

Chapter HSS 209

COMMUNITY WORK EXPERIENCE FOR AFDC RECIPIENTS

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HSS 209.01 Introduction. (1) **AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE.** This chapter is adopted under the authority of s. 49.50 (7m), Stats., to provide rules for county and tribal administration of community work experience programs which place AFDC recipients in uncompensated community jobs that serve a useful public purpose and provide recipients with job experience.

(2) **APPLICABILITY.** This chapter applies to all counties and tribal governing bodies that elect to establish a community work experience program, to any community agency operating a community work experience program and to all AFDC recipients required to register for and participate in community work experience.

(3) **DEFINITIONS.** In this chapter:

(a) "AFDC" means aid to families with dependent children, a public assistance program under title IV-A of the Social Security Act of 1935, as amended, and ss. 49.19 to 49.41, Stats., and ch. HSS 201.

(b) "AFDC recipient" means a person who is found eligible for and receives AFDC.

(c) "AFDC regular case" means a caretaker who is financially eligible for AFDC and whose child or children are deprived of parental support or care by reason of the death of a parent or continued absence of a parent from the home.

(d) "AFDC unemployed parent case" means an AFDC group where the child or children are deprived of parental support because the principal wage earner in the group is unemployed.

(e) "Agency" means a county department of social services, a county public welfare or human services department, or an American Indian organization which administers income maintenance programs.

(f) "American Indian organization" means the agency designated by the tribal governing body under s. 46.70, Stats., to administer services under s. 46.22 (4) (n), Stats.

(g) "Caretaker relative" means a qualified relative as specified in s. HSS 201.17 (1) who has a child under his or her care as specified in s. HSS 201.17 (2).

(h) "Community agency" means any public or non-profit organization under contract with an agency to operate a community work experience program.

(i) "Community work experience program" or "CWEP" means a program established by a county agency under s. 46.22 (4) (n), Stats., for the purpose of making AFDC recipients more employable through either

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work experience, which involves placement of AFDC recipients in un-compensated community jobs that serve a useful public purpose, or a combination of this type of work experience and training, including vocational training.

(j) "Department" means the Wisconsin department of health and social services.

(k) "FFP" means federal financial participation, that is, federal reimbursement for the allowable administrative costs of the community work experience program.

(l) "Medical assistance," also called "medicaid," means the assistance program under title XIX of the Social Security Act of 1935, as amended, and ss. 49.43 to 49.49, Stats.

(m) "Participant" means any AFDC recipient who is required or volunteers to take part in a community work experience program.

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HSS 209.02 Agency responsibilities. (1) **CONDITIONS FOR RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS.** In order to receive FFP available for its CWEP, a county or tribal governing body shall modify its contract with the department under s. 46.032, Stats., and shall make available all records necessary for the department's exercise of its supervisory functions under s. 46.206, Stats.

(2) **OPERATING RESPONSIBILITIES.** Each agency or community agency operating a CWEP program shall:

(a) Pay all work-related expenses of participants that are determined by the county to be necessary and directly related to participation, including expenses for transportation, child care, tools and special clothing not provided by the agency or community agency. No participant may be required to pay any work-related expenses from his or her own funds. Payment shall be made in accordance with the following provisions:

1. Payment for transportation costs, including the cost of transportation to and from the child care provider, shall be in the amounts equal to the cost of transportation by the most appropriate means as determined by the department or county;

2. Payment for child care, including child care during the time a participant travels to and from a CWEP assignment, shall be in the amounts determined by the department to be reasonable, necessary and cost-effective but not in excess of \$120 a month for each child if the recipient is participating less than 30 hours a week nor more than \$160 a month if the recipient is participating 30 hours or more a week;

3. Work-related expenses determined by the county to be necessary and directly related to participation shall be paid in advance to the participant, except that child care providers shall be reimbursed directly. Only expenses, other than for transportation and day care, that add up to \$10 a month for each participant may be counted for FFP purposes; and

4. Medical expenses for injuries or illnesses which directly result from participation in a CWEP job shall be paid only if these expenses are not otherwise reimbursed by workers' compensation or medical assistance;

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(b) Give participants an allowance payable in advance for expenses under par. (a), except for child care;

(c) Design the program to improve the employability of participants through actual work experience or work experience and training to enable the participants to move into regular employment, as follows:

1. Conduct an employability assessment and develop an employability plan for training, education and work experience based on prior training, proficiency, experience and skills of the participant; and

2. Assign participants to CWEP projects by taking into consideration, to the extent possible, the prior training, proficiency, experience and skills of each participant;

