

Practical Applications: Wisconsin's Work Participation Rate (WPR)

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to practice your knowledge and skills related to the Federal Work Participation Requirements and W-2 policy for the effective engagement of W-2 participants that will lead to an increase in Wisconsin's Work Participation Rate (WPR).

Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain the appropriate uses of core and non-core activities in W-2 case management; and
 - Apply practices that effectively engage W-2 participants while meeting work participation requirements.
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W-2 Contact Information

Questions regarding this training material should be directed via your local agency process to the Partner Training Team,
Email: PTTTrainingSupp@wisconsin.gov

A contact person is available to answer e-mailed questions related to this training material, assist you in completing any activity that you are having difficulty with, and/or provide explanation of anything else about this training material.

Questions regarding W-2 production cases and systems should be directed via your local agency process to the W-2 Help Desk at:
Email: DCFW2CARESHD@wisconsin.gov

Telephone: (608) 422-7900.

W-2 Policy questions should be directed to your Regional Office staff.

DCF is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need information in an alternate format, or need it translated to another language, please contact
(608) 266-3400 or the Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711.

For civil rights questions call (608) 422-6889 or
the Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711.



Introduction

When you attended the half-day "W-2 Case Management: Attaining the Work Participation Rate" class, you learned that Wisconsin is working on improving its Work Participation Rate (WPR) in order to meet the Federal Work Participation Requirements. Presently, Wisconsin is falling short of the rates specified in Federal TANF legislation and, because of this, faces the potential of significant financial penalties. The penalties are reductions to the TANF Block Grant, which funds W-2 and other TANF programs. Meeting or not meeting the WPR affects everyone, even at the local agency level. W-2 agency contracts include financial incentives for meeting the WPR and for improving the agency's Work Participation Rate.

This class is about making sure we are doing all we can to improve our current level of performance.

There are multiple factors that impact the WPR. What are some of those factors?

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Of the factors you listed, which are within your control as a Case Manager? Circle those.

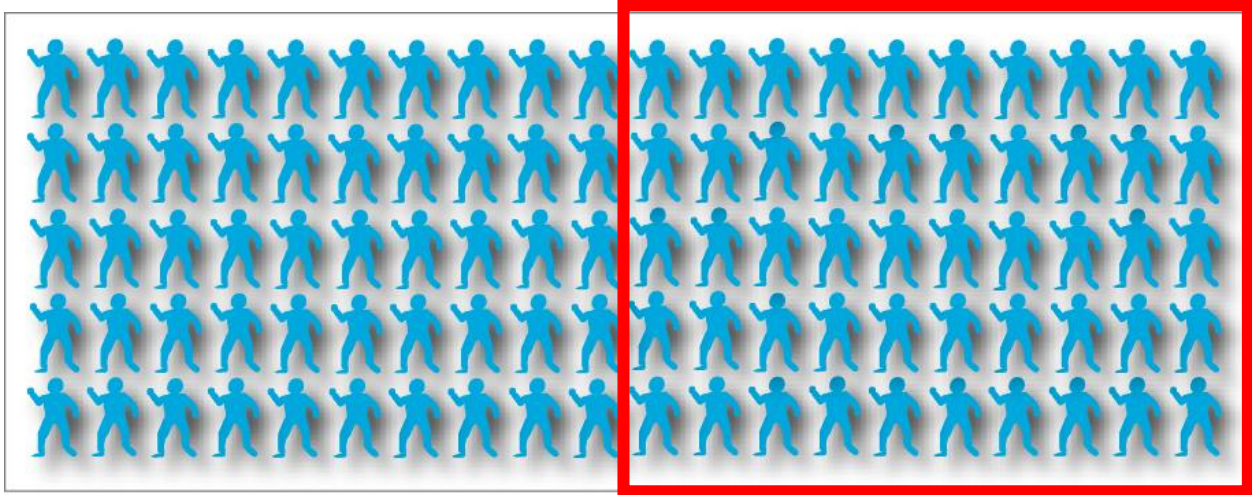
We know that you can't change things that you don't control. That's why we'll focus today on those things you can control.

These are the best opportunities for your actions to positively impact the WPR.



Putting It in Perspective

Let's take a look at a visual representation of the scale of change we're talking about. If this visual represents 100 participants that are part of the WPR calculation, TANF regulations say that our "All-Families" Work Participation Rate should be at 50%.



