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**WISCONSIN WORKS W-2**
To apply for assistance from the W-2 program you must apply at the region or county in which you live.

**APPLICATION**

*How will the W-2 agency handle my application?*

When you apply for W-2 benefits you will meet with a W-2 agency employee known as a Resource Specialist who will determine what kind of services you need. This meeting should take place within **2 working days** of when you first ask for help. After that, you will meet with a FEP or Financial Employment Planner. The FEP should meet with you within **5 working days**.

The W-2 agency will ask you to verify or prove certain information about yourself and your family, like your identity, marital status, number of children, your income, your last job and your education. If you need help gathering this information you should let the FEP know and she should help you.

After you meet with the FEP she should determine **within 7 working days** if you are going to be placed in the W-2 program and in what category the placement will be. The placements are:

1. unsubsidized employment
2. trial jobs
3. community service jobs (CSJ)
4. transitional placements (W2-T)

If you need more time to provide the information requested, the W-2 agency can extend the time to make a decision about your application and W-2 placement for up to 30 days.

While your application is being reviewed and you are waiting to be placed in a W-2 work placement you can be required to look for work if you are capable of working. Your application can be denied for not completing work search.
The W-2 agency cannot deny you the right to apply or simply tell you that you are not eligible. They must take your application and if they are going to deny it, they must give you a written notice explaining why.

The W-2 agency must take your application even if you have reached your W-2 time limits.

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**JOB SEARCH**

*Can the W-2 Agency require me to look for a job while they decide if I will be placed in a W-2 work position?*

Yes, if you are able to work, the FEP may require you to look for a job while she is deciding if you will be placed in a W-2 work placement. This is called **up-front job search**. You will be asked to apply for a certain number of jobs and write down all the places you apply. If you do not do this, you can be denied W-2 services.

The W-2 agency cannot require you to look for a job if you do not have the skills to get a job, you are not able to work due to physical or emotional health reasons, family crises (such as homelessness,
domestic violence), you have a newborn less than 12 weeks old, or because you are caring for a disabled child or partner.

Who is eligible for W-2?

Parents, 18 years and older, who live with their children. All parents (even if not married), step-parents and their children in the home are part of the W-2 group. Teen parents under 18 are not eligible for W-2 cash benefits on their own.

Immigrants

Will immigrants be able to receive benefits?

Parents who are in this country illegally will not be able to receive benefits for themselves or their children. There is an exception for certain undocumented persons who have been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty by a parent or spouse, or member of the parent or spouse’s family.

Most legal immigrants can receive benefits. This includes legal permanent residents, refugees, persons granted asylum, and other persons residing in the U.S. legally.

Although illegal immigrants cannot receive W-2, if their children are citizens or legal residents they can receive child care, food stamps and medical assistance.

What will I have to do to receive W-2 benefits?

Most persons will have to participate in some type of work, school or other activity such as counseling or treatment to receive W-2. Some people may be assigned to a single W-2 activity, others may be assigned to a combination of activities.

W-2 Work Placements

What kind of activities can I be
There are four W-2 placements. What you will be required to do and how many hours you will be assigned will depend on the category you are in and your abilities. The placements are:

1. **unsubsidized employment** - this is for persons who get a job during the up-front job search period or already have a job when they apply for W-2. You do not receive a W-2 payment but are eligible for child care and education and training services. You cannot be placed in this category if you do not have a job.

2. **trial job** - this is a job with a private employer that the W-2 agency assigns you to. This can be up to 40 hours a week. Persons in trial jobs will receive the wage paid by the employer and should receive all the benefits regular employees receive.

3. **community service job (CSJ)** - this placement pays $673 a month. This placement is for persons who have not been able to find employment and who may need further training or education. You can be assigned up to 40 hours of activities each week, 30 hours of work related activities and 10 of education. Some participants may be assigned to full-time job search, others to a training activity and others to a combination of work, education/training and job search.

4. **transitional placement (W2-T)** - this placement pays $628 a month. This placement is for persons who have physical, emotional or other disabilities, problems with drugs or alcohol, who are caring for a disabled child or spouse/partner, or have other reasons why they cannot work such as homelessness or domestic abuse. You can be required to work or participate in counseling, treatment or other similar activities for up to 28 hours a week and to attend school for up to 12 hours a week.
If you cannot work, you cannot be required to work. Any time spent in treatment, medical activities, therapy or counseling should be counted as part of your W-2 activities.

