

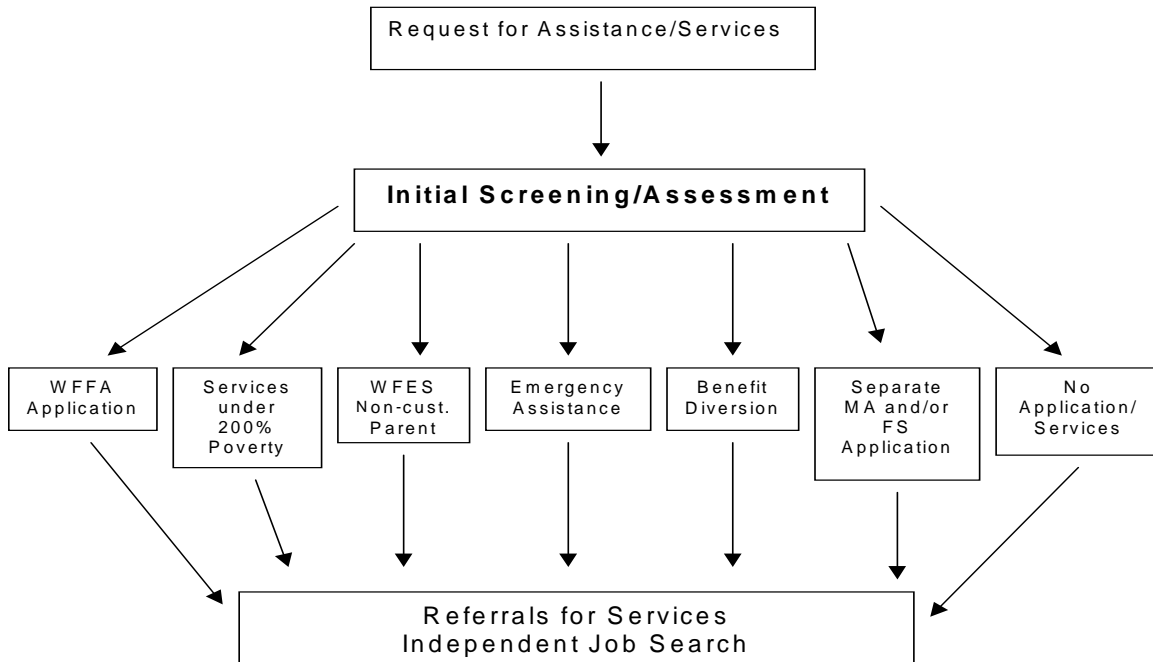
101 – INITIAL SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

Change #01-2004

February 1, 2004

I. INTAKE

The chart below shows the recommended intake process for Work First. It is important to understand that Work First is an employment program that offers a variety of services other than ongoing cash payments. Work First is not an entitlement. At Initial Screening and Assessment, the caseworker and the family will choose from a range of options as shown in the chart.



II. RECEPTION

Upon an individual's request for assistance the agency must ensure that:

- A. All applicants and/or individuals who inquire about receipt of Work First are provided with the DSS-8227, Immigrant Access Notice. (Figure 2)
- B. The individual understands and signs the DMA-5094 (Notice of Your Right To Apply for Benefits), with the individual receiving the original copy and a copy retained by the agency. The DMA-5094 is the agency's proof that the individual was informed of the right to apply for Medicaid.
- C. The individual signs an application for Medicaid and/or food stamp benefits and a DSS-5097 (Notice of Information Needed to Complete Your

Medicaid Application), if needed, on the date he/she requests either of these programs. If the individual signs a *Work First Family Assistance* (WFFA) application, he/she does not need to sign a separate Medicaid application.

If an individual is unable to be interviewed that day and expresses an immediate need for medical care, the agency must have him/her sign an application (DSS-8124) for Medicaid that day.

- D. The individual is not discouraged from applying for Medicaid. (Refer to the Family and Children's Medicaid Manual for examples of discouragement.)

Discouragement includes, for example:

- Requiring or suggesting that the individual wait to apply;
- Stating or suggesting the individual is ineligible for Medicaid;
- Giving incorrect or incomplete information about the programs or options;
- Requiring information be provided before making an application;
- **and/or**
- Failing to explain and have the individual sign a DMA-5094.

- E. The Daily Reception Log (DMA-5093) is maintained, recording every individual visiting the agency expressing a medical or financial need.