Wisconsin is not there yet. Currently, our rate is approximately 39%.

Raising that rate to over 50% is not impossible. We have opportunities, through factors that are under our control, to increase the rate.

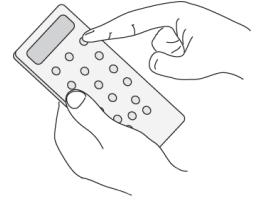
Here is one example of a factor to consider and its impact.
From Operations Memo 15-06:

"About 39% of W-2 participants fail to meet the work participation requirements each month because they are not assigned to sufficient hours of federally countable work activities, or the activities that are assigned may only be counted for a limited time."

There is no single answer or process for meeting the WPR. There is nothing that can guarantee success. Today we'll talk about how you can create the greatest likelihood that an individual will meet the WPR using tools that are within your control.

Activity

1. You are responsible for providing individualized quality case management services. However, meeting the Federal TANF Work Participation Rate is your number one priority.
True or False



2. For those subject to the Work Participation Requirements, the number of hours required to meet the Work Participation Rate is based on which factor?
 - a) The length of time the participant has been in the W-2 placement
 - b) The type of activity the participant is in
 - c) The age of the youngest child in the family
 - d) The number of children in the family

3. Which activity may be counted as a “Core” activity for Federal Work Participation?
 - a) BE – Adult Basic Education
 - b) EL – English as a Second Language
 - c) LS – Literacy Skills
 - d) VA - Vocational Adult Basic Education

4. Which of the following activities would be a “Non-Core” activity for a W-2 participant who is 28 years old and has a 6-year-old child?
- a) DR – Drivers Education
 - b) GE – GED
 - c) LA – Court-Related/Legal Appointments
 - d) PA – Parenting Skills
5. An 18-year-old parent without a high school diploma has an 18-month-old child. The parent is attending Adult Basic Education activities with the goal of obtaining an HSED. The FEP must assign HSED when recording this activity in CARES. True or False
6. A participant is attending an anger management support group 5 hours/week. Each session is 1 hour long. How would you code this activity in CARES?
- a) LF – Life Skills
 - b) MO – Job Readiness/Motivation
 - c) PA – Parenting Skills
 - d) PD – Personal Development

7. When a parent is participating in Job Skills Training, up to one hour of unsupervised study time for each hour of class time plus supervised study time may be assigned. True or False
8. W-2 activities that fall under the Federal category, Job Search and Job Readiness, may count toward the Core requirement for no more than _____ hours for a single parent of a child under six and _____ hours for all other individuals in the preceding 12 months.
- a) 200 and 320
 - b) 220 and 340
 - c) 240 and 360
 - d) 260 and 380
9. What can the 740 TANF report tell you related to the federal WPR?
- a) Cases that are subject to WPR
 - b) What family type a participant is in
 - c) What activities a parent has been assigned to
 - d) How many hours a parent has been assigned to participate in each activity
 - e) All of the above

Where Are Your Opportunities?

Maximize Use of Work Experience

When assigning Work Experience as the primary work training activity, assign at least 25 hours per week.

Increase Use of Job Skills Training

Job Skills Training, when designed for the local labor market, is a highly effective method for moving individuals into jobs.

Comprehensive Career Assessments

Career assessments help individuals explore their unique career interests, aptitudes and skills, and help them formulate immediate and long-term career goals.

Amelia is a single mother with two children, ages 9 months and 3 years. She has completed a career assessment. Her interests are in the medical office field. This is different than her past employment experience, which always has been factory work.

How can you use the assessment results to increase the likelihood of meeting the WPR?

Utilize Reports

Understanding the online reports that are available to help you manage your caseload will increase the likelihood of identifying cases that are not meeting the WPR.

Process W-2 Cases Timely

CARES case processing must be done timely to ensure that W-2 participation is counted accurately in the Work Participation Rate.

Carefully Select CARES Activity Codes

If an activity fits the definition of both a federally countable activity and a non-federally countable activity, always use the activity code for the federally countable activity.

Assign Sufficient Number of Hours

Ensure that W-2 participants are assigned to sufficient hours of federally countable work activities, considering that some activities may be counted only for a limited time.

