

Webinar Transcription

OFA Regions VI and VIII Webinar Series: TANF Data Reporting and Analysis Webinar # 1: Thursday, June 27, 2013

Speaker: Patrick Brannen, Consultant

Content: Overview of the section 1-4 reports, work participation rate files and feedback, TANF sampling, and common edits and error flags.

WELCOME

Larry Brendel: Good afternoon to those of you on the East Coast, and good morning to all others. My name is Larry Brendel and I am the Regional Program Manager for the TANF [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families] team in Dallas, and also Interim Manager for the Denver team. I would like to give a hardy welcome to all state TANF administrators, state data staff, and others to the first in a series of technical assistance Webinars that address *TANF Data Collection and Reporting*. In terms of the series, we do plan to hold another four Webinars between now and the end of the Federal Fiscal Year around data reporting issues. You will be receiving more information in the coming days and weeks on those upcoming Webinars, but at this point I am anticipating that the remaining four Webinars will start on Thursday, August 1, same time, same place, and every other Thursday through mid-September. So if you would hold the dates August 1, August 15, August 29, and September 12, that is when we are anticipating to do the additional Webinars around *Data Collection and Reporting*.

Larry Brendel: Today we are going to focus on an overall review of reporting requirements, including sampling issues as well as participation rate and time limit calculation. On the line we have staff from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), the Division of State and Territory TANF Management and Technical Assistance. We also have several staff from ICF International, our logistical contractor who helped us set up this Webinar, and will be helping facilitate the session. We also have other OFA managers and staff from Central Office, as well as other OFA Regional TANF program managers. I believe we had over 70 participants register for the call, including representatives from all 11 states in Regions VI and VIII, as well as another four or five states from around the country. We certainly welcome everyone and we appreciate you taking the time from your busy schedules to join us.

Larry Brendel: Today's presenter is Patrick Brannen. Pat has had a big role in data collection well before TANF was created in 1996. He was a federal employee for more than 36 years; 24 of those years were with the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Program and then TANF. Patrick wrote the programs and documentation related to Work Participation Rates and time limit calculations. Every month Pat sends feedback on data transmissions for each state to the Regional Offices to be shared with their states. We certainly are sad to say that Patrick's work for Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is ending at the end of this month, but we are grateful that he has agreed to share his expertise one last time with us. Patrick's duties will be picked up by others in the OFA's Division of Data Collection and Analysis.

Larry Brendel: We have got a lot of ground to cover over this next hour and a half. The time will be divided into four segments, which Patrick will explain as he gets into his presentation. So without any further ado, I am going to turn the program over to our honored guest and presenter, Patrick Brannen.

OVERVIEW OF TANF DATA REPORTING AND RELATED TOPICS

Patrick Brannen: Thank you, Larry. As Larry mentioned, I have a pretty ambitious agenda today, so I will not give you my usual tales of woes or list of jokes. I will just start right in. What I plan to cover in the first segment is the TANF Data Reporting Requirements. In the second segment, TANF Sampling. In the third

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segment, Work Participation Rates. And then in the last section, the data that I send to states each month that has the quarterly data, and we will talk about error codes and the like.

TANF DATA REPORTING REQUIREMENTS – STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BASIS

Patrick Brannen: So to begin, the Data Reporting Requirements. The statutory basis is the Social Security Act as amended by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 and the Claims Resolution Act of 2005. The regulatory basis is 45 CFR 260-265, with Section 265 being primarily the data reporting requirement.

Patrick Brannen: States are required to submit complete and accurate data on disaggregated data for families receiving TANF and SSP-MOE [Separate State Programs – Maintenance of Effort] assistance and families no longer receiving TANF and SSP-MOE assistance within 45 days of the close of the quarter. The quarterly financial data may be based on samples or the entire caseload, and they must be submitted electronically. If the state fails to submit complete and accurate data within the 45-day deadline, they may be subject to a penalty of up to four percent of their State Family Assistance Grant. However, if they submit the complete and accurate data by the end of the quarter immediately succeeding the quarter for which the data is due, then any penalty imposed would automatically be revoked. I am now on my sixth slide, and that is the TANF Data Reporting.

TANF DATA REPORT

Patrick Brannen: The TANF Data Report and the SSP Data Report, which mirrors the TANF Data Report, are divided into four sections. Section one is the disaggregated data on families receiving assistance under the TANF program. And this section has three different levels of data. It has family level data, adult level data, and then the child level characteristics data. The family level data includes data elements like the amount of cash assistance, the amount of Food Stamps assistance, receipt of child care, the type of family for Work Participation Rate, public housing, and reason for an amount of reduction in assistance for the TANF. Plus it has the time limit element of whether or not the family is exempt from the accrual of months or the five-year time limit provisions.

Patrick Brannen: Section two is the closed case data for families and individuals who are no longer receiving TANF assistance. Section two has two levels of data. It has the family level data, which the main new item within that family level data is the reason for closure. And then it has person level data, which has similar characteristics to what is in section one.

Patrick Brannen: I did not talk about the adult level data and the child level data for section one. So let me go back and do that. The adult level data, characteristics data, has normal characteristics such as age, gender, receipt of Federal benefits, citizenship codes, relationship to head-of-household, marital status. And then it has all the work activity data, the hours of participation is where you code that, the work participation status code, the work-eligible individual indicator code, and it has some additional earned income and unearned income, and employment status. The child level data has the similar characteristics as the adult level data, but would not have the work activity data associated with it.

