

2020-2021 County MFIP Biennial Service Agreement

January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021

Enter the county's unique ID number	62RAM966
-------------------------------------	----------

Contact Information

County/consortium name:	Ramsey
Plan Year:	2020-2021
Contact person:	Ling Becker
Title:	Director Workforce Solutions
Address:	2266 2nd Street North
City:	North St Paul
State:	MN
Zip code:	55109
Phone Number:	651-266-6001
Email address:	ling.becker@co.ramsey.mn.us
Confirm Email address:	ling.becker@co.ramsey.mn.us

Note: Please review Bulletin ## for more details before you complete this document.

A. Needs Statement

1. Besides funding, what is the single biggest challenge you are facing in financial assistance services?

The single most challenging issue facing RC FASD is hiring staff in a timely manner and retaining them. The position is an entry level one which is viewed as an entry point to other positions within the county. With changing workforce demographics, coupled with challenges of providing a competitive salary in comparison to similar agencies/other counties, Ramsey County has struggled with staff recruitment and retention.

We continue to be challenged by our technology systems. Our internal Electronic Document Management System (EDMS), has not been upgraded for Financial Assistances Services in over five years. Functionality limitations of the Minnesota Eligibility Technology System (METS) that is used to administer Medical Assistance and the EDMS system have significantly impacted financial workers ability to get their work

done efficiently. Document management and the functional complexity of METS require time consuming workarounds.

The demands and duties of a Financial Worker are ever-changing, with system modernization and legislative changes resulting in program policy and procedure changes. Specifically, dealing with system interoperability between METS and MAXIS, and the lack of MAXIS to respond timely to legislative changes, has created challenges for Financial Workers. Because of this, the Financial Worker position has become less attractive as a long-term employment option, creating constant staff turnover and training.

2. Besides funding, what is the single biggest challenge you are facing in employment services?

Employment services overarching goal is to help families improve stability to prevent long-term dependence on public assistance as a source of income.

- While many Minnesota residents are obtaining employment, there are many unable to fully take advantage of the vibrant economy. Our current program eligible residents live in high-poverty areas and face multiple barriers to education/employment. The need for financial investments to support residents to gain individual, family and economic stability continues to be very high.
- Employment counselors make efforts to navigate people to one of the many training and education options available in Ramsey County. Even with a variety of options available, they may not be accessible in a way that meets the needs of families and individuals nor are organized in such a way that it provides transferable or industry recognized credentials or skills across multiple industry sectors.
- Additionally, in times of low unemployment employers' perception of public workforce programs declines as some assume those remaining are unemployable. In addition, employers may not be aware of the services and resources available to them and may have underlying assumptions that publicly funded workforce programs are ineffective at providing candidates with the skills and abilities they seek.

3. *Identify the strengths in your community that you are most proud of that benefit MFIP/DWP families.*

Ramsey County has a strong network of community-based organizations as well as internal county services and programs to support those most in need. Over this biennium, WFS will strengthen existing relationships and foster new ones to better coordinate services in a way that works for families. Below are some of the initiatives and strengths that we are most proud of:

- Ramsey County over the past several years has created a culturally specific agency model, where services incorporate and build upon participant, family, community and cultural assets. We continue to work on strengthening this model through ongoing community engagement efforts. The county in its next two-year budget and strategic priorities align with our desired goals for reducing racial disparities and increasing meaningful efforts toward authentic community engagement. Most recently the county launched a county wide community evaluation board to ensure more community voices are heard. Finally, the county is prioritizing a strategic effort around Resident First. The model has us re-examining our methods of service delivery and having us think about accessibility to services.
- Ramsey County will build off internal county strategic initiatives to improve upon community engagement, young adult services and criminal justice reform efforts. One initiative over this biennium includes partnering with Ramsey County Public Health to develop a model to better connect young MFIP parents with early childhood screening, child and teen check-ups, home

visiting, social supports, primary healthcare and other resources. Another initiative called Reliable Opportunities Advance Dads Support (ROADS) is where WFS is partnering with the Ramsey County Attorney's Child Support Services office to provide employment services piloting with African American, American Indian and Latino fathers who have children in MFIP households. In 2020 and beyond WFS will explore opportunities to provide workforce services to residents who are on supervised release in support of a restructure program that is still in its infancy but has a goal of utilizing resources to support people's efforts to maintain and strengthen pro-social supports to reduce recidivism.

- WFS is a partner in the St Paul Promise Neighborhood's "The People's Fellowship" (TPF) which is a whole family approach focused on improving the lives of multiple generations of MFIP eligible families living with the Promise Neighborhood in St Paul.
- Employment Services has been utilizing person-centered practices such as Motivational Interviewing, coaching, and strengths-based assessments for many years. Over the last 5 years, WFS has been developing and implementing a research-based and person-centered approach which is called the Lifelong Learning Initiative (LLI). LLI helps participants identify their skill strengths and utilize them to set and achieve measurable employment gains. In this biennium, MFIP/DWP will incorporate LLI in employment services.
- Families Achieving Success Today (FASTX), provides a comprehensive set of co-located services designed specifically for families who experience multiple barriers to employment, supporting WFS's belief that every parent can work to some degree and provides the opportunity for parents to obtain employment and utilize wrap around services to retain their jobs over time.
- The Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED) recent launch of the statewide CareerForce platform will be leveraged to point participants toward job search resources. Staff will continue to be educated on using the platform with program participants.

