DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

AND FAMILIES
Secretary Emilie Amundson
201 East Washington Avenue, Room G200
P.O. Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916
Telephone: 608-422-7000
Fax: 608-266-6836
www.dcf.wisconsin.gov





TO: W-2 Agencies

Training Staff

FROM: Margaret McMahon, Director

Bureau of Working Families

Division of Family and Economic Security Department of Children and Families

BWF OPERATIONS MEMO	
No: 20-14 DATE: 05/29/2020	
W-2 🖂	EA 🛛 CF 🗌 JAL 🖂
RAP 🗌	TJ TMJ Other EP

SUBJECT: Updated Features in ACCESS Request for Services

CROSS REFERENCE: BWF Operations Memo 20-08

COVID-19 Q&A and Policy Adjustments via W-2 Help Desk

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 30, 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to:

- 1. Announce updates for simplified program requests in the ACCESS system for Wisconsin Works (W-2), Emergency Assistance (EA), and Job Access Loans (JALs); and
- 2. Provide guidance on functionality and use of the updated ACCESS system features for program requests.

BACKGROUND

On March 12, 2020, Governor Tony Evers issued <u>Executive Order 72</u> declaring a health emergency due to COVID-19 and directing all state agencies to assist in the state's response to the public health emergency. On March 24, 2020, the state of Wisconsin was put under a <u>Executive Order 72</u> declaring a health emergency due to COVID-19 and directing all state agencies to assist in the state's response to the public health emergency. On March 24, 2020, the state of Wisconsin was put under a <a href="Esafer At Home" order. This order and its extensions direct residents to stay at home and orders all non-essential businesses to close until May 26, 2020. On May 13, 2020, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned Governor Evers' Safer at Home order, ending some of the requirements Governor Evers ordered for the state. In response, some Wisconsin counties and municipalities established orders to continue Safer at Home rules.

The fluctuating situation of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact W-2 agency operations and the economic stability of Wisconsinites. Throughout the pandemic, the Bureau of Working

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Families (BWF) has been adjusting its program policies that allow easier access to its programs, including the suspension of in-person signature and meeting requirements. W-2 agencies and BWF staff also expect an increase in the number of applicants as families face economic hardship as a result of COVID-19.

BWF had a long-term project planned for release in October 2020 that would allow for individuals to apply for BWF programs in ACCESS. On April 25, 2020, BWF announced in BWF Operations Memo 20-08 its accelerated work to allow individuals to request W-2, EA, and JAL programs in ACCESS. While the long-term project to allow individuals to apply for these programs via ACCESS is still planned for release in October 2020, this short-term project currently allows for program requests in response to COVID-19. BWF now announces additional updates to the simplified program requests in ACCESS that will simplify this process for W-2 agencies and program applicants.

ACCESS

ACCESS is an online tool for applicants and participants to apply for and manage the FoodShare, health care, Family Planning Only, and Child Care programs. BWF currently has some tools in ACCESS for those already receiving W-2, such as managing documents and W-2 program information.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, various ACCESS features for BWF programs were updated and made available on April 25, 2020:

- 1. Allow applicants to complete the simplified request for W-2, JAL, and EA through the ACCESS self-service portal; and
- 2. Allow agencies to view the list of new ACCESS program requests in CWW and process them by contacting the applicant by phone.

The purpose of the program request feature in ACCESS is to continue to allow agencies to communicate with applicants when in-person meetings are unsafe and to expedite applicant requests for programs. In addition, this new process can relieve some W-2 agency administrative work by providing flexible self-service to applicants.

POLICY UPDATES

There are no W-2, JAL, or EA policy updates.

ACCESS UPDATES

Three major changes will be released in ACCESS on May 30, 2020.

- 1. Requests for IM and W-2, JAL, and/or EA at the same time
- 2. Separate tracking numbers and PDF summaries for W-2, JAL, and EA program requests
- 3. Geolocator capabilities

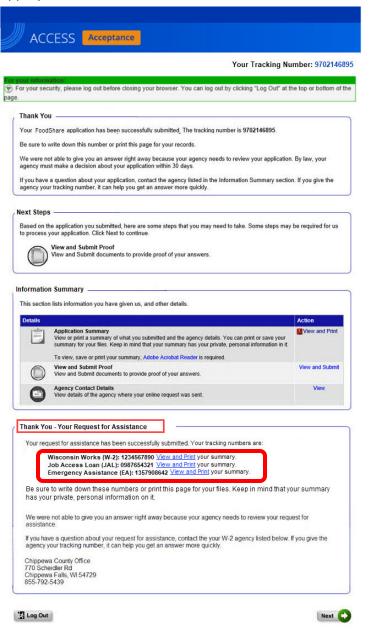
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1. REQUESTS FOR IM AND W-2, JAL, AND/OR EA AT THE SAME TIME

Currently, if an applicant requests IM programs and requests W-2, EA, and/or JAL, they must submit their information twice; once for IM programs, once for BWF programs. As of May 30, 2020, applicants will be able to simultaneously complete an IM application (FoodShare, Healthcare, and/or Child Care) and submit a simplified request for BWF programs (W-2, JAL, and/or EA) through the ACCESS self-service portal.

