

Agenda and Minutes

W-2 Contractors' Meeting

Location: Skype

Date: January 27, 2021

Time: 10:30AM-12:00PM

Invitees

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mac Strawder (DCF) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minette Knotts (DCF) – note taker | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tony Dzedzic (FSC) | <input type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Marks (FSC) | <input type="checkbox"/> Stacey Eggen (FSC) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Wolfe (FSC) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kaminski (Equus WS) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Reinhold (Equus WS) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kanwen Shao (Equus Workforce Services) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deb Leslie (WRI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jody Conner (WRI) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carolyn Frogness (WRI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gina Brown (WCI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shannon Franek (WCI) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vang Lee (AWWI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carlyle Outten (AWWI) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Latoya Stewart (AWWI) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nicole Hagen (Ross) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reno Wright (Ross) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parker Rios (UMOS) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sandra Salazar-Lozano (UMOS) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jodi Prout (UMOS) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NaTasha Chevalier (UMOS) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dallas Hawkins (UMOS) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Xiong Lor (MAXIMUS) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rachel Zietlow (MAXIMUS) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neng Thor (MAXIMUS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Autumn Morgan (MAXIMUS) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Randy Endsley (MAXIMUS) |

Representatives from Department of Children and Families, Division of Family and Economic Security, Bureau of Analytics and Research, Bureau of Child Support, Bureau of Refugee Programs, and Bureau of Working Families were also in attendance.

Conference Line

Skype Meeting

Join by phone: (608) 316-9000, 40843472#

Agenda Items

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Owner: Mac Strawder

Time Allotted: 5 minutes

Details: Roll call

- Mac led roll call.
-

2. DFES STAFF CHANGES & OVERVIEW OF REORGANIZATION

Owner: Janice Peters

Time Allotted: 10 minutes

Details:

- Status update

Discussion:

- Janice provided an overview of DFES' reorganization and staff changes.
 - DCF is currently recruiting for multiple vacant positions.
-

3. COVID-19 VACCINE ELIGIBILITY UPDATE

Owner: Patara Horn

Time Allotted: 10 minutes

Details:

- Status update.

Discussion:

Agenda and Minutes

- The COVID-19 vaccine phases and eligibility for Wisconsin can be found on the Wisconsin Department of Health's webpage <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine-about.htm>.
 - Currently eligible populations include
 - Frontline health care personnel
 - Residents in skilled nursing and long-term care facilities
 - Police and fire personnel, correctional staff
 - Adults ages 65 and over
 - Next eligible groups
 - Education and child care
 - Individuals enrolled in Medicaid long-term care programs
 - Some public-facing essential workers
 - Non-frontline essential health care personnel
 - Facility staff and residents in congregate living settings
 - Additional COVID-19 vaccine information can also be found on the Wisconsin Department of Health's webpage <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine.htm>.
-

4. W-2 48-MONTH LIFETIME LIMIT

Owner: Leah Watson

Time Allotted: 10 minutes

Details: Leah shared an attachment and requested feedback and input as needed from W-2 agencies regarding the W-2 Time Limit change.

Discussion:

- Leah will provide more detail as follow up. Currently, statute provides extensions that can be approved in response to unusual circumstances and provide an administrative rules definition of unusual circumstances under amended statute. Extensions can be improved if individual is experiencing hardship or someone in family has been battered to extreme cruelty. Wording has changed slightly to focus on individual or individual's family. Definition of hardships is largely borrowed from unusual circumstances.
 - Manju Duseti (DCF) asked if this information will be available on DCF's website.
 - Leah noted this and is planning to look into seeing if this update would be helpful in reaching our external stakeholders.
-

5. CONTRACT UPDATES

Owner: Linda Richardson

Time Allotted: 15 minutes

Details: Walk-ons and/or discussion if needed.

