

ONE-STOP AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

# Food Stamp Employment and Training

## Transition Plan

---

# Introduction

The Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) has been diligently working to automate case management functions that are both paper-driven and time consuming so regional Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) staff can spend more time assisting program participants directly.

In January of 2008, AWI began mailing letters directly to FSET program participants referred to the program by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The initial outreach to program participants had a dramatic impact on the day-to-day activities of front-line staff. Over a month later, AWI began mailing notices to participants who did not respond to the initial outreach letter. The automated process evolved by completing the case management functions of these processes. This includes:

- Confirming Reopen, New Case and Transfer To (with Reopened by FLORIDA on the *Case History* screen) To-Dos;
- Entering a Notification Activity (code 599) as a timing mechanism so program staff could follow the automated process and intervene if the participant complied with the instructions on the initial outreach letter;
- Entering the failure to comply on the *Alternative Plan* screen. Staff could also intervene and terminate the FSET Conciliation on the *Alternative Plan* screen if the program participant complied with program requirements thereby taking over the case.

A month later, AWI began to enter sanction requests on the cases when program participants did not respond to the Notice of Failure letter mailed by the automated process. In February of 2009, the automated process began to close cases. Within two days, over 3,000 FSET cases were closed. By March 3, 2009, over 6,000 cases will be closed by the automated process.

To assist program managers and quality assurance staff, AWI created an Exception Search. This provides the Regional Workforce Boards (RWBs) and AWI staff the ability to find problems that have occurred in the automated process. For example, if a letter is not mailed to a program participant, the results of the Exception Search will give staff the information needed so they can resolve the problem and have the case picked up in the automated process the next business day.

Over the past year, AWI has been developing screens in the One-Stop Service Tracking (OSST) system so the RWBs have the ability to implement strategies that include on-line notification of the participant's rights and responsibilities, on-line assessment, and on-line activity selection.

Prior to March 2, 2009, Regional staff had to conduct the orientation sessions where program participants learned about the program and signed the Opportunities and Obligations Acknowledgement Form. The signature on this form demonstrated that program participant's understood their rights and responsibilities. Program staff had to manually enter participant's acknowledgment by creating an *Orientation* activity in the OSST system.

Additionally,

- Staff had to assess program participants using a paper or electronic form. Program staff had to manually enter an *Assessment* activity in the OSST system. Depending on Local Operating Procedures (LOP), program staff may have entered the results of the assessment on the *Plan Development* screen or in a case note.

- If the program participant met a potential exemption who may have possibly been referred to the program in error, the program staff had to advise the program participant about his/her next steps to become “exempt” or excused from having to participate.
- Program staff also had to manually enter the participant eligibility for transportation assistance, and would request a Food Stamp Reimbursement (FSR) to be posted to the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card.

As of March 2, 2009, RWBs may utilize the OSST system to engage FSET program participants. The AWI has facilitated a number of Internet-based meetings and training sessions to discuss strategies for delivering FSET program services. The RWBs can now develop and implement strategies where program participants:

- Acknowledge their rights and responsibilities;
- Complete a basic assessment or answer a series of questions;
- Select an activity (if appropriate); and
- Learn about his or her next steps

through the automated process. The AWI has been diligently engaging the RWBs to maximize the developments in the system to serve the needs of both the regions and the program participants. To help the regions employ an automated engagement strategy, AWI has also updated the OSST Security Maintenance screens so the RWBs can enter very specific instructions to program participants in the Notice of Mandatory Participation mailed from Tallahassee, Florida.

