

## DWP-MFIP ES POLICY

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**TO** Ramsey County DWP/MFIP Employment Services Providers

**FROM** Kate Probert Fagundes – MFIP/DWP Employment Services Division Manager

**SUBJECT** My Bridge of Strength (MBS) and Goal Action Plan (GAP) including alternate non-English speaking MBS

**PURPOSE** This memo provides guidelines for using MBS and GAP tools with participants.

**BACKGROUND** Borrowing from Crittenton Women’s Union’s evidenced-based concept of outlining a path of incremental vertical and horizontal objectives, Workforce Solutions (WFS) has adapted the detail of the Employability Measure (EM) assessment to create the MBS and GAP tools for strengths identification. Implementation of these tools blends a strength-based approach with ongoing assessments aimed at clarifying the program participant’s goals and to then constructing their unique plans has been proven effective for achieving education and employment goals.

In August of 2014, WFS Assisted Services undertook a pilot project where counselors in the used the MBS and GAP with participants on their caseloads in order to evaluate the concept for use throughout Ramsey County. The purpose of the pilot was to test the utility of a participant-centered, strength-based coaching tool that supports the participant’s life-long learning. In addition, the goal was for the participant and counselor to learn ways in which the participant increased their role in choosing their own goal while working within MFIP requirements. The counselor’s role in providing support, guidance as appropriate, and tools was an essential part of the new equation.

In November 2014, WFS extended the pilot project throughout all Ramsey County employment services vendor agencies. Like the initial pilot, Phase 2 was aimed at families with whom a coaching approach was considered appropriate and will match the efforts of the counselor in the coaching relationship. The process included the participant’s completion of the MBS, as well as set specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and time-limited (SMART) goals on their GAP. This MBS and goal setting process increased participants’ engagement with the counselor. The MBS does not replace the completion of the EM in WF1 but may be used to assist the counselor in completing the EM. The results of a pilot focus group comprised of participants who used the MBS and GAP county-wide revealed that overall, the use of the MBS and GAP were beneficial. However, there were significant differences in the approach used by the counselor, which

participants said significantly impacted their attitude and ultimate success of obtaining their SMART goals.

Effective July 1, 2015 WFS is fully implementing the MBS and GAP tools for use with all participants on MFIP in Ramsey County. Evidence-based Motivational Interviewing (MI) elicits change talk that leads to the first steps of initiating a desire to change, but was missing two key components. WFS is committed to finding a way to capture strengths and to use them in the participant's goal planning. At the foundation of this desired strength-based approach is the belief that families have unique talents, skills, and life events to apply as a resource to addressing specific goals. Through coaching, the participant maximizes his/her power to self determine their goals and actions by building on their strengths. Incentives (consistent with WFS Support Services policy) are an option for reaching milestones and achieving goals set in the GAP.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **My Bridge of Strength**

1. MBS is completed during initial meeting(s) with their counselor. This is completed with all MFIP and DWP participants that are new to the counselor (regardless of whether they have completed the MBS in the past)
  - Note: There are two different versions of the MBS.
    - Version 1: Used for general program participants
    - Version 2: Alternate to be used for non-English speaking program participants. The language is simpler to translate and incorporates another column to acknowledge and celebrate the strength of being fluent in multiple languages.
  - MBS will be completed within the first three months of engagement.
  - MBS can be updated as often as needed but at least annually.
2. The purpose of the MBS is explained to the participant.
  - MBS purpose: to help participants identify their areas of strength and possibly areas to focus on or reinforce.
3. The participant and the counselor have a conversation, and go through each column of the bridge together.
  - For each column, the participant chooses the statement they believe is most representative of their current situation and circles the box with that statement in it.
    - Note: there is no wrong answer, as the participant chooses the statement, not the counselor.
4. Strengths participants have within themselves are discussed and the participant lists them on the bottom of the MBS form.
  - It is the counselor's role to assist with identifying strengths observed from the participant such as, "If we asked your best friend/parent/significant other, what would they say were your greatest strengths?" and providing feedback (not using checklists, strengths list, etc.).

5. The MBS in a visual roadmap for the participant and should be continuously referred to when celebrating participants' accomplishments, and to acknowledge progress towards goal as well as:
  - To help the participant center their focus and identify for which goal they may write a Goal Action Plan (GAP). The participant may also identify broader goals, as well as reevaluate current ones.
  - Develop discrepancies between goal and participant's steps towards the goal, to have a further discussion if progress is not being made.
6. Participant takes the MBS with them. A copy of the completed MBS is made and kept in the case file.
7. Based on the conversation during the MBS process, the participant identifies the goal they will work on first, and then complete the GAP.