Your Team Leader hands you the 740 TANF report. You see Edward currently doesn't have sufficient activity hours assigned to meet the WPR. Based on his most recent review, Edward was engaged in working toward his GED, Work Experience, job search, looking for more affordable housing, and parenting classes to learn how to work with his son on behavioral issues.

Based on what you see on the report, what changes could be made to increase the likelihood that his case can meet the WPR, without adding new activities?

Increase Participation of Individuals in W-2 T Placements

W-2 agencies must tailor strategies for increasing participation to the needs of the individual.

Work Experience and Participants in W-2 T Placements

Work experience can provide the participant in a W-2 T placement with the opportunity to develop good work habits, skills, and confidence. It's important to identify work sites that are flexible in meeting the unique needs of this individual and can help him or her reach his or her current goals.

Here are some ways to engage participants in W-2 T in Work Experience:

- Use a graduated approach that focuses on meeting certain goals that improve and increase good work habits.
- Expand the types of Work Experience activities that could be used.
- Assign additional activities that support the current goals for the work site.
- Refer participants to other programs that provide Work Experience options such as DVR and WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act).
- Consider opportunities that might be available at your agency.
- Apply assessment results to place a participant at a Work Experience site that is meaningful to that individual.

Reduce Non-Participation

W-2 agencies must consider strategies to help reduce non-participation.

Kassandra has one child. Kassandra doesn't have a high school diploma. She is very interested in getting her HSED. Based on the last activity logs, you notice that she has not been attending her HSED classes on Mondays and Fridays. At her next appointment, you ask why she is missing class. Kassandra states she uses her boyfriend's car, and she can't use it on Mondays and Fridays.

What can be done to increase the likelihood that she will be able to participate in her assigned activities and meet the WPR?

Two-Parent Households

In a Two-Parent Household, one parent needs to participate in 30 hours (20 hours Core and 10 hours Core or Non-Core) regardless of the age of the youngest child to meet the WPR.

Assign Appropriate W-2 Activities for 18- and 19-Year Olds

Teen parents, ages 18 and 19, who have not completed high school may meet the Work Participation Requirement through participation in activities that meet the federal definition of Satisfactory School Attendance.

Disregarded Cases

A case that is disregarded from the TANF Work Participation Rate could help meet the WPR if the W-2 participant is able to participate in enough hours.

Remember!

- The age of the youngest child in the W-2 group determines how many hours of Core and Non-Core activities a parent needs to participate in for a case to meet the WPR.
- Two-parent families are counted in the All-Family WPR.
- Documentation, verification, and supervision are required for all W-2 activities, with more detailed requirements for activities that count toward the WPR.



Practical Applications

It's time to apply what we have been discussing to case scenarios.

For each of these cases, you are conducting a staffing. With the other case managers in your group, review the information provided and respond to the questions.

Be sure to use the information about best practices shared today, the Work Participation Requirements and Activity charts from the previous class and the Activity Codes from the W-2 Manual Appendix as you discuss effective strategies for each case, balancing meeting the WPR with moving the individual toward his or her employment goals.



Scenario: James and Wanda

Prior to the weekly staff meeting, your team leader provided staff with a copy of the 740 TANF Report. The team leader asked that everyone bring a case that currently is not meeting the WPR requirements. You bring James and Wanda's case. You would like to discuss it and get ideas to help engage them so they participate at the level needed to meet the WPR requirements. James and Wanda have an appointment with you later in the week.

James, 51, and Wanda, 43, have three children, ages 14, 8, and 5. James had a long and steady work history in the construction trades until he was in a snowmobiling accident and suffered a back injury. He is not able to return to his prior job. Wanda never worked outside the home. The determination for James to be the placed parent was based on his solid work history. When the couple applied for W-2, Wanda had no interest in voluntarily participating because of her strongly-held belief that she was needed at home to care for her children and the household. In the last few months, she slowly has started to engage in activities, but continues to say that she only wants to participate minimally.

You received a formal assessment completed by James' medical provider, and discussed it with James at his last appointment. He is able to participate full time with accommodations and a lifting restriction of 10 pounds. His medical provider's recommendation is that he switch positions on a regular basis as needed. His doctor has him doing exercises on a daily basis at home to strengthen his core muscles. James has a high school diploma and has completed several short-term certificate trainings in the building trades. He has completed career assessments; his top area of interest is in the Building Construction trades, and his second highest interest is in Welding.

