

## DWP/MFIP ES POLICY

**DATES ISSUED:** September 9, 2011, rev: September 24, 2014

**DATE REVISED:** August 10, 2018 –DWP/MFIP/SNAP ES Division Manager

**SUBJECT:** Education and Training

**PURPOSE:** To outline changed procedures (compatible with the Ramsey County Workforce Solutions' vision of engagement, education and employment) for assisting participants in their education/training/experiential choices and pursuits.

### BACKGROUND:

DHS policy requires a new approach when considering education and training as an MFIP activity. The DHS policy ([Bulletin #14-11-02 Policy Changes to Education and Training Activities in Minnesota Family Investment Program](#)) no longer places the employment counselor in a role of approving participant education plans. Participant personal agency dictates their control over their education choices. Employment counselors provide an important service to participants through an informed objective view regarding the challenges and barriers inherent in such educational pursuits. Research and consideration have a place in education planning. Employment counselors can aid the participant in their fact gathering, fact weighing, and decision-making. Risks of non-completion, both financially and as a disruption to the participant's life plan, require careful attention to unique factors, and unique potential solutions, in each participant's situation.

The employment counselor's contribution to a participant not yet enrolled in an education activity differs slightly from the contribution with a participant enrolled in a school program before a conversation with the counselor. The employment counselor as coach will listen to the participant's needs and choices, and write an employment plan that reflects those choices while also providing structure and accountability for the participant to achieve his or her goal. Our goal is to help the participant get the education that leads to employment currently available in the Twin Cities metropolitan market.

#### **A. These changes include:**

1. If someone meets the basic eligibility requirements for pursuing education or training, MFIP employment counselors can no longer deny the option for education and training.
2. Inform MFIP participants the options they have for education and options to pursue Adult Basic Education, English language learning options and post-secondary education.
3. A cap on the portion of hours in these activities that can be used in the employment plan no longer exists.
4. Participants still have the option to combine education with other activities that will advance their efforts to become self-sufficient.
5. A 24-month limit to pursuing those activities no longer exists.

6. Participants must make satisfactory progress in order to continue in these activities as part of their employment plans.

**B. Not Changed:**

All adults receiving MFIP must have employment plans that meet the following hourly requirements for activities (unless they qualify for an exemption):

- 87 hours a month if there is a child in a single parent family younger than six
- 130 hours a month if the youngest child in a single-parent family is six or older
- 130 hours a month if the household is only a pregnant woman with no children
- 130 hours a month if two parents are in the household, but one is not active on MFIP
- 55 hours a week for two-parent families households

**C. Documentation:**

Adults pursuing education & training activities must still submit the documentation to:

- secure child care assistance if they want that assistance;
- confirm they are making adequate progress;
- meet the requirements of the state's Work Verification Plan.  
(These are the verification requirements that demonstrate attendance, etc.)

**\*\*\*NOTE:** Refer to [DHS Bulletin #14-11-02](#) for details on changes.

In July 2018, DHS announced that employment counselors have a new role in education and training daily supervision, documentation, and verification. While policy and procedures for supervision of education activities for adults (20 years and older), the present policy, remain in effect, however it has been expanded to allow an employment counselor, in limited instances, to provide attendance supervision. To do so, the employment counselor must:

- a. Keep in contact monthly by phone, in person, or electronically in order to discuss attendance along with progress.
- b. Confirm the participant's satisfactory progress by receiving and reviewing the quarterly or semester grades.
- c. Defer supervision to a school official if the participant fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress at the end of an instructional period. In this case, only an official at the school or training agency can verify the reported hours of attendance reported and sign the attendance sheets for the upcoming period.

Refer to the detail in Education and Training Daily Supervision, Documentation, and Verification, Section 9.33 of the employment services manual for explanation on how to count hours of attendance for education activities, how to count hours of study time for education activities documentation requirements for all education activities, and attendance recording or tracking of hours. Also refer to [MFIP Education Activity Log \(DHS-4209N\)](#) for explanation and usage.

**Note:** The option of an MFIP employment counselor supervising a participant in education activities is not available for participants under 20 (19 years old and younger) and attending high school or GED. A school official must supervise high school/GED attendance or activities, this includes participants that are enrolled in an Online School and/or Distance Learning Program. An employment services staff person cannot supervise high school/GED attendance or activity.

**D. PROCEDURES:**

1. Agency must include education information in the ES Overview.
2. Agency must have educational learning workshops where the participant can gather information and tools to be able to better make decisions regarding his or her future.
3. The employment counselor should become familiar with the guidance in Section 9.21 (Training and Education); Section 9.24 (Adult Basic Education or GED), 9.27 (Post-Secondary Training and Education), 9.30 (ESL and Functional Work Literacy FWL), and 9.33 (Education/Training Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification) in the [DHS Employment Services Manual](#).
4. In collaboration with the participant, the counselor will use the Ramsey County [MFIP Education and Training Guide](#) for post-secondary education to complete a collaborative, guided conversation between the counselor and participant. The completed guide is then kept in the participant's file. The counselor no longer uses the Occupational Research Packet. The time invested in this collaborative conversation can be coded as coaching and, as relevant, labor market information hours.
5. The employment counselor and participant discuss education related topics including but not limited to, the following points:
  - a. gather necessary information to inform the participant's understanding of the fit of the additional education or training to their employment goal; including previous education, training and work history;
  - b. the participant's awareness/knowledge and the employment counselor's labor market information regarding suitable local and/or regional employment opportunities that result from the additional education or training;
  - c. the increased wage potential resulting from completion of the education or training;
  - d. the education institute admission requirements, including discussion about private and public institutions;
  - e. the potential for (and costs of) remedial coursework before enrollment in core courses, sequencing of those activities and the necessary time commitment;
  - f. the support network available to the participant as assistance in completing the education/training program;
  - g. past successes and educational challenges, and the development of a strengths based approach for completing the education/training program;

- h. the participant's and the employment counselor's agreed upon definition of "satisfactory progress" and the required documentation;
  - i. the potential necessity of resolving past educational debt;
  - j. the prospective of, and participant's strategy for, a probationary period.
  - k. the documentation requirements for MFIP program for education activity; including education verification, activity log, progress report cards and financial aid, etc.
- 6. In collaboration, the employment counselor and participant develop a client driven, strengths based employment plan,
- 7. The employment counselor case notes, monitors, track, supports and case manages the participant's progress.

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:**

Maintaining accurate information on participant attainment of education, or the lack of a high school diploma/GED/Post-Secondary is important. To ensure the collection of accurate information, WFS directs ES agencies to confirm or improve the accuracy of this education level information and provides the following procedural steps.

**E. PROCEDURES:**

- 1. Using the monthly Current Information report Education Attainment column, identify those participant's having 1-11 grade levels completed or "none" in that column.
- 2. The counselor should explore with the participant his or her education experience (especially if it appears to be less than a high school diploma/GED) to determine if the information is accurate or needs updating.
- 3. When the counselor confirms that the information in the system needs to be updated, he or she should open the participant's WF1 case file:
  - a. Scroll to the bottom of the participants WF1 general tab page.
  - b. In the "Highest Level of Education" drop down box, select the correct education level information.
  - c. Click "save."
- 4. The Counselor then should send a status update to the financial worker requesting the education level information be updated in MAXIS.
- 5. The counselor adds a WF1 case note (subject "assessment") indicating when the education level was checked and whether it remains the same or has been updated.

**Contact:** Agency Planner