(d) Ensure that participants are not assigned to projects which require traveling an unreasonable distance from their homes or remaining away from their homes overnight without their consent. In this paragraph "unreasonable distance" means more than one hour travel time one way between the participant's home and the work or activity site, including time to take children to child care, using available transportation;

(e) Ensure that any job injuries incurred by CWEP participants are attended to in the same manner as regular employe injuries;

(f) Consider CWEP participants as employes of the agency or community agency only for purposes of workers' compensation benefits;

(g) Supervise or arrange for the supervision of participants;

(h) Establish ongoing work schedules and clearly explain them to the CWEP participants;

(i) Specify in writing for the participant the work site rules and expectations which shall be the same as the general work rules applicable to other employes at the work site or if there are no other employes at the work site, the employes of the agency. The work rules shall include job duties, performance expectations, work days and hours and activities prohibited on the work site;

(j) Specify in writing for the participant the CWEP rules of participation, the location of the work site, the required number of hours to be worked each month and the rights and responsibilities of CWEP participants;

(k) Ensure that participants are not required to use their AFDC benefits, other income or other financial resources to pay for any costs associated with participation in CWEP;

(l) Require that CWEP jobs meet any state and local standards for health and safety;

(m) Ensure that persons currently employed are not displaced by CWEP participants and that established unfilled positions that are vacant are not filled by CWEP participants;

(n) Ensure that CWEP jobs are not used to fill vacancies created due to a strike, lockout or other bonafide labor dispute, and are not used in violation of any existing labor agreement between employes and employers;

(o) Ensure that CWEP jobs are not used for political, electoral or partisan activities;

(p) Give priority to placing AFDC recipients in regular jobs over CWEP participation;

(q) Give first priority for placement in CWEP jobs to mandatory participants who volunteer;

(r) Ensure that supervisory evaluations of a participant's work are made during and at the end of the work experience and are made available to the participant;

(s) Ensure that a participant who has regular, paid employment is not given a CWEP assignment that interferes with his or her ability to fulfill the paid employment commitments; and

(t) Ensure that no person is required to participate in CWEP for more than 16 weeks in a 12-month period.

(3) PROGRAM EMPLOYE WORK SCHEDULES. An agency or community agency may schedule a CWEP participant for work only under the following conditions:

(a) Child care services, when determined to be reasonable, necessary, and cost-effective, are available and all costs are reimbursed by CWEP. When child care costs are greater than the amounts allowed under sub. (2) (a) 2, the agency shall:

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- 1. Exempt the individual from participation;
- 2. Reduce the number of hours to be worked by the participant in order to reduce the participant's day care costs; or
- 3. Permit participation at the maximum number of hours but supplement the funds available to pay for day care.

(b) The participant's total combined hours in both CWEP training and work does not exceed 8 hours a day and 32 hours a week, to allow 8 hours a week for the participant to seek regular employment;

(c) The employee's travel time to and from training, work, or a child care provider, and meal times for which regular employees are not paid, are not included as hours of CWEP participation; and

(d) The employe is not required to work on legal holidays on which the majority of regular employes at the CWEP work site do not work.

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HSS 209.03 Registration and participation. (1) **REGISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY WORK EXPERIENCE.** All AFDC recipients shall register for community work experience as a condition of AFDC eligibility in counties that elect to establish a CWEP, unless a recipient is exempt. A recipient is exempt if:

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(a) The recipient is the sole caretaker relative in the home and is caring for a child under 6 years of age who is living in the relative's home unless the child is at least 3 years of age but less than 6 years of age and day care licensed under s. 48.65, Stats., is available for the child;

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(b) The recipient is 65 years of age or older;

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(c) The recipient is the spouse of the principal wage earner;

(d) The recipient is currently employed for at least 80 hours a month and his or her hourly earning are at least equal to the legally established minimum wage for the type of job held, except that when the job held does not have an established minimum wage a recipient currently working at least 80 hours a month shall be exempted from CWEP regardless of wage level;

(e) The recipient is less than 16 years of age;

(f) The recipient is 16 or 17 years of age, is enrolled full time in school, has not graduated and has not been legally excused from school attendance by the school board except when he or she has been excused for no more than 30 days due to a physical or mental condition;

(g) The recipient is an 18-year-old student who is enrolled in and regularly attending high school, vocational or technical school with the expectation of graduating, and can reasonably be expected to complete the program before reaching age 19;

(h) The recipient has incurred an illness or injury which temporarily prevents employment or entry into training;