Patrick Brannen: The personal level data in section two is very similar to the characteristics data in section one. Again, it is to generate characteristics about families no longer receiving assistance.

Patrick Brannen: Section three contains aggregated data on families applying for, receiving, and no longer receiving assistance. It includes data elements such as: the total number of families, the number of two-

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parent families, the number of one-parent families, the number of no-parent families, total number of recipients, the number of adult recipients, the number of child recipients, the amount of total assets, the number of closed cases, the total number of applications, the number of new applications, the number of denied applications. The number of out-of-wedlock births are also included in that item.

Patrick Brannen: Section four is strictly for states that submit their data based on a sample, and this is the caseload by stratum for each month within the quarter. And that is very important so we can properly weigh sample data.

DEFINITIONS

Patrick Brannen: There are a number of definitions that are important, and I have moved on to slide seven. They are important in data reporting. The first is, what do we mean by complete and accurate data? For the disaggregated data, states are to report data that is available to them in their case records or financial records through automated data systems. It is supposed to be internally consistent and free from computational errors. The data must be reported for all data elements by no missing values. And it must be reported on all families, or if the state opts for the sample on all families that are in the state sample, which was selected using special sampling methodologies.

Patrick Brannen: The definition of assistance is long and I am not going to read it entirely. I will let you do that. It is available to you in the regulations and in the data reporting instructions right before the types of assistance. But basically it is cash payments, vouchers, etc., that are used for basic needs, including food, shelter, housing, clothing. It does include transportation and childcare for unemployed families, but not for employed families. It does not include this non-recurring short-term benefits. There is a whole host, a list of items that are included, excluded, which you get from the definition.

Patrick Brannen: We have defined TANF family in the regulations to mean all those individuals in the eligible family receiving assistance, essentially the assistance unit, plus the following additional people living in the household if not in the eligible family receiving assistance. And that is parents and caretaker relatives of a minor child receiving assistance, minor siblings of a minor child in the eligible family receiving assistance, and anyone whose income or resources are used to determine the amount of assistance that would be paid to the family.

Patrick Brannen: A two-parent family for Work Participation Rate purposes we have defined to include all families, and we defined that at a minimum to include all families with two or more natural or adoptive parents of the same minor child who are living in the home and are work-eligible individuals, unless both are minor and neither is the head of the household. That is a minimal definition and states can expand upon that definition to include other parents such as step-parents.

Patrick Brannen: An adult is an individual who is not a minor child. A minor child is an individual who has not attained 18 years of age, or has not attained 19 years of age and is a full-time student in secondary or equivalency level of vocational educational training.

Patrick Brannen: A noncustodial parent is a parent who lives in the state but does not live in the household with his or her child.

Patrick Brannen: A work-eligible individual means an adult, the adults or minor child head-of-household receiving assistance or non-recipient parents, unless the parent is a minor and not the head-of-household, is a non-citizen and ineligible to receive assistance due to his or her immigration status, or at state option

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on a case-by-case basis, a recipient of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Aid to the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (AABD) in the territories. The term also excludes a parent living in the home who is caring for a disabled family member living in the home, provided there is medical documentation to support the need for the parent to remain in the home to care for the disabled family member. At state option on a case-by-case basis, a recipient of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and an individual funded under MOE Tribal TANF funds, unless the state opts to include that family in the Work Participation Rates.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED TO STATES

Patrick Brannen: Next slide. I have provided, and I believe you can download from the Web site that you signed on, the following list of documentations. The first item is the instructions to the TANF Data Report, the TDR and SDR. It would have been nice if we had sufficient time to go over this element by element because I think that is really what a good TANF Reporting 101 session would give, but there is not sufficient time to do that, so you will have to read it for yourselves.

Patrick Brannen: The second document, WPRPGM, is the Work Participation Rate Program documentation. There is a lot of information in there that describes some of the pseudo code logic associated with how I wrote the program, what data elements are used, and at the end of it I do have a list of error codes which is duplicated by another document here. It is worthwhile at least looking through it once and see what you can glean.

Patrick Brannen: The Files and Formats document is a list of the files and formats that I send out to the regions to be forwarded to the states each month. And some of those documents, or most of those documents, are text files and some of them do not have headers. So in order to know what each field means on those documents without headers, you need to have the Files and Formats document. There is enough information in there about what these files are and how important they are to you. So it is a worthwhile document to read and understand what is going on.

Patrick Brannen: The next document, the WPR Error Flags Edits, they are the same edits that I mentioned that are at the end of the Work Participation Rate Programs. And the edit files show the code, what the code stands for, and what fields were used to get that edit. This document would be used to help you find out what is wrong with the case in error and make the corrections.

Patrick Brannen: The TLPGM document is the Time Limit Program document, and there is a lot of information in this document. It describes how we measure states' adherence to the federal 5-year time limit. There is also at the back of this document a list of the time limit error flag codes. And so that is useful in correcting the error codes that come up on the time limit error flag files I send you.