Discussion:

- The 2021 W-2 contract performance outcome claims use the Claim Effective Date (CED) starting January 1, 2021, as the data point that ties a claim to a contract period.
 - The CED is the day that a performance outcome claim meets the required metrics to make it valid e.g. a Job Attainment becomes valid when hours and wages meet the required amounts as of the 31st day of employment. The 31st day is the CED. The agency may enter the claim at a later date and/or confirm at a later date but the date to tie to contract year is CED.
 - Please note as a reminder: the claim must be initiated and approved within 90 days.
 - **Example:** If the date of employment is June 30, 2021, and the participant is still employed on July 30, 2021, and all other conditions are met for the performance outcome, then the performance outcome Claim Effective Date is July 30, 2021. The W-2 Contractor has until October 27, 2021, to initiate and approve the Job Attainment claim in CARES.
 - Linda reminded agencies that they can use a Primary Employment Begin Date (PEBD) or a Claim Period Begin Date (CPBD) when meeting POP claim requirements.
-

Agenda and Minutes

- A PEBD that falls into the next calendar year will count towards the new contract year if the CED is within that year.
- You may also have a job with a PEBD that is in 2020 and the 31st day is in 2020 but does not meet the required wages or hours.
- The agency may use a CPBD within 180 days of the PEBD and if the CPBD period at 31 days meets the criteria for a POP and it falls in 2021, then the claim counts in 2021 even though the job begin date (PEBD) was in 2020.
- Contract Allocation Periods
 - 2021 contract allocation periods cover January 2021- May 2021 and the June 2021 – December 2021. Funds from the first allocation period may not be carried into the second allocation period due to restrictions of TANF funding in state statutes.
 - Potential biennial budget changes to correct the language requiring TANF funds to be allocated within state fiscal year periods may be included in this budget BUT will not be effective until a budget is signed and includes new language.
 - We appreciate that some agency staff may follow the biennial budget process and may see language that could affect contracts (if it is included), but reminder that nothing is effective unless approved and signed.
- W-2 Administrative costs
 - All administrative costs are in cost reimbursement bucket in 2021 contract. There are four areas listed, W-2 Eligibility, Emergency Assistance Eligibility, W-2 Administration, and Fraud.
 - Link to federal definition <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2010-title45-vol2/pdf/CFR-2010-title45-vol2-sec263-0.pdf>.
 - Costs that represent the expenses of doing business that are not easily identified with the program but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs.
 - Examples of such expenses include accounting, human resources, general agency administration, and costs to operate and maintain facilities. Something to keep in mind, direct costs will include some activities with administrative qualities training, travel; etc. that expressly relate to the delivery of services.
 - Costs that related to activities directly related to the objective of the program.
 - An example of this would be the cost of staff who scan W-2 documents into ECF. They may have an Administrative Assistant title but are doing direct service work.

6. AGENCY DISCUSSION

Owner: Mac Strawder

Time Allotted: 35 minutes

Details:

- Agencies were asked to address the following questions:
 - What is your agency's initial experience with the Emergency Assistance (EA) policy changes and new WWP system for EA applications that went into effect on January 2, 2021?
 - What is your agency's experience with W-2 participants receiving the federal stimulus payments? Since W-2 participants may not file income tax returns, are they receiving stimulus payments from the IRS?
 - What is your agency's experience with W-2 participants accessing rental assistance being provided by other agencies using federal COVID-19 relief funds? Are W-2 participants receiving assistance from those other rental assistance funds, and if so, how has that affected the number of EA requests?

Discussion:

- WRI
 - Jody shared that WRI's experience with the EA/WWP rollout has been good overall and only experienced a few tweaks the first week. Two staff doing EA state it is a great system with no issues.
- WCI
 - Shannon shared that EA policy changes and new WWP system went smooth for the agency with only a few bugs fixed within the first week. Staff are not experiencing issues with using new system.
 - Regarding the federal stimulus payment, staff reported four participants have not received a second stimulus.