Over the past few months, Wanda gradually has agreed to participate in some activities. She doesn't have her high school diploma. She was unsure if she even would want to attend classes. Her fear of going back to school was because she dropped out her junior year, and she said she has no interest in going back to school or getting her GED. You have encouraged her to complete the TABE, and she scored better than she had expected. This was encouraging for her. Wanda felt a boost of confidence and agreed to start the GED Program at the local Tech College.

Wanda and James will not need child care assistance for their youngest while they are engaged in W-2 activities because she is in full-day kindergarten.

You currently have James as the **placed parent** in a CSJ placement and he is assigned to the following activities:

- Structured Job Search, including meetings with the job developer at the job center – Mon./Wed./Fri. 8:30 am to 10:30 am (6 hr/wk)
- Job Club – Mon. 10:30 am to 12:30 pm (2 hr/wk)
- Physical Rehab – 1 hour daily (evenings at home) (7 hr/wk)

- Work Experience at Habitat for Humanity as the General Contractor's assistant, helping volunteers follow the building plan and providing other technical support – Mon./Wed./Fri. 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm (12 hr/wk)
Total = 27 hr/wk

Wanda is volunteering, and currently is assigned to the following activities:

- GED – Mon. - Fri. 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm (10 hr/wk)
- Career Assessment workshop – Tues. 9:00 am to 11:00 am (2 hr/wk)
- Job Club – Mon. 10:30 am to 12:30 pm (2 hr/wk)
- Budgeting 1:1 with UW Extension office – Thurs. 9:00 am to 10:00 am (1 hr/wk)
Total = 15 hr/wk

What are James and Wanda's Work Participation Requirements? Identify what counts and what doesn't count toward the rate.

What suggestions would you give the FEP for increasing James' engagement in required hours and activities?

What can the FEP do to encourage Wanda to increase her hours of voluntary participation? Does Wanda need to increase her hours?

Scenario: Jeanine

At today's staffing, a co-worker brings in Jeanine's case. Jeanine is 26 years old and has two children, ages 4 and 6. She has been in a W-2 T placement for almost six months. Based on an earlier formal assessment, Jeanine's assigned activities total 10 to 15 hours per week. These activities have included counseling, exercise, completing online modules on living and working with anxiety disorders, etc., as recommended by her counselor. Jeanine's counselor has completed a new assessment that shows she is making progress and now has fewer limitations.

The assessment indicates that Jeanine continues to have frequent deficiencies in concentration, poor memory, sleep disturbances, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, difficulty thinking, decreased energy, and social withdrawal. She also may struggle with maintaining attention for two consecutive hours, completing a normal workday without interruptions, dealing with normal work stress, and performing fast-paced tasks. Overall, the assessment suggests Jeanine would benefit from a low stress environment, but could be engaged in Work Experience, Job Readiness or Life Skills, and Job Skills training. The counselor recommends four to five hours of assigned activities per day, including continued counseling of one hour per day as well as one hour per day of walking.

Jeanine has a high school diploma. She doesn't have much work history. Her last job was as a busperson at a bar/restaurant. She left this job on the recommendation of her counselor because it worsened her depression and anxiety. She has told the FEP that she misses working, but is at the point where she goes out of the house only if necessary.

The FEP has asked for Jeanine's case to be staffed because he wants to talk with her about her next steps to prepare to become job ready, but he doesn't want to push so hard that it worsens her anxiety, which may lead to non-participation. Given all that, the FEP does see potential for Jeanine's case being able to meet the WPR.

What are the Work Participation Requirements?

Where does the FEP go from here to increase Jeanine's engagement in W-2?

How can Jeanine be introduced to a work site?

What is a possible progression that leads this case to meeting the WPR?

Scenario: Celina

The FEP has been working with Celina since she came into the W-2 program as a new participant at the agency almost six months ago. Celina is 28 years old and has two children, ages 6 and 8.

The FEP's initial assessment with Celina showed that she had no major barriers to employment. She has a high school diploma, but felt her math skills were not as strong as they should be for some jobs. She had been working in a variety of roles, kitchen help, waitress, bartender, and dishwasher, at a friend's seafood shop for several years until the shop closed in 2013. Celina's unemployment benefits were exhausted about the same time that her children's father left them to move to Pittsburgh. Celina has gotten an occasional child support check over the last few months, but has no other regular contact with the other parent. She spent time living with her mother, but has been in her own place for three months, thanks to Housing Assistance, LIHEAP, and some help from family members.

