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TRANSMITTAL: 95 INF-14

TO: Commissioners of  
 Social Services

DIVISION: Economic  
 Security

DATE: April 11, 1995

SUBJECT: Questions and Answers from the March 15, 1995 Pride  
 In Work Teleconference

SUGGESTED

DISTRIBUTION: Local District Commissioner  
 Public Assistance Staff  
 Employment Staff  
 Medical Assistance Staff  
 Services Staff  
 Staff Development Coordinators

CONTACT PERSON: State Employment Program Technical Advisor  
 at 1-800-343-8859, extension 3-8377

ATTACHMENTS: Teleconference Questions and Answers (available on-  
 line)

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.

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On March 15, 1995, State Department of Social Services Commissioner Mary E. Glass presented a statewide teleconference regarding the Pride In Work (PIW) initiative. At the end of the presentation, participants were encouraged to ask questions regarding PIW. However, not all questions could be addressed during the presentation.

Attached are responses to those questions that could not be addressed during the teleconference. If you have additional questions or need further clarification regarding PIW, please contact your Employment Programs Technical Advisor.

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Robert N. Seaman  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Economic Security

PRIDE IN WORK (PIW)  
TELECONFERENCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. If a county is unable to get the support of a town supervisor in creating work sites, what other sources could be used? Also, will the private sector be included?

Creation of workfare projects is a very important component of PIW. There are many government agencies, including city, county, State and federal agencies as well as non-profit agencies, that can be used as sites. We are confident that workfare project development will be supported on the local level. This Department will also be available to assist local districts with workfare project development. At this time, state law prohibits for profit agencies from participating in workfare programs.

2. What is FEDS?

The Front End Detection System (FEDS) is designed to identify potentially fraudulent applications before any benefits are issued. Applications are referred to investigators when specific mandatory or optional "indicators" exist in a case. Those cases are investigated expeditiously and a report is given to the referring examiner within 30 days so that the findings of the investigator can be considered in the eligibility determination. On average, about 6,000 referrals are made every month statewide, with approximately 40% of those referrals resulting in case denial or grant reduction. FEDS has proven to be an effective cost-containment measure.

Each social services district in the state was mandated to have a FEDS program in place by December 26, 1992. The mandate to establish a FEDS program was outlined in an administrative directive (92 ADM-33) issued August 26, 1992. While FEDS is not part of PIW, it is a complementary process which serves to reduce the applicant caseload.

3. How will a 90 day limit on Home Relief be integrated with PIW?

The proposed limit on receipt of HR benefits will make the development of workfare projects more important. Workfare projects that are short term in length and which seek to complete a specific task that would not otherwise be accomplished can provide opportunities for large numbers of workers. This is in contrast to the individual slot development within agencies that has most frequently occurred in the past.

4. There appear to be many opportunities for "fair weather" projects. In smaller rural counties where indoor type projects are not readily available, where can projects be developed?

Some workfare projects will have seasonal limitations. However, creative approaches will overcome these limitations. In Westchester, during the winter months, participants are used to shovel snow for elderly persons at their homes.

5. What are the components of PIW? How do we integrate our disability unit into it?

The starting point for PIW is to identify those who can work and to what extent. Conversely, this screening must also identify applicants and recipients who should be deemed potentially fully disabled. These clients should then be placed in a track to aggressively pursue Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other available disability benefits. While this is happening, the client's status and progress must be tracked. Those not found permanently disabled should be assisted in identifying the type of work they can reasonably be expected to perform. If the disability ceases, the client should be assigned to a workfare project.

6. Can HR applicants volunteer for workfare or PIW prior to their cases being opened? We know they can be placed in training, but what about workfare?

Workfare is just one component of PIW. The number of hours an individual is required to engage in workfare is determined by the level of benefits. Thus, if an HR applicant receives Food Stamps or emergency HR during the application period, the district may, but is not mandated to, use those benefits to determine workfare hours.

The other components of PIW, mandatory SSI application for those determined permanently unemployable, and participation in appropriate treatment programs for those determined temporarily unemployable, are eligibility requirements. Districts do not have to wait for a case to be opened to engage applicants in these components.

7. When services are supplied by other agencies, for example job training workshops, can these agencies require more than the 75% attendance referred to in the regulations? If the agency requires 90% attendance how does this affect compliance?

The 75% attendance standard is a federal requirement for purposes of determining who may be counted in computing a state's ADC participation rate. Under PIW, the expectation is that every individual will participate 100% in their treatment program or workfare project unless there is a documented reason for non-compliance, e.g., illness.

8. If the object of Pride in Work is to get people into the workforce, where will the jobs come from given the current economy? What about the lack of health insurance available to recipients who find jobs?

It is our belief that employment opportunities are currently available for many Home Relief recipients. PIW will help these recipients to obtain these employment opportunities. Participants who want to work must be given the opportunity to work. In addition to providing needed services, participants are given the opportunity to gain job skills at workfare assignments. More importantly, the workfare component of PIW helps participants build resumes and provide references that enable them to find employment. Employers have stated that job applicants with good attitudes, who come to work

on-time each day are more desirable than skilled applicants with bad work habits.

