC reporting should follow the existing [payment calendar](#).

DCF will complete monthly fiscal monitoring to track allocation spending. Based on spending trends amounts may be reallocated throughout the course of this program. In addition to fiscal monitoring, W-2 agencies will also be subject to subrecipient monitoring for LIFE program eligibility determinations.

## **TRAINING**

BWF will issue guidance on the requirements of the LIFE program to W-2 agencies through the release of future operations memos, the LIFE Program and Policy Guide, and a Partner Training Team desk aid which will be available through the Partner Training Team's Learning Center. DCF strongly encourages agency staff who will process LIFE program applications to increase their awareness of the impact domestic violence has on survivors and best practices for working with survivors through additional webinars, trainings, etc.

The LIFE Program and Policy Guide will feature links to domestic violence advocacy agency websites where staff can search for domestic violence resources and information. Additionally, the Division of Family and Economic Security is partnering with the Sojourner Family Peace Center to provide a live, virtual training on "Breaking the Cycle: Trauma-Informed Strategies for Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence." The 2.5-hour training will be offered November 11, 2021 for W-2 agencies. More information will be provided in a forthcoming operations memo. Note that any new domestic violence training provided by the Division or the Division's Partner Training Team does not take the place of DV training new W-2 workers are required to take.

## **AGENCY ACTION**

Agencies should begin familiarizing staff with the LIFE program as additional materials are released. Agencies should also prepare for program roll-out, by considering staffing and logistics, through coordination with regional staff as needed.

Due to the sensitive nature of working with survivors of domestic violence, the Division expects W-2 agencies to:

- Identify staff with an understanding of trauma-informed case management to work with LIFE program applicants
- Identify staff who have experience working with domestic violence survivors to work with LIFE program applicants
- Proactively identify local DV resources and advocacy agencies for referral purposes
- Work collaboratively with Tribes, advocates, and agencies providing DV services

## **CONTACTS**

For WWP Functionality Questions: BWF Work Programs Help Desk  
[BWFworkprogramsHD@wisconsin.gov](mailto:BWFworkprogramsHD@wisconsin.gov)

For Policy Questions: [BWF Policy Question SharePoint](#)

DCF/DFES/BWF/BC