



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

FROM: Patara Horn, Director
Bureau of Working Families
Division of Family and Economic Security
Department of Children and Families

BWF OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 21-20

DATE: 07/01/2021

W-2 ☒ **EA** ☒ **CF** ☐ **JAL** ☒

RAP ☐ **TMJ** ☐ **TJ** ☐ **Other EP** ☐

SUBJECT: *Updates to COVID-19 Policy Adjustments*

CROSS REFERENCE:

[BWF Work Programs Policy and Automation Adjustments Document](#)
[W-2 Manual Section 5.3.1 Educational Needs Assessment](#)
[W-2 Manual Section 5.4.2 Career Assessment at Application](#)
[W-2 Manual Section 5.5.1.1 When to Use a Formal Assessment](#)
[W-2 Manual Section 4.4.2 Scanning Requirements](#)
[W-2 Manual Section 16.2.3 Enrollment and Attendance Verification](#)
[W-2 Manual Section 4.1.5 Using Data Exchanges to Verify Eligibility](#)
[BWF Operations Memo 21-19 Updates to COVID-19 Policy Adjustments: Use of CX Activity Code and CX Good Cause Reason Code](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 2, 2021

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memo is to announce the reinstatement of program policies that were suspended or modified to allow for additional flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, effective August 2, 2021. This memo applies to Wisconsin Works (W-2), Emergency Assistance (EA), and Job Access Loan (JAL) programs.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many families throughout the state of Wisconsin, including those served by programs administered by the Bureau of Working Families (BWF). During this uncertain and challenging time, BWF adjusted several program policies to encourage

social distancing, mitigate the spread of the virus, and allow for additional flexibility with agency processes. With widespread vaccination and the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, BWF is reinstating the following policies that were suspended or modified during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:

1. Suspension of 30-day timeframe requirement for career, educational, and formal assessment;
2. Modification of timeframe requirements for scanning documents into the Electronic Case File (ECF);
3. Suspension of Learnfare requirements; and
4. Suspension of State Wage Information Collection Agency (SWICA) matches.

POLICY

CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS 30-DAY TIMEFRAME

Temporary Policy

BWF temporarily suspended the 30-day timeframe for scheduling and documenting career assessments and standardized educational needs assessments to support social distancing efforts and reduce risk of COVID-19 exposure.

Reinstated Policy

Effective August 2, 2021, BWF is reinstating the required timeframe for completion of the career and educational assessments. Per W-2 policy 5.3.1, when completion of a standardized educational needs assessment is necessary to determine or confirm the applicant or participant's current educational levels, the assessment must be scheduled and documented in Wisconsin Work Programs (WWP) within 30 days of placement.

Per W-2 policy 5.4.2, a career assessment must be offered to all applicants and assigned as an activity on the initial Employability Plan (EP). If an applicant is new to W-2 or is reapplying and does not have a career assessment documented, a career assessment must be scheduled within 30 days of application and completed within 30 days of placement.

Participants that have been placed in and W-2 Employment Position e.g., Community Service Job, but do not have an educational or career assessment completed must have one scheduled within 30 days of the effective date of this reinstated policy.

FORMAL ASSESSMENT 30-DAY TIMEFRAME

Temporary Policy

BWF temporarily suspended the required 30-day timeframe for scheduling and documenting formal assessments to accommodate anticipated delays in scheduling and completing formal assessments due to COVID-19 related issues. Due to the necessity of formal assessments to ensure full participation and reasonable accommodations and modifications, the formal

assessment is to be scheduled and completed as soon as it is safe to do so, and the appropriate qualified assessor is accepting appointments.

Reinstated Policy

Effective August 2, 2021, BWF is reinstating the required timeframe for completion of the formal assessment. Per W-2 policy 5.5.1.1, participants offered or referred for formal assessment must have a formal assessment activity scheduled and documented in WWP within 30 calendar days of the referral date. Participants placed in a W-2 Transition (W-2 T) must have a formal assessment scheduled and documented in WWP within 30 calendar days of placement into the W-2 T placement.

Participants in need of a formal assessment that have been placed in a W-2 T but not yet referred must have one scheduled within 30 days of the effective date of this reinstated policy.

ECF SCANNING TIMEFRAME

Temporary Policy

BWF modified the policy regarding the required timeframe to scan documents into ECF to allow for more flexibility for agencies. The 30-day timeframe was suspended, and agencies were instructed to scan and upload supporting documents into ECF within a reasonable timeframe.

Reinstated Policy

Effective August 2, 2021, BWF is reinstating the required 30-day timeframe for scanning documents into ECF. Per W-2 policy 4.4.2, W-2 agencies are required to scan all paper documents, except attendance documentation that contains confidential information, into ECF within 30 days after receipt.

LEARNFARE

Temporary Policy

BWF temporarily suspended Learnfare requirements for all new applicants due to widespread school closures across the state of Wisconsin. Agencies were instructed to use the Learnfare Status Code WST-Student in Good Standing in CARES Worker Web (CWW) to avoid a referral to Learnfare and enter case comments indicating that children were exempt from Learnfare requirements. Current participants with children subject to Learnfare Case Management remained mandatory.

Reinstated Policy

BWF is reinstating Learnfare requirements, effective August 2, 2021, for all applicants and participants. Agencies should follow current policy outlined in Chapter 16 of the W-2 Policy Manual pertaining to school enrollment, attendance, and Learnfare Case Management.

If participants are still struggling with school attendance for their children due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, agencies should assist participants with any needed resources or barriers. Agencies are also reminded that participants can claim good cause for failing to cooperate with Learnfare Case Management, and COVID-19 related issues may qualify on a case-by-case basis.

SWICA

Temporary Policy

W-2, along with FoodShare, Healthcare, and Child Care, suspended the SWICA data exchange and match process early in the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency due to the economic uncertainty and exponential rise in unemployment. Additionally, the potential for overpayments because of a discrepancy could cause an additional burden during a financially difficult time for program participants.

Reinstated Policy

SWICA matches will resume in July 2021, and agencies will be expected to review and process all discrepancies per current policy in W-2 Policy Manual Section 4.1.5.

AGENCY ACTION

W-2 agencies must familiarize staff with these reinstated policies as described in this memo and update any relevant local agency procedures.

CONTACTS

For W-2 and Refugee Program Policy Questions: [BWF Policy Question SharePoint](#)

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

DCF/DFES/BWF/MO & DB