



Family Assistance Letter #108C

May 8, 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 #2**

This letter provides the second 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 initial work participation rate figures for Ohio from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the first quarter of the federal fiscal year (October – December 2011) are 32.9% for the all family rate and 36.6% for the two parent rate. These rates are based on a sample of our TANF caseload.

For February, the most recent month available, state data shows the all family rate at 42.55% and the two parent rate at 44.94%. Fifty nine counties are now meeting or exceeding the 50% all family work participation rate. Eight counties are meeting the two parent work participation rate of 90%; 10 counties are at 80% - 89%.

Corrective Compliance Plan Update:

System/Automation Strategies

Time Card Automation: The Time Card Automation system was launched on January 31, 2012, and is a new web-based time and attendance verification system that can be used to verify when work-eligible individuals complete work hours. After building an account, county work activity sites can submit their verified and failed hours to the county agency to be reviewed and posted in the CRIS-E system. Initial training was provided by video conference with 10 regional trainings that occurred in February. Currently 10 counties are using the system. There were submissions for 209 individuals in March. The Office of Family Assistance will conduct a presentation about the Time Card Automation system at the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Conference in May which will feature counties that are using the system. Additional training is being scheduled for late summer 2012.

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Correct entry of participant status codes in CRIS-E: Software changes were promoted on February 19, 2012 to ensure that CRIS-E household relationship questions are answered correctly. By imposing these edits, it will ensure the participation status code is correctly established for Ohio Works First (OWF) assistance groups. These codes determine 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 an individual's assignment.

Self-sufficiency Contract Changes

House Bill 337 of the 129th General Assembly was signed by the Governor on January 27, 2012, and was effective immediately. This bill included a provision that eliminates the requirement to make an Ohio Works First eligibility determination regardless of whether the self-sufficiency contract is signed. On February 6, 2012, an Action Change Transmittal was issued to explain the new policy. On May 7, 2012 the Ohio Administrative Code rule changes formalizing the policy change took effect.

Additional Program Policy Changes

Draft legislation is pending to impose a compliance activity on sanctioned individuals before restoration of OWF benefits.

County Corrective Compliance Plans

By the first month of FFY 2012, counties that were failing to meet the all family and/or two parent work participation rates were notified of the requirement to submit a corrective compliance plan. Eighty-six county agencies received notices. All of the required 86 plans have been approved and on-site monitoring visits have begun. Site visits have occurred for 20 counties and another 10 have been scheduled through May 2012. During these visits, current rates and strategies, issues identified as hindering county efforts, work participation data and activity reports, and recommendations for moving forward are reviewed.

Enhanced Training and Technical Assistance

Online job search/job readiness tools: The Office of Family Assistance continues to collaborate closely with the Office of Workforce Development with an increased focus on promoting the state job matching system, OhioMeansJobs. Additional links have been added to the Office of Family Assistance website providing direct connection to OhioMeansJobs and other job readiness resources. An additional OWF Work Activity Resources splash page is under development and should be completed soon. The splash page will include numerous work participation related links which will provide information on job search/job readiness activities, job skills training, the Learning Express Library (a free resource) online assessments, labor market information and job matching information.

Additional Work Participation Related Reports: A list of currently available reports, with short explanations, is attached to this letter. Another report to track lack of participation over time is currently in development.

Training/Technical Assistance sessions: Presentations have been made at statewide and regional information sessions and trainings:

Northwest Director's Conference – March 13, 2012. Agenda topics included Pay for Performance – Applicant Assignment, The Eligibility Worker's Role in Work Participation, Using Reports to Monitor and Improve Work Participation, Developing Community-Based Worksites, Developing and Managing JFS On-site Work Assignments and Time Card Automation Q&A.

Quarterly County Work Activity Roundtable – April 19, 2012. The agenda included a review of the Time Card Automation Q&A, an overview of the job search/job readiness policies, job skills training options, common work participation reports, online education, an overview of the new policy aligning self-sufficiency contracts with eligibility determinations, and the importance of close collaboration between eligibility and work activity units at the county level.

Work Participation Related Reports Training – April 20, 2012. This training covered the basics of accessing and navigating in the Business Intelligence Channel (BIC) system and provided an overview of the work participation related reports.

The Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association Conference that takes place on May 24 and 25 will feature several work participation sessions, including:

- Time Card Automation System
- Let's Make a Date to Improve Rates
- Sweating Small Stuff... Work Participation Rates
- Increasing Odds at Craps Table (work participation)
- Work Participation – What Does it Have to Do With Me?
- Work Activity Reports

Statewide Communication

ODJFS continues the media campaign to inform the public about the requirements associated with the TANF program and the state's efforts to meet the work participation rate. Purchased service announcements began airing on television and radio in January 2012 and continue to run. Director Colbert has appeared on news programs to discuss the efforts made by the state and the importance of meeting the TANF requirements.

Separate State Program

The Ohio Works Now program provides a supplemental food assistance benefit to working food assistance families. Using state maintenance of effort dollars to fund the

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program, the state counts these families in the work participation rates. The program launched January 25, 2012 and continues to run through June 2012. Quarterly data will be shared once confirmed by U.S. Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Other Initiatives

While not part of the state's corrective compliance plan, two other initiatives have been undertaken to improve work participation. The Office of Family Assistance will be releasing a Request for Proposals very soon for vendors who can assist with reviewing policies and practices to make specific recommendations to improve work participation rates. Also, four grants are being provided to non-profit agencies in three metropolitan areas to assist in providing work activity sites for two parent families.

Together we have made significant progress in improving the work participation rate. Meeting the requirements of the corrective compliance plan continues to be a top priority for ODJFS and the county departments of job and family services. While striving to meet these rates, we must continue to keep the ultimate goal of the program at the forefront - to provide assistance to children and families so they can move toward self-sufficiency, including providing assistance with overcoming barriers to employment.

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

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