HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA

# Hennepin County MFIP/DWP Employment Services Manual

Version Date 10/19/2026

# 01 – Introduction

The table of contents in this manual matches the one found in the DHS MFIP Employment Services Manual. To ensure you are following program policy appropriately, always refer to state policy and procedure first. Then, for local interpretations of state policy and county specific guidelines, refer to the information provided in this manual.

This manual is currently under construction. If you need assistance with policy or procedure not outlined in this document, contact your agency's assigned MFIP Employment Services Coordinator.

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# 02 – Glossary of Abbreviations

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|---|---|
| ABE | Adult Basic Education |
| CCAP | Childcare Assistance Program |
| CCP | Childcare Assistance Plan |
| CCW | Childcare Worker |
| EC | Employment Counselor |
| EDS | Electronic Document Storage |
| EP | Employment Plan |
| ESL | English as Second Language |
| ES OV | Employment Services Overview |
| ESP | Employment Services Provider |
| FSS | Family Stabilization Services |
| HSR | Human Services Representative |
| LEP | Limited English Proficiency |
| MFIP | Minnesota Family Investment Program |
| NIH | Needed in the Home |
| NOITS | Notice of Intent to Sanction |
| TTL | Transition Team Leads |
| UE | Unsubsidized Employment |
| WF1 | Workforce One |

# 03 – Financial Eligibility

See Chapter 3 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Applying for MFIP

- Household Size
- Income and Asset Limits for MFIP
- MFIP Benefit Amounts
- Budgeting Methods for MFIP Benefits
- One Time Changes in Income in MFIP
- Closing an MFIP Case
- Cost-Effective Health Care

## Financial Eligibility in Hennepin County

For current information for residents about how to apply for benefits and communicate with Hennepin County Economic Supports, visit:

Connect to economic supports | Hennepin County

**Applying for Emergency Assistance (EA) in Hennepin County**

Emergency Assistance is funded through the Consolidated Fund and administered at the county level. Counties create their own rules for qualifying for EA. In Hennepin County:

- EA is only available once in a 12-month period. Some of the things that EA can assist with are damage deposits, foreclosures, back rent, and utilities.
- Housing must be considered affordable for the EA team to assist with the emergency; there needs to be an ongoing source of income. If the EA team determines that an applicant does not have enough income to afford ongoing expenses, they may be required to apply for MFIP as a condition of their application.
- Eligibility is also based on gross income guidelines for the EA program that are based on family size.
- To speed up the application process residents should provide the following things along with their application:
    - identification
    - verification of relationship to children on the application
    - verification of the emergency
    - income verification

  If other verifications are needed, the eligibility worker will request them when they interview the resident.
- An interview is required for EA programs. Residents can call the EA team at 612-596-1900 to complete their interview within 24 to 72 hours from completing the online application. When calling, listen to all prompts prior to selecting an option in the phone system.
- When applying for EA, the applicant must comply with Employment Services and cure any current ESP sanction in order to be eligible for Emergency Assistance. If the EA applicant is not currently receiving MFIP, and their case previously closed due to 100% sanction, they will need to cure their sanction prior to approval.
- For questions about Hennepin County Emergency Assistance, contact the team at 612-596-1900 or by emailing HSPH.EWS.EATeam@hennepin.us.

**Hennepin County Office of Multicultural Services (OMS)**

- Hennepin County's Office of Multicultural Services provides interpreter services and assistance with application paperwork. OMS provides virtual services and can be reached at 612-348-2193.
- OMS staff speak more than 20 languages and are available to assist with applications for public assistance benefits, applications, and renewals for a green card; finding employment, clothing, and other resources; identifying housing options, applying for Social Security and unemployment benefits; and more.

**Known to Agency/Communication with Hennepin County Eligibility**

Hennepin County staff and ESPs must work together to serve residents effectively. Participants should not be required to provide the same information to multiple areas within the Hennepin County MFIP system. Information that has been communicated to any worker, whether Employment Counselor, HSR, or CCW, is considered "known to the agency" and must be communicated to all other staff who need to know it.

For Hennepin County worker and team contact information, see the MFIP ESP website.

## Transition Services in Hennepin County

When MFIP eligibility ends in MAXIS, the participant remains enrolled with their current ESP in the same WF1 Enrollment Sequence for two additional calendar months. During this period, the ESP continues to provide services and supports to the participant. These are called Transition Services.

ESPs must clearly communicate that ongoing services and supports are available, but participating in Transition Services is optional for the participant.

**When MFIP Closes**

Contact the participant to discuss their case status.

- If you expect that the case will be reinstated during the same month after the case is processed, offer to help the participant gather and turn in necessary paperwork. Track case status and resume regular services if MFIP is reopened.
- If you don't expect that the case will be reinstated, tell the participant that Transition Services are available.
- Send the Transition Services Information sheet to the current address on file by the 15th of the month that MFIP closed. For example, if MFIP closes for January 1st, send the letter by January 15th.
- Upload a copy of the document to EDS. This is a required EDS document in Hennepin County (Document Type: Correspondence; Document Name: Letter).
- In addition to sending the Transition Services letter, make at least one more engagement attempt in order discuss what Transition Services are available. Hennepin County recommends you try a different method of contact for the second engagement attempt (for example, by phone or email). ESP agencies may require additional engagement attempts, so follow your agency's procedures.
- If the participant declines to participate in Transition Services, discontinue outreach attempts.

**Eligibility for MFIP Transition Services**

- Before receiving Transition Services and supports, participants must have completed the Overview and created at least one Employment Plan during their enrollment.
- Participants that did not complete the Overview or make an Employment Plan during the regular enrollment period can get Transition Services and supports, but they must complete both things first.
- During Transition Services, do not ask a participant to update an expired plan, complete overdue assessments, turn in activity logs, or complete other items that would typically be required during regular enrollment. As long as the Overview and initial Employment Plan have been done, no other expired program requirements need to be updated.
- Assessment activity hours are the only type that should be entered during the Transition Services period since no activity logs are required.
- Participants can receive Non-Assistance Support Services during the Transition Services period. Refer to the current Hennepin County MFIP Support Services policy for details.
- ESPs are required to administer the Hennepin County Participant Experience Survey to all participants before their case is exited. Hennepin County recommends doing so in the second month of the transition period.

**Non-Compliance and Transition Services**

- Participation in Transition Services is optional, never send a NOITS during the transition period.
- Participation in Transition Services is not based on compliance during regular enrollment. If a participant is in sanction at the time MFIP closes, they may still receive Transition Services.
- If a case closes for 100% sanction and the participant wants to establish compliance with the program in order to reapply for MFIP, you can work with them to establish compliance before the transition period ends.
    - In these situations, develop a new Employment Plan with the participant that lasts up to 30 days or until the last day of the transition period, whichever is sooner. If they have reapplied for MFIP and their application is pending their compliance, do not require activities for longer than the application will be pending.
    - Once the participant has complied with the updated plan, submit a Status Update via ECF Next stating that the participant has complied; send a Worker Communication to the Sanction Expert Team. Document this in WF1 case notes and ensure a copy of the Status Update is also on file in WF1.
    - Establishing compliance after a 100% sanction does not have to happen during the transition period. The participant can choose whether or not to take the steps listed above during their transition. They will eventually need to demonstrate compliance in order to be reapproved for MFIP, but the participant can also work with Employment Services if or when they reapply for MFIP in the future.

**Exiting the Case**

Exits should never be performed based solely on information displayed in WF1. Verify the MFIP closure, reason, and date (confirming that the MFIP program has remained closed for two full calendar months) before proceeding with a program exit.

- Wait until the first day of the third month after MFIP closes before proceeding.
    - For example, if MFIP closed on January 1st, wait until March 1st before proceeding with the exit process.
- The exit date in WF1 should be the first of the month after MFIP Transition Services ends, two months after the MAXIS closure date.
    - For example, if MFIP closes for January 1st in MAXIS, the exit date is March 1st.
    - Exit dates should be the first of the month following the end of the Transition Services period, even if you are performing the exit after the first of the month has passed. See below for a list of exceptions to this.
- The WF1 exit reason is based on the closure reason in MAXIS. Refer to the ESM for more information on exit reasons 24.24 Exit Reasons for MFIP in WF1 (state.mn.us).
    - Unsubsidized Employment (UE) Exits are considered successful program exits and are connected to outcomes included in MFIP Employment Services contracts. To exit a case as a UE in Hennepin County:
        - The Case Closure Reason on the MAXIS tab in WF1 must read "Gross/Net Income" and at least one dollar of the counted earnings must be from employment or self-employment.
        - The Case Closure Reason is not "Gross/Net Income" but there is specific information documented in MAXIS case notes indicating that the eligibility worker closed the case due to gross/net earned income levels.
            - In this case, the ESP staff must add a WF1 case note referencing the date of the MAXIS case note that was used to determine that a UE exit was applicable.
        - The exit is not considered a UE in situations where ESP staff determine that unverified earnings would put the household over income limits.

In some situations, you will need to exit the case before the Transition Period is over:

- If the participant has reapplied for MFIP and a new MFIP referral is pending. Exit the current Enrollment Sequence and begin a new one using the new referral. The exit date should match the date MFIP was reapproved in MAXIS.
- If the case has been transferred to another Minnesota county and you see MFIP is open in the new county. The exit date should match the date the case was transferred according to MAXIS case notes or Incoming Status Updates.
- If a SNAP Employment and Training worker contacts you because they are attempting to enroll the case. Exit the case using the date MFIP closed so that the pending SNAP E&T referral can be processed. Do not provide Transition Services to a participant who has exited in order to receive SNAP E&T.
- If the case is closed due to the death of the participant, exit the case using the date MFIP closed.

## 04 – Participants' Rights

See Chapter 4 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Rights to Appeal
- Data Privacy

- Sharing Information in the Welfare System
- Special Types of Private Data (Family Violence, mental health and chemical dependency treatment information)
- Participants' Rights to Review Information
- Participants' Program Rights in MFIP
- Civil Rights
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Limited English Skills

## Participants' Rights in Hennepin County

**Right to Appeal**
Refer to Chapter 19, Sanctions and Non-Compliance in this manual for more on Hennepin County's dispute resolution process.

**Annual Data Privacy Training Series**

Hennepin County requires that anyone with access to private data complete the DHS Handling MN Information Securely training series prior to requesting access to any state or county system. The DHS training is a series of seven online training modules and assessments that must be completed annually by all staff to maintain system access. There is an eighth training required annually for supervisors. Instructions to access the training can be found on the county's MFIP ESP website under System Access.

**Authorization to Release Information**

A release of information signed by the participant must be in the Employment Services case file before any information can be released to entities who are not part of the Hennepin welfare system. Do not release participant information to schools, landlords, family members, friends, legal aid, doctors, or other third parties without a signed authorization on file granting permission to release specific information.

The signed release should indicate at minimum:

- The name of the individual, representative, or provider that the ESP worker has permission to communicate with,
- Which information may be discussed or released, and
- How long the release of information will be valid

**Reminders When Working with Releases of Information**

- Ask participants to sign a release of information for specific purposes and fill out the form fully at the time information is needed. Do not preemptively ask participants to sign a blank release of information for future use.
- Participants have the right to withdraw their authorization to release information at any time.
- ESPs should not use authorization to release information templates which list Hennepin County as the entity receiving the information, such as those found in ECF. The ESP's name should be listed as the entity receiving the information.

- When communicating with outside entities, always practice the minimum necessary rule. Only request and release the minimum necessary private information required to meet the need.
- ESPs are responsible for putting systems in place that adhere to the contract requirement to safeguard private information, according to direction from their own agency leadership and legal counsel.

**Sharing Information Within Hennepin County and the Welfare System:**

ESPs are part of the Hennepin welfare system due to their contract to provide MFIP Employment Services. A signed release of information is not required to share information between staff working within MFIP for Hennepin County. Hennepin County ESPs may share information with other contracted Hennepin ESPs and with Hennepin Human Services Representatives without a signed release of information for the purposes of case management.

**ESP Use of ECF to Obtain Participant Information**:

ESPs are granted access to ECF to support collaborative case management and view documents that participants have submitted to the eligibility department.

