



Family Assistance Letter #108B

January 31, 2012

TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services

FROM: Trudie J. Bormann, Deputy Director
Office of Family Assistance

SUBJECT: **TANF Work Participation Rate Corrective Compliance Plan:
Progress Report**

This letter provides an update on the progress being made on the state's Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2012 work participation rates and the items in the corrective compliance plan, referenced in Family Assistance Letter #108.

Work Participation Rates

The state does not yet have the initial work participation rate figures from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the first quarter of the federal fiscal year (October – December 2011). However, state calculations have the state's all family rate at 35.23% for October and 36.66% for November. Thirty three counties are now meeting or exceeding the 50% all family work participation rate. The state's calculation of the two parent rate is 37.39% for October, and 39.27% for November. Four counties are meeting the two parent work participation rate of 90%; six counties are at 80% - 89%.

Corrective Compliance Plan

System/Automation Strategies

Time Card Automation: We are launching a new Time Card Automation system today, January 31, 2012. The Time Card Automation system is a new web-based time and attendance verification system that can be used to verify when work-eligible individuals complete work hours. County work activity sites will be able to build an account, and once approved, have the ability to submit participant attendance information electronically directly to the county departments of job and family services. Once accepted, designated county agency staff will be able to copy and post the submitted hours directly into CRIS-E.

A video conference was held January 30, 2012 to introduce county agencies to the new system. Additional "hands on" training will be held at four Regional Training Centers throughout the state: February 6 (Columbus), February 9, (Akron), February 13

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(Bowling Green), February 27 (Cincinnati), and on February 29 (Columbus). AM and PM sessions will be held at each location.

Correct entry of participant status codes in CRIS-E: A software change is underway to create new edits on the CRIS-E household relationship page so that the questions are answered correctly when there are children under and over the age of six in an Ohio Works First (OWF) assistance group. By imposing these edits, it will ensure that the participation status code is correctly established for OWF assistance groups. The code determines the assignment hours needed for the participant. We have also created new alerts that will be generated to the work activities worker when the code changes from mandatory to exempt; exempt to mandatory or from a code that would change the required hours of individual's assignment. This new software is currently in user acceptance testing and will be promoted by the end of February 2012.

First Month Pay for Performance

A webinar was held on October 17, 2011, to explain how to use the first month pay for performance assignment. Family Assistance Letter #108A was issued to clarify how child care can be made available to families under the first month pay for performance assignment, and a video conference was held on January 4, 2012. Changes to the self sufficiency contract language in the Ohio Revised Code were included as an amendment to House Bill 337, which was signed by the Governor on January 27, 2012. Clarification will be provided about the changes and the OWF rules will be amended.

Additional Program Policy Changes

The state is exploring options to mandate and standardize a work participation demonstration as a willingness to comply before reinstatement. Options have been discussed with the OJFSDA Policy Workgroup and amendments to the Revised Code are being drafted.

County Corrective Compliance Plans

By the first month of FFY 2012, counties that were failing to meet the all family and/or the two parent work participation rates were notified of the requirement to submit a corrective compliance plan. Eighty-six county agencies received notices. All 86 plans have been submitted and are being implemented. In addition to the corrective compliance plan required components of Top Management Commitment, Accountability, the Utilization of Reporting Tools and Standardized Approaches/Practices, the state also required the plans to include an analysis of issues behind the counties not meeting federal work participation rate performance standards in previous years and strategies to be implemented to address these issues. The Office of Family Assistance continues to review the plans and to assign both Work Activity and Program Policy Services staff to the counties as technical assistance advisors for FFY 2012. Some plans are required to be amended. Staff will be monitoring each county's work participation rates and strategies throughout FFY2012.

Federal Reporting Changes

Ohio's TANF sampling plan was amended and a smaller sample will be submitted for the determination of the work participation rate. This will result in fewer errors being returned to the state for correction.

State Hearings Improvements

The Bureau of State Hearings has established a specialized sanction unit, starting January 1, 2012. Nine hearing officers and a supervisor have been assigned to the unit. These hearings are scheduled as soon as possible and decisions are to be issued within five days from the date of the hearing.