III. PURPOSE OF THE INITIAL SCREENING

The Initial Screening is a process of gathering important, preliminary information about a family, their resources and needs, and the circumstances that brought them to your agency. This information will enable you, with the family, to determine what actions, assistance, and/or services they should pursue.

The Initial Screening should be integrated into a conversation with the family. Your questions should be open-ended. Ideally, the family should dictate the flow of information and trigger the need for further questions.

Like all other aspects of Work First, the screening process must be family-driven. Your interaction with a family should adhere to three guiding principles:

- ◆ To maintain and enhance the family's self-esteem,
- ◆ To listen and respond with empathy, **and**
- ◆ To include their help in locating absent parents, finding suitable employment, and making decisions about referrals and available assistance.

The Initial Screening serves as your first opportunity to provide an up-front message about the purpose and philosophy of *Work First*. Families must hear and understand that assistance under *Work First* is temporary and time-limited.

Families must also be informed that they have a larger responsibility to prepare for work, find a job, and accept personal responsibility. Part of this message should include the following concepts.

- ◆ **Urgency:** The time to become self-sufficient is now.
- ◆ **Ownership:** We are each responsible for our own future and the future of our families.
- ◆ **Learn By Doing:** "Doing" replaces "waiting."
- ◆ **Life-long Learning:** Learning is a continual process.
- ◆ **Motivation:** Coaching, cheering, and giving hope increases self-esteem, confidence, and motivation.

To ensure that families understand and believe this new message, all agency-related contacts must reinforce the mission of *Work First* and the belief that families are capable and will succeed in their efforts to become self-sufficient.

IV. CONDUCTING THE SCREENING/ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW

- A. At the initial screening/assessment, collect information from the following broad categories. This information will determine what level of assistance and/or referrals are most appropriate for the family.
- ◆ **Purpose Of Visit:** To determine the circumstances that have brought a family to your agency.
 - ◆ **Family Information:** To identify the members of the family including the age, social security number, educational level, circumstances, and strengths/needs of each family member. This should also include the family's address and, if applicable, their telephone number.
 - ◆ **Work History:** To determine if the adult caretaker is employed, looking for work, or between jobs.
 - ◆ **Family Resources:** To identify what a family has done to support themselves to date and what other resources/barriers may exist beyond their household.

Counties may use their own intake/information forms to gather basic information from families. It is recommended that "matches" in the Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) (See Work First Manual Section 140.) be completed before the interview to help guide discussion of a family's income and/or resources to avoid or explain discrepancies. Refer to the Work First Appendices for on-line verification instructions.

- B. Outline

The following is a suggested outline for your interview. As was stated earlier, your conversation should be free-flowing and reflect the responses given by a family. The interview questions suggested below could be included on a form to be completed by the family prior to the intake interview, and/or they can be discussed verbally during the interview.

1. Purpose of Visit:

- ◆ What has happened to bring your family here today?
- ◆ What is your family's most urgent need at this time?
- ◆ What ideas do you have to keep this situation from recurring or becoming long-term?
- ◆ How does this situation affect your family?
- ◆ What are you currently doing to remedy this situation?

2. Family Information:

- ◆ Tell me about your family.
- ◆ Tell me about extended family members who live nearby.
- ◆ Which family members work or go to school?
- ◆ What are some things that your family needs or that you need for your family?

3. Work History:

- ◆ (Counties are encouraged to have prospective applicants complete a work history form similar to a job application identifying work history, job skills, likes/dislikes, and reasons for leaving jobs.)
- ◆ Are you or any members of your family employed?
- ◆ Tell me about your job.
- ◆ Who looks after your children while you are working? What is your backup child care plan?
- ◆ How do you get to work or look for work?
- ◆ What types of jobs have you had?
- ◆ Describe your job duties.
- ◆ Why did you leave that job?
- ◆ How did you get along with co-workers, supervisors?
- ◆ When did you last apply for a job?
- ◆ Where have you applied for a job?
- ◆ What type of job are you looking for?
- ◆ Do you have a high school diploma or GED?
- ◆ If not, tell me about why you dropped out of school. Have you ever tried to get a GED?
- ◆ What kind of formal training have you completed (e.g. computer software training, carpentry, electrician, nurse assistant)?