Documents in ECF are Hennepin County documents and are not part of the ESP file. The documents are available for the ESP to view in the context of their work, and if the ESP needs documentation from ECF for the ESP case file, a copy may be printed directly from ECF and placed in the ESP case file.

**Participants' Right to Review Information**

If a participant requests a copy of a document that is not kept in the ESP case file (for example, a copy of a social security card that exists in the Eligibility case file in ECF), the ESP must refer to the participant to the assigned HSR team to ensure information is released to the participant via the appropriate channels. ESPs may not print information from the ECF case file to give directly to participants, doing so goes beyond the scope of accessing documents needed to perform work and manage the case.

**Detection of Data Breach**

Any breach of privacy should be reported to the Hennepin County MFIP Program Manager, Privacy Officer (hsph.privacy.officer@hennepin.us), and the agency's assigned contract manager within 24 hours of detection.

Information to provide in this initial email includes:

- A description of the incident
- How many people were affected
- What additional steps have been taken to mitigate harm to people who were affected
- What additional private information could have been inferred due to the content of the breach
- What steps the agency is taking to prevent a future similar breach

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plans**

ESPs must provide comprehensive services regardless of a participant's primary language. Refer to Hennepin County's Limited English Proficiency Plan, available on the MFIP ESP website for additional guidance on serving participants with limited English proficiency.

Participants have the right to free and timely language assistance services, and under no circumstances may a friend, family member, child, or other unauthorized individual interpret on behalf of the participant.

# 05 – MFIP Employment Services: First Steps

See Chapter 5 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Referrals to employment services.
- Time frames for starting employment services.
- Participant choice of employment services providers.
- Participants moving into or out of a county.
- Employment services overview.
- Participation requirements.
- Parents with a child under 12 months old exemption.

## First Employment Services Steps in Hennepin County

### MFIP Application to Employment Services Enrollment

- The resident completes the Combined Application Form or MNBenefits application requesting MFIP cash assistance.
- The HSR conducts the initial interview for cash eligibility and the MFIP Financial Orientation. The applicant receives the ESP Choice Sheet (available in ECF).
- Program eligibility is determined by the HSR.
- When MFIP is approved, the HSR receives a MAXIS pop-up prompting them to generate a referral for Employment Services. The initial MAXIS referral is assigned to the MFIP Coordination Office and received in WF1 by the TTL team.
- The TTL team reviews the WF1 referral and assigns it to an ESP within three calendar days. At the time of referral, the TTL codes the MAXIS STAT/EMPS panel with ESP information. Referrals are based on:
    - Eligibility criteria. Special populations (FSS, Extension, Teen Parents) are assigned to specified programs at Hennepin County, PPL, and MVNA.
    - Current distribution of cases across providers.
    - The top three providers chosen by the participant on the Choice Sheet if it is in ECF at the time the referral is completed.
    - Agency proximity to a resident's address.
    - For cases that were enrolled at a Hennepin ESP in the last 90 days, the referral will return to the same agency unless the former agency's caseload is higher than funding allocation.
- ESP staff must accept and enroll new referrals within four calendar days of receiving them. The date that the MFIP Coordination Office transferred the referral to the ESP can be found in the Referral case notes entered by the TTL team. The WF1 referral date will show the original date the referral was generated by the WF1/MAXIS interface and sent to the MFIP Coordination Office.

### Referral Queue Notes

- ESPs with multiple agency locations can choose to reassign referrals received in their Hennepin MFIP queue as needed to manage caseload sizes.
- Upon enrolling the participant, open the Local Flag activity to indicate that the ES OV needs to be completed.
- **Duplicate Referrals:** If you receive a new referral for a currently enrolled participant, verify the MFIP status in MAXIS.
    - If MFIP closed and the referral is due to reapplication, exit the previous Enrollment Sequence and accept the new referral.
    - If MFIP has been reinstated or eligibility has simply been updated, but no new MFIP application has been processed, decline the new referral using the reason "duplicate referral."
- **Child Under 12 Months Exemption Cases**: Participants who claim the Child Under 12 Months exemption are referred to ESPs even though they do not need to participate until the exemption ends. Accept the referral and open the "Holding – Child Under 12 Months" activity. Track the case status monthly and invite the participant to attend an ES OV in the month after the exemption coding is removed from STAT/EMPS in MAXIS.
- **Eligible, Not Enrolled:** Because ESPs are expected to accept and enroll referrals within four calendar days, no cases should remain in the "Eligible, Not Enrolled" status for more than four days.
- If you receive a referral that you believe should have been assigned to another agency due to eligibility criteria, do not deny the referral. Contact the TTL team to request the referral be reviewed and transferred to the correct agency. Until the situation can be resolved, set the referral status to "Researching."
- If you have questions about processing unique referrals, contact your Hennepin County coordinator for assistance.
- If a newly referred participant requests a case transfer at the time of enrollment, complete the enrollment and ES OV prior to approving or denying the transfer request. For more information about case transfers, see Chapter 23.

**Agency Policy and Procedure for New Participant Enrollment**

All ESPs must document their agency's policies and procedure for completing new enrollments. Written policy and procedures may be updated as needed but should always remain readily available to program staff to ensure standard service to Hennepin County residents. Agency procedures must correspond with State and County policy.

At a minimum, agencies should specify the following items in writing:

- Staff roles around referral queue management, enrollment, intake, and overview processes.
- Timeline expectations around first attempts to contact, overview invitations, follow up steps after unsuccessful contact.

**Employment Services Overview**

The ES OV is a crucial step in the intake process. It is the ESP's first chance to set a positive tone and introduce the participant to the agency and program.

Former participants returning to MFIP Employment Services within 90 days do not need to complete a full overview as described in the DHS ESM. For these participants, a Reconnect Overview may be conducted. During a Reconnect Overview, the participant and staff member can review the list of MFIP Employment Service Overview Topics and Informational Brochures together and determine what level of detail is most appropriate based on the participant's knowledge of the program.

Participants must complete and sign the "MFIP Employment Services Overview Checklist" at the end of either type of overview session. The DHS-3172 "Rights, Responsibilities, and Consent" must also be signed.

Once the ES OV has been successfully completed:

- Close the Local Flag activity and open Assessment. Once the ES OV has been completed, Assessment should remain open until the case is exited.
- Track overview meeting time as Assessment hours.
- Upload signed Overview forms to EDS:
    - Hennepin County Overview Checklist (Document Type: Consent, Release of Information; Document Name: Overview Document)
    - Rights, Responsibilities, and Consent (Document Type: Consent, Release of Information, Document Name: Rights and Responsibilities)

Participants transferred between Hennepin ESPs do not need to complete an Overview again if it was completed for the current enrollment sequence by the previously assigned agency.

**Flexible Service Delivery**

Hennepin County's model for MFIP Employment Services emphasizes the importance of easy access to programming through a variety of meeting options. Residents can choose the format in which they would like to interact with their Employment Counselor. Service delivery options may include:

- In person, at a physical ESP office
- Remotely, via phone and email
- Virtually, using web-based platforms
- At a public place in the participant's community
- Flexible meeting days and times

The goals of flexible service delivery are to welcome and effectively serve residents with diverse needs and backgrounds; to accommodate the individual circumstances and preferences of participants; and to support equitable distribution of work across the network of providers. ESPs receive referrals based on their current caseload size and the percentage of the total county caseload that they are contracted to serve. Because of this, ESPs will receive referrals for participants who may not live near the agency's office. Hennepin County expects ESPs to provide participants easy access to multiple service delivery options that can meet their needs through high quality programming, without requiring an office visit.

Assess each participant's ongoing needs and preferences when providing services. The format of service delivery selected should not hinder the participant's ability to meet program requirements or receive support. Follow your agency's policies and procedures when implementing these various methods of service delivery.

When scheduling meetings with participants, offer at least one alternate meeting format option for participation. Document what options you gave the participant when case noting about scheduled meetings.

Hennepin County recommends ESPs:

- Develop internal procedures that define the following for meetings that take place virtually, remotely, or in the community:
    - How to obtain required signatures.
    - How copies of documents will be shared with participants.
    - How to administer support services.
- Identify an approved list of community locations (for example, libraries or community centers) where Employment Counselors can meet participants face to face in their community. When selecting options for community-based meeting, consider ease of access (including public transit and parking), the content of the meeting and potential need for privacy, and the participant's comfort level. Ensure community-based meetings take place in environments that are safe, comfortable, and welcoming.
- Set up platforms for virtual meeting spaces. Ensure staff can confidently navigate software and provide support to participants as needed.
- If applicable, develop internal policies and procedures around home visits and providing rides to participants.
- Include a list of available service delivery options on marketing materials sent to participants. Incorporate this information into initial engagement attempts on new referrals and in the Overview presentation as a part of the participant's introduction to the program.

## 06 – Continuous Assessment

See Chapter 6 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Definition and purpose of assessments
- Using the findings from assessments
- When assessments and screenings should happen
- Initial assessment
- The employability measure
- Vocational assessments
- Observational checklist for concerns about behavioral health
- Mental health and chemical health screening and assessments
- Special learning needs screening
- Comprehensive review

### Continuous Assessment in Hennepin County

#### Minimum Engagement Requirements

MFIP staff must make a minimum of one individualized attempt to engage each enrolled participant each month. In most cases, the assigned Employment Counselor is responsible for ensuring minimum

engagement requirements have been met, but other MFIP program staff may also make a monthly engagement attempt due to reasons like staff coverage and collaborative case management.

While once per month is the minimum engagement expectation, Hennepin County encourages regular, proactive engagement with all participants. Proactive engagement means taking the initiative to engage with residents in a way that effectively supports their goals and success in the program.

All participant engagement should be case noted in WF1 within three calendar days after it has happened. Case notes added in a timely fashion are a critical piece of accurately documenting services provided. When documenting participant engagement, include items such as:

- Attempts you have made to engage with a participant. Hennepin County recommends recording which phone number, email address, or address you used in your engagement attempt. As contact information is continuously updated in both MAXIS and WF1, it is helpful to know the details of each engagement attempt.
- The main points that you discussed with the participant during your interaction. Summarize the key points of all conversations relevant to MFIP Employment Services.
- Email conversations. Hennepin County recommends copying relevant text from emails with participants directly into case notes.
- Follow up steps that either you or the participant will take before your next check-in.
- Assessment of the participant's recent progress and current status relating to their goals, activities, and barriers that happens during engagement.
- Mass communications sent to the participant (for example, new counselor introduction letters, resource information, and newsletters). Hennepin County recommends uploading a copy of mass mailings to EDS and copying the text from mass emails into case notes.

One individualized monthly contact per participant is the bare minimum expectation for engagement. However, Hennepin County expects to see an increase in attempts to contact and engage the participant if there are overdue items on the case. For example, if a participant needs to complete an Overview, Employability Measure, needs to develop, update or review an Employment Plan, is not making satisfactory progress with their plan, or is in sanction, additional attempts to engage beyond the monthly minimum are expected.

**Mass Case Notes**

Mass case notes may be used to supplement individualized engagement attempts and can be a great tool to save time if sending out mass communications. However, they are not intended to take the place of regular attempts to engage directly with participants. Mass case notes do not satisfy minimum engagement requirements on their own. Individualized attempts to contact are required, particularly in instances noted above where extra engagement is expected due to overdue items on the case.

**Multiple Methods of Communication**

Consistent engagement is a critical piece of a participant's success in the program. Proactive attempts to contact and engage the participant are expected to come in a variety of formats. Employment Counselors should use various methods of communication when trying to engage with participants, particularly if a participant is difficult to reach or a challenge to engage. Methods of communication may include:

- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Emails
- Letters
- Scheduled in person or virtual meetings
- Home visits

Be sure to follow your agency's policies related authorization for using certain methods of communication, including emailing, texting, and home visits.

When sending letters or making phone calls to participants that have not responded, check MAXIS regularly for updated contact information, including address and phone number(s), to be sure are using the most current information available.