Agenda and Minutes

- Participants that receive relief funds are experiencing that funds are exhausted.
- UAMOS
 - Sandra reported that feedback from staff around the EA system has been positive. UAMOS staff enjoy the new system and appreciate that it is user friendly. Any issues encountered early on were addressed with check in meetings and questions answered were followed up via email from Ginger Seery.
 - UAMOS is not formally tracking information with stimulus payments.
 - Those applying for EA have reported being unable to receive assistance. Participants apply and do not receive a response, so they come to UAMOS.
- Ross
 - Reno shared that Ross' experience with WWP has been cognitive and allows staff to be more descriptive.
 - Participants inquire as to whether or not stimulus payments would impact their FoodShare benefits. There is an IRS non filer tool on IRS' website that participants may not know is available. FEPs are not hearing anything from participants around not receiving second stimulus check.
 - Most agencies have verified if EA assistance has been provided to participants to ensure rental needs are met. In most cases, there is other assistance needed. Reno stated this has not impacted numbers in a negative way.
- MAXIMUS
 - Autumn stated that for both the EA policy and WWP system staff report no system issues at this time. However, there are concerns regarding the app. Presently, when using the app WWP takes a while to work through. The main concern is the apps that were converted from EATS requires you to enter data multiple times.
 - Participants who were employed last year received a stimulus payment. Those who only received W-2 did not. Currently it is unclear if participants are filing the non-filer option available through the IRS website.
 - Participants are provided the following resources: EA, Community Advocates, and the SDC COVID-19 rent payment information. From the agency's understanding, participants who lost employment and currently receive W-2 did receive assistance from SDC; however, the process took a while. There are some clients who worked with Community Advocates and received assistance as well.
 - W-2 applicants that just applied, did apply for EA. The other resources slowed down the EA request because of the dollar amount being handed out. For example, the other programs are not delaying any request that come through, they are just slowing down how many requests we receive. If someone has applied for the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program (WRAP), they receive up to \$3,000 to assist with paying rent. Therefore, not many are requesting EA as one would think at this time. MAXIMUS does not consider any funding from other agencies when determining eligibility.
- FSC
 - Tony shared that FSC staff reported good experiences as they navigate new system, and that changes have not impacted appointment times.
 - Majority of participants FSC has spoken to are receiving stimulus checks. If participant expresses any issues staff refer to IRS website and tools available to participants.
 - Tony stated he is hearing that agencies that received federal funding have been depleted. FSC continues to refer clients to appropriate resources such as HUD and Community Action programs. FSC has not seen an effect on EA applications and continue to see increases in EA applications.
- Equus Workforce Services
 - Kanwen expressed after years of working in EATS, WWP was a bit confusing at first due to the multiple screens and not seeing everything at once. After working in it these last few weeks, staff have come to like the new system. The only issue Equus has encountered is how to fix errors from the very beginning (such as duplicate entries) and miss having a participants EA history for those that apply year after year.
 - Since November and December 2020, Equus has seen an increase and consistent high application levels since when the WRAP funding was winding down. Equus tracks weekly EA and W-2 applications and found that WRAP 1.0 did substantially decrease EA requests.
 - Kanwen stated that Equus does not have many W2 participants apply for EA unless they are new to W-2 due to a job loss, the majority of applicants are those not on W-2. The majority of applicants applying for EA after the moratorium ended and due to a financial crisis were referred for WRAP assistance first. This was largely because Equus worked with Community Action and discovered that if an applicant received EA first, then

- WRAP funds would not be available because the landlord had to agree to stop the current eviction action. By the time applicants received eviction notices, they owed way more than EA could assist with, it was decided that it was in the best interest of Equus' participants to make sure they received as much assistance as possible. If there was still a balance due, then participants were told to apply for EA. In most cases the WRAP assistance was able to catch participants rent up, but Equus still had applicants that applied for EA after they received what they could from WRAP. Kanwen shared that Equus also works closely with other nonprofits who have had to put together point of entry plans for rent assistance. Since EA is sum sufficient, agencies with funding (other than the WRAP funds) will refer EA eligible household to Equus.
- Sarah shared that participants have not complained about not receiving stimulus payments.
 - America Works of Wisconsin (AWWI)
 - Latoya stated that the new policy and system has taken some getting used to for those working in EA for a lengthy period of time. However, staff appreciate that the new system is user friendly, and for temp housing being 180-day verification so AWWI does not have to decline as many applications.
 - AWWI does not keep track of actual number of participants that receive stimulus payments.
 - Participants complain that they are unable to get ahold of anyone at WRAP. AWWI feels it was because a large number of individuals were applying.

7. WALK-ONS/CLOSING

Owner: Mac Strawder

Time Allotted: 5 minutes

Details: Walk-ons and/or discussion if needed.

Discussion:

- Jody asked if an FAQ on ACCESS will be forthcoming.
 - Tonya is not aware of an FAQ but will look into this with Jane and get back to agencies with more information.
- Janice asked agencies what the average amount is that participants need to pay for rent. If EA amount were to be increased, what are agencies thoughts on what it should increase to?
 - Kanwen suggested a rental analysis in different regions of the state for monthly rent for 1, 2, and 3-bedroom apartments.
 - Janice stated DCF has already done something similar to this but appreciates the suggestion.
- Any contract questions agencies would like presented please email Linda Richardson, Mac Strawder, and Minette Knotts.

Future Agenda Items: Please submit agenda items to Minette Knotts and Mac Strawder.

Next Meeting:

February 24, 2021

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Skype