How will I know what I am supposed to do?

Your W-2 worker or FEP should meet with you and together you should develop what is called an employability plan that tells you what you are assigned to do, where you have to go for your assignment and how many hours a day you have to attend each assignment.
DISABLED PERSONS

What if I am working at a regular job and don’t make enough money to support my family?

If you are working full-time the W-2 agency will not place you in a W-2 work position that allows you to earn W-2 cash payments. However, you can ask for help looking for a better job or you can ask for job training. If you work only part-time, you may be placed in a community service job on a part-time basis. You can then receive a partial W-2 grant, depending on how many hours you work in the community service job.

What if I am disabled or have other limits on my ability to work?

If your ability to work is limited for whatever reason, the W-2 agency can only assign you to activities that you are able to perform. For example, if you cannot lift more than 10 pounds, the W-2 agency cannot assign you to a job or other activities that would require you to lift heavy objects. And - if you are in therapy or treatment for mental health or substance abuse problems, - if you need to look for housing because you are homeless, - if you need to attend court appointments and counseling to address domestic violence issues, - the W-2 agency should make these activities part of your W-2 plan.

You should make sure you tell the W-2 agency about any problems you have.

What if I receive SSI benefits?

If you receive SSI you cannot receive W-2. You can receive what is called Caretaker Supplement benefits for your children. You will receive $250 a month for your first child and $150 for other children. You need to ask your county food stamp worker about these benefits.

NEW MOTHERS
**What if I’ve just had a baby?**

A parent of a newborn child is excused from W-2 activities for 12 weeks after the child is born. She will receive $673 a month during this period. As soon as your child is born, make sure you report the birth to your county and W-2 workers.

**What if I have a child who has a physical disability or behavior or emotional problems?**

The W-2 agency cannot assign you to activities that interfere with your need to care for a disabled child. For example, if you have a disabled child and you need to be home at 2:30 to meet his or her school bus, the W-2 agency must allow you to be available or help you arrange appropriate after-school child care. If you need to take a child to therapy appointments you should be given the time to do so.

**What if I am caring for my grandchildren or my nieces and nephews or other related children?**

You will not be eligible for W-2 for these children. You may be eligible to receive **Kinship Care** benefits of $215 per child per month from the child welfare system in your county. You will need to apply with that agency to receive Kinship benefits.

**W-2 SERVICES**

**What services must the W-2 agency provide?**

The W-2 agency must provide you with the services you need to find and keep a job, including:

- help with transportation
- paying for child care
- counseling, therapy or treatment if you are in need of such services
- education for persons who don’t have a high school diploma, who can’t read or write or who have limited basic skills, or who cannot speak English
- job training
- job experience in a W-2 assigned job
- help finding and keeping a good job

If you have physical or emotional problems, a learning disability, alcohol or drug problems, family problems, or other such issues, the W-2 agency must allow you to participate in the program, give you the extra help and services you need and help you with your problems. For example, if you cannot leave your home because of a physical disability you should be provided education at home. ★★★MAKE SURE YOU ASK FOR ALL THE HELP YOU NEED TO GET AND KEEP A JOB★★★

\textit{Can the W-2 agency tell me I am job ready and deny me W-2 job if I do not have a job?}

No, they can not. If you do not have a job you should be placed in a W-2 work position so you can receive a trial job wage or W-2 benefits. If you are able to work , you may be required to look for work while in a W-2 work position.

\textbf{PAYMENTS}

\textit{How much money will I receive under W-2?}

You will only receive payments from W-2 if you are in a community service job (CSJ) or W-2 transitions (W2-T) or you are caring for a newborn (CMC). Persons assigned to community service jobs and caring for a newborn will receive $673 a month. Persons who are assigned to a W-2 transitional placement will receive $628. If you are assigned to a trial job you will receive the wage paid by the employer.

\textit{When will I get paid?}
You are eligible for W-2 payments from the date the W-2 agency places you in a community service job or a W-2 transitional placement. You do not get paid for the time you wait to see a FEP or while waiting for a W-2 paid placement. For example, if you apply on April 2nd and the W-2 agency places you in a community service job on April 18th, that is the date used to determine your payments.