4. Family Resources:
- ◆ How have you been supporting your family?
 - ◆ What kind of support do you receive from the children's father or grandparents?
 - ◆ Tell me about the resources and opportunities in your neighborhood/community.
 - ◆ Do you have a valid driver's license?
 - ◆ If not, why not? What do you need to do to get your license?
 - ◆ Do you have a car?
 - ◆ If not, what would it take to get one? Could you get access to a car to use to get to work?
- C. Discuss the individual's skills and experience. Encourage a positive perspective, and help the individual brainstorm about employers, friends, or relatives he/she knows who do work that requires the skills and experience he/she has. Encourage registration with the Employment Security Commission (ESC) Job Service.
- D. At the conclusion of the screening interview jointly consider with the individual the services listed below in V. and others available in your agency or community. The worker and the individual will jointly decide on referrals and/or applications that are appropriate.
- E. Explain that there are various types of help available at the department of social services and in the community. The family may or may not need any ongoing assistance or services from DSS.
- ◆ If the family indicates a short-term financial need, discuss the Crisis Intervention Program, Emergency Assistance, and/or county General Assistance, as appropriate.
 - ◆ If the family needs help finding a job, discuss services available at the Employment Security Commission Job Service or a Job Link Center if there is one in your area. Discuss any other locally available job placement assistance.
 - ◆ If the family is interested in job-related training, discuss programs available through Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the community college, and any other training programs available.
- F. Explain that the above referenced services are available to the general public regardless of Work First eligibility. Encourage the family to visit the Job Service office, the community college, and other appropriate agencies to find out more.

WORK FIRST

Change #4-2003

Initial Screening and Assessment

March 1, 2003

- G. Discuss the two levels of eligibility for Work First, one based on income at or below 200% of poverty (at county option) and the other based on the established need standard.
 - 1. Families with income at or below 200% of poverty can (at county option) receive Employment Services and supportive services to support participation in approved activities, including those listed above through other agencies.
 - 2. Families eligible for assistance based on the need standard may qualify for time-limited monthly assistance checks, or they may qualify for benefit diversion.
- H. Discuss with the individual any current or future need for medical assistance for any family member. Always determine if any family member has any unpaid medical bills during the three months prior to the current month. Inform the individual that he may be entitled to Medicaid for one or more of the three months prior to the month of application, and if he decides against applying for Work First, he should consider applying for Medicaid if there are any unpaid medical bills.
- I. Discuss the Food Stamp Program. Food stamp benefits help low-income families or individuals buy food. Families must meet income, resource, citizenship, and work rules. If you buy and cook your food separately from others living with you, you may be able to apply as a separate household. Eligible households receive benefits to buy food every month.

V. REFERRAL POSSIBILITIES

- A. One of the goals of *Work First* is to prepare families for self-sufficiency. This preparation requires families to begin building a "safety net" for a future without *Work First Family Assistance* benefits. To accomplish this important goal, you must inform each family of available services, both in and out of your agency. Some of these services include, but are not limited to:

Vocational Rehabilitation	Dept. of Labor Apprenticeship Programs
One-Stop Centers	Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
Goodwill Industries	Social Security
Local GED & AHS Programs	Employment Security Commission
Family Resource Centers	Local charitable organizations
Adolescent Parenting	Services to the Aged Programs
Smart Start Initiatives	Head Start Programs
Veteran's Affairs	Salvation Army
Health Department	HUD/Local Housing Office
Mental Health	Transportation Services
LifeLine/Link-Up Programs	Area Mental Health Centers
Child Day Care Services	

NOTE: Since many of these services are provided by other agencies, your agency should develop a listing of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of some of the important resources in your community. This listing can be distributed to families to use, and you can encourage them to take initiative in making their own contacts.

B. Lifeline/Link-Up Assistance Programs

The Lifeline Assistance Program is designed to promote universal service by helping low-income individuals afford telephone service. Lifeline Assistance allows those eligible low-income customers to receive a credit each month on their telephone bill.

The Link-Up Program provides low-income persons a discount toward the cost of hooking up local telephone service.

C. Lifeline/Link-Up Assistance Programs Requirements

1. Customers must receive Work First Family Assistance, LIEAP, CIP, Weatherization, Housing Authority or Section 8 Assistance, Food Stamps, Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income;
2. Have the telephone service listed in his name; **and**
3. Receive the telephone bill.

NOTE: Verification of receipt of Work First Family Assistance or other low-income assistance must come from the authorizing agency.