Regardless of the engagement strategy selected by the RWB (client screens or staff driven initial engagement), the system will continue to:

- Confirm Reopen, New Case and Transfer To (with Reopened by FLORIDA generated on the Case History screen) To-Dos;
- Mail the Notice of Mandatory Participation with a revised second page. The revised language provides basic information about the program and serves as a written orientation notice;
- Enter the Notification Activity (code 599) on the *Skill Development* screen with an *Actual Start Date* and *Anticipated End Date* in OSST. This activity serves as a timing mechanism;
- Initiate the FSET conciliation process if the participant does not respond to the Notification of Mandatory Participation letter before the *Anticipated End Date* of the Notification Activity (code 599) expires;
- End the Notification Activity (code 599) by staff at the local level when the conciliation process is initiated;
- Mail the Notice of Failure to the program participant from Tallahassee, Florida;
- Enter a sanction request on the *Alternative Plan* screen if the program participant does not respond to the Notice of Failure timely (and staff do not resolve the conciliation on the *Alternative Plan* screen);
- Close the case if a Closure To-Do is posted on the case via the OSST interface with DCF’s data entry system, Florida On-Line Recipient Integrated Data Access (FLORIDA).

## ***What is the purpose of the transition plan?***

Between March 4, 2009 and March 25, 2009, the process of mailing the Notice of Mandatory Participation will be initialized across the State of Florida (with the exception of Labor Surplus Areas) to food stamp recipients who are determined by DCF to meet the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) criteria. **The RWBs will provide AWI with the dates to begin mailing notices to food stamp recipients in every zip code associated with each region.** The process of mailing the notices will be “rolled out” by zip code. The process is called “zip code mapping.” This process is explained under the section titled “Provide the updated zip code mapping to AWI in the provided Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format.”

The letters will be initialized based on the RWBs strategy for engaging FSET program participants.

- Will the participants be engaged using the client screens?
- Will the participants be engaged directly by program staff (offering a local orientation program)?

The RWBs will notify AWI of the strategy that will be implemented to engage FSET program participants by submitting a transition plan. This brief plan will provide AWI with the information required to implement the RWBs strategy through the OSST system. Below is an outline/checklist for the RWBs to utilize when submitting the zip code mapping and engagement strategies to AWI. The addendums to this document are step-by-step guides designed to assist both program managers and program staff in the development and implementation of the FSET service strategies.

If the engagement of FSET program participants was identified in the two-year plan and is not changing, please state that the processes were described in the two-year plan and are not changing. This statement is not valid if the client screens are being used as an implementation strategy.

### **I. Outline the strategy for engaging FSET program participants within the first 30 days of referral from the DCF.**

- a. Indicate how participants will acknowledge they have been informed of their rights and responsibilities. **Note:** *if the process outlined in the two-year plan is not changing and participants are notified of their rights and responsibilities by staff as described in the plan, state that the process is described in the two-year plan.*
  1. Will the participants use the client screens?
  2. Will participants utilize a local tool? If yes, please identify the tool being used.
- b. Indicate how participants will be assessed. **Note:** *if the assessments are administered locally by staff and the process is outlined in the two-year plan, state that the process is described in the two-year plan.*
  1. Will the participants be required to use the client screens?
  2. Will participants be assessed by program [staff](#)? If participants will be assessed by program staff,
    - Identify the tool used by program staff; and
    - Describe how the assessment is administered.

- c. Describe how participants will be directed to start an activity or document their hours if they are already employed, in school or volunteering in the community at a not-for-profit agency. **Note:** *if program staff assist participants with selecting an appropriate activity and the engagement process is described in the two-year plan, state that the process is described in the two-year plan.*
1. Will the participant receive his/her instructions from the OSST system after the assessment is completed through the automated client screens?
  2. Will the participant receive his/her initial instructions from program staff directly (not through the automated client screens)? If yes, describe how participants are engaged in the program activities:
    - Up-Front Job Search (only valid for the first 30 days after referral from the DCF and the participant must be engaged in an activity by the 31<sup>st</sup> day after referral)
    - Work Experience (combined with any activity)
    - Education and Training (combined with any activity)
    - Job Search and Job Training (required to be combined with an activity)
- d. Describe any additional responsibilities of staff during the initial engagement process:
1. If the RWB will not be utilizing the client screens, regional staff are responsible for entering data in the OSST system. A step-by-step guide associated with case management functions based on the automation of the initial outreach letter (not the client screens) will be sent to the RWBs within the coming week.
  2. If the RWB will be utilizing the client screens, please outline the following requirements. Please note: a step-by-step guide associated with case management functions based on the full automation process (client screens) will be sent to the RWBs within the coming week.
    - Will staff be assisting program participant who need assistance using OSST?
      - a. For example, will staff be assisting program participants who cannot read or write (or have other hidden disabilities)?
      - b. Will the RWB implement a hybrid strategy, offering instructor led sessions for program participants to complete the client screens?
    - Program participants who answer the assessment questions and complete the Participation screen requirements will receive a deadline to turn in documents.
      - a. Who will assist program participants who call and ask for help finding a place to go to school or complete volunteer hours?
      - b. Who will be responsible for collecting the documents, ending the activity serving as a timing mechanism and reaching out to participants to continue complying?