You will get paid from the 16th of the month to the 15th of the next, but not until the beginning of the following month. For example, you will get paid for the time for May 16th to June 15th on July 1st. When you first apply for W-2 you will get one or two partial checks, depending on when you are placed in a W-2 work placement. It could take 2 or 3 months to get your first full check. After that you should get a regular check each month.

Can I have other income and resources and still receive W-2 benefits?

Your family can have other income like earnings from a part-time job. Your total income must be equal to or less than 115% of poverty in order for you to receive benefits. Any child support you receive does not count. The current standards are:

- family of two is $1,312
- family of three is $1,645
- family of four is $1,979
- family of five is $2,312

You can also have assets (like cash) of $2,500, a car worth $10,000, and the home in which you live.

These standards are current as of March 2007, they change each March when the poverty limit is
Who will receive the child support collected on my case?

You will receive only a part of the child support collected for your children. The state of Wisconsin will keep the rest.

**SANCTIONS**

Can my W-2 payment be reduced or stopped?

Yes, your W-2 payments can be reduced by $5.15 for each hour you miss your W-2 work, school, treatment, counseling or other assigned activities. For example, if you miss 10 hours, you will lose $51.50 in benefits. This is called a *sanction*.

If your payments are going to be reduced to $538 or less for a CSJ or $502 or less for W2-T or stopped altogether the W-2 agency must first send you a notice and then attempt to contact you to determine if you had a good reason for missing your W-2 activities. **If you had a good reason for missing your activity, your benefits should not be reduced.**

For example, you should not be sanctioned for activities you could not do because of physical or mental health problems, because you had to care for a sick or disabled child or because you were experiencing family problems such as domestic violence.

To show that you have a good reason you should give your work supervisor and FEP proof of why you missed your hours. Such proof would include doctor's excuses for you or your children, court appointments, and meetings at your child's school. If possible, these excuses should be given to your FEP within 10 days of when you missed the activity. **You should keep copies of the excuses for your own records. If you cannot get a written excuse, the W-2 agency should not require you to have one.**
You can lose your right to participate in a W-2 work position, like a community service job, if you refuse or fail to participate in W-2 without a good reason, if you quit a job or, if you lose a job without a good reason three or more times. These are known as **strikes**.
**Time Limits and Extensions**

*Will I lose benefits if my children do not attend school?*

Yes, if children age 6 through 17 and teen parents do not attend school regularly, W-2 benefits may be reduced $50 a month for each child with a maximum penalty of $150 per family.

*Are there time limits on W-2?*

Yes, there is a **24-month** time limit (2 years) on each paid W-2 category - trial jobs, community service jobs (CSJ), and W-2 transitional placements (W2-T). Every month you are in a trial job, community service job or a W-2 transitional placement or caring for a newborn counts toward the 24 months. Months that you are sanctioned also count.

There is also a lifetime limit of **60 months** on receiving any W-2. This means that you can receive W-2 payments for only 5 years.

Any month in which you receive only child care, food stamps or medical assistance does **not** count.

*What happens when I reach my 24 month time limit?*

When you use up 24 months in a W2-T, CSJ or trial job you can be moved to another work category if you qualify. For example, if you were in a W2-T placement in order to receive treatment, the treatment is completed, and you have reached your time limit you should be moved to a community service job placement. You may also be able to receive an **extension** of your time limit.

*Who is eligible for an extension?*

If you are in a **CSJ placement** you are eligible for an extension if you participated in your W-2 activities and you have looked for a job and cannot find one.
If you are in a **W2-T placement** you are eligible for an extension if you have participated in your W-2 activities and you have some type of problem such as a medical or emotional problem, a learning disability, a sick or disabled child or partner, a child with behavior problems, you are homeless or you are the victim of domestic violence, that prevents you from working.

**Can I also receive an extension of the 60 month time limit?**

Yes, if you have participated in your W-2 activities and either you cannot find a job or you cannot work due to physical or emotional problems, a learning disability, because you need to care for a child or partner or have family problems.

**How do I receive an extension?**

You should ask your W-2 worker for one.

**Can I receive an extension if I have already left the program?**

Yes, you can return to the W-2 program at **any time** to request an extension if you cannot find a job or you are not able to work. You do **not** need an extension to receive benefits as the caretaker of a newborn for 12 weeks even if you have exhausted your W-2 time limits.