1. What strengths and resources do you have available to address the needs of your participants? *Please check all the resources available to participants in your service area and check whether the resource is available within MFIP financial or employment services “in-house” or from a partner organization (county resources with developed connections to MFIP), and/or an external community resource or both. If you lack the resources in your service area, check the Resource Gaps column. Add any “other” resources that you consider necessary.*

<u>MFIP Resources</u>	<u>Partner Resources</u>	<u>Community Resources</u>	<u>Resource Gaps</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ABE/GED
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adult/elder services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Career planning
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Childcare funds
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chemical health services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer lab access
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Credit counseling/financial literacy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	English Language Learner (ELL)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food shelf
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing assistance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Job club
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Job development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Job placement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Job retention
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Job search workshops
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mental health services
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	On-the- job training programs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Post-secondary education planning
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Short-term training
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supported work/ paid work experience
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation assistance (gas cards, bus cards)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vehicle repair funds
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Volunteer opportunities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth programs
				Other: _____

2. County Program Contact Information

Please name contacts for the following programs if different from the contact on the cover page. You only need to give a person’s phone and email once.

Name of MFIP Employment Services staff contact	Michelle Belitz
Contact phone	651-266-6054
Contact email address	michelle.belitz@co.ramsey.mn.us

Name of DWP staff contact	Michelle Belitz
Contact phone	651-266-6054
Contact email address	michelle.belitz@co.ramsey.mn.us

Name of Financial Assistance Services staff contact	Tina Curry
Contact phone	651-266-4365
Contact email address	Tina.curry@co.ramsey.mn.us

3. Employment Services Provider(s) Information

Statute 256J.50, subdivision.8: Each county, or group of counties working cooperatively, shall make available to participants the choice of at least two employment and training service providers as defined under Minnesota Statutes, section 256J.49, subdivision 4, except in counties contracting with workforce centers that use multiple employment and training services or that offer multiple services options under a collaborative effort and can document that participants have choice among employment and training services designed to meet specialized needs.

List your current employment services provider(s) and check the respective box to indicate which population served. If a Workforce Center is the only employment services provider, list the multiple employment and training services among which participants can choose. Section G of this form addresses provider choice.

Name and Address	Contact Person	Phone	Email	Population Served				
				MFIP ES	DWP ES	FSS	Teen Parents	200 % FPG
HIRED 1823 University Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104	John Klem	651-999-5670	John.klem@HIRED.org	X		X		
Ramsey County Public Health 1670 Beam Avenue, Maplewood, MN 55109	Sharon Cross	651-266-1827	Sharon.cross@co.ramsey.mn.us				X	
YW Works 375 Selby Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55102	Tom Ellis	651-221-4681	tellis@ywcastpaul.org	X		X		
Ramsey County Workforce Solutions 160 East Kellogg Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN 55101	Prince Corbett	651-266-4711	prince.corbett@co.ramsey.mn.us	X		X		
Ramsey County Workforce Solutions 160 East Kellogg Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN 55101	Angela Cardella	651-266-4704	angela.cardella@co.ramsey.mn.us	X		X		
Ramsey County Workforce Solutions	Lisa Laabs	651-266-4715	lisa.laabs@co.ramsey.mn.us		X			

160 East Kellogg Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN 55101								
Avivo 1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 127, Saint Paul, MN 55108	Julie Kizlik	651-752-8630	julie.kizlik@avivomn.org	X		X		
American Indian Family Center 579 Wells Street, Saint Paul, MN 55101	Kristin Kinney	651-793-3803	Kristin_kinney@aifc.net	X		X		
Goodwill Easter Seals MN 553 Fairview Avenue North, Saint Paul, MN 55104	Andrew Freeberg	651-379-5874	AFreeberg@gesmn.org	X		X		
Goodwill Easter Seals MN- FAST 553 Fairview Avenue North, Saint Paul, MN 55104	Andrew Freeberg	651-379-5874	AFreeberg@gesmn.org	X		X		
Hmong American Partnership 1075 Arcade Street, Saint Paul, MN 55106	Derlee Moua	651-495-1601	derleem@hmong.org	X		X		

B. Service Models

Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and the Diversionary Work Program (DWP)

1. Do you have culturally specific employment services for different racial/ethnic groups?

No

Yes, **check all that apply.**

African American

African immigrant

American Indian

Asian American

Asian immigrant

Hispanic/ Latino

Other, please specify in the text box below.

WFS is seeking a culturally specific employment service partner for Hispanic/Latino families to begin service delivery in 2020

2. What strategies do you use for hard-to-engage participants? **Check all that apply.**

- Home visits
- Off-site meeting opportunities
- Sanction outreach services
- Incentives, please specify: Stored value

cards _____

Other, please specify in the text box below.

FAST Mental Health Social worker, FAST wrap-around services

3. What types of job development do you do? **Check all that apply.**

- Sector job development
- Individual job development

Other, please specify in the text box below.

Job Connect

4. Do you have an ongoing job development partnership or sector base with community employers to help participants with employment?

- No
- Yes, **check all activities employer provides.**

- Interview opportunities
- Job placement
- On-site job training
- Job skills training
- Job shadowing
- Work experience
- Helps plan training programs

Other, please specify in the text box below

5. Do you provide job retention services to employed participants while they are receiving MFIP?

- No
- Yes, **check all that apply.**

- Available to assist with issues that develop on the job
- Financial planning
- Mentoring
- Personal contact with the employee and how often: monthly
- Soft skills training
- Transportation

Other, please specify in the text box below.

Support Services

How long do you provide job retention services?

- Less than 3 months
- 12 months
- 6 months
- Other: _____

6. Do you provide job advancement services to employed participants?

- No
- Yes, **check all that apply.**

- Career laddering
- Coaching/mentoring
- Education/training
- Networking
- Ongoing job search

Other, please specify in the text box below.

