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TO: **Income Maintenance Supervisors**  
**Income Maintenance Lead Workers**  
**Income Maintenance Staff**  
**W-2 Agencies**  
**Workforce Development Boards**  
**Job Center Leads and Managers**  
**Training Staff**  
**Child Care Coordinators**

FROM: Janice Peters, Director  
Bureau of Wisconsin Works  
Division of Family Supports

DFS OPERATIONS MEMO					
No:	08-19				
DATE:	05/7/2008				
FS	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	SC	<input type="checkbox"/>
CTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	CC	<input type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
FSET	<input type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CF	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input type="checkbox"/>	RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>
WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	EP	<input type="checkbox"/>	*
PRIORITY: HIGH					

SUBJECT: Emergency Assistance (EA) Policy Changes and Updated/New EA Documents  
for Wisconsin Works (W-2) Agencies

**CROSS REFERENCE:** Operations Memo 07-22

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** June 2, 2008

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Memo is to:

- 1) Provide Emergency Assistance (EA) program policy changes to the Wisconsin Works (W-2) agencies; and
- 2) Share updated and new EA documents with W-2 agencies.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Emergency Assistance (EA) program provides assistance to needy families experiencing a qualifying emergency of: impending homelessness; homelessness; energy crisis; fire; flood; or natural disaster. The program is administered at the local level by Wisconsin Works (W-2) agencies. Eligible families must meet nonfinancial and financial eligibility requirements. An EA payment may be provided to an eligible family no more often than once in a 12-months period. The EA payment for impending homelessness, homelessness, fire, flood or natural disaster is calculated as the lowest amount of the following three amounts, and the EA payment for energy crisis is calculated as the lowest amount of the following second and third amounts:

- a) The maximum payment amount per group member (\$150) multiplied by the number of members in the group; or
- b) The amount requested by the group; or
- c) The financial need resulting from the emergency less available income and resources.

The Division of Family Supports (DFS) convened an Ad Hoc EA Workgroup in 2007 to make recommendations to DFS on a variety of EA issues. The Workgroup included representatives from W-2 agencies statewide and advocacy organizations. The Workgroup developed several recommendations.

Some of the EA Workgroup's recommendations are being implemented at this time in the attached update of the EA policy requirements. The policy changes are outlined in this Memo.

Some other Workgroup recommendations are still under consideration and are not being implemented in this Operations Memo. These recommendations require additional time to address statutory, budget and information technology (IT) systems issues. DFS will continue working on these issues for implementation in the future.

### ***EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (EA) POLICY CHANGES***

The EA policy changes are implemented in the attached updated EA Policy effective June 2, 2008:

- 1) Minimum Time for the Child Residing in the Home: Requires that the child is anticipated to reside in the home during the one-month period after the EA Application (i.e. the following 28, 29, 30 or 31 days depending on the length of the month) to be consistent with EA's goal of stabilizing homes for children. Note: The child may be anticipated to reside in the home part-time such as in joint custody arrangements;
- 2) Coverage for Relocation: In addition to current EA coverage for relocation, allows EA for relocation when:
  - a) There is impending homelessness with a legal eviction notice for the current home; and
  - b) The W-2 agency determines the landlord does not agree to keep the EA group as tenants or the EA group cannot afford the costs of the current home (including costs for rent, utilities, transportation, etc.); and
  - c) The EA group has obtained a different home with lower costs than the current home;
- 3) EA Application: Implements the updated/revised EA Application form and instructions;
- 4) Minimum Contact with the EA Applicant: Requires the W-2 agency to have at least one in-person (i.e. face-to-face) contact with each EA applicant or his/her representative as part of the agencies' EA Application process;
- 5) Optional Best Practice: Case Management to Enhance EA's Coordination with Other Housing/Emergency Resources:
  - a) For all EA applicants, agencies are encouraged to provide appropriate case management to enhance EA's coordination with other housing/emergency resources. For example, distribute a list of local resources, provide information on budgeting classes, and discuss the possible usefulness of W-2 case management services; and
  - b) For repeat EA applicants, agencies are encouraged to provide additional case management/referrals. For example, referral to W-2 when appropriate.

Note: These case management best practices apply to both approved and denied EA Applications. Denied EA Applications often have a crisis of some sort that needs to be resolved.

### **UPDATED AND NEW EA DOCUMENTS**

The following EA documents are implemented effective June 2, 2008:

- 1) EA Policy includes the EA policy changes outlined above and also reorganizes the EA policy to better correspond to a W-2 agency's work flow for processing an EA Application plus incorporates clarifications for many technical assistance questions submitted by W-2 agencies via DFS Regional Offices;
- 2) Updated EA Application form and instructions to clarify the EA Application for applicants. (The agency's instructions are included in the EA Policy.);
- 3) A new EA Information Sheet titled "Applying for Emergency Assistance: What you need to know" to share basic information about EA requirements with interested customers and potential EA applicants; and
- 4) A new Optional Checklist Tool for Worker Verification of EA Application Information to provide a format for workers to record verification/documentation of EA information.

### **NEXT STEPS**

#### TRAINING

Training will be provided on the EA changes. For information, please check the Training Times newsletter or the DWD Learning Center website which is located at the following web address: <https://wss.ccdet.uwosh.edu/stc/dwd>

#### POLICY MANUAL UPDATE

Chapter 17 of the W-2 Policy Manual will be published on June 2, 2008.

#### EA APPLICATION FORM AND INSTRUCTIONS UPDATE

The updated EA Application form and instructions will be available on June 2, 2008.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE RULE IMPLEMENTATION

DFS is seeking an Administrative Rule clarification for the EA policy change regarding the minimum time for the child residing in the home. Additional information about the Administrative Rule clarification will be provided later in the Administrative Rule process.

#### EA WORKGROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION

DFS is continuing to follow-up on the following recommendations from the EA Workgroup for implementation in the future:

- 1) EATS Enhancements: Automate the updated EA Application in EATS.
- 2) EA Overpayment Recovery: Implement a process for W-2 agencies to request DWD recover EA overpayments (for example, when there is fraud by the landlord, joint fraud by the tenant/landlord, or the landlord did not stop the eviction after the landlord received the EA payment). Implementation of EA overpayments recovery is being considered and will require changes in Wisconsin Statutes and information technology (IT) changes to automate the function for EA.

- 3) Maximum EA Payment Amount: Revise the current maximum EA payment amount of \$150 per person to increase the total amount for small groups in order to provide an amount sufficient for one-month of housing costs for these low-income families experiencing housing emergencies. Also decrease the total EA payment amount provided to large groups. These changes are being considered and need to be carefully designed and implemented to avoid unintended effects and ensure funding is available.
- 4) Income Limit: Establish an income limit for EA to target EA to the neediest families and to be consistent with income limits for other Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs.

## **CONTACTS**

For EA Policy and EA Documents Related Questions: BW-2 Regional Office Staff

### Attachments:

- EA Policy;
- Updated EA Application form and instructions;
- New EA Information Sheet; and
- New Optional Checklist Tool for Worker Verification of EA Application Information.

\*Program Categories – FS – FoodShare, MA – Medicaid, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – Food Stamp Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC - Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, \*Other EP – Other Employment Programs.

DWD/DFS/BW-2/JM