Patrick Brannen: The TANF Sampling Manual is important not only for states that sample, because they need it to develop their sampling plans, etc., but there is a lot of information in the manual that is applicable in all states in terms of your frame construction and retention of documents, etc. So it is worthwhile even for the states that do not sample to have their data people read through the TANF Sampling Manual and glean what information they can.

Patrick Brannen: The final document is this Sample Monthly WPR file. And this document is an Excel spreadsheet and it allows you to take data from the summary tables that I send and plug into the spreadsheet and it shows you how the Work Participation Rates are actually calculated in the summary file data. So it is useful for states, particularly if you are calculating your Work Participation Rate and you

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are getting a different rate than I am. You can kind of see where we differ in our rates. And that is the end of my first section so I will open it up for questions.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Hi, everyone. As a reminder, if you have a question and you want to ask it verbally, you need to have a phone icon next to your name. On the participants' panel you can click the raise hand icon and that will alert us that you have a question and we will unmute your line. If you do not have a phone icon or if you would rather submit a question online, you can also do that by simply clicking on the Q&A panel on the floating toolbar and just submit that question to All Panelists. Okay, it looks like we do not have any questions at this time. If you do think of any, feel free to submit them online and we will have another Q&A break soon. Thank you.

TANF SAMPLING

Patrick Brannen: Okay, my next section is on TANF Sampling, and I have a number of topics I want to cover on it. My first topic is on the Sampling Plans. And the states have the option to report on their entire caseload or sample cases. If they opt to report on a sample of cases, they need to submit a TANF Sampling Plan for approval prior to any sampling processes. The plans are due in the Central Office at least 60 days before the beginning of the sampling period, the fiscal year, which is usually when we start changing from non-sampling to sampling. And the plans must have fully documented all the processes and procedures that the state is going to use.

Patrick Brannen: The Criteria for Plan Approval must conform to principles of probability sampling. That means that all cases in the sample frame are your list of cases from which you are going to select your sample. All cases on that frame must have a known non-zero chance of being selected. Because some states stratify, they will not all have an equal chance of being selected, although within a strata they will have an equal chance of being selected. The documentation must fully describe the sample frame, how it is constructed, how it is maintained, the timing of updating the frame, any problems associated with the frame, whether or not it is complete and lack of completeness, and any other procedures that you use that would show problems associated with using that frame. I know if you are using a payroll listing you may have a sampling frame where you have more than one payment, so you have to un-duplicate payments. We have one state that uses a Medicaid frame and there are a lot of cases on that frame that do not receive TANF. So there are things like that that must be explained in the sampling plan to give us the most full understanding we can of how this frame was constructed and how you are sampling from it. You must fully describe your sampling procedures that you use to select cases from the frame, and methods, etc. You should also describe the methods of estimating totals, percentages, etc., from the sample frame because our idea of what you are really doing or our understanding is important that we know that you are doing with the way you are sampling.

Patrick Brannen: The Annual Sample sizes for both the TANF and the SSP are 3,000 completed case reviews. Of the 3,000 completed case reviews, 600 should be newly approved applicants. And of the 2,400 ongoing cases, 600 of those should be two-parent families and the other 1,800 ongoing cases. For the closed cases, the annual sample is 800 completed case reviews. For states that have a very, very small caseload, there is an adjustment in our sampling manual to adjust for these sample sizes, so you get a little bit of a break on the 3,000 and the 800. Approximately one-twelfth of the sample should be selected each month and states should monitor their sample size and sample selections. Most states do a marginal over-sample to ensure that they select enough cases in a month, 250 cases plus, so that any listed-in-error cases which are families for the active cases that did not receive assistance for the month, that they

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correct for that. If a state throughout the year finds that it has not selected enough cases, then it is going to have to make an adjustment for under-sampling. And the sampling plan should include a description of how they would do that if this happens.

Patrick Brannen: By virtue of sampling, there is going to be sampling errors associated with any estimates made from that sample. For the Work Participation Rate, we will use the midpoint estimate from our estimators around which we could construct confidence balance, and based on our minimal sample sizes, we are satisfied with the precision this will provide. But if a state is not satisfied with the precision that they will achieve based on our minimal sample sizes, it is the state's responsibility to increase those sample sizes to a precision it is willing to accept. And, of course, if they report 100 percent of their caseload, then there is no sampling error associated with those cases. There may be non-sampling error, but not sampling error.

Patrick Brannen: The Monthly Sample Frame for active cases is a list of all families that received assistance for the month through the end of the month. Because of the 45-day requirement to submit data after the close of the quarter, we do not require you to include on the sample frame cases that received assistance after the month for the month. But if they received it before or during the month, then it should be included on the TANF Frame and Active Frame. For the closed cases, the frame consists of all cases that were terminated assistance for the current month but received assistance in the prior month. And the sample frames are similar for SSP-MOE.