7. Do you utilize any career pathways programs or skill assessment and credentialing programs for your participants?

- No Yes, **check all that apply.**

- Pathways to Prosperity (P2P)
- National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)
- Work Keys
- Other: Career Bridge, My Next Move, CareerWise

Family Stabilization Services (FSS)

1. Do you have professionals available to assist with FSS cases?

- No Yes, **check all that apply.**

- Adult Mental Health professional
- Adult Rehabilitation Mental Health Services (ARMHS) worker
- Chemical Health professional
- Children’s Mental Health professional
- Psychologist
- Public Health Nurse
- Social Worker
- Vocational Rehabilitation worker

Other, please specify in the text box below.

2. Do you make referrals for children of FSS participants?

- No Yes, **check all that apply.**

- Children’s Mental Health Services
- Child Wellness Check-ups
- Public Health Nurse home visiting services
- Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)

Other, please specify in the text box below.

3. Are any of these services for children offered to non-FSS families?

- No Yes

Services for families not on MFIP/DWP but are under 200% of Federal Poverty Guideline

1. Do you provide services to families who are not receiving MFIP or DWP assistance but are under 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG)?

No Yes, **check all the services that apply.**

- Child care Job retention services
- GED ABE/ELL Classes
- Job postings Computer Lab Access
- Support Services

Other, please specify in the text box below.

Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Services for Teen Parents

1. Are there specialized workers who work primarily with teens?

No Yes, **check all that apply for each age group.**

**Minors
(under age 18)**

Age 18/19

X	x	Financial worker
x	x	Employment service worker
X	X	Social worker
X	X	Public health nurse
X	X	Child care worker
X	X	Child protection worker
X	x	Other Job Role

2. Is there a single point of contact for teens, that is, one staff with primary responsibility for keeping in contact with the teen, working with the teen, and making connections to other services? Respond for each age group separately. If yes for an age group, check the one position that serves this function within that age group.

**Minors
(under age 18)**

Age 18/19

No Yes No Yes

Financial worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment service worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social worker (Social Services)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Public health nurse | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Child care worker | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child protection worker | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other job role: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Does your county have an active partnership with the local public health agency to get teen parents enrolled and engaged in public health nurse home visiting services? **Check one** for each age group.

Minors
(under age 18)

Age 18/19

- Yes, mandatory
- Yes, voluntary
- No

- Yes, mandatory
- Yes, voluntary
- No

C. Performance Measures; Racial/Ethnic Disparities

1. Performance-based funding is determined by a service area’s annualized Self-Support Index value. Review the information and report links in this section to see the effect of performance on funding and reporting, based on Statute 256J.626, subdivision 7.

Each year, a bonus to a service area’s Consolidated Fund allocation will be based on its performance on the Self-Support Index in the previous April to March year.

The **three-year Self-Support Index (S-SI)**: This measure starts with all adults receiving MFIP or DWP cash assistance in a quarter and tracks what percentage of them, three years later, are no longer receiving family cash assistance or are working an average of 30 hours a week if still receiving cash assistance. Those who left MFIP after reaching 60 counted months and those who left due to 100 percent sanction are only counted as a success if they worked an average of 30 hours per week in their last month of eligibility or if they began receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) after family cash assistance ended. To provide fair comparisons across service areas, DHS calculates a “Range of Expected Performance” for the S-SI that is based on local caseload characteristics and economic conditions. The service area’s Self-Support Index value is whether the service area was above, within, or below its expected Range.

The S-SI and Range are annualized for the four quarters in the April through March year ending in the reporting year before the funding year. See the annualized report on the MFIP Reports page on the DHS website for 2019 <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4651D-ENG>. A service area with an annualized S-SI “above” its customized Range of Expected Performance for 2019 will receive a 2.5 percent bonus added to its Consolidated Fund allocation for calendar year 2020.

- If your service area is receiving a bonus, congratulations! Please share a success strategy:

N/A

- If your service area performed “above” or “within,” you can go to item 2.
- If your service area performed “below” for 2018 and performs “below” again for 2019, you then will have to **negotiate a multi-year improvement plan** with the commissioner. If no

improvement is shown by the end of the multiyear plan, the next year's allocation must be decreased by 2.5 percent, to remain in effect until the service area performs within or above its Range of Expected Performance.

2. A **racial/ethnic disparity** is defined as a one-year Self Support Index that is five or more percentage points lower for a non-white racial/ethnic group than for the white group of MFIP/DWP-eligible adults in the county or consortium. The report "The Annual Summaries for counties of the Self Support and Work Participation performance measures" <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4214Z-ENG> on the MFIP Reports page includes a list of service areas that have a racial/ethnic disparity requiring action. (If your county has a disparity but data are missing for quarters with cell size too small to report, contact benjamin.jaques-leslie@state.mn.us to get the unpublished counts and percentage gaps.)

If your county or consortium is **not** in the list, skip the following question.

What strategies and action steps for each of the groups with disparities do you plan for the coming biennium to reduce these disparities?