- c. Who will enter the appropriate countable activity and enter hours of participation (that include the two hour credit for orientation/assessment completed on-line)?

**II. Provide the updated zip code mapping to AWI in the provided Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format.**

- a. **Background:** Cases are built or reopened in OSST based on data AWI receives from DCF. The cases are placed in a unit for regional staff to manage based on the participant's zip code. Each zip code is associated with a county and a region.
- b. **Roll-out Plan:** Instead of mailing letters out to all food stamp recipients coded as ABAWD across Florida on March 3, 2009, AWI will initiate the mailing process based on "roll out dates" provided by RWBs. The AWI will begin to mail out letters based on zip codes. This will allow regions to stagger the number of letters initiated between March 3 and March 24, 2009.
  1. Each RWB received a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet (sent directly to the Executive Director). On the Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet is the current mapping AWI uses to place cases in a FSET and Welfare Transition (WT) unit. The RWB must review the spreadsheet and update it accordingly. The RWB must provide the date participants in each zip code should start being mailed letters (the date the zip code will be rolled out). **A step-by-step instruction on updating the zip code mapping Microsoft Excel spreadsheet has been provided: see the addendum titled *Zip Code Mapping Step-by-Step Instructions*.**
  2. Return the updated Excel Spreadsheet to AWI.
    - **Every zip code must have a roll-out date assigned by the RWB on the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.** Incomplete sheets will be returned to the RWB.
    - The AWI needs 48 hours advanced notice before rolling out a zip code. For example: if the RWB plans on mailing out letters to participants in one or more zip codes on the first possible date, March 4, 2009, the Excel Spreadsheet must be sent to AWI in the correct format no later than close of business February 27, 2009.
  3. The RWB must update the *Unit Details* associated with each FSET unit that will be active. This includes the instructions that will be included in the Notice of Mandatory Participation sent to program participants.
    - **The process to update the *Unit Details* is outlined in the addendum titled *Zip Code Mapping Step-by-Step Instructions*.**
    - What instructions are mailed on the Notice of Mandatory Participation? The instructions are based on the RWBs strategy to engage program participants.
      - a. If the RWB is engaging program participants directly (not using client screens in OSST), the *Primary Instructions* field on the Security Maintenance screen must be updated for each FSET unit.
      - b. **If the RWB is using the client screens, the RWB can use the default instructions by leaving the *Primary Instructions* field blank.** The Notice of Mandatory Participation will include instructions

for logging onto the OSST system. If the RWB wants to include specific times, dates and locations for using computers associated with the program, the region can enter those instructions in the *Supplemental Instructions* field.

- The AWI has provided a step-by-step guide to updating the *Primary Instructions* and the *Supplemental Instructions* field on the Security Maintenance screen for each active FSET unit in the region. **See the addendum titled *Zip Code Mapping Step-by-Step Instructions*.**
  - The zip code will not be rolled out (Notice of Mandatory Participation mailed) until the *Unit Details* are updated on the Security Maintenance screens.
- c. Each unit must have an *Alert Receiver* assigned to it. This is done in the *Security Maintenance* system. Details are provided in the addendum titled ***Zip Code Mapping Step-by-Step Instructions***.
- d. Program staff must be given authority to update information in the FSET units. If the staff member will be working in a particular unit most of the time, the unit should be established as the *Primary Unit*. **See the addendum titled *Zip Code Mapping Step-by-Step Instructions*.**

An equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.