Patrick Brannen: Treatment of Special Cases. I briefly mentioned newly approved applications, and frequently on a newly approved application, states pay back to date of application. So if somebody applied in June and was approved on the 2nd of August and was paid on the 2nd of August, they got a partial check for June, a full check for July, and a full check for August. And because the August payment was made for August before the end of August, the case has to be on the August frame. The state has the option to include it on the July frame or the June frame. It is highly unlikely they would include it on the June frame but it is possible they may want to include it on the July frame. If they include it on the July frame, the case will be a new application for July. If not, then the case is a new application for August. And you should describe in your sampling plan how you are dealing with these special cases. So other special cases might be noncustodial parents, cases that are selected into the sample more than once. If you have tribes in your state, tribal members, members of the tribe who are not served by the Tribal TANF program, whether they are served by your program, those that do not live on the reservation particularly, and cases that could be selected both in the TANF and SSP-MOE frames, how you would treat those. And then there are some situations where children are not living with their parents. Emergency assistance, being ready to go into foster care cases. And you should describe whether you include those and how you treat those.

Patrick Brannen: The sampling methods that have been approved are sample random sampling, systematic random sampling. And most states use either stratified simple random sampling or systematic random sampling. If you have other methods that you want to use, you need to submit those for approval.

Patrick Brannen: Some other things to consider, the list of sample cases should be submitted to the TANF Central Office within 10 days after sample selection. And I mentioned states need to monitor their sampling throughout the year, and if they are under-sampling, they need to correct for under-sampling before the end of the year. So certainly at 6 months you ought to see where you are—and at 9 months—to make sure you are going to meet the 3,000 completed case reviews or the 800 closed cases. And finally, sample records need to be retained for a period of 3 years or until any penalties have been

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disposed of, if you are penalty-liable. And that is really true of states that do not sample as well. You have frames, your sample frames should be maintained that long as well.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Patrick Brannen: So are there any questions on TANF sampling?

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: We have received one question over the WebEx system. The first question is: Where or how do we get the sample monthly [Work Participation Rate] WPR document? I will just say real quick that all of the documents from the Webinar are currently posted on the registration Web site where you all signed up to attend today. They are under the Webinar materials tab. We will actually be sending out a follow-up e-mail to this Webinar later today with a link to an evaluation, and also we will send a link to the registration page again so you can access those materials.

Patrick Brannen: If any time in the future they do not have that document, they can always contact their Regional Office to get it. And that is true for any of these documents.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Great. Thank you, Patrick.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Okay, we also received a question from Petrina Jesz from Tennessee through WebEx. So I will just read that for her. Is the TANF-ACF-PI-2013-02, Reporting on TANF Work Measures, a requirement for the TANF sampling, or for both sampling in all caseloads?

Patrick Brannen: The work measures is something separate from the TANF Data Report and the SSP-MOE Data Report. When we first began TANF, there was a high-performance bonus and those measures were developed for that high-performance bonus. And then after that, they were used I guess for some departmental and OMB requirements. That is what they use. I know they want to get, to the extent possible for those work measures, all adult recipients. I think we will have to leave the full answer to that question up to Central Office to get them a more full, complete answer whenever they are available, because I have never been involved in that process.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Okay, thank you very much. We do have another question on the phone. Sarah Marsh, you are now unmuted if you would like to ask your question.

Sarah Marsh, Colorado: We were just wondering if there was some advice on the kinds of skills necessary to do this oversight that Patrick was talking about. How do other states do it? Is there a full-time person? This sort of monthly sampling monitoring, the choices about if the case belongs in July or August. Any advice in that area?

Patrick Brannen: Well, it does not hurt to have somebody who is knowledgeable in statistics and data. But if you do not have that, it just needs somebody who pays attention to detail, and looking to see how many cases you have sampled each month, chart it, and see if you are meeting the requirement. And I think also on the feedback that I send you, you should be looking at the data pretty thoroughly—and we will talk about this more later—to make sure that you are getting back what you think you are getting back, and you are correcting the errors in the way you think you are. There are some decisions you have to make. For example, we will talk about a case that is both disregarded and participating and how I treat that and what you will need to do to look at that case and figure out what is best for the state. So I think it is important to have good people to monitor things to see what is going on. Other than that, the best advice

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I could give you would be maybe to send the question to the Welfare Peer TA Network and see how other states are doing it.

Sarah: Thank you.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Okay, we have no other questions at this time. Thank you.

WPR DEFINITIONS

Patrick Brannen: Okay, my next section is on Work Participation Rates (WPR), and I am going to start out with some definitions. The Annual All Families Work Participation Rate is a simple average of the 12 All Families Monthly Work Participation Rates. And the Two-Parent Family Annual Work Participation Rate is the same thing. It is a simple average of the Monthly Two-Parent Work Participation Rates.

Patrick Brannen: The Monthly All Families Work Participation Rate is a ratio and it is the number of families receiving TANF and SSP-MOE assistance that have a work-eligible individual who is engaged in work for a sufficient number of hours for the family to count, divided by the number of families receiving TANF and [SSP-MOE assistance with a work-eligible individual, minus the number of families that are sanctioned for refusing to participate in work. And I have really coded those as disregard-twos in my way I handle or process the rates.

Patrick Brannen: The Two-Parent Rate is the number of two-parent families where the two parents are engaged in work for a sufficient number of hours for the family to count over the number of two-parent families, minus the number of two-parent families that are sanctioned for refusing to work. Oh, and both the number of families sanctioned for refusing to work, if they have been sanctioned for more than three months in the preceding 12-month period, then they will not be subtracted. And that is true for both the All Families Rate and the Two-Parent Rate.

