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**State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker**

**TO: W-2 Agencies
Training Staff**

**FROM: Janice Peters, Director
Bureau of Working Families
Division of Family and Economic Security**

DFES OPERATIONS MEMO					
No:		13-07			
DATE:					
FS	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	BC+	<input type="checkbox"/>
SC	<input type="checkbox"/>	CTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	FSET	<input type="checkbox"/>
BC+ Basic	<input type="checkbox"/>	BC+ CORE	<input type="checkbox"/>		
CC	<input type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input type="checkbox"/>
CF	<input type="checkbox"/>	JAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input type="checkbox"/>
RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>	WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/> *
EP					

SUBJECT: Wisconsin Works (W-2) Services for Noncustodial Parents

CROSS REFERENCE: [W-2 Manual 7.5.1](#)
[W-2 Manual 1.4.6](#)
[W-2 Manual 1.2.4](#)
[Wis. Stat. s. 49.159\(1\)](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to:

1. Remind Wisconsin Works (W-2) agencies of current W-2 services for noncustodial parents (NCPs) and to share suggestions for engagement of noncustodial parents; and
2. Provide guidance and instructions on co-enrollment and services for noncustodial parents, including FoodShare Employment and Training (FSET).

BACKGROUND

The W-2 program has always supported the provision of services to NCPs, although engagement of noncustodial parents in W-2 has historically been low. The W-2 policy basic assumptions, which help guide W-2 services to families, include working with both custodial and noncustodial parents to achieve economic stability. In addition to working with child support agencies to establish paternity and child support orders, W-2 agencies must take a more

proactive role in helping to move families out of poverty by supporting both custodial and noncustodial parents in finding and maintaining employment. Research suggests that children of parents who pay their child support have fewer behavioral problems, make better grades, and stay in school longer than children in families that do not receive regular child support. One study indicated that even as little as \$1,000 per year in child support made it 18% more likely a custodial parent would exit the welfare system.

The 2013-2016 W-2 and Related Programs Contract established new incentives for W-2 agencies to engage noncustodial parents in W-2 services. Under the new contract, W-2 agencies may receive the following payments for eligible noncustodial parents:

- Monthly capitation payment
- Job Attainment outcome payment
- Job Retention performance outcome
- High Wage Job performance outcome
- SSI/SSDI Attainment performance outcome

POLICY REMINDERS

Serving Noncustodial Parents in W-2

The Financial and Employment Planner (FEP) may place noncustodial parents who apply for W-2 in the Case Management for Noncustodial Parents placement (CMN). For a noncustodial parent to be eligible for W-2:

1. The custodial parent must be participating in W-2;
2. The noncustodial parent must be subject to a child support order; and
3. The noncustodial parent must meet all financial and nonfinancial eligibility criteria except that the individual is not a custodial parent.

For a full list of eligibility requirements, see [W-2 Manual 7.5.1](#)

W-2 agencies are required to provide all W-2 applicants, including noncustodial parents, with a number of W-2 specific publications and forms. See the [W-2 Manual, Section 1.4.6](#) for a complete list. Some of the information contained in the forms and publications may not apply to participants receiving case management services only. During a review of the forms and publications, the W-2 agency should explain to the NCP that some information does not apply.

The W-2 agency may provide the following services to eligible noncustodial parents:

- Employment Search (ES)
- Job Retention Services (JR)
- Career Advancement Services (CR)
- Education and Training activities, including:
 - Job Skills Training (JS)
 - Adult Basic Education (ABE)
 - GED (GE)
 - HSE (HE)
- Life Skills (LF)
- Parenting Skills (PA)
- Other case management services, depending upon the circumstances of the family.

Engaging Noncustodial Parents

The following are options for engaging noncustodial parents in the W-2 program. Since many noncustodial parents are fathers, most of these suggestions come from evaluations and research of fatherhood programs.

