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| Department of Public Health and Human Services | SECTION: PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS |
| WoRC GUIDELINES MANUAL | SUBJECT: Assessment & Participation Hours |

References: ARM 37.78.206 and .216; 45 CFR 261.30 - .36;
TANF 701-2

GENERAL RULE-- Individuals referred to the WoRC program must negotiate a WoRC Employability Plan (EP) before the household is eligible for TANF cash assistance.

WoRC EMPLOYABILITY PLAN:

The Employability Plan is a written plan outlining steps necessary for each participant to move towards self-sufficiency. Adequate detail is included so there is no confusion about required participant actions. The EP is individualized according to the participant's needs.

Upon enrollment, the following three screening tools must be used to establish or re-establish a baseline of barriers to employment.

1) BARRIER REDUCTION SCREENING GUIDE: (HCS-731)

The next step for each individual who completes a FIA/WoRC Employability Plan is to respond to a Barrier Reduction Screening Guide. The Barrier Reduction Screening Guide is a tool to gather information about the participant's strengths and barriers, which in turn identifies the action plan and the need for specific activities. The WoRC case manager reviews with the participant the information on the Barrier Reduction Screening Guide to determine appropriate referrals and activities for the Employability Plan.

2) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE: (HCS-326)

The participant and the case manager must complete the Domestic Violence Screening Questionnaire (HCS-326). The Universal Notification (HCS-174) letter is given to the participant and a referral is made to the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (or other appropriate local counselor/entity dealing with domestic violence) if the screening results warrant such action.

The case manager enters a 'Y' in the Family Violence field on the EMPL screen to indicate there is family violence in the current household when:

- The participant answers 'yes' to any question on the Domestic Violence Screening Questionnaire;
- The WoRC Case Manager has involved the participant in a conversation regarding the domestic violence to determine

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if they are currently involved in a domestic violence situation, and if so;

- The participant has indicated they are willing to address the issue.

3) **WoRC EMPLOYABILITY PLAN: (HCS-781B)**

The EP is required for all participants. It is necessary for the participant and the WoRC Case Manager to jointly sign the EP (HCS-781B). This certifies that all rights and responsibilities are explained to the participant. The case manager's signature acknowledges the agency's responsibilities. The participant's signature and receipt of paperwork is required.

****As of January 1, 2010 the Assessment Record (HCS 750) is no longer required.**

The Employability Plan must:

- 1) Be developed jointly with the participant;
- 2) Focus on an employment goal that reflects the local job market availability;
- 3) Include appropriate activities based on the varied screenings and assessments;
- 4) Reflect a direct path to available employment;
- 5) Be negotiated for the current month and the two future months; and
- 6) Be signed and dated by the participant and case manager (every month) by the 15th of the month for the following month, updated as changes occur, and copies are retained in the case file and provided to the participant when changes are made.

A current signed Employability Plan is a condition of eligibility. This means that the case manager and participant must sign an Employability Plan for the following month. The exception to this policy is for the participants transitioning to Post Employment benefits. For the participants transitioning to Post Employment, a three month Employability Plan can be signed by the participant and case manager at the time of transition.

WoRC case managers are required to populate two future months of activities on TEAMS for proper issuance and rollover.

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If component notes or an activity checklist are used to provide detail, they are printed and signed by the case manager and participant and attached to the Employability Plan.

At a minimum, the EP must reassess long-term plans every 90 days throughout the duration of participation in the program. Screenings and Assessments that were completed at intake should be reviewed and updated during the reassessment. The WoRC case manager and participant must initial changes to the EP.

NOTE: There are three ways of completing the Employability Plan.

1. Case managers may use the HCS-781B Employability Plan Form.
2. A print screen of the EMPL with the FV indicator blackened out.
3. Print the full FIA/EP through a print session.
 - *If the EMPL screen print is used, the case manager and participant still need to sign and date.

REFERRALS TO OTHER AGENCIES FOR FURTHER ASSESSMENTS OR SERVICES:

WoRC should consider all the following agencies and programs (not an inclusive list) as resources in coordinating WoRC assessments and services to meet the needs of TANF participants:

- Workforce Investment (WIA)
- Local Office of Public Assistance
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Child And Family Protective Services
- Child Support Enforcement
- State And Local Food Programs
- Developmental Disabilities
- Maternal And Child Health Programs
- Family Planning
- Alcohol & Drug Services
- Mental Health Services
- Partnership Project
- Adult Basic Education
- Human Resource Councils
- Other Identified Local Resources
- Probation And Parole

PARTICIPATION HOURS:

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The number of hours an individual must participate in monthly activities are based on whether the individual is a single parent with a child under the age of six (108 hours), a single parent with no child under the age of six (132 hours), or two-parent household (132 hours).

NOTE: TEAMS will display a warning message on the EMPL screen if it is exited with less than the minimum hours. Hours are saved, but authorization cannot occur on EMPS until the total hours meet monthly minimum and maximum hourly participation requirements.

Participation in all activities is to continue in all months a TANF grant is issued, including the month of closure. If a participant requests case closure and fails to comply with negotiated activities the remainder of the month, the WoRC Case Manager will pursue a sanction recommendation for non-compliance. Childcare assistance continues through the end of the benefit month in the closure month.

108 Hours

The following individuals are required to participate for a minimum of 108 hours per benefit month (an average of 27 hours per week.)