**Baseline Engagement**

According to Hennepin County's performance measures for MFIP Employment Services, 80% of all enrolled participants at each agency must have at least 3 activity hours logged each month. The data for this indicator is tracked in two ways. Employment hours are tracked in MAXIS by the HSR and all other activity hours are tracked in WF1 by the ESP. This performance measure emphasizes the importance of engagement in reaching positive outcomes for residents.

**Tracking Assessment Hours**

- In addition to tracking participation hours for the various activities in the participant's Employment Plan, track Assessment hours for time spent working directly with the participant.
- Employment Services Overviews, Employment Plans, Employment Plan Reviews, and Employability Measures are considered critical meetings. These actions necessitate significant collaboration between the participant and employment counselor and assessment hours should be tracked to reflect the time spent on these actions.
- Assessment hours are meant to reflect time spent meaningfully engaging with the participant towards the goal of eliminating barriers and supporting their progress towards economic self-sufficiency. Examples of meaningful engagement through assessment include:
    - Understanding or reviewing the participant's goals
    - Discussing current needs, setbacks, or barriers, and strategies to address them
    - Offering relevant, individualized information about resources, supports, or referrals
    - Engaging in the planning process, including the development or review of an EP
    - Coaching around successfully identifying or completing appropriate activities
    - Discussing the family's overall wellbeing
    - Providing emotional support
    - Gathering feedback from the participant
- It is possible to have meaningful engagement in person, via phone, through online meetings, or via email, but not all contacts result in meaningful engagement as outlined above. Before tracking Assessment hours, use your professional judgement to determine if your contact with a participant included some evaluation of their progress, needs, goals, strengths, or plans.
- Before tracking assessment hours, clearly case note what was discussed during the interaction to demonstrate that meaningful engagement occurred.

- Assessment may happen during formal scheduled meetings (like an Overview or EP update), informal check-ins, or other ongoing engagement with the participant.
- If an email or text conversation includes multiple exchanges between you and the participant, track the hours when the conversation has come to an end. Email and text interactions may be counted for a maximum of 1 Assessment hour per day.
- Track all Assessment hours within the week they occur.
- When tracking Assessment hours, round up to the nearest full hour. For example, for a 30-minute phone conversation, round the conversation up to 1 hour. For a 1.5-hour meeting, round up to 2 hours.
- Do not track Assessment hours for unsuccessful attempts to engage participants. Assessment requires two-way communication.
- Do not track Assessment hours for interactions that are purely logistical or administrative in nature. For example (exchanging paperwork or dropping off a bus card without engaging in meaningful conversation, communication based on scheduling or reminding the participant about an upcoming meeting, exchanges centered on answering quick, surface level questions, etc.)
- Do not track Assessment hours for sending mass communications to participants.

**Hennepin Requirements for Employability Measure**

The purpose of the Employability Measure (EM) is to fully assess the participant's current stability in key domains that significantly impact a person's ability to obtain and retain employability. The EM supports the development of effective Employment Plans by identifying strengths, highlighting areas of need, and providing a starting point to address barriers to future success. Wherever possible, the Employment Plan should include activities that assist in resolving some of the barriers identified in the EM.

The Employability Measure must be completed:

- Within 3 months of enrolling a new or returning participant
- When a participant reaches 48 months on MFIP
- At any other point in time that the Employment Counselor determines a more comprehensive assessment to determine next steps with a participant is necessary. If the EM is being administered outside of the required intervals, case note your rationale for completing it.

The Employability Measure is **not** required to be completed in the following instances:

- When a case is transferred to another ESP within Hennepin County and EMs were completed for the current enrollment sequence by the previous ESP as required by policy.
    - The receiving agency is, however, required to complete an EM if the participant is due for the 48-month EM assessment.
- Another EM is not required if the participant reaches 48 months within 60 days of completion of their last EM. The Employment Counselor should use case notes to indicate if this occurs.

## 07 – Employment Plans

See Chapter 7 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Employment Plans

- Purpose of employment Plan
- Electronic and Paper Plans
- Plan Types
- Time Frames to Initiate/Review Plans
- Hourly Requirements for Plans
- Holidays and Excused Absences
- Reduced Hours Plans
- Goals
- Order of Preferences for activities
- Accommodating Disabilities
- Core & Non-Core Activities

## Employment Plans in Hennepin County

### Employment Plan Goals and Strengths

Employment Counselors must complete the Goals and Strengths sections in each Employment Plan they develop with participants. These sections are used to capture the current goals of the participant (both short and long term), and the strengths they possess that may help to achieve those goals. When completing this section of the Employment Plan, it is important to:

- Always engage the participant when completing this section. The content you include should always come from the participant, even if you help them to brainstorm. This is an important conversation to build confidence and develop rapport with participants.
- Include goals in the plan that reflect what is important to the participant. This is not a space to indicate due dates for paperwork or the generic programmatic goals of MFIP Employment Services.
- Discuss goals and strengths with the participant every time you review or update their Employment Plan. Overall goals may remain similar, but it's important to continue to engage participants in this discussion at each plan update.
- Whenever possible, include steps and activities in the plan that will support the participant in reaching the overall goals they have shared. Discuss the connection between action items and the goals they support.

### Pending Employment Plans

An Employment Plan is not valid until it has been signed by the participant and the Employment Counselor. Because of the emphasis on flexible service delivery within Employment Services including remote and virtual services, there may be times when it's necessary to leave the plan you have developed pending until you receive the signature page back from the participant to finalize the plan. While you wait for the signed copy of the Employment Plan:

- Save the Employment Plan as "Pending." The Employment Plan may not be activated until the participant has signed off on the plan agreeing to the activities within it.
- When the participant's signature is obtained, activate the plan immediately.

- A plan may be left pending for up to 14 days. During those 14 days, work with the participant to obtain the signature, presenting them with a variety of methods to return the signed plan. These methods may include:
    - Using agency approved technology for electronic signatures
    - Signing and returning a plan via mail
    - Visiting a physical ESP office or community location to sign the Employment Plan
    - Using email to send a photo of the signed plan
- If the signed Employment Plan is not received after 14 calendar days, delete the pending plan in WF1. A new Employment Plan is required.
- Save the Employment Plan signature page to the EDS case file. Unless the signature page is in EDS, the plan is invalid.

**Reviewing an Employment Plan**

Employment Plans must be reviewed at least every 3 months for Universal Participation participants and at least every 6 months for FSS participants. An Employment Plan review does not require creating a new plan in WF1, but it does require a conversation with the participant to confirm if the current Employment Plan and its activities continue to be appropriate for the participant. When reviewing an Employment Plan, please note:

- It is only appropriate to review the current Employment Plan if the participant is making satisfactory progress with the activities in the plan. If a participant is not following through with the activities in the current plan, or is not making progress towards their goals, the plan should be rewritten to determine if other activities should be included.
- The Employment Plan review must be completed with the participant. This may occur via phone, in person, remotely, or virtually.
- The case note following the review of the plan must note that the activities remain appropriate, and the participant agrees to continue participation in their current activities for an additional period of time (up to 90 days for UP, up to 180 days if FSS).
- When case noting the review, use the case note category “Employment/Service Plan” so that it’s easy for other Employment Counselors as well as program monitors to determine when the last review of the plan occurred.
- If there are any changes to the information in the current plan, create a new one.

## 08 – Family Violence Waiver

See Chapter 8 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Family Violence Waiver
- Family Violence Waiver Overview
- The Family Violence Waiver Referral Form
- Rights for Non-Citizens
- Requests for a Family Violence Waiver
- Verifying Family Violence
- Time Limits & Family Violence Waiver
- Family Violence Specialists

- Employment Plans & Family Violence Waiver
- Non-Compliance & Family Violence Waiver
- Ending a Family Violence Waiver
- Child Under 12 Months & Family Violence
- Resources for Addressing Family Violence

## Family Violence Waivers in Hennepin County

### Overview of Hennepin County Model

Hennepin County's Family Violence Waiver (FVW) model is designed to meet the needs of participants efficiently and flexibly:

- Participants may be quickly connected to a Hennepin County Family Violence (FV) Specialist to determine eligibility for the FVW and complete a safety plan. Hennepin County requires each Employment Services Provider to have trained FV Specialists on staff.
- Participants who are interested in working with an external Domestic Violence (DV) Advocate or receiving additional services after having established FVW eligibility may be connected to relevant community resources.
- Participants who prefer not to pursue additional resources may get their FVW eligibility determined efficiently and then be granted the time and flexibility needed to address their safety concerns independently during their MFIP enrollment.
- Participants with an existing relationship with an external DV Advocate may have that person assist with the FVW determination process.

When a participant discloses that they are experiencing domestic violence, they may choose to request the FVW but are not obligated to pursue it. The participant is the expert in their own life and ultimately responsible for deciding if the FVW is right for them. There is no limit to the number of times a participant may be approved for the FVW. The waiver may be removed and reapproved as many times as is needed while on MFIP.

The Hennepin County FVW model emphasizes the continued involvement of the assigned worker throughout the FVW process. Initially, the assigned Employment Counselor is responsible for providing accurate information to support the participant's decision about whether to request a waiver. If the participant chooses to pursue the waiver, the counselor is responsible for tracking and facilitating each step of the FVW determination and review processes.

### Responding to FVW Requests

ESPs are responsible for efficiently connecting participants who want a FVW to a person trained in and specializing in domestic violence who can determine their eligibility for the waiver and make a safety plan. This must be a third person; the assigned worker and the specialist cannot be the same person.

When family violence is disclosed the assigned Employment Counselor will:

- Ask the participant if they would like to meet with a Hennepin County FV Specialist, or if they would prefer to work with an external DV Advocate.

- Arrange an appointment for the participant, specialist, and assigned Employment Counselor to meet. The counselor is responsible for setting up this meeting whether the participant chooses to use a Hennepin County FV Specialist or external DV Advocate. Do not ask or require the participant schedule their own meetings to discuss FVW eligibility.
    - To schedule with a FV Specialist at your own agency, follow your agency's internal process and contact your supervisor if you have questions.
    - If a specialist from your agency is not available, you can request a meeting with another Hennepin County FV Specialist by emailing the case number to mfip.fvspecialist@hennepin.us. Do not include participant names or case details in this email.
    - If the participant would like to use an external DV Advocate from an organization outside of Hennepin County's ESP network, obtain a signed release of information before initiating communication to coordinate on the participant's behalf.
- Inform the participant that they will be asked for documentation of the violence they are experiencing. Documentation may be submitted in advance, brought to the meeting, or prepared during the meeting with the specialist.
    - Offer to assist in any way that you can to help the participant obtain the documentation needed.
    - The participant is not required to participate in employment services while they work to document the presence of violence.
    - Sanctions cannot be imposed at this time due to good cause from reported family violence and potential FSS eligibility.
    - If a participant does not have any existing documentation, they may work with the specialist to write a sworn statement during the meeting, as long as the specialist affirms their eligibility by also writing a sworn statement.
    - If a participant could not gather documentation prior to your meeting with the specialist and chose not to prepare a sworn statement during the meeting, documentation may be submitted after the meeting. While documentation is pending, the specialist can create a safety plan and develop an EP with the counselor, however, do not:
        - Activate the plan until the documentation is received. The plan may pend up to 14 days and must be deleted if not signed by the 14th day.
        - Send notification to TTLs requesting the FVW coding until the documentation is received.
- Upload the documentation received to EDS
    - Save the document as Private
    - EDS Document Type: Program Specific, EDS Document Name: Family Violence

**Meeting to Determine FVW Eligibility**

The FVW meeting involves the participant, specialist, and assigned Employment Counselor.

The FV Specialist will:

- Introduce themselves, share a bit about their role, and why they have joined the meeting.
- Share and review the Domestic Violence Brochure (DHS-3477) with the participant, giving an overview of the MFIP FVW and its purpose.

- Confirm with the participant if they are comfortable with both the assigned Employment Counselor and specialist being present to discuss the violence concerns and complete the safety planning process. The FV Specialist and participant can talk privately if the participant indicates that is their preference. The assigned Employment Counselor might leave the room, call, or online meeting until the specialist and participant are ready to finalize the Employment Plan.
- Ask questions and request information as needed to determine FVW eligibility. This may include preparing sworn statements as documentation of the participant's FVW eligibility.
- Determine FVW eligibility based on the information provided. The standard length of time FVWs are approved for is 6 months. Eligibility begins on the date that the FVW EP is signed by all three parties and the EP signature page and documentation used to determine eligibility have been added to EDS.
- Discuss needs, provide appropriate resources, and develop a safety plan in collaboration with the participant.
- Provide information and resources as appropriate if the participant is determined ineligible for the FVW.

