

## DWP/MFIP ES Policy

**DATE ISSUED:** May 31, 2018

**FROM:** DWP/MFIP/SNAP ES Division Manager

**SUBJECT:** Increasing Participant Income/Tactical Employment Building

**BACKGROUND:** MFIP Employment Services in Ramsey County is a work program fueled by the participant's dreams, self-determination and action toward stability and self-sufficiency. For most, employment is best pathway toward financial stability.

The 4Es - Engagement, Education, Employment, and Employment Retention - are Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (RC WFS) Diversionary Work Program (DWP) and Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Success Indicators. They are levers for positive change for participants.

Guided by the employment counselor, the successful participant travels through these success indicators to a place of increased family stability as demonstrated by the self-support index (S-SI), employment, and other income measures.

In some cases, participants will take big leaps forward toward achievement of their dreams and goals. In many cases, taking small, incremental steps, is the necessary approach. As always, coaching and using MI remain very important tools for assisting participants to move into employment and increased income.

With this policy, WFS is clarifying an expectation for agencies to implement additional strategies for increased job retention and increased income. The intent is to assist participant leave MFIP due to having retained their job and having increased their income. The increase in income should impact full family.

The goal is to find ways to increase income by providing services to multiple members in the household and give them opportunities and coaching regarding income increase through employment.

**PURPOSE:** There are many steps in travelling from receiving a full cash grant and food grant to having a self-sufficient, MFIP-leaving income. It is easy to become stalled. WFS is prescribing steps to Supervisors at ES agencies in an effort to increase knowledge about non-working cases and applying

the information, resources and support to help them move forward. It is about helping the family get more money. It is about increasing their income. It is about helping them leave MFIP employed.

**PROCEDURE:** The distance from receiving a cash grant under \$110 to self-sufficiency is less distance than between receiving a full cash and food grant and self-sufficiency. Start with the data and link to an action with the participant or family member.

“Retention support” is the active investigation of ways to help a participant retain their employment and an intervention to improve employment and increase income. It is a highly individualized approach and may require courage and creativity on the part of the counselor to implement an untried before strategy.

#### **MFIP and WIOA Counselor Collaboration**

MFIP Counselors identify people in the household who could be eligible for a WIOA Workforce Program and refers the individual to WIOA counselor. Counselors should review the WIOA/Workforce Programs and Public Assistance Programs Collaboration policy at <https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Work%20with%20Ramsey/Integrated%20Service%20Guidance%208.25.17.pdf> to be familiar with basic referral opportunities to:

- Ramsey County Workforce Center or Affiliate
- ULEAD
- Ramsey County Vocational Rehabilitation Services (two locations)
- Right Track
- Youth Build

If there are already co-enrolled participants, respective program counselors should be in regular communication. If a counselor has a co-enrolled participant but is not in regular communication with a counterpart counselor, establish and maintain communication immediately.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES:**

##### **No cash but large food support amount**

Monthly, with use of the Preliminary Report and the Current Report, review cases with low cash grant (near \$0) and a food support amount. These are prime candidates for retention support and services. Reach out. Support their continued employment. Case note the effort and result. The goal is to provide coaching that helps families increase their income through increased employment and education, not to help them close MFIP case.

Updates in the Current Report:

- There is a new column titled Current Food Grant.
- Note the Monthly Cash Grant Current Column:
- Purple highlights of \$0 to \$110 suggest a Housing Grant and no other cash. Look at the Reported Hours for this case. If work hours are listed in the Preliminary hours report, provide retention support.
- Purple highlights of \$0 may indicate unearned income (such as child support) or it may indicate work income. Review the Reported Work information. The family may benefit from retention services. Reach out to these families and offer/provide retention support. Review the educational activities on the preliminary hours list so that if participant is working part-time and going to school part-time the retention services or increasing income strategies do not destabilize the participant's education plans.
- Green: Cash grants over \$110 indicate a rise or fall of at least \$200 from the previous month (reflecting a possible change in employment earnings, child support, or household membership). Investigate – if working, provide retention services.
- A blank space in this Monthly Cash Grant Current Column means they are off the MFIP grant altogether or have not been approved yet for the current month.
- (Note: the cash and food grants items are from MAXIS through the first two of the current month and could still change throughout the month. MAXIS can change daily. If you think any of the grants or other items seem incorrect, you can double-check through MAXIS – Inquiry or status updates.)

**Non-parent, older teens on their parent's caseload.**

WFS includes on the Preliminary report a new column indicating oldest child in the household, plus ages of all children. Use this to identify children in the household (who are not parents themselves), ages 15, 16, 17 and 18, who may benefit from WIOA young adult employment services or community referrals for education and employment. This new list is not a list of teen parents. The counselor is expected to identify the cases where there is a teen in the household and is then expected to have a conversation with the participant about their teen's possible interest in work. The counselor then can make a referral to WIOA youth program for services for that teen or help family find other resources that can support teen's education and employment.