Minnesota TANF/MFIP outcomes have shown persistent disparities between White participants and African American and American Indian participants. Additionally, WFS is closely watching an emerging disparity in the three-year index in the Latino population. In an effort to reduce racial disparities, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions has been developing and executing multiple strategies; over this biennium WFS will build off this foundation to include the following:

- Partners for Equity efforts- Beginning in 2020, WFS will have three culturally specific community-based organizations to deliver comprehensive, strength-based, and culturally specific family stability services to African-American, American Indian and Latino families receiving MFIP. While County is using language of the culturally specific contractors, the County is seeking to continue to build partnerships with the community and looking to partner with the potential providers for equity work. In particular, culturally specific ES means:
 - a. the mission of the contracted agency is rooted in the culture(s) and cultural identity(ies) of the participants served;
 - b. the majority of the board and key executive leadership of the contracted agency represent the race(s), ethnicities, and culture(s) of the participants served;
 - c. employs, or intends to employ, management and direct service staff who, in part, reflect the race(s), ethnicities, and culture(s) of the participants;
 - d. the agency delivers services to increase participants' employability in a manner that both acknowledges and responds to the legacies of historical trauma, racism, inequality, and poverty that have negatively affected access to, and success with, education and employment opportunities; and
 - e. agency services incorporate and build on participants' values, beliefs, worldviews, and traditions, many of which are rooted in or informed by culture and experience.
- Cultural Consultants: WFS values the communities we serve and the richness of consultation in a cultural context to better serve our participants in our employment and education programs. Through lending input and guidance, consultants are integral to our services and will be

connected and engaged with communities experiencing racial disparities. Consultants will assist WFS with a number of interventions such as training, case consultations, policy and procedure review, coordinate community efforts and community conversations.

- WFS has representation in the St Paul Indians in Action learning cohort which is comprised of 10 county leaders and 10 members of the American Indian community. The cohort meets over the course of a year to developing overarching, countywide principles for all of Ramsey County’s work that impacts the American Indian Community; it will give us an opportunity to re-evaluate, improve and modify our service delivery efforts.

D. Program Monitoring/Compliance

1. What procedures do you have in place to ensure that program funds are being used appropriately as directed in law? **Check all that apply**

- Budget control procedures for approving expenditures
- Cash management procedures for ensuring program income is used for permitted activities
- Internal policies around used of funds, i.e. participant support services

Other, please specify in the text box below.

2. What procedures do you have in place to ensure program policies are followed and applied accurately? **Check all that apply.**

- Case consultation
- Sample case review by supervisors
- Sample case review by workers

Other, please specify in the text box below.

Sample case review by Workforce Solutions Planners

If your service area has not made changes to your random drug testing policy since the last BSA, go to Section E.

3. What procedures/policies do you have in place for administering random drug tests to MFIP participants who are convicted drug felons as required by Minnesota Statutes, section 256J.26, subdivision 1?

Check one.

- Written policy within the MFIP unit
- Coordination with Corrections
- Currently establishing new policy/procedure(s)
- Other, please specify in the text box below.

E. Collaboration and Communication with Others

1. How many employment services front-line staff in your county or consortium has MAXIS access? 100 _____
How many managers/supervisors have MAXIS access? 12 _____
2. Describe the process your service area uses to identify and resolve discrepancies between MAXIS and WF1 data in areas such as Family Stabilization Services coding, employment/hours, sanction status, etc.

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions MFIP employment services performance measures are data driven; the quality and integrity of that data is a priority. Ramsey County's strategy for data management incorporates access to the State of Minnesota's MAXIS Inquiry and Workforce One and the team of provider Data Specialists, WFS MIS, CHS FAS Management and Supervisors, and CHS Evaluators.

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions provides data and requires provider agencies to analyze and use data to ensure that outcomes are achieved and process improvements made. Providers are required to dedicate 1 FTE to a Data Specialist role, a staff person with responsibility to help the provider most effectively produce results through data use. The Data Specialist is in a key role to help staff members achieve and/or exceed the performance measures and indicators. The Data Specialist works with their agency Supervisors and staff through an active process focusing and intervening on the key components of each measure in order to achieve the highest performance.

The primary responsibility of the Data Specialist is the collection, use, management and interpretation of participant performance data, as well as guidance and instruction for staff and management. Familiarity and high-end use of Workforce One and Maxis Inquiry are required. Helping others develop incremental skills and move toward high-end user status in Workforce One is within the role of the Data Specialist.

F. Emergency Services

1. Does your county provide emergency or crisis services from your Consolidated Fund?

No Yes

If yes, please attach a copy of your emergency / crisis plan: Make sure the character limit is 8000.

RAMSEY COUNTY EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (EA) POLICY

Effective August 22nd, 2014

SECTION 1. General Provisions

- 1.1 Ramsey County will grant Emergency Assistance (EA) when funding for the program is available through the designated portion of the MFIP Consolidated Support Services Fund as established by the county agency.
- 1.2 Ramsey County EA, as defined in this policy, will serve families with a minor child or a pregnant woman experiencing an emergency. An emergency is defined as circumstances that require immediate action which, if not resolved, will result in severe hardship or pose a direct, immediate threat to the physical health or safety of a child. Typically, this is due to threat of eviction or utility disconnect.
- 1.3 Income, assets and current living expenses of each household member will be considered in determining eligibility for EA.
- 1.4 Issuance of EA funds must be anticipated to produce long-term (at least 6 months) resolution of the emergency from the date of issuance. To that end all potential emergency needs covered by our emergency assistance policies should be resolved as well as the current emergency.
- 1.5 The Ramsey County Community Human Services Director may adjust the fund distribution or EA eligibility factors dependent upon expenditure patterns.
- 1.6 Ramsey County may apportion annual funding over the year by establishing quarterly expenditure limits. EA is available to the extent funding remains in the quarter's allocation from which issuance is being drawn. The availability of funding will be at the sole determination and discretion of Ramsey County.
- 1.7 The quarterly distributions or eligibility factors may be adjusted dependent upon expenditure patterns. Unallotted EA funds at the end of the quarter may be carried forward to the next quarter. Unallotted EA funds at any time may be transferred to another allowable program area under the MFIP Consolidated Fund.
- 1.8 EA is limited to once in a 12-month period. The 12-month period is calculated from the date of the prior issuance of EA. When EA is used to pay for emergency shelter the service period is counted from the date the person or family is placed in shelter.