DISREGARDS

Patrick Brannen: There are some disregards associated with the Work Participation Rates. For the All Family Rate, a single custodial parent with a child under age one may be disregarded, and there is a lifetime limit of up to 12 months for that disregard to the family. And then a family participating in a Tribal Work Program can be disregarded from the All Families Work Participation Rate.

Patrick Brannen: The Two-Parent disregards are family participating in a Tribal Work Program. And a two-parent family where one of the two parents is disabled. We exclude those from the rates.

COUNTABLE WORK ACTIVITIES

Patrick Brannen: There are 12 Countable Work Activities. Nine of these are core activities and three are non-core. And for each of the work activities you are providing the average hours of participation per week for the report month. And the core activities are the unsubsidized employment, subsidized private sector employment, subsidized public sector employment, work experience, on-the-job training, community service, vocational education, and providing child care to an individual who is participating in a community service program. The non-core activities are the jobs readiness training, satisfactory school attendance, and the education directly related to employment.

REQUIRED HOURS OF WORK

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Patrick Brannen: So in order for a family to count for the All Family Rate, a work-eligible individual must be engaged in countable work activities for 30 hours a week, of which 20 hours are from core work activities. For the two-parent families, the two parents, if they do not receive federally-funded child care, the two parents must be engaged in work for an average of 35 hours, 30 of which is from core work activities. If the two-parent families receive federally-funded child care but are caring for a severely disabled child, then again, the two parents must be engaged for an average of 35 hours per week, of which 30 are from core work activities. If the two-parent family is receiving federally-funded child care and is not caring for a severely disabled family member, a disabled child, then the requirement is 55 hours per week, of which 50 hours must be from the core work activities.

DEEMED ENGAGED IN WORK

Patrick Brannen: Some individuals may be deemed engaged in work with fewer hours, and the first group are the teen head-of-households or married teens, may be deemed engaged in work if they participate in satisfactory school attendance or education directly related to employment for an average of 20 hours per week. A single parent or custodial caretaker relative may be deemed engaged in work if they participate in core work activities for an average of 20 hours per week.

LIMITATIONS: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Patrick Brannen: There are limitations on vocational education and on job search in terms of what you can use, how many hours or months you can use them. For vocational education training, there is a lifetime limitation of 12 months. And after the families use or the individuals use the 12-month limitation on vocational education, you can no longer claim hours of participation in that activity as countable.

LIMITATIONS: JOB SEARCH

Patrick Brannen: For job search, the limitations are six weeks in any fiscal year. Not more than four consecutive weeks of job search. If a state has an unemployment rate of 50 percent higher than the U.S. average or is deemed a needy state, then it gets 12 weeks of job search. And three or four days can be counted as a full week only once.

SIX WEEKS JOB SEARCH CONVERSION TO HOURS

Patrick Brannen: When we regulated based on the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, we converted the six weeks of job search into hours. And in doing so we changed the requirement from any fiscal year to any 12-month period. So for an individual who has a work requirement of 20 hours, that converts to 120 hours. For an individual who has a work requirement of 30 hours, that converts to 180 hours. And if the state is a needy state, 120 becomes 240, and the 180 becomes 360. Not more than four consecutive weeks still apply, so if you used assistance in four consecutive weeks, and the fifth week, even if they participate in job search, the hours cannot be claimed. One important thing to consider in tracking the hours of job search is there is going to be months in which an individual changed from a 180 requirement to a 120 requirement. And if they have already exceeded the 120, they will not be able to use job search until that falls back below 120, so you have some hours to use. It is most important to kind of keep track of how those hours go.

EXCUSED ABSENCES CONVERTED TO HOURS

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Patrick Brannen: We also have provided excused absences and the 10 days of excused absences we converted, in any 12-month period, to 80 hours. Since not more than two days or 16 hours may be used in any one month, and the job search hours have to be associated with scheduled hours of work in non-employment activities. So the excused absence hours are not applicable to unsubsidized employment, subsidized public sector or private sector employment, and on-the-job training, but are to the other eight work activities.

HOLIDAYS

Patrick Brannen: In your Work Verification Plans we allowed you to specify up to 10 holidays. And again, reporting hours for those holidays must be that an individual was scheduled to work on those holidays. These holiday hours, again, apply to non-employment activities.

DEEMED CORE HOURS

Patrick Brannen: Another provision that affects hours of participation is deeming core hours. If an individual, work-eligible individual, participates in community service or work experience for the maximum extent possible under the Fair Labor Standards Act, but still does not have sufficient hours to meet the core hour requirement, we will deem the remaining core hour requirement as met. This applies to states that combine their Food Stamps [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] and TANF grants in determining the maximum hours permitted under TANF. I think there is a little paperwork that has to be done with Food Stamps to do this. And we have hard-coded this into our programs, which states can deem core hours. So if your state has decided that you want to be able to do this and you are not currently doing it, you are going to have to notify OFA. Although we do check with Food Stamps on a periodic basis to see which states are deeming core hours, or have met the mini Food Stamp requirements.

