

OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE

INFORMATIONAL LETTER

TRANSMITTAL: 00 INF-20

TO: Commissioners of  
Social Services

DIVISION: Temporary  
Assistance

DATE: October 10, 2000

SUBJECT: WMS Input Directions to Assure Accurate and Complete  
Federal Reports

SUGGESTED

DISTRIBUTION: Temporary Assistance Directors  
WMS Coordinators  
Medical Assistance Directors  
Food Stamp Directors  
Staff Development Coordinators

CONTACT PERSON: Program Questions:  
1-800-343-8859:  
Temporary Assistance: Central Region/PA Policy Team  
at extension 4-9344.

ATTACHMENTS: None

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
99 ADM-7					

A. Introduction

The purpose of this informational letter is to explain how WMS input of household information for temporary assistance cases affects necessary federal reporting. It also stresses the need to structure WMS input so that it provides a logical basis for complete and accurate federal reports.

The federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of August, 1996, provides for a penalty of 4% of the State's federal TANF block grant for failure to submit accurate, complete and timely reports. Based upon this State's block grant amount of \$2.4 billion, a 4% penalty for faulty reporting could, therefore, amount to in excess of \$90 million. In addition, separate and substantial penalties exist for failure to enforce time

limits and for failure to meet work participation rates. It is very important to take every step to assure that New York State's reports continue at a high level of accuracy and completeness.

Analysis of the first federal reports has revealed certain problems that arise from apparently contradictory WMS input that is incorrectly processed by the automated logic in place to produce report data for TANF reporting and for employment reporting. It is necessary to resolve these contradictions by identifying and eliminating the input situations from which they arise. This letter describes the situations and provides guidelines to correct the problems.

## B. WMS Input Guidelines

In order to assure the accuracy and completeness of federal (TANF and Employment) reporting, local districts should take steps to assure that workers adhere to the following guidelines when deciding upon WMS input:

### 1. Relationship

The Relationship Code field on screen 3 (For NYC WMS, TAD item #329) is used to determine the time limit tracking status of individuals and is also central to the assignment of the "parent count" used in the calculation of employment participation rates. Workers must therefore take care to use the codes as accurately as possible in the designation of relationships of members of the household. To address identified problems on the database, directions to workers should stress the following principles:

a. Child in Common: When two unmarried individuals have a child in common in the assistance household, one of the individuals (the one not identified as 01 - Applicant/Payee) should be identified with Relationship Code 30 - Non-Legal Union, Child in Common. In such situations, use of code 03 - Non-Legal Union - is not appropriate and will cause an incorrect "parent count" for the case.

b. Essential Person: The Essential Person Relationship Code (12) must not be used to identify individuals who must be included in the case through filing unit rules - that is, because the individual is the natural or adoptive parent of a child under 18 in common with another individual in the case, or is the blood-related or adoptive minor sibling of a minor child receiving assistance. Code 12 should be used only when the sole basis for inclusion of the individual in the case is the individual's status as an essential person. Proper identification of essential persons is especially important in time limit tracking as such individuals are counted for the State Sixty Month Time Limit but not for the TANF Time Limit.

### 2. Student Status/Highest Degree of 18 Year-Old

As explained in 99 ADM-7, an individual who is 18 and a student (Employability Code = 35) is considered a child for time limit tracking purposes. However, if such an individual has a high school or equivalent secondary degree, that individual is an "adult" for purposes of category, time

limits, and federal reporting. This is a continuation of previous Office policy that was not specifically addressed in 99 ADM-7. It is therefore extremely important that workers accurately code the Highest Degree field in WMS screen 03 (NYC WMS, item #390 on TAD). Individuals with a high school or equivalent degree must be coded "1 - High School Diploma, GED or National External Diploma Program." Eighteen year-olds who are identified as having such a secondary degree will be tracked as adults for time limits, even if also coded as "student" in the WMS Employability Code field.

### 3. Time Limit Exemption Indicator

As explained in GIS Message 2000 TA/DC016 (9/12/00), workers must enter the WMS Exemption Indicator (T/Lm) on screen 03 (NYC WMS item #393 in TAD) whenever a case is at or over a time limit and a decision is made that the case is exempt from such time limit. The Exemption Indicator entry will establish the case as a valid exemption for federal reporting and for Tracking-related time limit reports. The Indicator must be entered where appropriate even though other WMS fields (e.g., Employability Code) might be used as the basis for the time limit exemption. Appropriate Exemption Indicator entries are:

#### **Upstate WMS**

- T - TANF/60 Month Exemption (Case types 11 or 12 only)
- S - Safety Net cash/24 Month Exemption (Case type 16 only)
- A - Aid Continuing (Case types 11, 12, 16 only)

#### **NYC WMS**

- X - Time Limit Exemption
- A - Aid Continuing

### **C. Recommended Action/List**

1. General: Properly applied, the above guidelines will help assure the continued effectiveness of reports produced from WMS data. Adherence to these guidelines will also help maintain the acceptability of federal reports, thereby enabling the State and local districts to avoid federal fiscal penalties associated with reporting deficiencies. Districts should therefore take steps to assure that these directions are communicated to all staff responsible for creating WMS input.

2. List - Cases with Relationship Code 03: The Department of Labor has requested a listing of all cases which include an individual on WMS coded with Relationship 03 - Non-Legal Union, and also a minor child coded "son" or "daughter" and with the same last name as the individual coded 03. Workers must examine all listed cases and apply the instructions contained in this letter to change the Relationship Code of these individuals to 30 - Non-Legal Union, Child in Common, where appropriate. The "Non-Legal

Union" listing will be available shortly after the issuance of this letter. A GIS will notify districts of its availability.

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Patricia A. Stevens  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Temporary Assistance