SECTION 2. Eligibility

To be eligible a family unit must meet all of the following conditions:

- 2.1 At least one caregiver must have resided in Minnesota for at least 30 days.
- 2.2 Family composition: The Emergency Assistance Family Unit must contain an adult caregiver and:
 - A. At least one (1) child who is either less than 18 years of age or is under the age of 19 years and a full-time student in a secondary school or pursuing a full-time secondary level course of vocational or technical training designed to fit students for gainful employment. An unborn child meets the definition, or,

B. A child as defined above, must be returning to the family home within thirty 30 days of the request for EA.

2.3 At least 1 adult and 1 child in the family unit must not have used Emergency Assistance (EA) or Emergency General Assistance (EGA) funds in Minnesota in the last 12 months.

2.4 At least one child or pregnant woman must meet MFIP citizenship requirements.

2.5 Total gross income of the family unit must be less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline for the household size.

A. Review income received in the month of application.

B. Use the gross income of all unit members. For self-employed persons use the MFIP procedures to determine the adjusted gross income.

2.6 The emergency must not be caused by the unit being currently sanctioned or because the caregiver is disqualified from MFIP. Failure to qualify for an MFIP Extension is not considered non-cooperation.

2.7 Payment in combination with other available resources must be able to resolve the emergency for a period of at least 6 months from the date of issuance.

2.8 Emergency Assistance will be available during one 30-day period in a 12-month period. For families who are in a Ramsey County shelter system, an additional 30 days of assistance may be issued if the original emergency continues beyond the initial 30-day period, and will resolve the emergency for at least a 3-month period.

2.9 The unit must be unable to resolve the emergency by combining any assets, income or other funds available to the unit.

2.10 Resources available to the family shall be used to help resolve the emergency, but only to the extent that using them does not create the potential for another emergency.

A. Resources are defined as all real and personal property owned in whole or in part, and all income, minus basic needs, received from the date of application through the disposition of the application.

B. Count assets the unit can convert to cash in time to resolve the emergency. Do not count assets if converting them to cash creates an undue hardship for the unit. Do not count personal effects and essential household goods.

2.11 The unit must have used at least 50% of its income and liquid assets for basic needs during the 30 days before the application date.

Basic needs are defined as the minimum personal requirements of subsistence restricted to shelter, utilities, food (use the thrifty food plan), work transportation (allow the "all you can ride" bus card amount), or child care expenses when neither parents is available to provide child care due to employment.

Exemptions to this rule are:

- Homeless families or pregnant women who are living in a contracted Ramsey County homeless shelter: Family Place, Family Service Center, Dorothy Day Women Shelter, and Project Home.
- Homeless families or pregnant women who are Ramsey County residents living in a non-Ramsey County shelter facility, in a transitional or supportive housing program or in a Battered Women Shelter.

Determine 50% of income as follows:

1. For Earned Income

Use gross earned income received in the 30-day period prior to application. Subtract taxes, employer-mandated expenses, and child-support payments withheld from wages.

2. For Unearned Income

Count all unearned income (including foster-care payments) and assets received in the 30-day period prior to application. Subtract any mandatory deductions including child-support.

2.12 Relative Assistance Limitations

Ongoing assistance from relatives may be considered when determining whether or not housing is affordable, subject to the following limitations:

- A. Relative assistance is limited to a maximum of \$100/month
- B. Relative assistance is generally limited to one time. If the family loses housing as a result of or failure of the relative assistance they will not be allowed to use it again as a resource when considering the affordability of housing for EA or EGA.
- C. Do not verify the income of the relative promising assistance.

SECTION 3. Application, Processing and Verifications

- 3.1 An application (CAF or shortened EA application) for Emergency Assistance will be provided to a caregiver upon request. The date of application is the date the signed CAF or shortened application is received by Ramsey County.
- 3.2 A face-to-face interview may be required for an intake situation. It is not usually needed for Case Management, but meeting with the client may expedite the process.
- 3.3 The county will notify the family of approval or denial of their request for assistance within 10 days of receipt of all verifications.
- 3.4 An application for emergency assistance is required to verify items deemed necessary by the county agency to determine eligibility. The items include but are not limited to:
 - A. Identity
 - B. State and county residency
 - C. Social Security number
 - D. The emergency and the cost of resolving the emergency
 - E. Income
 - F. Deductions from income
 - G. Assets
 - H. Relationship to children
 - I. Immigration status
 - J. Pregnancy
 - K. Basic Needs expenditures for the period 30-days prior to application for EA.

3.5 Failure to provide requested verifications will result in the denial of Emergency Assistance.

SECTION 4. Determining Amount of Assistance

4.1 Ramsey County will determine the amount of Emergency Assistance available to resolve the applicant's emergency in the following manner.

- A. The minimum amount needed to resolve the family unit's emergency will be determined.
- B. The amount of income and assets the family unit has or will have that can apply toward the emergency will be determined.
- C. Assets the family unit can convert in time to resolve the emergency will be determined.
- D. The availability of other public or private aid will be determined.
- E. All of the above resources will be combined in considering the amount of assistance.
- F. The amount determined in (E) will then be subtracted from the amount to resolve the emergency

4.2 All EA payments are limited to the most cost-effective solution for the county and the family. Staff is expected to negotiate with landlords and other vendors to determine the absolute minimum payment that must be made to resolve the emergency. For housing emergencies, cost-effective is defined as the solution that requires the lowest outlay of public funds – even if it results in the relocation of the family to more expensive housing.

