

CHANGE NOTICE FOR WORK FIRST MANUAL

Date: November 12, 2004

MANUAL: Work First

CHANGE NO: 6-2004

TO: County Directors of Social Services

EFFECTIVE: January 1, 2005, make the following changes to the Work First Manual.

I. BACKGROUND

Manual Section 120

Work First participants may be sanctioned for a range of reasons related to non-compliance with program requirements.

The four categories of non-compliance are:

1. Failure to cooperate with Child Support Enforcement (IV-D).
2. Non-compliance with the provisions of the Mutual Responsibility Agreement (MRA).
3. Failure to participate in required Substance Abuse Treatment.
4. Intentional Program Violation (IPV).

Manual Section 119

With a few exceptions, the Work First Program is the same for two-parent families as for other families who receive Work First cash assistance. Two-parent families are subject to the same eligibility rules, are subject to work requirements and time limits, must sign a Mutual Responsibility Agreement, and so on. Continue to follow all procedures for quarterly reporting, projecting income, and sending adequate and timely notices.

The method for issuing Work First payments to two-parent families, however, is different than for other families. Upon applying for and receiving either Work First cash assistance or Benefit Diversion for three months in a twelve-month period, an able-bodied two-parent family is subject to Pay-After-Performance. This means that instead of receiving a Work First check at the beginning of the month, two-parent families do not receive a check until they have completed the required hours of work and/or work-related activities. This is Pay-After-Performance.

To meet federal participation rate requirements, 90% of all able-bodied two-parent families must participate in countable work activities for at least 35 hours per week (55 hours if receiving federally-funded child care). Pay-After-Performance for two-parent families increases the opportunity to meet the required federal rate.

Manual Section 104B

Substance abuse and mental health issues are significant barriers to employment for a number of adult Work First participants. To assist these families in becoming employed and maintaining employment, all Work First adult applicants/recipients will be screened for possible substance abuse, and they may be voluntarily screened for mental health. Non-custodial parents and families with incomes at or below 200% of poverty may also volunteer to be screened for mental health, or substance abuse, if your county has chosen to serve these populations.

If the screening indicates the adult is at risk for substance abuse, he/she will be referred to a Qualified Substance Abuse Professional (QSAP). The QSAP will conduct a comprehensive substance abuse assessment. If treatment is appropriate, the QSAP will facilitate the arrangements for the treatment. Applicants/recipients who do not comply with their treatment plan are not eligible for Work First cash assistance.

Manual Section 116

Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) is a temporary, short-term program designed to reduce dependency on public assistance. While participating in WFFA, families should begin to develop their own income sources, with the assistance of the county worker. One of the primary income sources for *Work First* families is child support. The Child Support Unit assists families in obtaining money and health insurance from a parent or spouse who is absent from the home.

Manual Section 103 Personal responsibility is the cornerstone of *Work First* and the key to many families being able to leave welfare and become self-sufficient. *Work First* requires caretakers to be responsible for themselves and the well-being of their children. Every *Work First* family must develop a Mutual Responsibility Agreement (MRA) which describes the caretaker's and the worker's responsibilities.

II. SPECIFIC CHANGES

These changes are being implemented to conform to changes contained in the TANF

State Plan approved by the General Assembly (P.L. 104-193) that was effective October

1, 2003. The changes are going forward now because necessary automation changes are now available and will be ready for use effective January 1, 2005.

Manual Section 120

Per changes in the TANF State Plan, cases that are under sanction will not receive a Work First check for one month or until compliance, whichever is later. This includes sanctions for MRA and IV-D. These cases (with the exception of Substance Abuse Sanctions) must be placed in a payment type "S" status. Payment type "S" will be defined as a case that is in a sanction. If an individual fails to comply with his/her Substance Abuse Treatment and/or Plan, that individual will be ineligible for cash assistance but remains in the Work First Family Assistance case. The family's need standard will be reduced by one for each individual who fails to comply with Substance Abuse Treatment and/or Plan. The payment will be recalculated minus the needs of the individual. Substance Abuse Sanctions will be entered on the budget as an MRA Sanction and will be placed in payment type "1" status because they will still be eligible to receive a reduced payment.

Manual Section 119

Per changes to the TANF State Plan Pay-After-Performance as a sanction will be discontinued. Pay-After-Performance for two-parent families will remain.

Manual Section 104B

Instructions are given on how to key a budget and enter a Substance Abuse sanction with the correct pay type. Correction have been made to the Area Mental Health references, they are now called Local Management Entities.

Manual Section 116

Per changes in the TANF State Plan, cases that are under child support sanction will not receive a Work First check for one month or until compliance, whichever is later. The children remain eligible for Medicaid. The adult is ineligible for Medicaid unless she is pregnant, then evaluate for MPW.

Manual Section 103

Per changes in the TANF State Plan, cases that are under MRA sanction will not receive a Work First check for one month or until compliance, whichever is later. The family will continue to receive Medicaid.

III. CONVERSION

On the night of December 29, 2004 EIS will change the pay type from “2” to “S” on all Work First cases if at least two individuals have family status code “P”, and an active sanction. No change will be made to active Work First cases with pay type “2”, if at least two individuals have family status code “P”, and no active sanction.

Counties must continue to apply current sanction policy on all Work First approvals, changes, and pending applications approved by 12/31/04. The new sanction policy must be applied effective January 1, 2005.

IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE WORK FIRST MANUAL

Remove		Insert	
Section	Pages	Section	Pages
120	1-15	120	1-10
119	1-9	119	1-9
104B	1-7	104B	1-7
103	1-11	103	1-12
116	1-7	116	1-7
116F	116F	116F	116F

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services. If you have any questions, please contact your Work First Representative.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Lamm, Program Administrator

Family Support and Child Welfare Section

JAL:ds

Attachment

[Wf120.pdf](#)

[Wf119.pdf](#)

[Wf104B.pdf](#)

[Wf103.pdf](#)

[Wf116.pdf](#)

[Wf116F.pdf](#)