The assigned Employment Counselor will:

- Listen actively and capture the safety activities identified by the participant and FV Specialist into the safety section of the EP. This includes checking the appropriate boxes in the safety activity template in WF1 and adding custom steps as needed to capture information around individualized steps and resources.
- Review the information added to the safety section to confirm with the FV Specialist and participant that all steps are included and accurate.
- Finish the planning process by adding any other activities the participant is interested in doing in addition to the safety activities. Safety is the priority of a FVW plan and if additional activities or action steps may jeopardize the participant's safety, the FV Specialist may suggest activities be revised prior to finalizing the plan.
- Ensure all three parties sign the FVW Plan. In addition to the Employment Counselor and the participant, the FV Specialist must sign on the line for "other involved in development of the EP" and without this signature, the plan is invalid.
- Ask the participant if it is safe for them to take the EP and other resource handouts home with them.
- Add a WF1 case note to document the FVW meeting.
    - Document whether it's safe for the participant to take materials home. This is important as it helps the current or future workers to determine what sorts of information can be sent in future communications.
    - Use discretion in case noting the details of the meeting and follow the minimum necessary rule when documenting safety concerns:
        - Example: Met with FV Specialist T.D. and participant. Waiver approved through 08/31/22, documentation in EDS file, and safety plan created. Participant is unable to take the safety plan or resource handouts home with her today.
- Request MAXIS be coded with the FVW by inserting the Status Update into ECF Next and sending a worker communication to the TTL team (x127TTL) to request action be taken.
    - SUs must include the start and end date for FVW eligibility.

    - A copy of the Status Update must also be on file in WF1.
    - On private cases where access to ECF is locked, submit the Status Update to Hennepin County via fax (612-288-2981). Then, contact the TTL team via email at HSPH.ES.TEAM.TTL@hennepin.us to request action be taken. Do not send status update forms via email.
    - Do not submit any additional documents to ECF along with the Status Update.
- Track the FVW 6-month review date and initiate the FVW review before the FVW has expired. Hennepin County recommends setting a WF1 Tickler to track original review dates and prompt next steps. The original review date for the waiver does not change even if there are changes made to other EP activities before the 6-month review.

After the FVW Plan has been signed, the EC cannot make changes to the safety section, but may update other areas of the plan if revisions are needed due to changes in activities, goals, resources, etc. In this case, the EC must copy the safety section approved by the FV Specialist into the new plan and confirm that the new activities are reasonable and safe for the participant.

- If the FV Specialist is not present, ECs should include language such as "safety plan created by TD on 05/11/2022" on the signature line for "others involved in plan development." This is important for tracking the existing review date for the FVW if activities are updated before the review.
- If necessary changes to the safety section are identified during the meeting, schedule a meeting with the FV Specialist to update the safety section.

**Working with Domestic Violence Advocates**

- Domestic Violence Advocates are experts in the field who have received extensive and specialized training (not offered by Hennepin County) on the dynamics of domestic violence, advocacy, and counseling victims.
- Advocates are trained to navigate systems outside of Employment Services including law enforcement, criminal and civil legal systems, child protection, and county agencies.
- When a participant chooses to work with an advocate from an organization outside of the Hennepin County ESP network, the advocate may not be familiar with the specific details of the MFIP Family Violence Waiver. The Employment Counselor may need to guide the Employment Plan process. Be prepared to explain:
    - What factors go into programmatic eligibility for the FVW.
    - What forms of documentation are acceptable.
    - That other activities added to the plan must be reviewed to ensure they do not conflict with the safety plan.
    - That all three parties must sign the FVW plan for it to be valid.
- If a pre-existing safety plan is received from an external advocate, the safety section should still be added to the EP in WF1, but it does not need to be translated in detail into the plan.
    - In the safety section, indicate the date the safety plan was created, with whom, and that it has been filed in EDS.
        - EDS Document Type: Program Specific; EDS Document Name: Family Violence Waiver Safety Plan
    - Send the plan to the DV Advocate who created the safety plan for review and signature.

**FVW Review Process**

FVWs are part of the FSS track. FVW plans must be reviewed at least every 6 months and rewritten at least annually. ECs are responsible for tracking the review dates for FVW plans and scheduling meetings as needed.

- Plans can be reviewed sooner if family violence prevents the participant from following through with the activities in the current EP, but must be reviewed at least every 6 months.
- Decisions to renew the waiver after 6 months are made on a case-by-case basis with safety being the deciding factor. Participants do not need to re-verify eligibility for the FVW or resubmit documentation at the renewal meeting as long as the FV Specialist is able to confirm whether the safety concerns remain present.
- FV Specialists MUST be present at the time of the review. ECs may not review the safety section of the EP or make determinations to renew or remove the waiver without the presence of a specialist or advocate.
- Whenever possible, ECs should attempt to schedule the review with the same FV Specialist who completed the initial waiver.
- The purpose of the review is to determine if:
    - The activities are still appropriate,
    - The participant can safely comply with the plan, and
    - If FVW should continue or end.

If a participant fails to attend the scheduled meeting to review the FVW:

- Do not immediately end the waiver.
- Contact the FV Specialist to collaboratively review the case, including WF1 and MAXIS case notes and focusing on the last 90 days, to determine if participant has expressed continued safety concerns or shared information suggesting this may be the case.
- Reschedule the review meeting:
    - If the participant has failed to attend the first scheduled meeting, do not immediately reschedule the meeting if you are unable to reach the participant.
    - Allow time to make additional attempts to engage beyond the minimum of once per month, using varying means of communication to reach the participant to reschedule. If the assigned EC has not met baseline engagement expectations, or it seems additional engagement attempts may have been helpful given what's known on the case, the FV Specialist may request the EC make additional attempts to reach out. The FVW should not be ended if the assigned EC has not done due diligence with engagement.
    - If the participant fails to attend the second meeting to review the waiver, the waiver may be removed with the approval of the FV Specialist. The FV Specialist has the authority to decide next steps for the FVW renewal process and making the final decision to end a waiver.
    - Remain flexible. If the participant communicates with you after missed appointments, safety may be impeding follow through so additional time or accommodations may be appropriate.

**Removing a FVW**

Removing a FVW for non-compliance with the EP prior to the FVW review date is not a common practice due to the sensitive nature of this FSS category and the increased likelihood of ongoing good cause being present.

If an EC would like to consider removal of the waiver prior to the FVW review date due to non-compliance, they should:

- Reach out to a FV Specialist to discuss the situation.
- The FV Specialist will send an email to mfip.fvspecialist@hennepin.us for an in-depth case consult to determine next steps.
- After the case review, the FV Specialist will work with the assigned Employment Counselor on any action items identified.

**Family Violence Liaisons**

While all agencies in the network are required to maintain an adequate number of trained Family Violence Specialists, there are times that agencies may require external support from Family Violence Specialists from other agencies to meet a need. This is especially common during staff transition or as agencies work to reach their required agency representation per contracts. As such, each agency within our network has been paired with a partner agency to support one another via inter-agency FVW meetings when the need arises.

Each agency has an identified Family Violence Waiver Liaison who serves as the direct point of contact if there is a need for inter-agency support. Similar to the way that we use Transfer Contacts to initiate and complete the transfer process, the Family Violence Waiver Liaisons at both agencies are the contacts who speak directly to fulfill meeting requests. Individual Employment Counselors should reach out to their agency's own Family Violence Waiver Liaison to request an inter-agency meeting if external support is needed. The requesting agency's Family Violence Waiver Liaison will reach out to the partner agency's Liaison to schedule the meeting to occur.

The Family Violence Waiver Liaison is the party responsible for determining which specialist at their agency is available to take the appointment and providing the Liaison at the requesting agency with the contact information for the assigned specialist and the meeting availability.

Once received, this information will be shared with the primary assigned Employment Counselor, who will then be able to connect directly with the partner agency's assigned FV Specialist to work through the logistics of how the meeting will occur in collaboration with all parties (participant, Employment Counselor, and Family Violence Specialist), how the plan will get signed, and the method of the meeting. If the meeting will take place via phone or online platform, the primary assigned Employment Counselor at the requesting agency is responsible to initiate the conference call or schedule the online meeting and send the meeting link to all parties.

A signed Release of Information to communicate across agencies about the FVW participant is not required, but any case specific information shared prior to the meeting should be sent using encrypted email or privately via phone.

# 09 – Teen Parents

See Chapter 9 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Policies Specific to Teen Parents
- Education Requirements
- Options for 18- & 19-Year Old Parents
- Roles of Employment & Social Services
- Social Services Assessments
- Online & Distance Education
- Employment Plans Focused on Education
- Documenting/Tracking Education Activities
- Child Under 12 Months & Teen Parents

## Teen Parents in Hennepin County

This chapter is under construction, more information will be available soon. Please contact your agency's Hennepin County MFIP Employment Services Coordinator for questions about local policy and procedure.

# 10 – Paid Employment

See Chapter 10 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Paid Employment
- Full-Time & Part-Time Employment
- Loss of Employment
- Paid Employment:  Described
- Paid Employment:  Documenting/Tracking
- Self-Employment:  Described
- Self-Employment:  Documenting/Tracking
- Work for Rent Reductions
- On-the-Job-Training: Described
- On-the-Job-Training:  Documenting/Tracking
- Paid Work Experience:  Described
- Paid Work Experience:  Documenting/Tracking
- Grant Diversion

## Paid Employment in Hennepin County

### Agency Policy and Procedure for Self-Employment

All ESPs must document their agency's policy procedure for the approval of Self-Employment Business Plans and completion of Self-Employment Progress Reviews. Written procedures may be updated as needed but should always remain readily available to program staff to ensure standard service to Hennepin County residents.

Agency policy and procedures must correspond with State and County policy.

At a minimum, agencies should specify the following items in writing:

- Which agency staff are designated to approve business plans.
- Which agency staff are designated to complete progress reviews.
- Process for conducting business plan and progress reviews (timelines, expectations, involvement of participant etc.)
- What resources are provided to participants to support business plan development (if different from those listed in DHS ES Manual 10.12)

Refer to the MFIP ESP website for the following supporting materials:

- **Self-Employment Business Plan Process Map** – Flow chart explaining basic process agencies should follow when a participant requests to include self-employment activities in their Employment Plan.
- **Self-Employment Progress Review** – Required tool used to discuss and document the participant's self-employment progress (whether towards developing the initial business plan or once the plan is approved), and to determine if self-employment activities will continue to be included in Employment Plan.
- **Self-Employment Business Plan Decision Notice** – Required document used to document and notify the participant of agency's decision and rationale for approval or denial a self-employment business plan.

ESPs are required to use these documents but may also decide to develop additional forms to support agency procedure around approval of plans.

## 11 – Unpaid Work

See Chapter 11 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Unpaid Work: Definition and Limits
- Requirements for Unpaid Work Placements
- Unpaid Work: Documenting/Tracking
- Community Service: Documenting/Tracking
- Providing Child Care/Community Service
- Providing Child Care: Documenting/Tracking
- Fair Labor Standards
- Injury Protection Program

Other Helpful Chapters in the MFIP Employment Services Manual Regarding Unpaid Work:

- 23.27 Non-Displacement
- 23.30 Criteria for Unpaid Work (including union and public employers)

### Unpaid Work in Hennepin County

Unpaid work activities should contribute to the participant's skills development and support them in reaching their long-term employment and training goals. The decision to include unpaid work activities

in a participant's plan should be based on collaborative conversation with the individual. Unpaid work is not an automatically required activity once the participant has exhausted their annual job search hours.

Unpaid work experiences may be a valuable option if the participant is unable to get or keep a job, is not progressing through the goals of their Employment Plan, or requires a specific skill set in order to be successful in the desired workforce.