Updates in the Preliminary Report:

- A major change you will see is a listing of all children living in the household for the ES parents in the “preliminary month” (which is always 2 months before the current month).
- Below the parents’ names on WF1, the person id (or PMI) of the child in the case 2 months ago is listed along with the membership code and age.
- Not all children are “active” on the MFIP grant for various reasons, usually due to social security income, and those “not active” have a membership code other than “A”. If other than “A” and are ages 15-18, investigate offering assistance.
- Because children are added to the Preliminary Report, it is much longer. The key is pointing out the youngest and oldest children in the case in serving the whole family.

Once the counselor has identified where there is a teen in the household, he or she is expected to have a conversation with the participant about their teen’s possible interest in work.

The counselor then can make a referral to WIOA youth program for services for that teen or help family find other resources that can support teen’s education and employment.

### **Two-Parent case, second parent (adult) may or may not be on MFIP**

This is a prioritization of where to put counselor resources and increase work hours. This a tactical and practical assistance for families. Being employed even one day a week will help build new working behaviors, practice employment success, and bring in more cash to the family. While it may also have a positive impact on Self Support Index, this is a strategy to serve families. Employment does not have to be full-time to begin with. As we all know, working works. And bringing additional cash into the family benefits all in the household. Please work with any adult member who is in the household and may or may not be on MFIP. Please refer them to the workforce centers for services. Please consider providing them with other resources that may help them secure employment and education.

Other updates to the Preliminary Report:

- Like previous versions, if the columns for “parents” is “2p” for 2 MFIP eligible parents/adults on the case but a second parent/adult is not shown, that means the other parent/adult is either not enrolled on WF1 or is with a different agency. The “2p” code should be highlight in light purple in those cases.

- If there second parent/adult not eligible for MFIP (such as citizenship, social security income, etc.) then the membership code is shown after the dash under the “Member” column.
- Serve these parents/adults, any second parent/adult, by offering assistance and referrals (i.e. job search resources, etc.).
- If the counselor has identified the two-parent/adult households with no MAXIS hours shown or no Preliminary reported work hours (two months prior for both sources), then contact them to assess their interest in work.
- If the counselor has identified the two-parent/adult households receiving an estimated cash grant of less than \$110 and with no MAXIS hours shown, then contact them to assess their interest in job retention support for the second parent and/or interest in work for the MFIP eligible parent.

### **Supporting Working Families**

Practice retention. Check-in frequently (monthly) with working participants to learn of their current situation. Agencies are expected to provide support services for working clients.

Use the current or preliminary report to identify the cases with zero (or low) cash grant (or low) and food grant as indicator of working cases to reach out to. It is part of the counselor to check in with people.

### **Employment Plan**

When reviewing the employment plan do not brush over the line(s) about checking in with the counselor before quitting a job. This is not an issue of a counselor control. The counselor may be a position to help the participant solve the problem driving the participant to consider quitting. If given the opportunity to help the participant, the counselor may indeed help the participant.

### **Leave the Low Cash Grant Alone – Use it as Indicator**

In the past, we had a practice of encouraging participants with a low cash grant to close the grant. This was an improving-Self-Support-Index strategy. The Increasing Participant Income Policy is NOT a Self- Support Index improvement strategy. It is aimed at increasing the family’s income. DO NOT ENCOURAGE STOPPING THE CASH GRANT alone. Instead, view a low cash grant as an opportunity for you to intervene and help the family earn more income.

### **Monthly Supervisor Monitoring**

Supervisors should review the monthly Current and Preliminary reports to identify the no or low cash cases and review these lists with individual

counselor to understand and guide case management of the retention and income-increase strategies.

If the ES agency doesn't see any MAXIS hours or too few in the preliminary report, ensure the participant submits the pay stubs. Inform the FAS Liaison and the financial worker of the situation so he or she can anticipate getting the income entered within 60 days after the end of the month worked. All should understand that income needs to get on MAXIS by 60 days (e.g., March income entered by May 30) for the reports and the MFIP system to know who is getting income, and cross-department information and support make things possible.

### **WFS Evaluation**

The WFS focus on successfully increasing a participant's income will be supported by evaluation. Even those participants who moved out of Ramsey County can be part of program level evaluations through MAXIS information or, eventually, from wage detail information for those who left MFIP without reported income. A future possibility is a survey of those who left two years earlier to learn what pushed them to lose income or to identify barriers to keeping or increasing it.

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