D. Lifeline Program Procedures for Applications/Reapplications in the Work First Program

1. Explain the Lifeline and Link-Up Assistance Programs to the applicant.
2. If the applicant meets the eligibility requirements and wants to apply for the Lifeline Assistance Program, have him sign the DSS-8168-I. (See Figure 1.) Hold the DSS-8168-I until you dispose of the Work First application. Verification of the telephone bill is not required for the client to apply for the Lifeline Program.
3. If the application is approved, complete the information on the DSS-8168-I. Enter the head of household's social security number in the appropriate block on the form. Ensure the information written on the DSS-8168-I is correct and legible.

WORK FIRST**Change #17-2002****Initial Screening and Assessment****August 1, 2002**

4. Mail the completed DSS-8168-I, without delay, to the appropriate telephone company. File a copy in the case record.
5. Upon receipt of the DSS-8168-I, the telephone company verifies the recipient's name and telephone number and keys the information into its system. The recipient receives the credit with his next billing cycle.
6. If the application is denied or withdrawn, file the form in the case file if applicable. If client is receiving Medical Assistance, Food Stamps, Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP), or Crisis Intervention Program (CIP), forward the application to the appropriate program. Do not forward to the telephone company.

E. Lifeline Program Procedures for Ongoing Work First Cases

1. If the recipient is not currently receiving the credit, explain the Lifeline Assistance Program to him.
2. If the household meets the eligibility requirements and wants to apply for the program, complete the DSS-8168-I. (See Figure 1.) Enter the payee's social security number in the appropriate block. Ensure information written on the DSS-8168-I is correct and legible.
3. Mail the completed DSS-8168-I, without delay, to the appropriate telephone company. File a copy in the case record.
4. Upon receipt of the DSS-8168-I, the telephone company verifies the recipient's name and telephone number and keys the information into its system. The recipient receives the credit with his next billing cycle.

F. Procedures for Receiving Link-Up Assistance for New Phone Service

A person requesting new telephone service will apply at the local telephone company for service. The telephone company will either mail the application form to the proper local agency or will give the client the application form to be taken to the proper local agency to be signed and for the agency to verify that the client is receiving benefits that make him eligible for Link-Up Assistance. Complete the form, and return it to the telephone company. In order for the person to receive the discount, the telephone company should not install the telephone until they receive the form. When the telephone company receives the DSS-8168-I, the Link-UP discount will appear on the first bill.

VI. OUTCOMES OF THE SCREENING INTERVIEW

Following this Initial Screening and gathering of family data, you will have sufficient information to determine what services or benefits to offer the family.

Possible outcomes of the initial screening interview include:

- ◆ Referral for independent job search (no services provided, no application). Best for individuals who have a strong work history, recent connection to the workforce, good resources within the family (e.g., transportation, child care), well developed work-related skills and training.

EXAMPLE: You may require individuals to register with First Stop with the Employment Security Commission before allowing them to apply for *Work First Family Assistance*. (Do not deny them the right to apply for Medicaid.)
- ◆ Application for Emergency Assistance, according to the policy in your county.
- ◆ Application for Benefit Diversion. Best for families who are between jobs or have a likely job offer or expectation of ongoing income to begin within the near future. See Section 102 for detailed discussion.
- ◆ Application for Services for low-income families (Section 102). Best for individuals whose screening interview shows limited work history, a need for guidance in accessing services, a need for basic education and/or training, job seeking skills, supportive services such as transportation, and for job readiness.
- ◆ Application for Employment Services for Non-Custodial Parents of Work First Recipient children (See Section 102).
- ◆ Application for *Work First Family Assistance* (cash payment). Best for individuals whose situation indicates a need for financial assistance to meet the ongoing needs of children and who show the need for longer-term job readiness, basic education (such as GED), or training. If *Work First Family Assistance* is the family's choice, go to the Personal Responsibility instructions next (Section 103).

Remember always to offer the family the opportunity to apply for Medicaid and/or food stamp benefits on the same day that you interview them.

VII. DOCUMENTING THE INITIAL SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

If the initial screening and assessment results in an application for Medicaid or Work First, maintain forms and case narrative documentation in the case records for those programs.

If the initial screening and assessment does not result in an application for Medicaid or Work First, complete Form DMA-5095, Medicaid/Work First Notice of Inquiry, to document the caseworker's and applicant's statements of the reason for the decision not to apply.

Maintain this form and other screening and assessment documentation in a case record.