**What if my W-2 worker tells me I am not eligible for an extension?**

You have the right to appeal your worker’s decision. (See hearing rights at the end of this booklet.)
***If you feel you need an extension do not sign a form saying you don’t want one even if your worker says you won’t get one anyway.***

What happens after I find a job?

Once you find a job you will probably not be eligible for W-2 payments. However, you can still get help with education and training or help finding a better job. You should continue to receive child care, medical assistance and food stamps.
OTHER BENEFITS

What other benefits are available through the W-2 agencies?

The following types of assistance are also available to families whether or not they are in a W-2 work position:

Job access loan: Persons who need cash assistance in order to obtain or continue employment may borrow up to $1600 from the W-2 agency. The loan will have to be paid back on a monthly basis. At least 25% has to be paid back in cash. The rest can be paid back by working in a community service job. Loans can be used for such things as buying or repairing a car, obtaining a driver’s license, or paying rent if you are facing eviction or you are homeless.

Emergency Assistance: Persons who are homeless or facing eviction are eligible to receive $150 for each family member to help pay their rent or for new housing. You can receive these benefits once every 12 months.

Your W-2 agency may have other grants for persons in a crisis situation—ask your FEP if you are in need of immediate help.

APPEAL RIGHTS

W-2 Appeal Rights

What can I do if I am denied W-2 benefits, I am found job ready, I do not receive the services I need, my benefits are reduced, or I am denied an extension?

You have the right to request a hearing. The hearing is called a factfinding. You must request a factfinding at the W-2 office within 45 days of the date on the notice or the effective date of the action the W-2 agency is taking. For example, if you receive a notice dated August 26th which tells you that your W-2 payment will be reduced September 1st because you are being sanctioned you must file a request for a factfinding by October
15th. The factfinding request should be given to the W-2 agency. You should ask for proof of your request.

If you lose your factfinding you can file an appeal with the State Division of Hearings and Appeals. That appeal must be filed within 21 days of the date on the factfinding decision.

State appeals should be mailed to:

Division of Hearings and Appeals
P. O. Box 7875
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Legal Action can help you with a factfinding. Contact Legal Action in Milwaukee at (414) 278-7722 or toll free at (888) 278-0633.
CHILD CARE

Who is eligible for child care assistance?

You are eligible for child care assistance whether you receive W-2 or not. In order to receive child care:

First, you must be a parent living with his or her children, a kinship care relative (i.e. grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, adult sibling), guardian, foster parent, legal custodian or other person acting like a parent,

Second, you must need the care for a child who is under 13 years old or a disabled child under 18 years old, (a disabled child is a child who requires more than the usual care and supervision for the child’s age)

Third, you must need the child care in order to work, participate in your W-2 activities (your treatment, school and work), participate in the food stamp work program or for certain school programs.

Can I receive child care while I look for work?

If you are looking for a job while your W-2 application is being processed or you are in a W-2 case management (job-ready) or other work placement you can receive child care while you look for work.

What if I am receiving child care so I can work and I lose my job?

You should report the job loss to your county worker and your W-2 worker (if you have one). If you want to continue to receive child care while you look for a job you must enroll in the W-2 program. You cannot continue to use child care if you are not working or enrolled in W-2.
Can I receive child care if I am a teenager and go to high school?

You can receive child care to go to school if you are under 20 and you need it to complete high school. If you are under 18 years old you need to live with your parent or other responsible adult in order to receive child care.

Can I receive child care for education programs if I am not in W-2?

Yes, parents and other relatives can receive child care for high school equivalency programs, basic education or literacy programs, to learn English or college programs. The parent or other relative must also work a few hours a week. Child care for school for persons not receiving W-2 can only be received for two years.

Do I have to be a citizen or legal alien to qualify for child care?

No, parents who are in this country illegally are eligible for child care but only for children that are citizens or legally residing in the United States.

What are the income limits for child care?
In order to begin receiving child care assistance your family’s income from work and other sources must be at or below 185% of poverty. The current standards are:

- family of two $2,111
- family of three $2,647
- family of four $3,184
- family of five $3,720

Once you are receiving child care assistance you can continue to receive it until your income reaches 200% of poverty. The current standards are:

- family of two $2,282
- family of three $2,862
- family of four $3,442
- family of five $4,022

Any child support your family receives will not be counted towards your income. There is no asset limit for child care.

The income standards are current as of March 2007, they change each March when the poverty limit is adjusted.