SECTION 5. Emergency Needs that may be funded

5.1 Shelter

- A. For shelter requests, consider issuance of EA being cost effective if the household's income is equal to or greater than the on-going shelter cost.
- B. Ramsey County will not issue EA for past due rent, current rent or a damage deposit when an adult unit member is not named as a lessee on the lease under which the rent or damage deposit is due.
- C. EA payments for shelter are limited to a maximum of two months rent. Or one month's rent plus a damage deposit, so long as the total does not exceed two months rent.
- D. Where the applicant lives in public or subsidized housing or holds a Section 8 voucher, the following applies:
 - The shelter cap is calculated at two times the tenant share of subsidized rent;
 - If the application is for a damage deposit, EA payments will cover the full market rate for the damage deposit;
 - EA will not be issued for rent due from a period of time before the unit passed inspection (pro-rated rent).
- E. For new entry into a new rental agreement, EA issuance is limited to one month of rent and a damage deposit.
- F. EA payment for damage deposit cannot exceed one month's rent. The damage deposit must be included in the lease, and must be paid before or on the move-in date. No retroactive rental damage deposits will be paid.
- G. Court assessed fees may be paid with emergency aid, attorneys' fees and fines will not be paid.

5.2 Utility bill

- A. Emergency assistance may be used to pay utilities including, electric, gas, water and sewer, fuel oil, wood and trash removal.
- B. Payment will be made only if the utility is continued or restored.
- C. The utility cap will be limited to \$1,800 per request.

5.3 Foreclosure prevention

- A. The family must own, occupy and maintain the home.
- B. The family must verify that a lending institution denied refinancing.
- C. The Emergency payment along with other payments must be accepted as full payment of the arrearage. Mortgage payments in late status (generally six weeks past the due date) but not necessarily in the foreclosure process will be considered.
- D. Assistance for persons in co-op housing will be calculated in accordance with the rules for determining mortgage assistance.
- E. EA payment to prevent foreclosure is limited to no more than two times the household's monthly mortgage payment.

5.4 Property taxes

- A. Ramsey County will not issue EA to pay for property taxes.

SECTION 6. Right to Appeal

- 6.1 See Minnesota Statutes Section 256.045 and 256.0451

SECTION 7. Exceptions

- 7.1 Exceptions to these payment limitations may be made at the discretion of the Director of Ramsey County Community Human Services, or designee if it is determined that doing so is cost-effective for the county.

SECTION 8. Money Mismanagement

- 8.1 Families on MFIP or other public cash assistance programs must be evaluated for mandatory vendoring if they:

- Have used EA or EGA twice in a 24 month period,
- Failed to make rent or utility payments while in subsidized housing, or
- Are exempt from the 50% test;

If mandatory vendoring is determined appropriate, these families must agree to the mandatory vendoring of their cash assistance for shelter and utility needs. This vendoring shall last for a period of 24 months from the date of approval of EA and should be reviewed at Eligibility Review time. Families unwilling to agree to vendoring will not be eligible for EA.

SECTION 9. Family Homelessness Prevention Fund (SafetyNet Funds)

Effective January 1, 2006, \$55,000 in Consolidated Fund money is set-aside annually for the creation of a

Family Homelessness Prevention Fund. Staff working with Emergency Shelter Intake control this fund and only those staff may issue from this fund. Eligibility criteria and fund use is as follows:

9.1 Eligibility

- A. A family is defined the same as in EA section 2.2
- B. Family cannot combined EA or EGA with SafetyNet funds available to meet the need.
- C. Family must meet MFIP gross income test.
- D. Receipt of EA within the past 12 months is not a bar to use of these funds.
- E. If being used for a damage deposit or rent, families must agree to the mandatory vendoring of their rent for a period of two years.

9.2 Issuance limitations

- A. Issuance is limited to one time per household per calendar year.
- B. The Shelter Intake Program Assistant is charged with tracking issuances from this fund, including amount and purpose of issuance, and reporting on them monthly.
- C. FHPF funds may only be issued for:
 - a. Rent, damage deposits, rental application fees, and
 - b. Bus tickets to transport families to other jurisdictions where housing is waiting for them.

9.3 Issuance Process

The FHPF Consolidated Fund money will be issued via MAXIS using EA code OT. County money is issued using the county process.

SECTION 10. Amendments

10.1 Amendments can be made to this plan under the following conditions:

- A. Approval of Ramsey County CHS Director.
- B. Changes in the plan will be submitted to DHS in accordance with the effective date of the designated change.

G. Other

Administrative Cap Waiver

Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) allows counties to request a waiver of the MFIP administrative cap (currently at 7.5%) for providing supported employment, uncompensated work or community work experience program for a major segment of the county's MFIP population. Counties that are operating such a program may request up to 15% administrative costs.

If your county is interested in applying for the waiver for the coming biennium, please complete the following four questions.

1. Describe the activity(s) you will provide.

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions expects to exceed the 7.5% administrative cost cap in calendar year 2018. Additional administrative expenses will be incurred due to: 1) use of consolidated fund dollars to continue the county-wide unpaid work experience program; 2) use of consolidated fund dollars to deliver county-wide supported work experiences, including these services for young parents

and specific services for participants of African and American Indian descent; and 3) coordination and combination of unpaid work and paid work experiences and activities to maximize participant's employability.

Workforce Solutions has prioritized action strategies for achieving the participant stability and access to opportunity goals outlined in the Needs Statement section above.

