

DWP/MFIP ES - Operational Definition

Effective Date: October 19, 2015

Operational Definition: An Evolving Employment Services Philosophy 2014-2018

The Vision:

Since early 2014, Workforce Solutions has undertaken a major system change shifting from a process outcomes based system to a family centered, self-determined based lifelong learning informed system.

The aim for Ramsey County Employment Services is to provide residents on public assistance DWP or MFIP employment services which emphasize engagement, education, employment and employment retention to increase resident opportunities for improved employment and family stabilization.

Fueled by the participant's choices, and guided by the employment counselor, Ramsey County Employment Services helps the participants develop executive skills, strengthen their personal agency and self-determination, as well as choose and pursue the activities that matter in achieving their goals for self-sufficiency (as measured by the self-support index) rather than doing only those things that are countable in MFIP simply because they are mandated.

The 2014-2018 Ramsey County MFIP/DWP Program objectives/strategies are to:

- a. Increase the number of participants working per month
- b. Increase the number of participant work hours per month toward and beyond 130 hours per month
- c. Increase the number of participants leaving MFIP due to income
- d. Reduce employment racial disparities
- e. Increase participant education and skill certification levels
- f. Provide effective career guidance services
- g. Provide effective MFIP and DWP Employment Services within guidelines of MFIP and DWP rules.

by

- creating a full-family centered system that engages and helps families remain engaged to obtain education, find and sustain employment, reduce isolation, and create prosperous communities;
- shifting power from the system to the family, wherein the participant has power to create own plans and goals and the system provides supports and incentives to do so (family and counselor become partners and share accountability);
- delivering services where it is interest of the resident – county office, home, community sites, etc.;
- providing between two and four evidence based or evidence informed interventions that work for multiple families;
- investing funds based on a need of families and the level of intervention.

Contact Person: Your Agency Planner

How We Have Gotten Here:

Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is a comprehensive work-focused program in which participants are encouraged and expected to work.

The goals of MFIP are:

1. To encourage and enable all families to find employment;
2. To help families increase their income and move out of poverty;
3. To prevent long-term dependence on welfare as a primary source of family income.

Evolving Strategies and Tactics

- A. With the 2013 Request for Proposal for employment services, Workforce Solutions implemented an MFIP-ES 2014-2016 program approach that paired the work requirements activities more closely with career coaching, education (especially GED or high school diploma), certificate and credential building, mentoring, and retention services, to increase the effectiveness of employment services and assist people to move from MFIP to self-sufficiency.
- B. As part of that 2013 vision, matching a career guidance/development focus with the TANF and MFIP work activity requirements became a primary focus of Ramsey County's program. Education, credential building, career coaching, and retention services were evidence based practices identified as the foundation of the employment services.
- C. As part of that 2013 vision, a new emphasis was placed on the participant's pathway to work and each participant's progression was to include a customized labor market assessment and career coaching. This included the continued practice of using motivational interviewing and assessments to identify strengths, abilities and options, replacing the past practice of identifying barriers and limitations.
- D. As part of the 2013 vision, career planning was expanded to include building on the participant's: educational and employment foundation; current status, interests, abilities, education, experience, aptitudes, needs; and, labor market needs, establishing educational, vocational and employment goals, and matching participants to jobs.
- E. As part of that 2013 vision, Workforce Solutions focused on the belief that education, work, and healthy engagement in community activities can get more people out of poverty and help stabilize families. Agencies were expected to find appropriate ways to stabilize families; and while the family stabilizes, the focus on career coaching remains.
- F. As part of that 2013 vision, developing and executing strategies to reduce racial employment disparities was a fully defined responsibility of each employment services provider.
- G. As part of that 2013 vision, the list of performance measures and outcomes expanded. The measures were designed to be a tool for assessing the health of the services. Outcome performance is evidence of a robust service delivery or the need for improvement in the services.

The emphasis was to focus on the services, not solely on the measures. All deliverers of the Ramsey County MFIP/DWP Employment services were expected to focus on service delivery.

- H. In 2014 (and continuing through 2015 and beyond), WFS ES programs underwent a systems sea-change shifting from a process outcomes-based system to a family-centered, self-determination-based, life-long learning informed system.
- I. In 2014, the concept of strengthening participant and staff executive function skills was embraced and included in the department vision under the term “lifelong learning”. A pilot project involving WFS and Goodwill staff will be undertaken in late 2015. The pilot’s purpose is to incorporate evidence-based practices (related to executive skill development and coaching) with traditional models of ES service delivery. The ultimate goal is to end the participant’s entrapment in the cycle of poverty by increasing his or her ability to set short, measurable, achievable goals related to long-term education and employment gains.
- J. Additionally, Mathematica, representing a new curiosity and interest in the national research and data collection regarding the coaching service model, will provide consultation on the analysis, development, and implementation of an infrastructure to support the department objectives of Coaching and Executive Skills/Lifelong Learning Development (Lifelong Learning Initiative). LLI is the process of utilizing enhanced coaching methods to guide ES program participants with the identification of their individualized self-sufficiency goals and then leading through the progression of steps for strengthening executive functioning skills in order to achieve those goals. The Lifelong Learning Initiative is the recognition of executive skills strengths and weaknesses and then the identification (“Coaching”) of the steps that need to be taken to build essential executive skills.
- K. WFS has been invited, along with nine other states, to participate in the national Job Search Study (the “Study”) designed to review and test ES participant education and employment retention success with various executive skill development and coaching interventions; the LLI model will become a part of the Study.
- L. As part of that expansion of the vision, continued use of motivational interviewing and coaching are the foundation of the adaptation and expansion of the career planning, counseling and coaching functions introduced in 2013 vision.
- M. Ramsey County WFS was selected for as one of 8 teams nationally to participate in the Systems to Family Stability National Academy for the next 18 months (through December, 2016). The Academy is charged with supporting local and state TANF programs to improve employment outcomes and strengthen service delivery. The Academy is a way to redesign and reenergize TANF programs to ensure that families receive needed services and supports for successful transition to employment and economic stability.

From January 2014 to present, the professional ES employment counselors have been expected to incorporate all of the following in their daily work with ES participants and their families:

- career counseling including career assessments and current labor market trends
- career coaching including discussion about the participants' individualized self-sufficiency dreams and resulting goal action steps
- planning for achievement of higher level of education including GED and technical skill attainment, and
- lifelong learning/executive skill development.

In 2016 and forward, Workforce Solutions expects that all of the case management, counseling, coaching and program management activities carried out by employment counselors and leadership be conducted with the guiding principles of:

- Recognition of the participant rights of personal agency and self-determination;
- Use of strength based employment plan development;
- Celebration of cultural diversity;
- Celebration of individual, family, and community resiliency;
- Respect for the whole family (multi-generational approach);
- Identification and recognition of participant dreams and goals;
- Use of motivational interviewing ("MI");
- Use of coaching techniques
- Development of participant executive functioning ("EF") skills;
- Expectation that all people regardless of barrier and physical and mental health challenges are able to learn and earn; and
- Discussion about career advancement and retention as strategies from orientation and all throughout the job training and job attainment cycle.

By January 1, 2018, tactics and strategies to meet the following outcomes (and others to be determined as incremental change unfolds) will be in place:

Workforce Solutions shall have well established and evidence driven, supported and informed interventions that support above vision

Workforce Solutions shall have clear understanding of how to help families to get services through the right intervention

Workforce Solutions shall have a procedure to match staff skills to the intervention provided

Workforce Solutions shall have a procedure to match families need to the intervention needed

Workforce Solutions shall fund interventions based on the needs.