Before offering or placing a participant in unpaid work or community service, review applicable chapters in the MFIP Employment Services Manual carefully to ensure that all required elements for host sites have been met and sites are set up appropriately.

**Community Service, AmeriCorps, Reading and Math Corps**

These specialized types of community service programs offer stipends, but do not count as earned income on MFIP unless they are at, or above the minimum wage.

However, if the stipend puts the participant's earnings above minimum wage, the income is counted against the grant, and those hours are tracked in MAXIS. To prevent duplicate tracking for an activity in these instances, it is important that the Employment Counselor verifies if the hours have already been tracked in MAXIS by the HSR for the stipend received. If the hours exist in MAXIS, add a case note indicating that hours have been tracked via MAXIS for the month. Do not track additional hours for this activity in WF1 for that month.

## 12 – Job Search

See Chapter 12 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Job Search: Description and Activities
- Job Search Requirements
- Job Search:  Documenting/Tracking

### Job Search in Hennepin County

**Tracking and Reviewing for Progress**

- Round up to the next full hour when a participant submits a Job Search Log where the total hours add up to a number with a half hour increment.
- Review logs for the participant's overall progress in their job search activity, not just completion of required hours. If a participant is lacking hours but appears to be getting positive results and making progress towards the goal, acknowledge the success, and continue supportive conversations with the participant.
- If it is unclear whether the participant is making progress on their job search related goals based on submitted logs, follow up with frequent attempts to check in, get more information, and offer additional support and resources when needed.
- If a participant consistently does not meet their job search activity requirements, discuss the reason(s), and consider alternate activities. If the participant agrees that Job Search is no longer the most appropriate activity for them, update the Employment Plan.

# 13 – Education and Training

See Chapter 13 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Education and Training Overview
- English Language Learning
- English Language Learning:  Documenting/Tracking
- Adult Education
- Adult Education:  Documenting/Tracking
- Job Skills Training Related to Employment
- Job Skills Training: Documenting/Tracking
- Post-Secondary Training and Education
- Post-Secondary Ed: Documenting/Tracking
- Online Education and Training
- Online Learning: Documenting and Tracking

## Education and Training in Hennepin County

### Education and Training Activities Performance Metrics

Hennepin County MFIP Employment Services contracts include two performance metrics related to participant education and training.

#### Education/Training Activities

The Education/Training Activities metric requires agencies to report quarterly on the percentage of all enrolled participants who are engaged in an education or training activity. This output measure reflects participation in activities that provide a foundation for career building. Participation in education and training activities includes:

- High school, adult diploma, GED classes, or other equivalent programs
- Adult Basic Education
- English Language Learning (including ESL and Functional Work Literacy)
- Post-secondary education programs
- Career pathway programming or other short term training programs
- Job Skills Training Related to Employment

#### Education Skill Gain

The Education Skill Gain (ESG) metric requires agencies to report quarterly on the percentage of all enrolled participants who have successfully completed a designated education or training activity. This outcome measure reflects successful educational achievements that support improved career prospects and progress towards economic self-sufficiency. Education Skill Gains may be captured for the following achievements:

- Attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, including a high school diploma, GED, or adult diploma.
- Achievement of ESL Level 6.

- Completion of a post-secondary degree, diploma, or certificate.
- Completion of a short-term training program resulting in a credential.

**Tracking Education Activities and Skill Gains**

ESP Program Managers use WF1 reports to obtain data for education performance metrics. The data included in these reports is based directly upon information tracked by Employment Counselors in WF1 activities. When opening and closing education activities in WF1:

- Open activities to match the current Employment Plan. Do not open the education or training activity prior to it being included in a valid Employment Plan.
- If an education or training activity is not opened in WF1, the participant will not be included in the report used to track performance metrics.
- Participants may obtain multiple credentials within one education/training program. To track multiple credential attainment, it might be necessary to open more than one education/training activity.
- When closing an education/training activity, only select "Successful" under the "Completion Results" tab if the participant has finished their education or training, AND earned the final credential, certificate, diploma, highest level of language proficiency, etc.
- Select "Unsuccessful" under the "Completion Results" tab if the participant has disengaged from the education or training program before achieving the program's end goal. It is possible for a participant to have been successful in their coursework prior to disengaging from the education or training activity, or for participants to leave the program for a positive reason (for example, obtaining employment). However, unless the participant achieves the end goal of the education or training program, the activity exit is tracked as unsuccessful.
- When a participant has achieved ESL Level 6, close the education activity in Workforce One on the date the level achievement was verified and select "Successful" as the outcome. This will allow the outcome to be counted during WF1 reporting.
    - If the participant plans to continue attending ESL after reaching level 6, after you close the original ESL activity, open a new ESL Activity in order to continue tracking participation hours.
    - While it is possible that a student may continue to participate in ESL after achieving a Level 6, review the participants goals to determine if the activity continues to add value for the participant, or if new activities and goals can be set for the Employment Plan.
    - Once the ESL Level 6 achievement has been captured as a successful outcome, all future exits from ESL activities must be counted as "Unsuccessful" to prevent double counting the individual's achievement.
        - For example, if a participant verifies achievement of ESL Level 6 on 01/01/2022, close the activity on 01/01/2022, and indicate that it was completed successfully. Then, if the participant plans to continue attending ESL, open a new ESL activity on 01/01/2022 for future tracking.

**Documentation of Education Skill Gain**

When closing an education or training activity as a success counted as an Education Skill Gain:

- Verify completion of the education or training program. Acceptable forms of verification include:
    - a copy of the diploma or certificate
    - final course grades verifying that the participant has passed the course
    - passing test results from a licensing exam
    - a statement from the program's instructor indicating successful completion
    - verification of successful completion obtained from an online student portal
    - ESL proficiency test results or other supporting documentation verifying ESL level
- Upload the verification used to EDS. (Document Type: Education and Training; Select appropriate Document Name according to verification received.)
- Add a case note that indicates the outcome the participant has achieved in their education or training program. For example, "The participant has completed their Certified Nursing Assistant training and passed all testing standards to earn the credential."

Verification must be received prior to capturing the successful outcome in WF1 for a participant's Education Skill Gain. If you are unable to obtain verification at the time the Employment Plan is updated and the activity is closed, you must select "Unsuccessful" when closing the activity. If verification is received on a later date, the activity exit information may be edited to capture the successful outcome.

## 14 – Social Services and Other Activities

See Chapter 14 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Role of social services activities in Employment Plans.
- Activity types and Employment Plan sections used for different social services activities.
- Documenting and tracking requirements for Social Services and other activities.
- Treatment and Rehabilitation Services.
- Documentation and tracking requirements for Treatment and Rehabilitation Services.

## 15 – Holding

See Chapter 15 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- When to Use Holding as an MFIP Activity
- Holding: Documenting/Tracking

## 16 – Child Care

See Chapter 16 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Child Care Assistance Sub-Programs
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Policies & Requirements
- MFIP Child Care Assistance
- Determining Hours of Authorized Child Care
- Eligibility Periods & Required Reporting
- School Breaks
- Types of Child Care Settings

- Two-Parent Families
- Sanctions & Child Care Assistance
- Inability to Obtain Child Care
- Services to Help Families Find Child Care
- Medical Restrictions & Child Care
- Payment Policies
- Overpayments in Child Care Assistance
- Transition Year Child Care

## Child Care Assistance in Hennepin County

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is available as a support service to MFIP participants engaged in authorized activities with Employment Services. It's important that Employment Counselors assess participants' need for CCAP because they are the primary point of contact for initiating the childcare application. Regularly assessing childcare needs ensures the participant will have the supports necessary to make progress on the goals and activities in the Employment Plan.

Communication regarding childcare needs, authorized activities, and changes in the amount of service required comes from the Employment Counselor based on their ongoing work with participant.

**Supporting Participants Applying for Child Care**

- Provide the CCAP application and assist participants to fill it out and gather necessary verifications. Participants can apply online or by submitting application materials to Hennepin County.
    - Participants are encouraged to apply online via MNBenefits. Supporting documents can be uploaded while completing the online application.
    - ESPs can get a supply of printed Child Care Assistance application packets by emailing HSPH.Brookdale.OS@Hennepin.us. Include the name of the agency, contact person, address, and number of packets needed in the email.
- Assist participants who need help finding a CCAP provider. Parent Aware is a useful resource for choosing the best provider to meet the family's needs.
- Complete a Child Care Plan (CCP) on behalf of the participant to communicate the number of hours childcare is needed for each authorized activity and details about the childcare provider. The CCP is available on the MFIP ESP Website.
    - The best practice is to submit the CCP with the application, whether by mail or by uploading it to MNBenefits at the time of application. By submitting the CCP with the application, Hennepin County staff will be able to quickly assign the incoming application to the ESP's assigned CCW. If the participant fills out the childcare application on their own before you have created a CCP, contact your agency's CCW to notify them of the pending application and submit a CCP for your participant immediately.
    - If you need help determining the proper number of hours for travel time between activities, contact your agency's CCW.
    - The amount of childcare requested on the CCP is a recommendation, not a guarantee. The final approval will come from the CCAP team.

- Before submitting the application, use the ESP Checklist to gather all required forms and verifications. Participants may need to submit additional verifications separately but providing all necessary documentation at the time of application greatly reduces processing time.
- Submit the completed application:
    - Mail paper applications and supporting documents to:

      Hennepin County
      HSPHD Child Care Assistance – MC 718
      300 South Sixth Street
      Minneapolis, MN 55487-0718

    - Submit digitally via the ECF drop box at hhsews@Hennepin.us.

**Checking CCAP Case Status**

Use MEC2 and ECF access to confirm case status and details. MEC2 can be used to check Child Care application status, ongoing CCAP status, whether a childcare provider is registered in Hennepin County, current co-pays, amount of service authorized, and current activities. ECF can be used to determine what information has been requested by the CCW and if requested paperwork has been received.

Childcare staff use MEC2 and ECF to:

- Case note communication with the participant and actions taken on the CCAP case.
- Review income and eligibility for CCAP.
- Request missing documentation from the participant.
- Authorize service based on approved activities in the CCP.
- Determine the participant's sliding fee based on income, household size, and possible childcare provider charges.

If you have questions about the information you see in MEC2 and ECF, contact your agency's assigned CCW.

**Special Circumstances**

- Child Care is not available for foster children.
- Participants who provide in-home childcare cannot receive childcare assistance to care for their own children.
- While claiming the Child Under 12 Months exemption, participants cannot receive CCAP unless there are verified medical circumstances.

## 17 – Family Stabilization Services

See Chapter 17 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Family Stabilization Services Overview
- Eligibility Criteria
- Illness, Injury and Incapacity
- Needed in the Home to Care for an Ill or Incapacitated Member
- Special Medical Criteria

- Developmental Disability
- Mental Illness
- IQ Below 80
- Learning Disability
- Family Violence Waiver
- In the Country for 12 Months or Less
- Applying for SSI or RSDI
- Age 60 or Older
- Unemployable
- Qualified Professionals
- Documenting Conditions
- Enrolling in Family Stabilization Services
- The Employment Plan
- Referrals to SSI & Disability Services
- Sanctions
- Returning Participants to Regular MFIP

## Family Stabilization Services in Hennepin County

**When a Pre-60-month Participant Discloses Potential FSS Eligibility**
Employment Counselors are responsible for providing participants with an overview of the FSS service track and how they may benefit from the flexibility it provides if found eligible. The information regarding the FSS track may be given as part of the Employment Services Overview but should also be revisited at any point during the enrollment that a participant appears to meet FSS eligibility criteria. During this conversation:

- Review all FSS categories and discuss potential eligibility for any that may be appropriate for the participant's situation.
- Support the participant in choosing which category of FSS to pursue if multiple eligibility factors exist. Participants that are potentially eligible for multiple FSS categories are not required to verify eligibility for each, but they should be informed of any benefits that may exist should they choose to provide verification for each category. For example, if a participant verifies eligibility for a category that results in banked months, this would extend the overall length of time in which they can receive MFIP.
- Explain the documentation requirements for verifying FSS eligibility and provide the participant with the form that corresponds with the FSS category they want to request.
- Offer to assist the participant with obtaining documentation. If help is needed, a signed authorization to release information is required before communicating with a third party on the participant's behalf.