These strategic priorities include:

- Reduce racial employment disparities
- Leverage strategic, purposeful partnerships
- Integrate the 4E success indicators – engagement, education, employment and employment retention into program
- Strengthen the WFS full family approach and family well-being measurement
- Leverage career pathway opportunities
- Integrate the executive skills development (Lifelong Learning Initiative) supporting the individual's charting of their own course
- Increase WIOA and TANF program collaborations
- Increase staff skill development
- Pursue evaluation and continuous process improvement.

2. Explain the reasons for the increased administrative cost.

All services are targeted to increasing participant abilities for achieving self-sufficiency and the Workforce Solutions' ability to meet performance outcomes requires strategic support and direct administrative services. Currently Workforce Solutions works very closely with WIOA and, using TANF innovation grants and small funds from the MFIP block grant funds a year-round employment program which requires coordination among the County, FAS, PHN, employers, Workforce Innovation Board and WIOA team. In addition, the County is committed to shifting any available program dollars to fund paid work experience, which will also be evaluated. The goal is to use paid work experience placements to expose participants to different jobs and careers. Upon completion of work experience, participants will be placed or encouraged to consider different educational programs. MFIP-ES providers use enhanced unpaid work experience services in lieu of the successful but unfunded supported work program. The MFIP-ES providers use funds in a wide variety of ways to enhance services. The goal is to help participants gain necessary jobs to obtain and retain employment and to help participant to make a better educational goal for themselves and ensure that Ramsey County stays in compliance with State and Federal mandated outcomes.

Funds will be used to cover the cost of the planners and evaluators to conduct evaluation and reporting for unpaid work experience (UWE) projects, creating a meaningful evaluation tool to measure levels of engagement and skill enhancement to inform how involvement in these work activities support the engagement of activities and the stability of families. In addition, funds are used to support the provision of MIS and program technical guidance to the UWE providers, universal monitoring of program implementation, and ensure compliance with IPP and all State and Federal rules and regulations relating to the program.

Ramsey County continues to increase collaborative initiatives and programs between WIOA and MFIP/TANF, internal departments, colleges, Workforce Innovation Board and employers, thus increasing administrative expenses.

3. Describe the target population and number of people expected to be served.

Contingent on funding, Ramsey County plans to implement a county-wide supported work program for MFIP participants with a specific focus on young parents and African American, American Indian and Latino participants. The goal is to partner work experience placements with career exploration and education that will lead participant to secure better employment.

The target population for unpaid work is Ramsey County adult MFIP participants with limited skills and work history, including FSS and extended participants. The program is used to support learning skills enhancement on the job and will be offered to participants exploring different training opportunities and career possibilities. The program providers will be encouraged to pair unpaid work experience with other meaningful activities such as job search, obtaining ABE/GED, career exploration, or other relevant activities.

4. Describe how the unpaid work experience is designed to impart skills and what steps are taken to help participants move from unpaid work to paid work.

Ramsey County's Work Experience Program (WEP) is designed to assist MFIP participants experiencing difficulties in obtaining or maintaining public or private sector unsubsidized competitive employment. Participants engaged in the WEP will be placed in a subsidized work experience placements that will provide participants with work activities to develop new skills and enhance current skills, while providing an opportunity to gain work experience in a supportive work environment that builds confidence and gives participants an opportunity to explore other career options. Upon completion of the WEP, participants will have acquired new skills, enhanced current skills, improved their soft-skills and be better prepared for competitive public and private sector unsubsidized employment.

Unpaid work experience is an option if the participant agrees to participate and/or the unpaid work experience meets following criteria:

- The participant has been unable to obtain or maintain paid employment in the competitive labor market and there are NO paid work experience programs available.
- The unpaid work experience provides specific skills or experience that cannot be obtained through other work activity options where the participant lives or is willing to live.
- The skills or experience result in higher wages than the participant would earn without the unpaid work experience.

Once the WEP experience is completed, participants will get support for seeking unsubsidized work. The resources available at Workforce Solutions are an example of the support provided by all MFIP employment services agencies in Ramsey County.

The Workforce Solutions' Talent Solutions team will develop and nurture business partnerships in an effort to better connect the residents seeking unsubsidized employment opportunities.

The Talent Solutions team works very close with the employers to secure placement of the participant into paid jobs.

The Talent Solutions team also has staff with an assigned caseload, so they look for specific jobs that best match the skills and interests of the job seekers assigned to their caseload. This team will e-mail, call and schedule face-to-face meetings with participants to share job leads. Some job leads are posted onto screens placed in the lobbies of MFIP program sites.

Each provider agency has staff functioning in similar roles, and take proactive actions like the Talent Solutions roles described here. Some agencies have functioning employer advisory boards to provide advice and guidance to job development efforts.

Addendum for Unpaid Work Experience Activities

If your county is providing unpaid work experience activities for MFIP participants and you don't already have an Injury Protection Plan (IPP) in place, please click on this [LINK] to fill out the IPP form.

Email the completed form to: Tria.chang@state.mn.us

Provider Choice

Does your county (select one):

- Have **at least two employment and training services providers**. Go to Section H.
- Have a **CareerForce center** that provides multiple employment and training services, offers multiple services options under a collaborative effort and can document that participants have choice among employment and training services designed to meet specialized needs. Go to Section H.
- Intend to submit a **financial hardship request**. See below.

Financial Hardship Request

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP - Exception to Choice of Employment Service Providers Requirement

MFIP provisions require counties to make a choice of at least two employment service providers available to participants unless a workforce center is being utilized (Minnesota Statutes, section 256J.50, subdivision 8). Counties may request an exception if meeting this requirement results in a financial hardship (Minnesota Statutes, section 256J.50, subdivision 9).