**Can I pick my own child care provider?**

Yes, you can pick any provider you like so long as she is certified or licensed. You can pick a family home provider or a day care center.

**Can I receive child care services in my own home?**
Only if it is necessary because of the child’s health conditions or other special circumstances.

**How is the day care paid?**

Once you are authorized for child care the county pays the child care provider directly.

**Will I have to pay anything for my child care?**

Most parents and caretakers will have to pay a co-payment. Teen parents who are in a W-2 family and who attend school do not have a co-payment. Other teen parents, foster parents and kinship relatives with court orders, will only have to pay a minimum co-payment. Parents leaving W-2 for a job pay the minimum co-payment for the first month they work.

Your co-payment amount will depend on your family’s income (child support does not count), your family size and the type of child care you use.

**What if I want to switch child care providers?**

You need to tell your county worker who the new provider is and a new authorization needs to be issued.
**CHILDCARE APPEAL RIGHTS**

*What can I do if I am denied child care assistance, my child care benefits are terminated, the agency does not authorize enough child care hours or I disagree with the co-payment amount?*

You can request a hearing before the state Division of Hearings and Appeals. **You must request a hearing within 45 days of the effective date of the action you are challenging, or the date of the notice you receive, whichever is later.**

You can mail your request to:

Division of Hearings and Appeals  
P. O. Box 7875  
Madison, WI  53707  
Phone: (608) 266-7709  
Fax: (608) 264-9885

The state hearing office will schedule a hearing within 4-6 weeks of your request.

**Legal Action can help you with a hearing.** Contact Legal Action in Milwaukee at (414) 278-7722 or toll free at (888) 278-0633.

**APPLYING FOR SERVICES**

*Where can I apply for W-2 or child care?*

You can apply at the W-2 office for your county. In Milwaukee you need to apply at the region you live in:

Northeast  -YWCA  
1915 N. Martin Luther King Dr.  
Milwaukee, WI  53212
267-3900

Southeast - UMOS
2701 South Chase Avenue
Milwaukee, WI  53207
389-6600

Central - UMOS
4030 North 29th Street
Milwaukee, WI  53216
486-5200

Northwest - Maximus
6550 North 76th Street
Milwaukee, WI  53223
760-6060

Southwest - Maximus
1304 South 70th Street
West Allis, WI  53214
607-0477

If you do not want W-2 benefits and need child care to work and/or go to school you should apply at one of the county offices located at:

1. Milwaukee County Department of Human Services
   1220 West Vliet Street
   Milwaukee, WI  53205

2. Milwaukee County Department of Human Services - Southside Office
Note: You do not need to be eligible for W-2 in order to receive child care for work, food stamps or medical assistance. There is no time limit on these benefits. In Milwaukee, if you only want these benefits you can apply at a county office. You do not need to go to a W-2 office.

In counties other than Milwaukee you should contact your county or human services agency or Job Center to find out where to apply.

**Where can I apply for food stamps, medical assistance and SSI-Caretaker benefits?**

In Milwaukee, you can apply for these benefits at the county offices listed on the previous page.

In counties other than Milwaukee, go to your county social or human services office.

**How do I find out about kinship care benefits?**

In Milwaukee, you can call Perez-Pena at 273-1262 or contact your local Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare Office.

In counties other than Milwaukee, you should contact the county child welfare agency.

**How to Get Help with W-2 Problems**
For help - if you are denied W-2 benefits, you are sanctioned, you are found job ready, you are denied an extension, you are having problems with child care, or any other public benefit problems contact:

Legal Action of Wisconsin  
230 West Wells Street, Suite 800  
Milwaukee, WI  53203  
Phone: (414) 278-7722  
Toll free: (888) 278-0633

Walk-in hours:  Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday (the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month) 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the 16th Street Clinic (1032 South 16th Street) by appointment only.  Call 278-7722 to schedule an appointment.

Outside Milwaukee

Racine/Kenosha:  
Toll Free:  1-888-278-0633

Madison area:  1-608-256-3304  
Toll Free:  1-800-362-3904

La Crosse area:  1-608-785-2809  
Toll Free:  1-800-873-0927
**Oshkosh area:** 1-920-233-6521  
Toll Free: 1-800-236-1128

**Green Bay area:** 1-920-432-4645  
Toll Free: 1-800-236-1127

The above information is current as of April 2008. Income limits and policies are subject to change.

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