**Reviewing Submitted Documentation**
For all pre-60-months FSS eligibility categories, the assigned Employment Counselor is responsible for reviewing documentation and making the FSS eligibility determination, according to the documentation requirements and eligibility criteria outlined in DHS policy.

As part of this determination, confirm that the verification has been completed by a qualified professional as identified by DHS. Refer to state policy for a list of which professionals are qualified to verify each category of FSS eligibility: 17.45 Qualified Professionals (state.mn.us). Then, confirm that adequate information has been provided to verify whether the participant is FSS eligible.

**Documentation is Incomplete**

If the documentation does not include all information necessary to determine FSS eligibility, was not completed by a qualified professional, or if there is reason to question the validity of the document, the assigned Employment Counselor will:

- Follow-up to gather the additional information required to make the FSS eligibility determination.
    - If there is a signed release of information on file, the Employment Counselor may be able to contact the provider directly for additional information.
    - If the qualified professional provides the information necessary to verify FSS eligibility, do not require that another form be submitted. Case note your conversation and who (including name and title) provided the clarifying information.
    - If there is not a signed release of information on file, contact the participant to request they gather the missing information or provide authorization for you to request it on their behalf.
- Develop a short-term, Reduced Hours/Good Cause Employment Plan with the participant if obtaining additional information is expected to take more than 14 days. Include:
    - Action steps related to obtaining the documentation. For example, finding a new provider if needed, scheduling an appointment with the correct qualified professional, or submitting paperwork by a certain deadline.
    - Information about resources or referrals relevant to the participant obtaining the necessary verification.
    - Actions you will take to assist the participant in obtaining verification if needed.

**Documentation is Complete**

If the documentation is satisfactorily completed by a qualified professional, and the participant meets the eligibility criteria for a category of FSS, the assigned Employment Counselor will:

- Create an Outgoing Status Update in WF1 to request MAXIS coding be updated. The Status Update must include:
    - Which FSS category has been approved.
    - The start date of FSS eligibility.
        - The start date of eligibility is the date the documentation provided was signed by the qualified professional.
    - The end date of eligibility indicated by the qualified professional on the submitted documentation.
        - If the qualified professional has indicated the condition is lifelong or has clearly indicated that the expected duration is unknown, the end date of eligibility should be 12 months after the date the form was signed. Do not approve FSS eligibility for more than 12 months; request updated verification at least annually.
        - If the documentation provided does not clearly state the length of time the condition is expected to continue, request additional information prior to making the determination.

- Insert the Status Update into ECF Next and send a worker communication to the TTL team (x127TTL) to request action be taken.
    - On private cases where access to ECF is locked, submit the Status Update to Hennepin County via fax (612-288-2981). Then, contact the TTL team via email at HSPH.ES.TEAM.TTL@hennepin.us to request action be taken. Do not send status update forms via email.
- Monitor the case to ensure your communication is received and coding is updated appropriately. If all necessary information has been provided, the TTL team will typically complete coding requests within 3 business days.
- Update the Employment Plan to correspond with the verified FSS category.

Case assignment based on FSS eligibility type ended 1/1/2025. Do not transfer Pre-60 month cases due to FSS eligibility or category.

**Redeterminations of Pre-60 FSS Eligibility**
Because Pre-60 FSS verification does not impact MFIP case eligibility, the HSR team does not send verification requests when FSS eligibility ends. The assigned Employment Counselor is responsible for tracking and redetermining eligibility when pre-60 FSS eligibility ends. Track FSS end dates and notify the participant in advance when their certification period is ending. Provide information about what verifications may be used reverify eligibility and offer support to gather documentation if needed.

Hennepin County recommends the practice of creating Workforce One Ticklers for 60 and 30 days prior to the FSS end date to ensure the assigned worker takes the appropriate steps in a timely manner. At these times, be sure to check MAXIS and ECF to see if the HSR team has already received updated verifications or indicated any changes on the case.

**Troubleshooting FSS Questions**

For any questions related to FSS cases that are not addressed by this policy, ESP Program Managers should contact their assigned Hennepin County Coordinator.

## 18 – Time Limits and Extensions

See Chapter 18 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- The 60-Month Time Limit Policy
- Agency Responsibilities
- Transition Period in MFIP
- Extension Decisions
- Sanctions & Extensions
- Extension Categories
- Employed
- Ill/Injured or Incapacitated
- Illness, Injury/Incapacity: Participant
- Needed in the Home
- Special Medical Criteria
- Hard to Employ Extensions

- Developmental Disability
- Mental Illness
- Learning Disability
- IQ Below 80
- Unemployable
- Family Violence Waiver
- Two-Parent Families & Extensions

## Time Limits and Extensions in Hennepin County

Most parents are eligible to receive 60 months of lifetime MFIP benefits. Beginning at MFIP month 48, various communications occur to educate the participant about potential extension eligibility categories.

**Case Management Leading Up to 60 Months**

Employment Counselors should continually assess cases in their 48th month and beyond. Employment counselors remain key in helping identify possible MFIP extension eligibility criteria through their conversations with participants. MFIP Employment Counselors are responsible for providing participants with an overview of the FSS service categories and educating participants about extension eligibility.

- In the 48th MFIP month, Employment Counselors are required to complete an Ongoing Employability Measure. This requirement is waived if an Employability Measure was completed in month 46 or month 47.
- Employment counselors should inform participants of documentation requirements needed to verify extension eligibility.
- Employment counselors should offer to assist the participant with obtaining documentation. A signed authorization to release information is required before communicating with a third party on the participant's behalf.

**Administrative Review**

When a participant reaches their 54th month of MFIP, the assigned Employment Counselor and TTL team will complete tasks as part of an Administrative Review and face-to-face meeting. Before the face-to-face meeting, the TTLs require that the assigned Employment Counselor complete a 54-Month Administrative Review Checklist and save the form into WF1 EDS, to assist the TTLs in the face-to-face meeting with the participant. The 54-Month Checklist provides historical information that helps guide conversations and decisions about the participant's extension eligibility.

As part of the 54-month Administrative Review process:

- ESP Program Managers receive an email from the TTLs by the 15th of each month identifying cases that have reached their 54th month on MFIP and require the completion of a checklist.
- The assigned Employment Counselor will complete the Administrative Review Checklist and save to WF1 EDS by the 23rd of the month. The completed checklist should be saved into WF1 using:
  Document Name: Face to Face Extension Checklist
  Document Type: Assessment
- The Administrative Review Checklist does not need to be completed in collaboration with the participant. It can be completed based on historical knowledge of the case.

Once the assigned Employment Counselor completes the 54th Month Checklist, the TTLs:

- Mail an appointment letter out of ECF to the participant to schedule the face-to-face meeting. A case note will be included in both MAXIS and WF1 noting the appointment date and time.
- The purpose of the face-to face meeting is to ensure the participant understands the status of their case, is made aware of the various extension categories and eligibility criteria, options they have as their 60th month on MFIP approaches (such as opting out of cash assistance), and what happens if their case is determined to be not eligible for an extension beyond 60 months.
- The face-to face meeting occurs via phone, and the TTLs will use the information provided via the completed 54th Month Checklist to assist in guiding the conversation.
- If the participant attends the meeting as scheduled, a case note in both MAXIS and WF1 will be added to document the meeting as well as next steps. A face-to-face meeting form will be uploaded into ECF.
- If the participant does not answer the phone for the scheduled appointment and the meeting is not able to be completed, the TTLs will include a case note in both MAXIS and WF1 to note the outcome of the meeting. A total of three attempts to reach the participant for completion of the meeting will be made via appointment memo, reminder phone call, and a "no show" letter accompanied with resources and options to reschedule.

**Determining Initial Post-60 Extension Eligibility**

Cases are not automatically reviewed for MFIP extensions. Participants can request an extension verbally to the Employment Counselor (the request must be case noted in WF1), or the participant can make a written request. If the participant has requested to have their case reviewed for MFIP extension eligibility, the review will occur in the participant's 60th month of MFIP.

The TTLs are responsible for all initial extension eligibility decisions. The extension decision for those reaching time limits on MFIP usually occurs within the first two weeks of the participant's 60th month. To have the TTLs review a case for initial extension eligibility, the Employment Counselor should:

- Create an outgoing Status Update. Indicate via comments section that the participant is requesting a review for initial extension eligibility. This status update document is required in both WF1 and ECF.
- The Status Update must be uploaded to ECF and a worker communication sent to the TTLs to request the review of extension eligibility.
- On private cases where access to ECF is locked, submit the Status Update to Hennepin County via fax (612-288-2981). Then, contact the TTL team via email at HSPH.ES.TEAM.TTL@hennepin.us to request action be taken. Do not send status update forms via email.

Upon decision, the TTLs will email the assigned Employment Counselor to inform them of the extension eligibility decision (approval/denial), the type of extension approved, dates of eligibility, and which agency the case should be transferred to for ongoing post-60 case management.

During the 60th month of MFIP, the Employment Counselor should ensure that all current supporting medical and/or supporting eligibility documentation is uploaded into ECF. If the participant's supporting documentation is overdue for review, the Employment Counselor should ensure that the most recent supporting documents are added to ECF to be considered as part of the extension review.

If the initial extension request is denied:

- When the MAXIS case is closed, the assigned Employment Counselor will follow the transition services timelines and guidelines as outlined in Chapter 3 of the Hennepin County Employment Services Manual.
- If the participant submits additional supporting documentation for an extension request during the transition period, the Employment Counselor will upload the new information into WF1 and ECF, upload a Status Update request for extension eligibility review into ECF and WF1, and send a worker communication via ECF for the TTLs to review the new documentation.
- The TTLs will re-evaluate the case for extension eligibility and advise of their decision.

**Transfer Process for Post-60 Month cases:**
All post-60-month cases approved for an extension of MFIP are transferred to designated agencies (HIRED, Hennepin Operated) who serve the post 60 month extended MFIP population.

When an initial MFIP extension is approved, and the case requires to be transferred:

- The TTLs will determine the receiving agency for the extended case based on capacity at each of the post-60 service providers as part of the extension approval process.
- The TTLs will inform the counselor of type of extension approved, dates of eligibility, and which Post-60-months agency to transfer the case to.
- As the sending agency, the assigned Employment Counselor will inform their Agency Transfer Contact to initiate the transfer process to the receiving post-60 agency within one week of notification from the TTLs.
- The sending Agency Transfer Contact will ensure that the Employment Counselor has prepared the case for transfer prior to initiating the transfer.
- The assigned Employment Counselor will reach out to the participant to inform them about their upcoming case transfer.
- The receiving Agency Transfer Contact will confirm that the current EMPS code appears correctly on STAT/EMPS in MAXIS.
- See Chapter 23 for additional information related to all inter agency case transfers.

If either Agency Transfer Contact identifies questions or concerns on the case pending transfer, they may request additional information from the TTLs who made the initial extension approval.

**Redeterminations of Post-60 Extension Eligibility**
While the TTLs are tasked with determining the initial extension decision, ongoing extension eligibility decisions are made by the assigned post-60 Employment Services Provider. The assigned Employment Counselor is responsible for tracking and redetermining eligibility when post-60 extension eligibility ends. Track end dates and notify the participant in advance of their certification period ending. Provide information about what verifications may be used to reverify extension eligibility and offer support to gather documentation if needed. Be sure to check ECF frequently as the extension eligibility end date approaches as it is possible that a participant will submit updated documentation or verifications to the HSR that should be used in reverifying extension eligibility. If updated documentation exists within ECF that is used to determine ongoing extension eligibility, the information should be uploaded to WF1 EDS by the assigned Employment Counselor.

Hennepin County recommends the practice of creating Workforce One Ticklers for 60 and 30 days prior to the extension eligibility end date to ensure the assigned worker takes the appropriate steps in a timely manner. At these times, be sure to check MAXIS and ECF to see if the HSR team has already received updated verifications or indicated any changes on the case.