A financial hardship is defined as a county's inability to provide the minimum level of service for all programs if a disproportionate amount of the MFIP consolidated fund must be used to cover the costs of purchasing employment services from two providers or the cost of contracting with a workforce center.

To request approval of a financial hardship exception from the choice of provider requirement, please provide the following information.

1. If the county had a choice of providers in calendar year 2019, describe:
 - factors that have changed which indicate a financial hardship
 - why the hardship is expected to persist in the near future and
 - the magnitude of the hardship, which makes limiting delivery of employment services the best financial option for the county

2. Summarize options explored by the county, including use of other partners in a workforce center or other community agencies, such as a Community Action Program or a technical college. The summary should also include:
 - major factors which prevent the county from utilizing these options and include a cost analysis of each option considered; and
 - the process used to determine the cost of other options (RFP or other county process).

3. If the county proposes to directly deliver MFIP employment services, provide a budget and staffing plan that clearly indicates consolidated funds will not be used to supplant county funds. The description should include information about what steps will be taken to ensure that county staff have the experience and skills to deliver employment services.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Employment and Economic (DEED) will also review the amount budgeted by the county for employment and training during calendar year 2019 and use this amount as a guide to determine whether the amount budgeted by the county for calendar year 2020 is reasonable.

If a financial hardship is approved, DHS and DEED will closely monitor county programs to ensure outcomes are achieved and services are being delivered consistent with state law.

H. Budget

Click on the link below to review your service area's 2020 MFIP allocation and Federal Funding Sources:

[INSERT LINK]

In the budget table below, indicate the amount and percentage for each item listed for the budget line items for calendar years 2020 - 2021 Also note:

- Refer the 2020-21 Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Biennial Service Agreement (BSA) Guidelines Bulletin section, "Allowable Services under MFIP Consolidated Fund."
- Total percent must equal 100.
- MFIP administration is capped at 7.5 percent unless the county is approved for an administrative cap waiver. To apply for the administrative cap waiver, respond to the questions on Section G under Administrative Cap Waiver.
- The percentage of Employment Services DWP budget should be significantly less than, the Employment Services MFIP budget.
- Income maintenance administration is reasonable in comparison to the whole budget.
- Ensure the Emergency Assistance/Crisis Services plan is included if funds are allocated.

- If “other” is used, briefly state or describe the line item. “Other” expenditures include any costs that are not related to administering MFIP, DWP or Emergency program services or atypical costs. All services must be an allowable service under the MFIP Consolidated Fund.
- Email Brandon Riley at brandon.riley@state.mn.us, if you need assistance or have questions with the budget section.

Service Area:

2020 Budget Line Items	Budgeted Amount	Percent
Employment Services (DWP)	1,167,928.00	6.02
Employment Services (MFIP)	10,511,349.00	54.14
Emergency Services/Crisis Fund	2,762,212.00	14.23
Administration (cap at 7.5% for county and 15% for tribe and county with administrative cap waiver)	2,061,049.00	10.62
Income Maintenance Administration	2,912,213.00	15.00
Incentives (Include the total amount of funds budgeted for participant incentives but don't include support services here)		
Capital Expenditures		
Total:	\$19,414,751	100

2021 Budget Line Items	Budgeted Amount	Percent
Employment Services (DWP)	1,167,928.00	6.02
Employment Services (MFIP)	10,511,349.00	54.14
Emergency Services/Crisis Fund	2,762,212.00	14.23
Administration (cap at 7.5% for county and 15% for tribe and county with administrative cap waiver)	2,061,049.00	10.62
Income Maintenance Administration	2,912,213.00	15.00
Incentives (Include the total amount of funds budgeted for participant incentives but don't include support services here)		

Capital Expenditures		
Total:	\$19,414,751	100

Email Brandon.Riley@state.mn.us if you need assistance with this section.

Certifications and Assurances

PUBLIC INPUT

Prior to submission, did the county solicit public input for at least 30 days on the contents of the agreement?

No Yes

Was public input received? No Yes

If received but not used, please explain.

ASSURANCES

It is understood and agreed by the county board that funds granted pursuant to this service agreement will be expended for the purposes outlined in Minnesota Statutes, section 256J; that the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (hereafter department) has the authority to review and monitor compliance with the service agreement, that documentation of compliance will be available for audit; that the county shall make reasonable efforts to comply with all MFIP requirements, including efforts to identify and apply for available state and federal funding for services within the limits of available funding; and that the county agrees to operate MFIP in accordance with state law and federal law and guidance from the department.

Counties may use the funds for any allowable expenditures under subdivision 2, including case management outlined in Minnesota Statutes, section 256J.

Counties or Tribes (and all tiers of subgrantees) must use the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Grant Guidance, Code of Federal Regulations, title 2, subtitle A, chapter II, part 200, as applicable (including modifications) in the administration of all DHS federal and/or state funded grants.

https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl

This allocation is funded with 8% state funds and 92% federal TANF funds and paid quarterly. The catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CDFA) Number is 93.558 – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

The Award number for the period of January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021 will be published with the MFIP Consolidated Fund Calendar Year 2020 and Calendar Year 2021 Allocation with Performance Bonus

SERVICE AGREEMENT CERTIFICATION

- Checking this box certifies that this 2020 - 2021 MFIP Biennial Service Agreement has been prepared as required and approved by the county board(s) under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, section 256J. In the box below, state the name of the chair of the county board of commissioners or authorized designee, their mailing address and the name of the county.

Name (chair or designee)	Mailing address	County

If your county/tribal agency is unable to complete your BSA by October 15th, 2019 you will need to request an extension by emailing tria.chang@state.mn.us. Please provide additional information about why you were not able to compete this form.

DATE OF CERTIFICATION