1. Single parent household with a child under the age of six (including a teen parent living independently and a minor parent who is not living with another adult); and
2. Teen parents not living independently, who are not attending school who has a child under the age of six.

NOTE: Teen parents living independently and minor parents are considered 'adults' for participation purposes.

NOTE: If one or both parents in a two-parent household is incapacitated, either temporarily or permanently and documentation or notification from WoRC Monitor is provided to the Social Service Specialist, the family is considered a single-parent family and each parent is responsible for completing 108 hours

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each month if there is a child under the age of 6 years. The WoRC Monitor will contact the Social Service Specialist and OPA Supervisor at the time of the NPI approval with the date span for the disability/incapacity so the coding on SPRD can be changed.

132 Hours

The following individuals are required to participate for a minimum of 132 hours per benefit month (an average of 33 hours per week).

1. Single parent household with no child under the age of six (including teen parents living independently and minor parents who are not living with another adult);
2. Minor children age 16 or 17 and not attending school; and
3. Teen parents not living independently, who are not attending school and with no child under six.

NOTE: Teen parents living independently and minor parents are considered ‘adults’ for participation purposes.

► **NOTE:** If one or both parents in a two-parent household is incapacitated, either temporarily or permanently and documentation or notification from WoRC Monitor is provided to the Social Service Specialist, the family is considered a single-parent family and each parent is responsible for completing 132 hours each month if there is not a child under 6 years. The WoRC Monitor will contact the Social Service Specialist and OPA Supervisor at the time of the NPI approval with the date span for the disability/incapacity so the coding on SPRD can be changed.

132 hours

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If the filing unit contains **two or more able-bodied adults** coded 'IN' or 'DQ' (for any reason), this is considered a '**two-parent**' household for participation hours and each adult, who has a FIA, is required to participate a minimum of 132 hours per benefit month (an average of 33 hours per week).

NOTE: Teen parents living independently and minor parents are considered 'adults' for participation purposes.

► **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents in a **two-parent** household is incapacitated, either temporarily or permanently and documentation or notification from WoRC Monitor is provided to the Social Service Specialist, the family is considered a single-parent family and each parent is responsible for completing 108/132 hours each month depending on the age of child. The WoRC Monitor will contact the Social Service Specialist and OPA Supervisor at the time of the NPI approval with the date span for the disability/incapacity so the coding on SPRD can be changed.

NOTE: If there are any minor children (age 16 or 17) not attending school or teen parents not living independently and not attending school in a **two parent household**, the minor child or teen parent not living independently is required to complete 33 hours per week of FIA activities (unless they have a child under the age of 6). The 'adults' must complete 33 hours per week of FIA activities.

COORDINATING CHILD CARE SERVICES:

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When a need for childcare has been determined, the referral form (DPHHS-CC-051) is sent electronically to the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist. Childcare assistance will not start until the date an electronic referral form is received at the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. The initial childcare certification plan will be for 60 days plus the remaining days in that month using a 33-hour varied schedule plus time for travel. After the initial referral, certification plans will be issued according to a daily schedule and for a 3-month period. Exceptions to a daily schedule requirement may be authorized.

Data systems for child care and public assistance programs will communicate case closures by sending alerts, for all closure reasons. According to 1-10 of the Child Care Policy: "Parents and providers subject to an adverse action taken by the Department or the CCR&R are entitled to timely notice. Timely notice means that the CCR&R has mailed written notification to the parent or provider 10 days prior to the adverse action."

WoRC must notify the R&R if a participant is going to close their case. The R&R will send the notice based on the direction from WoRC. This is only the case if in the middle of a certification plan.

Unpaid Co-Payments

If a participant fails to pay their co-pay amount the R&R will notify the WoRC Monitor. Child care sends two notices (a non-payment of co-pay and a pending closure) to the participant. The monitor will send an email to the WoRC case manager that the co-pay needs to be taken care of and addressed at the next case management meeting. If they do not make the co-pay, then not having child care is not considered good cause for non-participation and the participant may be sanctioned.

VERIFICATION OF PROGRESS:

Verification of progress is very important, especially as the individual nears the 60-month time limit. The participant and the WoRC Case Manager agree on the manner in which progress is measured. Examples of progress measures are time sheets, statements from instructors, certificates of completion, grades, attendance records, calendars, etc. Whatever type of verification is most suitable for the activity and the participant is appropriate.

RE-NEGOTIATING ACTIVITIES DURING THE BENEFIT MONTH:

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When changes are made to the WoRC Employability Plan during the benefit month, the changes are entered on EMPL so participation documentation accurately reflects negotiated activities.

1. New components may be added.

When a new component and hours are added to an existing WoRC plan, the hours associated with other components must be changed appropriately so as not to exceed 160 hours or go below 108/132 hours.

2. Existing components may be changed.

When one (1) or more hours are completed for an activity that is ending, record the actual hours completed in the NEG HOURS field, enter the appropriate end date.

3. Existing components may be DROPPED by entering a 'D' in the STATUS CODE field. Components are only dropped when a participant has not or will not complete any of the hours assigned to the activity.

Dropped components are "locked," preventing further updates. If the component is dropped in error, it cannot be reinstated; a new component must be reentered on a new line.

Components can only be dropped during the current benefit month or for future months. Components cannot be dropped during the reconciliation month. They are instead reconciled with zero hours.