The assigned Employment Counselor will review supporting documentation and make the ongoing extension determination. If approving an ongoing extension, the assigned Employment Counselor will:

- Send a Status Update to the TTLs via ECF advising of extension category eligibility and new dates of eligibility.
- Launch a worker communication via ECF to advise the TTLs of the work item for review.
- Save a copy of the Status Update into WF1.

If the assigned Employment Counselor does not have updated medical or other qualifying documentation to support extension eligibility, the extension can be ended due to "no extension identified". The assigned Employment Counselor should:

- Send a Status Update to the TTLs via ECF requesting to end the extension.
- Launch a worker communication via ECF to advise the TTLS of the work item for review.
- Save a copy of the Status Update into WF1.
- When the MAXIS case is closed, the assigned Employment Counselor will follow the transition services timelines and guidelines as outlined in Chapter 3 of the Hennepin County Employment Services Manual.
- If the participant submits additional supporting documentation for the extension review during the transition period, the Employment Counselor will re-evaulate the case for extension eligibility and advise the TTLs via Status Update if an approval is made.

**Family Violence Waivers and Post-60 Application**

In instances when a post-60-months participant submits a new application and requests a Family Violence Waiver to meet extension eligibility, the Family Violence Specialists on the Hennepin Operated team (Family Violence Waiver Specialty Corner) will be leveraged in the process to determine eligibility of the waiver required for application.

The following process will be followed for post-60 FVW applications:

- The Hennepin Operated Family Violence Specialists (FVW Specialty Corner) will coordinate a meeting with the participant to determine waiver eligibility. This meeting will focus on waiver eligibility and subsequent safety planning only.
- If approved, the FV Specialist will complete a paper employment plan (DHS-2409) and safety section (DHS-2309E) in collaboration with the participant.
- The Family Violence Specialist will then upload these documents as well as the documentation of waiver eligibility to WF1 EDS. **OR**
- The future assigned ESP may contact HSPH.fvwspecialists@hennepin.us through encrypted email to request a copy of the safety section and FVW eligibility documentation if these items have not already been saved to WF1 EDS.
- Once MFIP is approved, the participant will be assigned to an ongoing post-60 ESP who will conduct the requested Employment Services Overview and an updated employment plan as per normal practices.
- It's important to note that an additional meeting with a FV Specialist and new safety section is not required to be completed at the first meeting with the participant. While no changes to the safety section can be made after the plan has been signed, the safety section that was previously completed with the Hennepin Operated Family Violence Specialist should be reviewed with the participant as part of the employment plan meeting.
    - If there are necessary changes to the safety section identified during the employment plan meeting, schedule a meeting with a FV Specialist within your agency to update the safety section.

    - If no necessary changes to the safety section are identified, the employment counselor must copy the safety section approved by the FV Specialist into the new plan and include language such as “safety plan created by TD on 05/11/2025” on the signature line for “others involved in plan development” This is important for tracking the existing review date for the FVW.
- The newly assigned ESP may email HSPH.fvw.specialists@hennepin.us if there are any additional questions regarding the safety plan created with the participant.

## 19 – Sanctions and Non-Compliance

See Chapter 19 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Non-compliance
- When not to sanction someone
- Good cause
- Sanction Types
- Vendoring Benefits
- Steps Before Imposing Sanction
- Notices of Intent to Sanction
- How Participants Can Prevent Sanctions
- Pre-60 Month Sanctions
- Closing Cases for 100% Sanction
- Face-to-Face Meetings for 100% Sanction
- Sanction Reviews and Outreach
- Post-60 Month Sanctions
- Dispute Resolution
- Two-Parent Families Post-60 Months
- Ending & Correcting Sanctions
- Dispute Resolution
- Conciliation Conference
- Fair Hearing (Appeal)
- Child Support Sanctions
- Dual Sanctions
- Drug Felon Sanctions

### Sanctions and Non-Compliance in Hennepin County

#### Use of NOITS and Sanction in Hennepin County

Hennepin County has emphasized a shift from transactional services to proactive, participant led service delivery. As a result, only use the NOITS and sanction processes when all other opportunities to engage the participant have been exhausted. The NOITS is not considered an engagement tool.

#### Engagement Prior to the NOITS and Sanction

You are required to make multiple attempts to engage the participant, using varying methods of communication, prior to sending a NOITS and requesting a sanction be imposed. These attempts must

include efforts to engage **individually** with the participant. The minimum engagement requirement for MFIP Employment Services is once per month, however, you are expected to increase your engagement attempts in the months prior to initiating the sanction process by sending a NOITS. Continue to support the participant and proactively seek ways to avoid reducing a family's benefits.

- A NOITS does not count as an attempt to engage the participant to avoid sanction.
- Mass communications are not considered individualized attempts to engage the participant to avoid sanction.

Attempt to engage the participant using all available methods to ensure they have received all of the necessary information about requirements; have had an opportunity to discuss whether the current Employment Plan's activities remain appropriate; are well informed of the consequences of non-compliance; clearly understand steps required to avoid sanction; and have had an opportunity to disclose good cause reasons for failure to comply. Varying methods of communication may include:

- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Emails
- Letters
- Scheduled in person or virtual meetings
- Home visits

If one form of communication is unsuccessful, attempt to reach the participant using another method of communication prior to the start of the NOITS and sanction process. Follow your agency's policies related to authorizations when using certain methods of communication, including emailing, texting, and home visits.

**Assessment Prior to the NOITS and Sanction Process**

In addition to increasing your engagement efforts, always conduct a full assessment of the case when determining if a NOITS and subsequent sanction are appropriate. A full assessment of the participant's case includes:

- Review all recent case notes to determine if the participant has disclosed information that meets the definition of good cause, or if the participant is potentially FSS eligible. For those not in the FSS track, but for whom information indicates possible eligibility, the FSS sanction policy applies.
- Review case notes and other relevant information in MAXIS to determine if critical information has been disclosed to the eligibility team that impacts whether a NOITS or sanction is appropriate.
    - For example, case notes or MAXIS coding indicating homelessness, the recent birth of a child, or work hours indicating the participant is meeting the minimum hour requirements through employment.
- Review information obtained during assessments such as the Employability Measure, MFIP Self Screen, Brief Screening Tool for Special Learning Needs, and/or Observational Checklist to determine if anything suggests the individual may have good cause or is possibly FSS eligible.

If you determine that good cause may be present, or other information exists that makes the participant possibly eligible for FSS, do not initiate the sanction.

**Notice of Intent to Sanction (NOITS)**

- Hennepin County encourages ESPs to utilize WF1 to create a NOITS. The NOITS within WF1 does not need to uploaded into EDS since it is already saved within the system.
- A NOITS must allow participants at least 10 calendar days to comply. Do not send a status update to impose the sanction before the 11th day in order to provide the participant the full 10 days to satisfy the actions steps identified in the NOITS.
- It is acceptable to write a NOITS that allows the participant more than 10 days to comply with the actions outlined.
- Do not sanction participants if their current level of participation meets the minimum program requirements for hours, even if their Employment Plan is written for more.
    - For example: A participant with a child under 6 has an Employment Plan that is written for 30 hours per week of job search activities. They have not submitted any documentation of job search activities for the month, however, MAXIS confirms the participant worked 100 hours in the previous month. Sanction may not be imposed.

**Sanction Cut-Off Dates**

10 Day Cut Off: The last day that HSRs can impose a sanction in the MAXIS system for the following month. This deadline is determined by DHS and allows adequate time for HSRs to send the required notice of adverse action before the case is impacted.

Sanction Cure Date: The last day for a participant to come into compliance with an ESP to have their sanction cured for the following month. Sanctions can be cured on or before 10 days prior to the effective date of the sanction.

Certain instances of consecutive sanction may be cured up to the day before the effective date of the sanction. See ESM 19.27 for guidance related to these instances. 19.27 Pre-60 Month Sanctions (state.mn.us)

**100% Sanctions and Face to Face Meetings**

Before a case can be closed for sanction limit, a face-to-face meeting with the participant is required. Please see the Employment Services Manual, 19.33 for information required to be provided prior to case closure. 19.33 Face-to-Face Meetings for 100% Sanctions (state.mn.us)

**Using ECF For Sanction Requests**

When uploading or inserting a document into ECF, you must also launch a workflow for that document. This step notifies the Sanction Expert team that there is a work item that needs to be completed. If the workflow is not launched, there is no guarantee that your request will be processed.

Hennepin County recommends that Employment Counselors do not wait until the 10 Day Cut Off to make sanction requests. Sanction requests sent on or near the cut-off date are not guaranteed to be imposed for the following month.

**Engaging Participants in Sanction**

After an Employment Services sanction has been requested, Hennepin County expects that attempts to engage beyond the minimum engagement requirement of once per month continue. Provide support and opportunities to resolve the sanction and restore full benefits for the family. Hennepin County requires continued contact using varying methods of communication until you are able to contact the participant and resolve the sanction.

**Case Closure for Sanction Limit**

When an MFIP case is closed for sanction limit, ESPs should refer all participants interested in curing their sanction to the HSR team to begin the reapplication process.

When reapplying for MFIP after reaching the sanction limit, the application will be pended in MAXIS, and a manual referral will be made to the most recently assigned ESP so that the participant may reestablish compliance with Employment Services. If the participant is currently enrolled when the new referral is sent, the ESP should close the current MFIP sequence, and accept and enroll the new referral once received.

When a case is referred to the ESP to cure a 100% sanction, the TTLs will make a referral note indicating that the case is a 7$^{th}$ month sanction referral and indicate the date of the MFIP application for the ESP's reference.

**Establishing Compliance after 100% Sanction**

For participants that are still enrolled with your agency, you may begin working towards establishing compliance prior to receiving the new referral. Monitor the case to ensure that the participant is taking the necessary steps towards reapplication. Once the new referral is received, the close the current MFIP sequence, and accept/enroll the new referral.

For participants that have already been exited from their last MFIP Enrollment Sequence, wait to receive a new MFIP referral prior to beginning work towards establishing compliance. If a previous participant is no longer enrolled with your agency, and contacts you directly requesting to take steps to cure the sanction, direct them to reapply for MFIP so that a new referral can be made. Once the participant is enrolled, work towards curing the sanction can begin. If the participant has reapplied but no referral was sent, contact the eligibility team to request a referral be generated.

If the participant has not come into compliance within 30 days of the application date, the HSR will deny the pending MFIP application. In these instances, do not wait two months to exit the case in WF1. It is okay to close it immediately. If the participant chooses to apply again, another referral will be created.

After reaching the sanction limit, the case is disqualified for one full month before benefits can be reapproved. The participant can reapply at any time during the disqualification period and work towards establishing compliance with Employment Services. The Employment Counselor may cure the sanction during the disqualification period, but unless good cause has been established the benefits will not be approved until the disqualification has ended.

Hennepin County recommends two weeks as a reasonable compliance period to cure a 100% sanction. If according to your professional discretion and specific case details you choose to require compliance for more than two weeks, document your rationale in case notes.

In cases where the 100% sanction occurred in the past and the sanction reason is no longer relevant, it may be appropriate to cure the sanction immediately after the participant completes an ES OV and/or develops a new Employment Plan. Refer to the MFIP Employment Services Manual Chapter 19.45 for examples of these instances.

When the participant has come into compliance and the sanction is ready to be cured, submit a Status Update to the Sanction Expert team via ECF to let them know the client has complied and the MFIP application can be approved.

**Hennepin County Dispute Resolution Process**

There are two levels of the dispute resolution process. A participant may go forward with either one, or both, but each ESP must designate someone within the agency, other than the assigned Employment Counselor, as the person to whom participants can bring complaints against actions taken or decisions made regarding their case. The person who supervises the Employment Counselor would be a logical designee in many instances.

**Conciliation**

This is a voluntary and informal meeting for the Employment Counselor, participant, and potentially a supervisor, to discuss the disagreement around actions taken or decisions made on the case. This step allows an opportunity to resolve the issue within the agency. If a resolution is not achieved, and the participant wishes to pursue the complaint, they may request to appeal. The conciliation is not a mandatory piece of the appeal process, and a participant may move forward with their request to appeal without completing a conciliation with their Employment Counselor.