(i) The recipient is incapacitated with a medically confirmed physical or mental impairment which by itself or in conjunction with age prevents the individual from engaging in employment or training, and;

1. The impairment is expected to exist for a continuous period of at least 3 months; or

2. The person receives social security or supplemental security income (SSI) payments because of disability or blindness;

(j) The recipient lives so far from the CWEP work site that he or she is unable to travel to the site within one hour, excluding time required to take children to and from child care, through use of available transportation;

(k) The recipient is needed at home on a substantially continuous basis to care for another family member whose medical condition as determined by a physician or psychologist does not permit self-care and for whose care no other appropriate member of the household is available;

(1) The recipient is an active participant in the Wisconsin employment opportunities program under ch. HSS 208. In this paragraph, "active participant" means a Wisconsin employment opportunities program registrant assigned to participate in specific activities for 3 or more days a week;

(m) The recipient is enrolled in an educational or training program which, when it is completed, is expected to lead to employment. In this paragraph, "enrolled" means being accepted in writing into an educational or training program and regularly attending that program; or

(n) The recipient is at least 6 months pregnant.

(2) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION. (a) An AFDC recipient who is exempt from CWEP registration may volunteer to be a participant in CWEP.

(b) The agency shall inform every recipient who volunteers to participate in CWEP at the time she or he volunteers, of the conditions of participation, including any sanction that may result from failure to comply with a CWEP assignment. The agency shall also inform the recipient at that time that the voluntary participant may withdraw from participation in CWEP without any penalty if the recipient does so in writing before the beginning date of a CWEP assignment or if, during an assignment, the participant gives the agency 20 days advance written notice of that decision in which case the recipient may not participate in CWEP as a voluntary participant for 12 months after the date of withdrawal.

(3) PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS AND PENALTIES. (a) A participant shall comply with CWEP work assignments except when there is good cause which shall be demonstrated by any of the following circumstances:

1. Illness, injury or incapacity of the participant or a member of the participant's family. In this subdivision, "member of the participant's family" means a spouse, child, parent or other dependent relative who lives with the participant;

2. Court-required appearance or temporary incarceration;

3. Family emergency or unavailable child care;

4. Breakdown in the transportation arrangement;

5. Appointment for a job interview; or

6. Any other circumstance beyond the control of the participant.

(b) When a participant fails to comply with a CWEP work assignment without good cause and the non-compliance or non-participation without good cause would normally result in discharge from work for other employes at the work site or, if there are no other employes at the work site, the employes of the agency, the agency shall issue a notification in accordance with sub. (5) (a) and take the following actions affecting the recipient's AFDC eligibility and payments:

1. For an AFDC-regular case, the AFDC grant shall be reduced in accordance with subd. 3 or 4 in an amount equal to the amount paid to the caretaker relative;

2. For an AFDC-unemployed parent case, the AFDC grant shall be terminated in accordance with subd. 3 or 4;

3. For the first occurrence of non-participation, the AFDC grant shall be reduced under subd. 1 or terminated under subd. 2 for 3 calendar months; and

4. For the second and subsequent occurrences of non-participation, the AFDC grant shall be reduced under subd. 1 or terminated under subd. 2 for 6 calendar months.

(4) MAXIMUM REQUIRED HOURS OF PARTICIPATION IN ANY MONTH. (a) An agency may not require a recipient to participate in the program for more hours in a month than the number of hours equal to the recipient group's monthly AFDC payment 2 months earlier minus child support payments made 2 months earlier, which offset the AFDC benefit, divided by the greater of the applicable state or federal minimum wage. Child

support payments to the county clerk of courts and subsequently disregarded from AFDC benefits are not considered to have offset the AFDC grant.

(b) Agency arranged or approved training in which the recipient participates shall be counted toward CWEP participation requirements on a hour-for-hour basis.

(5) NOTICE AND RIGHT TO FAIR HEARING. (a) The agency shall send written notice to any participant who fails to comply with a CWEP work assignment without good cause. The notice shall include:

1. The agency's proposed action affecting the participants's AFDC eligibility and payments; and
2. An explanation of the participant's right to explain any disagreement with the proposed action by contacting the agency within 10 working days of the date on the written notification.

(b) Any participant adversely affected by an agency decision under this section may request a fair hearing in accordance with s. 49.50 (8), Stats., and s. PW-PA 20.18 [ch. HSS 225]. The request for a fair hearing shall be addressed to the department's office of administrative hearings.

Note: The mailing address of the office of administrative hearings is P.O. Box 7875, Madison, Wisconsin 53707.

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