Enhanced Training and Technical Assistance

Online job search/job readiness tools: Over the past quarter, the Office of Family Assistance has made a concerted effort to collaborate and coordinate more closely with the Office of Workforce Development. This collaboration has led to an increased utilization of the State Job Matching System, "Ohio Means Jobs." This system makes real time online job search and job readiness resources available at no cost. The system may be utilized in county training rooms, resource rooms, local libraries, etc. It provides local labor market information, career and training options, as well as resume tips and access to thousands of Ohio job postings. We are encouraging county agencies to utilize this tool as our formal online job search/job readiness system. A video conference was held on January 12, 2012, which featured information from the Office of Workforce Development and county agencies that work closely with their One Stop offices to provide effective job search/job readiness activities.

Additional Work Participation Related Reports: Several new reports have been implemented to assist county agencies in monitoring and improving their work participation rates. A Director's Dashboard report is designed to provide county directors with a high level snapshot of the county department's ADCR (excludes two parent families) work participation performance. It includes data on Alternative Work assignments, sanctions, and unassigned assistance groups. This report allows county directors to quickly identify red flag issues with their county work participation efforts.

The new Work Participation Summary Report provides a high level look at each county's overall work participation rates. It also allows agency directors and county commissioners to gauge and compare their monthly work participation to the other counties on a monthly basis.

A new report, the Sampling Report (GWP559RA), was developed to display OWF assistance groups included in the monthly sample to be sent to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the work participation rate determination. This report provides notice to county agencies to obtain and enter verified attendance hours for these specific OWF assistance groups prior to submission of the data to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Work Activity Status Report (GWP007RA) was developed based on county input and is a variant of the existing GWP103RA report. The new report lists the same data: assigned and verified hours for work eligible individuals as well as unsupervised homework and pregnancy due date fields; but it is now available daily instead of every two weeks. This allows county departments to have close to real time data for assigned and verified hours.

In January 2012, two new reapplication reports were made available via the Business Intelligence Channel (BIC) to provide county staff with information for preparing and planning for case reapplications coming due that will allow county workers to be more proactive in contacting clients early to schedule reapplication appointments. The state has automated the mailing label creation process so counties can mail the JFS 7204 reapplication form to individuals whose reapplications are coming due. In addition, the reports include information that identifies those OWF assistance groups subject to reapplication who have a work eligible individual in the assistance group. This will assist the counties to more easily identify when assessments and/or assignments are needed during the reapplication process.

Additionally, presentations have been made by Office of Family Assistance staff at statewide and regional information sessions and trainings:

Canton District Director's Workforce Conference at Salt Fork – November 15, 2011. Agenda topics included: First Month Pay for Performance, Role of the Eligibility Worker on Work Participation Rates, Understanding Work Activity Reports, Prorating Hours of Participation, Developing Work Sites and County Best Practices.

Southwest Workforce Conference – December 6, 2011. Agenda topics included: First Month Pay for Performance, Role of the Eligibility Worker on Work Participation Rates, Understanding Work Activity Reports, Prorating Hours of Participation, Developing Work Sites and County Best Practices.

Quarterly County Work Activity Roundtable – January 19, 2012. The agenda included a presentation regarding Connect Ohio, a program focused on providing basic computer training to Ohioans; county corrective compliance plans; and three new work activity reports that assist counties with monitoring work participation. Also, Program Policy Services staff reiterated the importance of close coordination between eligibility and work activities and the interconnection of work participation through all areas of an agency.

Identifying Work Eligible Individuals –Webinars held January 24 and 26, 2012.

Additional sessions will occur in the first half of 2012 that cover Supportive Services for Work Activities & Work Allowances and AEIEI Entry Impact on the Budget & Work Participation. Additional county work activity roundtable meetings are also scheduled

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for April 19, July 19 and October 18, 2012. Work participation rates and the corrective compliance plans will be the primary topics of discussion.

Statewide Communication

ODJFS launched a media campaign to inform the public about the requirements associated with the TANF program. A new poster has been developed and distributed to all 88 counties. Public service announcements began in January 2012.

Separate State Program

On December 9, 2011, the state issued Action Change Transmittal No. 253, announcing the start of the Ohio Works Now program in January 2012. Ohio Works Now provides a small supplemental TANF-funded food assistance benefit to employed TANF-eligible needy families with children in addition to the food assistance benefits the families already receive. The families must have a work-eligible individual with a minor child, and be employed sufficient hours to meet the TANF work participation requirement for that family. The program successfully launched on January 25, 2012 and is slated to continue for approximately six months.

Efforts to meet the requirements of the corrective compliance plan are a top priority for ODJFS and the county departments of job and family services. It is imperative that Ohio meet its all-family and two-parent work participation rate for FFY 2012 to avoid the actual financial penalty that the state will otherwise face.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact:

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