1. Identify staff who have interest and skills in working with noncustodial parents. Evaluate staff attitudes toward working with noncustodial parents, and feelings or comfort level in working with both parents to increase family stability and economic security. Many noncustodial parents are fathers, and research shows that some staff members are more successful than others in engaging fathers.
2. Identify barriers to noncustodial parent participation, including transportation, child care, legal issues, etc. Prior to conducting outreach, think about resources and solutions to address barriers.
3. Identify W-2 cases where the noncustodial parent is not ordered to pay child support, or is not currently paying child support. Consider talking with the custodial parent (W-2 participant) about if and how the noncustodial parent is involved in the lives of the children. In some cases, a relationship may not exist between the two parents, or the communication between the parents may not be cooperative. There may be safety issues to consider in some cases (domestic violence or child safety). Combine outreach efforts to noncustodial parents with providing information to custodial parents about the benefits of both parents participating in W-2.
4. Identify community partners to increase referrals to the W-2 program. This includes child support agencies, fatherhood programs, Job Centers, home visiting programs, family resource services, etc.
5. W-2 services for noncustodial parents are limited at this time to case management. Brainstorm services and incentives your agency can provide to these participants. Investigate other community programs that you may be able to collaborate with in providing other services, such as parenting education and legal services. Gather information on medical care and mental health services for low income noncustodial parents. Work with your local Income Maintenance agency on a way to streamline applications for FoodShare or other types of assistance.
6. Form relationships with other community agencies that serve families. Some noncustodial parents will be ineligible for W-2, but the W-2 agency can provide other resources to assist noncustodial parents who are unemployed and living in poverty. Ultimately, efforts you make to assist noncustodial parents could improve the lives of their children.
7. Conduct an "Open House" at your agency and invite families, school administrators, and other potential partners.
8. Conduct outreach activities. These include the following:
 - Informational meetings for custodial parents and noncustodial parents on your W-2 "family services."
 - Informational posters at the W-2 and partner agencies.
 - Informational brochures handed out during the W-2 intake process.
 - Informational brochures handed out at school events or health screenings.

COORDINATING CO-ENROLLMENT AND SERVICES FOR NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS

FSET Enrollment

In order for W-2 agencies to earn W-2 contract payments for providing W-2 services to noncustodial parents, W-2 agencies must enroll the noncustodial parent in the W-2 office in CARES. The W-2 agency must track participation, update work programs screens, and enter required documentation in the W-2 CARES office.

Individuals that are eligible for both W-2 and the FSET program cannot be co-enrolled in the CARES system. An individual can be open in only one CARES work program office at a time.

Because individuals can only be enrolled in one CARES office, W-2 agencies that do not provide FSET services must coordinate with the FSET case manager regarding individuals who are participating in FSET, but wish to enroll in W-2. W-2 agencies must consider the unique needs of each parent and maximize the training and services available in both programs to best serve each individual, e.g., an individual who receives job training through the FSET program would then benefit from the employment placement and retention services provided under W-2.

Workforce and Community Services

When working with W-2 participants, including noncustodial parents, the W-2 agency must facilitate referrals and coordinate services with other partner agencies within its geographical area, including: Job Centers, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the [Office of Veterans Employment Services](#). Integration of services across programs and providers reduces duplication of effort and maximizes employment outcomes. Many supportive services will continue to be available after a participant has moved into unsubsidized employment and may support the individual's continued employment. (W-2 Manual, Section [1.2.4](#))

CONTACTS

For W-2 Policy Questions in the Balance of State: Bureau of Regional Operations, W-2 Regional Coordinators

For W-2 Policy Questions in Milwaukee: Milwaukee Operations Section Regional Administrators

For CARES and EATS Processing Questions: W-2 Help Desk

*Program Categories – FS – FoodShare, MA – Medicaid, BC+ – BadgerCare Plus, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – FoodShare Employment and Training, BC+ Core – BadgerCare Plus Core, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC - Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, Other EP – Other Employment Programs.

DCF/DFES/BWF/JZ