**Request to Appeals and Fair Hearing**

Participants may submit their request to appeal directly to DHS, to their Employment Counselor, or to the county. Requests to appeal must be made in writing and within 30 days after receiving the notice of adverse action or NOITS.

Participants may submit their request directly to DHS at the following address:

DHS, Appeals Division, Human Services Bldg.
444 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-3818.

Participants may also submit the request to appeal to their Employment Counselor. If an Employment Counselor receives a written request for appeal from a participant, the request should be uploaded to ECF, and an email should be sent to HSPH.EWS.Appeals@hennepin.us to alert the team regarding the participant's request.

**Appeals**

The appeal hearing is scheduled with the State of Minnesota and handled through the Hennepin County Appeals Unit. The Employment Counselor will be notified by the Appeal Unit when an appeal is requested. The Employment Counselor is then required to prepare the information for the appeal and attend the hearing.

Direct correspondence to: HSPH.EWS.Appeals@hennepin.us. The phone number is 612-348-2550.

A completed appeal packet must include the following:

- DHS-33 or the participant's written request to appeal
- DHS-35 State Appeal Summary
- Copies of the Employment Plan
- Copies of relevant case notes and correspondence
- Copies of manual references and DHS bulletins supporting the rationale for steps taken on the case
- Medical or psychological reports if relevant
- Make four copies of the packet, one each for the case file, the participant, DHS, and the HC Appeals Unit.

## 20 – Diversionary Work Program

The Diversionary Work Program (DWP) ended March 1st, 2026.

## 21 – Refugee Services

See Chapter 21 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Voluntary Nature of Refugee Services
- Who Is Eligible
- Minnesota Agencies Providing Refugee Services
- Descriptions of Refugee Services
- Collaborating With Refugee Services
- Links to Additional Information

## 22 – Fraud and EBT Misuse

See Chapter 22 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- Fraud
- EBT Misuse
- Participation During Disqualification

### Fraud in Hennepin County

Hennepin County's Fraud Unit investigates reported program violations to prevent ongoing fraudulent activities. If potential fraud is detected, Employment Counselors should contact Hennepin County's Fraud Unit at:

- Phone: 612-348-9040
- Email: hsph.FAA.service.fraud@hennepin.us
- Fraud tip line: 612-348-4952

Examples of what an Employment Counselor should report cases where:

- a participant has unreported income that has not been counted in benefit calculations.
- a participant won the lottery or received an inheritance.
- a participant isn't living at the address reported to Hennepin County.
- a participant's children are no longer living in the household.
- the second parent is in the home but has not been reported as a member of the unit.

MAXIS case notes may include information about active fraud investigations. Employment Services staff must never inform the participant if they are under investigation. Information related to fraud investigations should never be copied into WF1 case notes.

# 23 – Manager's Chapter

See Chapter 23 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- County and Tribal Duties
- Tribes and MFIP and TANF
- MFIP Data Supporting Systems
- Workforce One
- Family Violence
- Duties to Coordinate Employment Services
- Employment Services Agencies
- A Choice of Providers
- Non-Displacement
- Criteria for Unpaid Work
- Limited English Proficiency Plan
- Qualified Professionals
- MFIP Consolidated Fund
- Medical Assistance and TANF Funding
- Biennial Service Agreements
- Local Extension Request
- Performance Measures
- Quarterly Reports
- Grant Diversion Programs

## Managing Employment Services in Hennepin County

### Case Transfers Between ESPs

There may be times when transferring a case to another ESP is appropriate to best serve the participant. Most often, the participant should be the one to initiate the process by requesting a case transfer.

However, in some situations, it is appropriate for the ESP to initiate a discussion with the participant about the option to transfer their case.

These situations include:

- The participant wants to receive in person services onsite at an ESP office due to difficulty accessing other service delivery options (such as virtual or in the community) and because of current barriers they cannot reasonably travel to the current ESP's office location.
- The participant is working closely with another provider to access additional programs or training opportunities. For example, a participant who is completing a Career Pathways training program with another provider may be interested in also receiving MFIP Employment Services from the same agency.
- The participant works with their current Employment Counselor via an interpreter, however, there continues to be a gap in their understanding of program expectations and how their assigned Employment Counselor can support them. The ESP must document what steps have been taken to effectively serve the resident, including which language services have been made available, and what progress has been made.

Before initiating a conversation about transferring the case, the ESP Program Manager must first contact their assigned Hennepin County MFIP Employment Service Coordinator to discuss the situation, review what actions have been taken, and decide if a transfer to another agency would support better outcomes for the individual. Do not initiate transfers due to language needs without prior approval from your Hennepin County Coordinator.

If a newly referred participant requests a case transfer at the time of enrollment, complete the enrollment and ES OV prior to approving or denying the transfer request.

It is not appropriate for the ESP to automatically initiate a discussion with the participant regarding a transfer:

- Because the participant has limited English proficiency, and another agency is known to serve the specific population. ESPs are required to provide free and timely interpreter services that accommodate residents' language needs. Proactive efforts to serve the LEP participant should be made and documented in WF1 prior to discussing a transfer.
- Because their home address is closer to another ESP's office. Hennepin County MFIP Employment Services are offered through a flexible service delivery model in which ESPs are expected to provide various service delivery options. Refer to Hennepin guidelines around Flexible Service Delivery for details. MFIP referrals are not based on agency proximity to the participant's home. Agencies should be prepared to serve participants who live outside of the ESP's immediate community. If a participant requests a case transfer due to location, be sure that they know the full range of service delivery options available to them through their current ESP before proceeding.
- Because a participant has been challenging to engage, serve, has displayed resistance towards their assigned Employment Counselor, or refused to follow program requirements. If the assigned counselor struggles to develop positive rapport with a participant, the ESP Program Manager may consider a transfer to another Employment Counselor within their own agency.

**Reviewing Transfer Requests**

While participants do have the right to change ESPs, all case transfers must be approved by the agency's designated Case Transfer Contact and completed in connection between both the sending and receiving agencies' Case Transfer Contacts. The Case Transfer Contact for each agency is listed on the ESP Staff Directory. An Employment Counselor may not determine on their own that a participant would be better served elsewhere, may not initiate or accept transfers from other agencies, and may not independently choose to deny a participant's request to transfer.

It is critical for Case Transfer Contacts to carefully evaluate transfer requests prior to approval. Ensure participants are receiving high quality services and the support they need from their assigned Employment Counselor. Confirm that they understand the range of service delivery options available, and that the request for transfer is not based on miscommunication or misunderstanding.

Reasons to decline a transfer request include:

- The participant has requested a change in ESP because of an unresolved conflict between the provider and the participant. In this instance, before making a decision on the transfer request, hold a conciliation conference with the participant, counselor, and Program Manager in order to resolve the conflict (see 19 - Sanctions and Non-Compliance (state.mn.us) for more).
- The case has a pending NOITS or is in sanction. These actions must be resolved prior to a case transfer can be approved.
- The current agency's Case Transfer Contact does not agree that the reason for the transfer request is valid. The participant may appeal the denial of their transfer request.
- The participant's case has been transferred within the last 6 months.

Important things to remember:

- A case transfer must always include a discussion with the participant. Case note all discussions about case transfer requests.
- Two parent families must be transferred together.
- Overviews do not need to be conducted after a transfer, as long as they were completed by the sending agency.
- ESPs may refuse to accept a transfer if they identify that the request contradicts the guidance provided above.
- ESP Program Managers should contact their Hennepin Coordinator at with any questions or concerns related to a transfer request.

### Completing the Transfer

The Case Transfer Contact at the sending ESP will:

- Reach out to the Case Transfer Contact at the receiving ESP to discuss the transfer and confirm they will accept the case.
- The Case Transfer Contact at the sending ESP should include a sufficient level of detail in their communication to the receiving agency's Transfer Contact. This communication should include:
    - The events leading up to the transfer request from the participant.
    - Whether a transfer to another counselor within the current servicing agency was offered as a possible resolution.

    - The options that were provided to the participant to support them in selecting a new ESP for ongoing services.
- Case note all communications related to the transfer, including who approved it at the receiving ESP.
- Work with the current Employment Counselor to confirm the case is ready for transfer:
    - Record all recently issued support services in WF1
    - Upload all required documents to EDS
    - If Childcare Assistance is active on the case, upload a copy of the most recent Childcare Assistance Plan to EDS
    - Create a final case note that summarizes key information for the next counselor (for example, if Overview has been completed, CCAP status, service delivery preferences, specific needs)
- Using the WF1 Case Assignment tab, assign the case to the Case Transfer Contact at the receiving agency. Leave all current activities open when completing the transfer.

If you are the Case Transfer Contact at the receiving ESP:

- Accept the case transfer in WF1 and reassign the case as appropriate to the new counselor. Case note the date the case is received.
- Email the TTL team at HSPH.ES.TEAM.TTL@hennepin.us to tell them that the case has been transferred to your agency. This email will prompt the TTLs to update ESP assignment information in MAXIS on STAT/EMPS. Emails containing personal information including participants' names must be encrypted.
- If Childcare Assistance is active on the case, work with the newly assigned counselor to submit an updated Childcare Plan to your agency's assigned childcare worker within 30 days of the transfer. Submitting the updated CCP will prompt the CCAP case to be reassigned to the CCW assigned to your agency.

### Conflict of Interest

MFIP participants may not receive services from an agency that employs a relative or someone with other close personal relationship to the participant. If a relationship has not been disclosed by the participant, it is the ethical responsibility of the employee to report any enrollment which may be considered a conflict of interest. If a potential conflict of interest exists, agencies will follow the transfer process outlined above to refer the participant to an alternate agency.

If the potential conflict of interest is identified at the time of referral, deny the referral and notify the TTL team so that the case can be reassigned to another ESP.

### Security Transfers

In certain situations, a counselor or other staff member may feel unsafe serving a participant, or circumstances may arise that present a security concern for the Employment Service Provider (ESP) as a whole. These situations may include, but are not limited to:

- Threats or aggressive behavior toward staff or other participants

- Harassment or stalking of staff members
- Repeated violations of program boundaries or policies
- Situations involving law enforcement or legal issues that create safety concerns
- Any behavior that compromises the safety or security of the ESP environment

Counselors should notify their supervisor immediately if they perceive a risk to their safety or the safety of the ESP. Once agency leadership has been notified of a potential safety risk:

- The ESP Program Manager should reach out to their assigned Hennepin Coordinator to discuss the situation and determine whether a security transfer may be considered for next steps.
- The ESP Program Manager should ensure that the WF1 case notes are updated to include the events leading up to the request for a security transfer to allow the request to be thoroughly assessed.
- If the request is determined to require next steps, the assigned Hennepin Coordinator will email the Hennepin Operated MFIP Policy Specialist to jointly determine the transfer request outcome. Additional guidance will be identified as needed, considering the participant's needs, and risk to organizational safety.
- Hennepin Coordinator and the Hennepin Operated MFIP Policy Specialist will share their recommendations regarding the transfer request to Workforce Development Manager and Hennepin Operated Program Manager for approval.
- The assigned Hennepin Coordinator will communicate the outcome of the transfer request to the Transfer Contact at the requesting agency and document the decision in WF1 case notes.

**ECF Upload Instructions**

Hennepin County MFIP Employment Services Providers have a responsibility to communicate MFIP case information in a secure and timely manner with the appropriate Hennepin County team. Employment Services Providers are required to complete file uploads of important participant documents directly into the ECF system, and send ECF worker communications to the appropriate parties as needed.

Procedure for these actions can be found in two Hennepin County Local Policy Update documents:

- For guidance on creating status updates and completing worker communications, see "**MFIP Status Updates Guide**."
- For instructions and troubleshooting on uploading files into ECF, see "**ECF Upload Though Citrix App Guide**."

## 24 – Tools

See Chapter 24 in the MFIP Employment Services Manual for full state policy on the following topics:

- MFIP Initial Eligibility Threshold Guide
- Amount of Earnings Needed to Exit MFIP
- Links MFIP Benefit Levels
- What Is Needed in Employment Services Case File
- List of Forms Useful to Workers
- DHS Optional Forms

- Helpful and Frequently Used Links
- Exit Reasons for MFIP in WF1
- Disability Criteria for SSI Benefits