THIRTY PERCENT LIMIT

Patrick Brannen: My next slide, Thirty Percent Limit, not more than 30 percent of the families participating may do so due to participation of vocational educational training or deemed engaged in work based on the satisfactory school attendance and education directly related to employment. When we run the monthly Work Participation Rates, we actually calculate whether or not a state is exceeding a 30 percent limit. And if they are, we make the adjustment. When we send out the monthly files, the WPR files, which show your monthly rates, the ones we have made an adjustment to have a little asterisk right after the rate and you will know we have adjusted that rate. And if you can use that sample month, the WPR file you are going to get, downloaded the Excel spreadsheet and the tables, you can actually see what your rate would have been had you not exceeded the 30 percent limit and what the adjustment for the 30 percent limit was.

CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCE

Patrick Brannen: There are some situations where you have a change in circumstances that affect how you calculate the average hours per week. And the first is when a family receives a partial month of payment. For the partial month payment, you can use the full weeks for which they received assistance and average those to get your average hours per week for the report month.

Patrick Brannen: A second situation is one in which an individual was a work-eligible individual for part of the month and not a work-eligible individual for the remainder of the month. In this situation, you code

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the individual as a work-eligible individual, and again use the average hours per week for the period of time he or she was a work-eligible individual to compute the hours you will post on the work activities. And I think that completes my presentation on the Work Participation Rates. So I am up for questions again.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Thank you, Patrick. As a reminder, you can submit a question online using your Q&A panel, or you can raise your hand to ask a verbal question. We have a question from James Valnes. You are now unmuted if you would like to ask your question.

James Valnes, South Dakota: Just for clarification purposes, when we are looking at the cases that would be added to that 30 percent limit counter, could you give an example of when a case in one of those activities would not be added to the counter?

Patrick Brannen: Yes. If you have a family who is participating in several activities, one of them being vocational/educational training, and they have sufficient hours to count as participating, I will check whether or not they still have sufficient hours to count as participating if I remove the vocational/educational hours. And if that is true, then they will not count for the counter. Otherwise, those with voc/ed hours do count toward the counter. The other two cases that count toward the counter are those that are deemed engaged in work for satisfactory school attendance and education directly related to employment. And all of them count toward the counter. Does that help?

James Valnes, South Dakota: Yes. Usually—South Dakota is where I am from—we have an expectation that if they are in Voc-Ed [vocational education] it would be full-time. If you are in a full-time Voc-Ed activity, it is not practical to expect somebody to get an additional 20 or 30 hours in on top of their Voc-Ed requirement. So it is natural that everybody in voc/ed is going to be in the counter as well, which is kind of a problem if you exceed that 30 percent limit.

Patrick Brannen: Yes, if you exceed the limit, then some of those families will not count toward that rate.

James: Okay. So we just have to manage our cases very carefully when identifying what activities they should be assigned to.

Patrick Brannen: I think that is correct.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Okay, thank you. We do not have any other questions at this time.

MONTHLY WORK PARTICIPATION RATE (WPR) AND TIME LIMIT (TL) FILES SENT TO STATES

Patrick Brannen: Okay, I will move on to my next segment. And I am going to be looking at the WPR and Time Limit Files that are sent to states each month and kind of go through those. The first one on my list is—I have used Colorado's two-digit codes for all these—so the CMBF08, if it is your state, instead of 08 it would be something else. Texas, it would be 48. Montana 30. That sort of thing. The CMB is “combined,” then F08_NUMDEN, that is the numerator and denominator of the Work Participation Rates. I just started sending this file out about a month ago and it has the monthly numerators and denominators for the combined rate. It starts at October and goes through September and then it has the average for the fiscal year. There is a similar file on here for TANF that starts TAN, and the rest that starts SSP_NUMDEN. And I

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did not list those on my slide here but, again, those files are basically informational files to help you verify your calculations of the participation rate.

Patrick Brannen: The next file on my list is F08_THIST.TXT. The T History is the transmission history file and it is just a report of what you have transmitted to date for that fiscal year. It helps track down differences in terms of whether or not you can sift complete data for us. If there are cases rejected on the file that were never re-transmitted, it will kind of show that. And if you submit data to us and we have downloaded it and you do not know whether the data made it onto what we are now sending you, this can kind of help because we do not normally, at least when I was running the program, I never downloaded before the end of the month. I always did it as soon after the first of the month as I could do it. And I would send the data download out to the regions so that you would know when I downloaded. So if you look at this transmission history file you could be assured whether or not your data was being reported in what I have sent you.

Patrick Brannen: The next file on the list is the TANF08_DP. The # sign represents the quarter for which this is being done, .TXT. The _DP are the cases that are disregarded yet have sufficient hours to count as participating. And what I have done is if the hours of participation include vocational education hours, so that this case might count toward the 30 percent limit, or would count toward the 30 percent limit, I do not know how close you are when I run these programs to exceeding the 30 percent limit. So I treat the case as disregarded and I send it back to you in a file so you can check to see if you are exceeding the 30 percent limit, or if you are even close to the 30 percent limit. If you are not for that given month, then what you would want to do is re-transmit this case as not disregarded, and it would get used in your rate. It would add one family to the numerator, one to the denominator. So it will give you a slightly higher rate. And if you are sampled, those cases would count more. They would count as whatever that weight of the sample case was.