For her first few weeks in W-2, Celina participated in employment search, educational needs and career assessments, and some workshops. After three weeks, she didn't have any strong job leads, so the FEP focused on Work Experience and some Basic Education to sharpen her math skills. She placed Celina at Continental Process Solutions, a work site that the FEP felt could offer her experience with several different focuses while she worked there, including office clerical tasks and reception work. During this time, she also was seeing a counselor weekly to help her adjust to single parenthood and the challenges of being on her own.

Career assessments and inventories Celina completed prior to her WE assignment pointed solidly in the direction of customer service and interacting with people. Initially, she had challenges at the Continental Process Solutions work site. The supervisor felt Celina had learned some bad habits after years of working for her friend, primarily bringing a casual attitude to the workplace, which was not appropriate for Continental, and was coaching her on appropriate workplace behavior. After Celina had been at Continental for four weeks, the site supervisor felt much more confident about Celina's interpersonal skills and suggested moving her on to more technical tasks at the site, from learning the company's spreadsheets to other, more rigorous mental tasks that required a quick turnaround.

Celina continued at Continental for another eight weeks. During that time, she mastered at least three different office and administrative assistant tasks. The site supervisor gave Celina a ringing endorsement, saying that she was showing signs of taking initiative by helping recently-placed W-2 participants learn how to do necessary entry level customer service tasks. Co-workers noted that she was very supportive and encouraging. In addition, her TABE scores in Math have shown improvement.

Based on this information, the FEP and Celina decided to search more actively for employment. The job developer connected her with two solid leads, one at

Amalgamated Organic Produce as a shipping clerk, and the other at People's Internet Coffee Cooperative as an online support agent.

Over a three-week period, Celina applied for both jobs and was hired by Amalgamated. After being very positive about her first two days on the job, things seemed to change for Celina. She did not do well recognizing different types of produce, and became very frustrated as she tried to learn the computerized shipping system. By the end of the week, her supervisor determined that Celina wasn't picking up the job duties fast enough and terminated her.

Celina was encouraged that she got a call back from the Coffee Coop the following Monday, but the interview did not go well. She felt very intimidated by all the computer communication equipment and the list of processes she would be required to know. She also said she really hated coffee.

Another week of independent employment search produced no leads. Now, the FEP is wondering about the next steps. Perhaps the FEP's initial career assessments didn't give the most accurate read on Celina's abilities and interests.

What are the Work Participation Requirements?

Why was Celina able to succeed at the Work Experience site, but didn't do very well in paid employment?

What additional assessment could benefit Celina at this time? How would that information impact her assigned activities?

Is more Work Experience the best path for Celina, or are there other possibilities that would count as Core activities?

Things to Remember: Improving Wisconsin's WPR

- Focus on factors that are within your control.
- Look for opportunities to meet the WPR when activities are assigned.
- Assign activities that engage participants by matching their goals and interests.
- Use Core activities to their fullest potential.
- There is no single answer that applies to every case.
- Participants in W-2 T placements can meet the WPR.
- Accurate entry of assigned activities and non-participation into CARES is critical.
- Strategize or hold case staffings with colleagues when possible and appropriate.
- There are no guarantees. What you can do is create the greatest likelihood that a participant will meet the WPR.

Appendix

Sample 740 TANF Report

WP OFFICE: W2 EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

FEP WORKER: Your Worker ID

Name	Case Number	PIN	W-2 Begin Date	W-2 Placement Begin Date	W-2 Placement Code	EP End Date	Total Scheduled Hours	Total Federal Scheduled Hours	Family Profile	TANF Work Hours Required	Tentative Meeting	Total Core Activity Hours	Total Non-Core Activity Hours	Total Job Search & Job Readiness Hours	Activity Code	Actual Assigned Hours
Edward	190967654	220987654	01/24/15	01/24/15	CSJ	04/01/15	35	28	W-2 Sng Par Fam with Child >=6	30	No	20	8	5	WE	15
															GE	8
															ES	5
															HR	3
															PA	4
Kassandra	1964490872	720876451	12/03/14	12/03/14	CSJ	04/03/15	31	31	W-2 Sng Par Fam with Child >=6	30	Yes	21	10	11	HE	10
															ES	5
															CE	4
															MO	2
															WP	10