Job availability will vary throughout New York State. However, people must be responsible for themselves and if individuals are employable they should be working or aggressively looking for work. Department statistics have indicated that entries to employment have continued to increase over the last several years despite the current economic situation.

A lack of medical insurance should not deter someone from accepting employment. For ADC recipients who find employment, transitional medical assistance is available. Currently, there are no plans to offer transitional medical assistance to Home Relief recipients who find jobs.

9. What is Westchester County's Entries to Employment Rate?

From October 1993 to September 1994, Westchester County placed over 220 Home Relief recipients in jobs. In addition, over 1,400 Home Relief recipients were sanctioned for non-compliance over the same period of time. A number of other factors should also be considered when determining the success of PIW. These factors include entries to employment, applications for assistance, case closings and other cost savings. Over the last five years, the Home Relief population in Westchester County has increased by less than 1% while some districts have increased up to a statewide high of 130%. The statewide increase during the five year period was 17%. In addition, PIW participants have provided Westchester County with over 300,000 hours of work at public and non-profit agencies without any additional costs to the taxpayer. Referrals to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through the initiative have resulted in over \$1.5 million in savings.

10. RE: Fair Hearings - My experience has been that Hearing Officers generally side with clients, even when workers present adequate and accurate documentation. How do we change this?

The PIW computer system gives workers immediate access to information on each participant. Historical information regarding case actions are available through the system. Westchester County has found that in addition to having workers attend each fair hearing with the proper case record information, clear and consistent communication to each participant about expectations and consequences has resulted in a high affirmance rate.

11. How is PIW different from work relief or CETA that we've used in the past?

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) refers to a subsidized employment program. One of the PIW components is workfare or work experience, but PIW is not only a workfare program. PIW involves the entire Home Relief population. Those considered employable could be sent to a workfare assignment or other activity. Those who are temporarily unemployable may be referred to mental

health or drug treatment. Those considered permanently unemployable may be required to apply for other sources of income such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

12. If a client was actively participating in PIW and comes up on a wage match for concealed employment income for the same period, is the grant or income recoupable since the client worked for it?

Yes. The hours worked are not considered or used to reduce the overpayment amount. A recipient cannot work off assistance to which he or she was not entitled.

13. Are Home Relief participants required to work 20 hours a week at a worksite or would the number of hours be determined by dividing the monthly benefit by the applicable wage of pay for the workfare project? Are GED and job search included in the 20 hours per week for PIW?

Under PIW, the number of hours that a PIW participant may work is based on the amount of the Home Relief benefit and, at district option, the Food Stamp benefit, divided by the federal or State minimum wage or the prevailing wage whichever is higher. For example, a Home Relief recipient receiving \$340 monthly in benefits would be required to work 80 hours a month on a project that pays minimum wage (\$340 divided by \$4.25).

At this time, there is no 20 hour per week requirement. However, Governor Pataki's proposed budget bill would provide for a maximum of 20 hours per week in workfare for employable Home Relief recipients without children who are also participating in a supervised job search program.

14. What is the client to worker ratio for PIW and how does it compare with the ADC client to worker ratio?

In Westchester County, the client to worker ratio in PIW is approximately 200 to 1. There is a similar client to worker ratio in the ADC program.

15. Will videotapes of the teleconference be available?

This Department's Office of Human Resources Development (OHRD) will be forwarding videotapes of the teleconference to the Staff Development Coordinators in each local district.

16. Is there a safety net in PIW for non-compliant/sanctioned clients? Has PIW in Westchester County increased the rates of homelessness, crime and/or referral to adult protective services or children services?

The PIW program is operated under existing state law and regulations. Westchester County staff have indicated that PIW has not resulted in increases in homelessness or crime and referrals to both adult protective or children services have not increased.

17. The additional workfare projects and recipients working will generate additional training related expenses, therefore increasing the LDSS workload. Will additional staff need to be hired to meet the workload? Will additional funds be available for staff?

The Pride in Work system that is currently under development will support the increasing workload. Point of Service terminals will be provided to record attendance at workfare sites and Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation sites. Workers will receive this attendance data to enable them to better determine when to sanction a recipient or authorize training related expenses. The system will also assist the worker by producing many of the documents currently completed manually; these include the various appointment letters, the conciliation notification and internal and external referrals. Also, at this time there is no additional funding available to hire additional staff. We believe that the system will actually create efficiencies within the districts and the overall impact will include reduced staff time in conducting Pride in Work system supported functions.

18. Will there be a place on the automated tracking system for diversions? Diversions that result from "Front Door" activities should be tracked.

The Pride in Work System will allow the recording of activities for applicants the day the application is registered on the Welfare Management System (WMS).

19. How will card swipe be operated for recipients that are involved in workfare groups or "crews" that move from project to project?

Daily attendance at workfare assignments will be verified through the use of card swipe technology. When permanently mounting the card swipe service is impractical, attendance verification can be conducted through the use of battery operated devices. The hand-held device can be transported to the actual work site where each client will swipe the Benefit Issuance Card at the beginning and end of the day. The device will store each of these swipe transactions including the client's Client Identification Number (CIN), date and time of verification and site identifying data. By plugging the device into a phone jack at the end of the day, the information will be transmitted to a central data base for further processing. This information is also matched against client specific data in the PIW mapper system.