2. SEPARATE TRACKING NUMBERS AND PDF SUMMARIES FOR W-2, JAL, AND EA

If an applicant requests more than one BWF program (W-2, JAL, or EA), they will have separate tracking numbers for each program. For example, W-2 agencies often assign EA and W-2 cases to different agency workers. This new ACCESS functionality will allow W-2 agencies to better manage program requests by allowing individual program requests to be assigned to the appropriate workers.



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3. GEOLOCATOR UPDATES

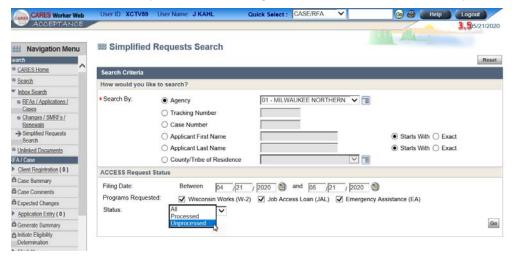
Currently, applicants with Milwaukee zip codes served by more than one W-2 agency must use the agency map to determine their local W-2 agency. New functionality in ACCESS will add address validation functionality when the applicant is adding their home address. This will automatically locate most applicants' local W-2 agencies based on their zip codes.

CARES WORKER WEB (CWW) UPDATES

Updates to CWW include the following features:

SIMPLIFIED REQUESTS SEARCH PAGE

The "Simplified Requests Search" link in the navigation menu will first lead to the new Search Criteria page, where workers can customize the criteria they would like to use to display requests. Workers will have only access to the agencies and counties defined by their worker profile



W-2, JAL, AND EA ACCESS REQUESTS

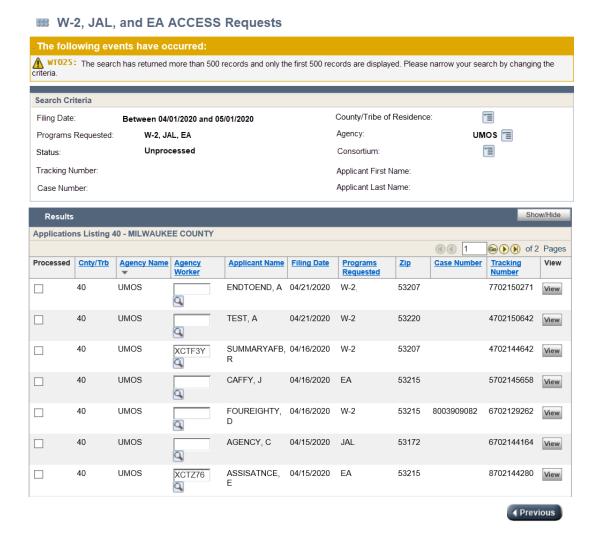
The agency worker will click "Go" on the "Simplified Requests Search Page" to display W-2, JAL, and/or EA requests based on the searched criteria. Note: The worker will only see up to 500 requests on this page. Each program request will have separate tracking number, so agencies can assign different request types to different workers.

The new functionality in ACCESS will add address validation when the applicant is adding their home address. This will automatically locate most applicants' local W-2 agencies based on their zip codes. However, when the geolocator is not able to determine the W-2 agency, you will still have a dropdown option to assign the program request to the correct agency.

The agency dropdown menu may still appear if:

- The client reported address does not match the client reported county
- There are any unforeseen issues with the geolocation functionality
- The request was submitted before the Phase Two go-live

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Note: Requests submitted prior to May 30, 2020 will still appear together without separate tracking numbers.

AGENCY ACTION

W-2 agencies should discuss the ACCESS updates with staff. W-2 agencies should also update any relevant local agency procedures to respond to all W-2, EA, and JAL program requests in the timeframes specified in BWF Operations Memo 20-08.

TRAINING

The DCF W-2 Partner Training Team created the Processing Simplified ACCESS Program Requests in CWW Desk Aid to assist W-2 agency workers in conjunction with BWF Operations Memo 20-08. The desk aid is available in the PTT Learning Center.

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CONTACTS

For W-2, EA, and JAL Policy Questions: DCFW2PolicyQuestions@wisconsin.gov

For W-2 WWP and CWW Functionality Questions: BWF Work Programs Help Desk BWFworkprogramsHD@wisconsin.gov

For ACCESS technical support: Member Services (1-800-326-3002)

DCF/DFES/BWF/SC