Patrick Brannen: The next file, the TANF08_EA#, these are cases that have Excused Absence hours and there were more than 4 hours of excused absence. And if you are only able to use 2 days or 16 hours and you divide that by 4 weeks, you get 4 hours. So if they have more than 4 hours, I list them here. The only reason they should have more than 4 hours is if one of those two changes in circumstances has occurred. Otherwise, you have miscoded something here and you need to correct that coding.

Patrick Brannen: The next file is the TANF Error Flag Files, the TANF08_EF#. Those cases show all the errors that I coded as I went through and reviewed your data. And there is the list of error codes and the meanings were on that file we described, the WPR Error Flag Edits, so you can tell what they are. These cases are cases that should all be corrected and re-transmitted. And it is best to do these on a monthly basis and stay on top of them so you clean up all your errors and you are not left with a whole lot of errors at the end of the processing. And the way the error cases work, if you do not correct them, they may work to your disadvantage because they cannot count toward the numerator if they are in error, but they could count toward the denominator, or they do count toward the denominator. Maybe correcting the error does not give them enough hours to count toward the numerator, but in some cases it will make a difference. So it is very important to correct all your Error Flag cases on a regular basis.

Patrick Brannen: My next file is the TANF08_HL#. And this is the Holiday Listing. As I mentioned for holidays, you verify, you specify the holidays in your Work Verification Plan. I have hard-coded in my calculations how many holidays fall in each month. And I can be wrong sometimes because there are certain holidays that may be in one month in one year, and another month the next year based on the method you use for calculating your average hours per week. But the cases that are on this are probably...

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You need to find out if that is the situation or they have simply been miscoded and you have more holiday hours here than you should.

Patrick Brannen: The next item is the TANF08_HR#, 1, 2, 3, 4. Cases on this file have shown more than 80 hours of participation per week. There is only 168 hours in any week. And I know none of us work 80 hours per week for a month, every day for a month. I know there are some very hard-working people out there receiving TANF, but 80 hours is pretty extreme. So I send this list for you to check and see if something was not miscoded in terms of the hours. That is what I suspect most of these cases are. I could have used a much lower number, 70 or 60, and probably caught some other cases that were miscoded. But I think it is important that we pay good attention to how we code hours of participation.

Patrick Brannen: The next file, the TANF08_STB.TXT, is the Summary Tables. And they all have headings on them. Summary tables show, by review month and stratum, the case counts, the total cases, the sample size, the number of families participating, number of families disregarded, families listed in error, families that count toward the 30 percent limit. This is just information to help you check out data, make sure it looks reasonable as compared to what you find when you do your processing. And hopefully it is just a help to make sure everything is going well.

ERROR FLAGS

Patrick Brannen: Okay, I thought I would also go over some of the error codes here, at least the All Families Error Codes, and then maybe talk about some other cases that are in error. Error Code 1 is never used because it already catches that code when you do your original transmission.

Patrick Brannen: Error Code 2, the Type of Family is 1, but there is no work-eligible individual coded. Type of Family 1 means it is used in the overall rate. If there is no work-eligible individual coded, it may be that something happened in the transmission process where we did not get that adult record. Maybe there was no work-eligible individual in this family, it should have been coded Type 3. We do not know; it is something for you to check out and figure out whether there was somebody who should be work-eligible and correct the case accordingly.

Patrick Brannen: Error Code 3, the Work Participation Status Code is 1, but there is no child under age one. And I look at all the ages of the children that you submitted and I count the age of the child based on the age of the child as of the first day of the report month. So if they are under age one as of the first day of the report month, I would find them. So it could be that a child was not coded that should have been coded. Or it could be that Work Participation Status Code 1 is not applicable.

Patrick Brannen: Code 4, Work Participation Status Code is 15, but not a teen head-of-household or married teen engaged in satisfactory school attendance. Again, I think it is a matter of checking out whether this is really a teen head-of-household or married teen, and whether or not there are any hours of participation in satisfactory school attendance, because zero hours is not considered satisfactory.

Patrick Brannen: Code 5, Work Participation Status Code 16, and teen head-of-household, not a teen head-of-household, married teen who is engaged in education directly related to employment for an average of 20 hours per week. So it is just, again, a matter of checking the individual and the hours and seeing what has been coded and making corrections accordingly.

Patrick Brannen: Code 6 is Work Participation Status Code 17, but no child under age six.

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Patrick Brannen: Code 7 is Work Participation Status Code 17, but not 20 hours of participation in core activities.

Patrick Brannen: Code 8, the Work Participation 99 which is not applicable, is not applicable to an individual who is a work-eligible individual. So, basically, on that one you have to use a different Work Participation Status Code.

Patrick Brannen: Error Code 9, the Type of Family is 3, is not acceptable for a family with a work-eligible individual. So if you have got a work-eligible individual, then it needs to be a 1 or a 2. And it may be that not all the coding was there to indicate that this was a non-work eligible individual, so my program treated it as a work-eligible individual. So there is a lot to check out there.

Patrick Brannen: Code 10, it meets the definition of a work-eligible individual but there is nobody designated as a work-eligible individual.

Patrick Brannen: Code 11, the Work-Eligible Individual Indicator is 07, but the citizenship indicates that this is a US citizen, not a non-citizen.

Patrick Brannen: Code 12, the Work-Eligible Individual Indicator is 08, but the amount of unearned income for SSI is zero. So it failed the edit there.