### **Goal Action Plan**

1. The GAP is completed with every MFIP and DWP participant who has a clearly identified goal. Goals may be identified during the conversation while completing the MBS, or the participant and counselor may work together to identify them at another time. The counselor may use their MI skills to draw out the participant's goals and strengths they will use to accomplish them.
  - Note: There are two different versions of the GAP, either one can be used.
  - As goals are obtained, discontinued or changed, so is the GAP.
2. The purpose of the GAP is explained to the participant.
  - GAP purpose: Break down the participant-identified goal into smaller, tangible steps.
3. The participant and the counselor have a conversation, and the participant chooses a goal to work on.
  - The counselor teaches the participant how to write their goal in the SMART format: Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-limited.
4. Once the SMART goal is developed, the participant writes their SMART goal on the GAP after the statement: My Goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The participant talks through the steps needed to obtain their SMART goal, and writes down the steps on the GAP for themselves as well as deciding due dates for each step to be completed.
  - The counselor's role is to be a champion and supporter of the participant's goals and to educate the participant about their choices.
  - The counselor and participant talk through details regarding how the steps will be accomplished, and adjust steps as needed. In order to work through all that needs to be done to accomplish a goal, it may be helpful to take notes and talk through how the goal will be obtained before writing the steps out on the GAP.
    - The participant and counselor plan ahead and discuss possible obstacles to attaining the goal and how to overcome them, as well as what resources (both internal and external) the participant has and will use to accomplish their goal. This may be other people who are supportive or have information that

they may need. The participants own internal resources (strengths and virtues) will also be identified to access during their pathway to accomplishing their goal.

- Accountability is an important component to building essential skills, staying motivated and reaching milestones. The counselor will encourage the participant to hold themselves accountable to their goals, and also explain that once the goal has been identified, it will be expected that the participant work towards reaching their goal in the time-frame outlined on the GAP.
6. The participant compares their goal and action steps against the SMART criteria and checks off the boxes on the GAP, accordingly.
  7. Strengths that the participant has within themselves to accomplish their SMART goal are discussed and the participant lists them on the top of the GAP form.
  8. Incentives, if used are discussed. The participant and the counselor decide on which incentive will be used, at what point the participant will receive the incentive and when.

#### **Purpose of Incentives**

- Reinforces Positive Behavior
- Provides a reward for effort put into working on reaching a larger goal
- Keeps the momentum going

#### **Use of Incentives**

- Type of incentive should be agreed upon ahead of time (by the end of the GAP meeting)
  - Incentive should be provided soon after pre-identified goal has been obtained
  - Link the amount of incentive to the energy/focus/time needed to accomplish the goal
9. At the close of the meeting, schedule the next meeting
    - More frequent meetings/check-ins will be necessary and may occur as often as weekly or every two weeks.
  10. At the next meeting, participant and counselor review GAP, and determine whether goal has been reached. If not, discuss progress, and whether to discontinue, revise, or write new GAP.

#### **Employment Plan (EP)**

- MBS - No reference of the MBS is needed in the EP, however the strengths that the participant has identified (on MBS and/or GAP) should be clearly written on the EP under the “strengths” section.
- GAP – In comment section of EP, counselor writes: “Follow through with ongoing Goal Action Plans.”

#### **Case Note**

The counselor writes a detailed case note “telling the story” of the meeting including explaining each area on the MBS discussed with the participant.

**Workforce One case note type: Counseling and Guidance**

**Case note subject line:**

- Enter the letters MBS in the subject line of the case note if the MBS was completed during the meeting that is being case noted.
- Enter the letters GAP in the subject line of the case note if the GAP was completed during the meeting that is being case noted.
- If both the MBS and the GAP were completed during the meeting that is being case noted, include both acronyms in the subject line.

**Employability Measure (EM) (MFIP Only)**

The EM requirement of being completed once in a lifetime remains true for MFIP. Each section of the EM will still need to be “scored” on a scale of 1-5 and entered in Workforce One.

However, in order to avoid duplication of work, the counselor may write, “see case note” under the reason section of the EM if they are using the MBS to complete the EM. Because the columns of the MBS correspond to the areas of the EM (with the exception of safety), this will already be detailed in the case note. Keep in mind that the safety reasoning will still need to be discussed and case noted even though it is not on the MBS if you are using the MBS to complete the EM.

**Tracking Hours in Measure 10**

- 10ACC – Career Coaching will be used during MBS and GAP meetings - track time accordingly.
- 10BSI – MBS is an assessment – track time accordingly.
- 10CLM – Labor market information is often researched during meetings where MBS and GAP are completed – track time accordingly.

**EVALUATION**

Data will be collected from counselors from the following sources:

- Counselors will be asked to complete an evaluation form in January 2015 for general feedback on the use of the MBS and GAP with their participants.
- Workforce One.
  - *Subject line key word search.* Data will be pulled through a key word search on the case note subject line to quantify the amount of MBS and GAP forms completed within each agency. This count will be included in quarterly reports.
  - *Case note detail.* Case notes will be reviewed for accuracy and thoroughness.

**MATERIALS**

MBS, GAP version one and version two, MBS PowerPoint training presentation, and the MBS Desk Reference are posted on the Provider Web Page under the forms tab.

**NOTE**

No alterations or changes can be made to the MBS and GAP at this time. Please note any comments and suggestions and forward those to your agency’s Planner.

**ACTION** Required Action: MFIP supervisor to discuss with team.

**DATE** Effective Date: July 1, 2015

**WFS CONTACT** Your agency's Planner