**DATE: May 16, 2022**

**OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #22-05-02**

**SUBJECT:** Changes to Employment and Training (E&T) Contractor Use of Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance Activities for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Participants

**TO:** Executive Directors

**FROM:** Robert Patrick

 Acting Director

 Bureau of Operations

**PURPOSE**

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) of changes to E&T contractor use of TANF Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance activities.

**BACKGROUND**

Pennsylvania is committed to provide human-centered programming and policies to move families out of poverty and into economic security. The Department acknowledges not all E&T participants can address goals set on the Agreement of Mutual Responsibility (AMR) when activity time limits are strictly enforced.

TANF Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance activities are core activities that include defined periods of job search and job readiness assistance federally limited to 12 weeks in the preceding 12-month period, no more than four weeks of which are consecutive. For purposes of the 12-week limitation (no more than four consecutive weeks), a week consists of seven consecutive days. This federal limitation is *only* for the purpose of counting hours spent in this activity toward the state TANF Work Participation Rate (WPR). [Federal flexibility](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/policy-guidance/tanf-acf-pi-2006-04-qualifying-count-participation-job-search-and-job-readiness) allow states to choose when time spent in these activities is claimed toward the state WPR.

**DISCUSSION**

Effective upon publication of this memorandum, the Department will allow participants to continue Job Readiness Assistance Activities beyond federal time limits when a participant is actively engaged with an E&T contractor and working on the goal plan identified on the AMR and Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

**TANF JOB SEARCH AND JOB READINESS ASSISTANCE**

Pennsylvania defines TANF Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance as the act of seeking or obtaining employment and/or preparation to seek or obtain employment. Job Readiness Assistance includes life skills training/coaching, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities. Activities identified as Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance include:

* Defined periods of job search and job readiness assistance
* Workplace preparation that may include instruction in interviewing techniques, resume preparation skills, time management, and identification of employer and workplace expectations
* Problem solving, reading comprehension, decision making, and critical thinking skills
* Limited basic literacy and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) preparation embedded with job readiness assistance as necessary for an individual to seek or obtain employment; this includes literacy and English instruction in the context of preparing a resume or job application, interviewing skills, workplace expectations, and effective job seeking
* Barrier remediation services to prepare individuals for job search and employment such as (but not limited to) criminal history assistance, family services, homelessness/housing services, domestic violence assistance, substance abuse or mental health treatment, and vocational rehabilitation
* Basic life skills instruction such as balancing life and work, budgeting, parenting classes, and household management
* Career exploration including aptitude testing

**NOTE:** Substance abuse, mental health treatment and/or therapy must be determined to be necessary and documented by qualified medical, substance abuse, or mental health professionals.

Job search and job readiness activities **must** be supervised by the contracted E&T provider on an ongoing basis not less frequently than once each day in which the individual is scheduled to participate. Self-directed job search is not an allowable activity for TANF recipients.

CAOs will continue to discuss participant progress and need for supports/services to achieve goals on the AMR/IEP at Direct Service Team (DST) meetings. Extended use of Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance activities is not cause for CAO action.

**WORK PARTICIPATION RATE (WPR)**

The Bureau of Employment Programs (BEP) will continue to track the use of these activities via program monitoring and the monthly TANF Sample. If an individual is selected for the TANF Sample, BEP will review the case and determine whether it can claim time spent in Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance activities toward the WPR; this will not be the responsibility of CAOs.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Share and review this information with appropriate staff members.
2. Direct questions regarding this Operations Memorandum to your Area Manager.
3. This Operations Memorandum is in effect until further notice.