Patrick Brannen: Code 13, the Work Participation Status Code is 2, but there was no reduction in the amount of assistance for the report month due to failure to participate in work activities.

Patrick Brannen: 14, the work-eligible individual is coded as a noncustodial parent, a non-recipient, noncustodial parent. Either the Noncustodial Parent Indicator is coded as a 2 as not being a noncustodial parent, or the Family Affiliation Code is coded as a 1 as receiving assistance. So that is simply a data inconsistency.

Patrick Brannen: On 15, the work-eligible individual has deemed core hours, but the state is not designated as a state that has deemed core hours. So that is one where maybe a state is set up with the mini Simplified Food Stamp Program, has done all the paperwork, and my program is not recognizing it. Either that or the state should not be deeming core hours.

Patrick Brannen: And the last error code for the All Families Rates is 16, is the number of deemed core hours exceeds what would normally be expected. The combination of that and the hours for community service and work experience exceed the core hour requirement.

Patrick Brannen: I think you all can read these error codes as well as I can and we have a lot. I always have lots of questions on error cases and how to resolve it. Sometimes what you think you sent us is not what you sent us, or what is on our database. And those are the kind of the hardest errors to correct or identify what is wrong with them. Most of the other error mistakes pretty much figure out on their own based on the error coding.

SUMMARY NOTES

Patrick Brannen: So what I would like to say in conclusion is that it is important to submit complete and accurate data in a timely basis. We are giving you monthly feedback so that we can make this data the best data possible. So again, it is important to correct these errors on a monthly basis, timely basis, so

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they do not build up and we do not have problems towards the end. I would recommend that states read the sampling manual, read the instructions, be as knowledgeable as you can about all the requirements in the TANF Data Report so that you have somebody that is somewhat of an expert there, because it is important to do the best job possible.

Patrick Brannen: And if you have questions, be proactive about asking. You can send e-mails, phone calls to the Regional Office. If you do not get a timely response and it drags on, follow up and make sure, because sometimes these things do get lost in the shuffle. And if there is anything the Central Office can do to help, generally, I have always wanted to help and I am sure the people that take over for me will want to help, too. So like I said, be proactive, do your best jobs. I know you always have. We are what we call the "Friendly Feds" and we like to help. And I think with that I will close. If there are any other issues, any other questions, I am happy to answer them.

ANY QUESTIONS?

[silence]

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Thank you. Okay, I do have a few questions in the queue online. The first is: In the WPR definition, are individuals required to work and not participating and sanctioned for three months versus those sanctioned for more than three months, are those two populations treated the same?

Patrick Brannen: Those that are required to participate and refuse to participate in work activities and are sanctioned for the month. If they have not been sanctioned for more than three months in the preceding 12 months, they are disregarded. If they have been sanctioned for more than three months in the preceding 12 months, they are not disregarded. They are in the denominator.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Thank you. The next question is: Do you anticipate any changes to the calculation of the WPR?

Patrick Brannen: Not on my part. Of course, I am a short-timer here, but I think the time that changes will come is whenever there is reauthorization of the program. And whether they continue with using the Work Participation Rate or they modify it in some way, I do not know at this time. I have no knowledge of what Congress is thinking. And who knows if they even are thinking about it at this time? But that is when it is most likely to come is when we have reauthorization.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Okay, thank you. And the last question I have is: When we submit the TANF sampling accurate data, is it for the sample caseload or for the entire state caseload?

Patrick Brannen: It is for the entire state caseload. It is the number of cases that were on your sample frame broken down by strata, so that we know that if you have three strata in Stratum 1, you have X number of cases from which the sample was selected. And the same for the other two strata. The sum of the cases in your stratum counts generally should be the same, the total should be the same as what you reported in Section 3 for the total caseload for the state.

Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: Okay, thank you for that clarification.

THANK YOU!

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Jackie Rhodes, ICF International: I do not think we have any other questions at this time, so we are actually going to close it out. As a reminder, we just wanted to let you know that we will be sending a follow-up e-mail later today with the link to the registration Web site where you can access those documents that we discussed. The follow-up e-mail will also include a link to a Webinar evaluation. And when the Webinar closes today you will also be automatically linked to that evaluation. So just a reminder to only complete the evaluation once, but if you are watching in a group you might want to look out for that e-mail so that each person has the opportunity to answer the evaluation. And now I am going to turn it over to Larry Brendel to close us out.

Larry Brendel: Thank you. Again, I want to thank Mary Beth [from WebEx] and also thank all the folks at ICF International for helping with the logistical support. I want to thank all the participants for spending the time with us today. And please be on the lookout for notices of the future Webinars and we will share the subject matter for each of those ahead of time so you know what area we will be focusing on in this data and other reporting that we will be going forward with. And I certainly, last but definitely not least, I would like to thank Patrick for his presentation and certainly to wish you and Kay and your daughter the best as you move into the next phase of your life, and enjoy the plans for traveling and anything else you have got in your bucket list. And we certainly appreciate you spending the time with us today. That is all I have, and again, thank you all for joining us.

Patrick Brannen: Well, Larry, let me thank you and thank all the state and regional people that I have worked with over the years. It has been a real pleasure to work with everyone. And I wish all of you only the best in the future. Thank you.

[End.]