

Texas Workforce Commission

Choices Guide

February 2011

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Choices Guide

Overview of Guide

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) requires Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to plan for services to be delivered using an integrated approach. Integrated service delivery is more than just a good practice—it is a way of looking at how services are delivered and finding ways to ensure Workforce Solutions Offices meet employer and job seeker needs. For a discussion of integration concepts, see TWC’s *Report on Senate Bill 280* at <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/news/ipp280.pdf> and <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/news/integrationrpt/pdf>.

The Workforce Solutions Office provides services that are designed to lead to employment. Choices services are an important part of this process because they serve both employers and job seekers and provide job-matching tools that all Workforce Solutions Office staff can use.

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide:

- information about Choices policies and procedures; and
- guidance and instruction on assisting Choices-eligible individuals to prepare for, obtain, and retain employment.

Objectives

The objectives of this guide are to:

- improve the linkages between the needs of employers and the aims of job seekers;
- ensure service consistency;
- establish a base for quality assurance;
- communicate expectations for service outcomes, limitations, and funding; and
- assist Boards and Workforce Solutions Offices in developing local policies.

Target Audience

The target audience for this guide includes:

- Workforce Solutions Office staff
- Board staff
- TWC staff

Parts of the Guide

The guide is divided into four parts:

Part A: Policy and Requirements

Part B: Choices Operations

Part C: Appendix

Part D: List of Revisions

Changes to Content

TWC maintains the Choices guide online at www.twc.state.tx.us/boards/guides/guides.html to provide access to current statewide policy and guidance information.

Updates to the guide will be issued through WD Letters and Release Notes, which will indicate that the guide has been revised to incorporate new information. Part D of the guide, List of Revisions, contains the revision date, the section revised, and a brief explanation of the specific revision.

List of Terms and Acronyms

ACF	Administration for Children and Families
ABE	Adult Basic Education
Board	Local Workforce Development Board
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DARS	Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services
DRA	Deficit Reduction Act
EID	Earned Income Deduction
EITC	Earned Income Tax Credit
EPS	Employment Planning Session
ESL	English as a Second Language
FEP	Family Employment Plan
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act
FMGC	Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HHSC	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
IDA	Individual Development Account
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
JARC	Job Access and Reverse Commute
MOE	maintenance of effort
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OJT	on-the-job training
OTTANF	One-time TANF
PRA	Personal Responsibility Agreement
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996
SIG	Status in Group
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SNAP E&T	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training
SSI	Social Security Insurance
SSN	Social Security number
TABE	Test of Adult Basic Education
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TANF-SP	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families State Program
TOP	type of payment
TWC	Texas Workforce Commission
TWIST	The Workforce Information System of Texas
TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
USDOT-FTA	U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration Agency
VITA	Volunteer Income Tax Assistance
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WOA	Workforce Orientation for Applicants
workforce area	local workforce development area
WOTC	Work Opportunity Tax Credit

Choices

Part A – Policy and Requirements

A-100: GENERAL POLICY INFORMATION

A-101: Background

The following sections provide a brief history of Choices and changes in policy resulting from federal and state laws.

A-101.a: Federal Legislative Authority

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) (Public Law [PL] 104-193) established the block grant for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as part of a federal effort to “end welfare as we know it.” The TANF block grant replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, which had provided cash assistance to poor families with children since 1935.

PRWORA redefined the federal government’s role in administering the nation’s welfare system by providing states the flexibility to design their own systems. PRWORA offers states an opportunity to enact far-reaching changes and respond more effectively to the needs of families within each state’s unique environment. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issues regulations governing key provisions of the TANF program.

Under the TANF block grant structure, states use the funds to operate their own programs. States can use TANF dollars to meet any of the four purposes set out in federal law:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
- End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

In February 2006, the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 (PL 109-171) reauthorized the TANF program through fiscal year 2010. DRA also changed several provisions in the law related to TANF work participation that further defined work activities and also tightened verification requirements for work activities.

On February 5, 2008, HHS issued TANF final regulations, which addressed changes from the June 29, 2006, interim regulations, including:

- allowable work activities;
- verification, documentation, and internal control procedures; and
- inclusion of certain child-only cases in the calculation of work participation rates.

A-101.b: State Legislative Authority—TANF State Program

The 77th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2001), enacted House Bill 1005, creating a new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families State Program (TANF-SP) specifically for two-parent households. The program uses TANF MOE funds. Effective October 1, 2001, TANF-SP hourly work requirements are based on the hourly requirements under federal TANF regulations. Activities available to two-parent households are the same as those available to single parents.

House Bill 2292, enacted by the 78th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2003), amended the Texas Human Resources Code to require a pay-for-performance model for families receiving TANF. House Bill 2292 requires individuals to engage in work activities to receive TANF assistance and Medicaid assistance for adults.

During the 80th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2007), the two-parent separate state program was funded with state General Revenue instead of TANF maintenance-of-effort (MOE) funds. This was in response to DRA, which requires all separate TANF state programs funded with TANF MOE to be included in the calculation of work participation rates.

A-101.c: Choices Program

Choices operates under a *work first* service model. Upon applying for TANF assistance through the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and throughout delivery of benefits and employment services, Choices participants receive a consistent message:

- Government assistance is temporary.
- Texans are responsible for the support of themselves and their families.
- Employment is the goal.

Both state and federal welfare reform legislation emphasizes personal responsibility, time-limited cash assistance benefits, and the goal of work instead of public assistance. To support these mandates, TWC and the Boards developed a service delivery model with the goal of employment at the earliest opportunity for applicants and recipients of cash assistance.

Choices provides services to two populations:

- Single-parent families
- Two-parent families

On October 1, 2001, Texas created TANF-SP specifically to serve two-parent households. One or both adults in a two-parent household are responsible for meeting the family's mandatory work requirement.

A-101.d: Goal of Choices

The goal of Choices is to end dependence on public assistance by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.

Boards are given flexibility to develop strategies that promote the prevention and reduction of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. These strategies must support the primary goal of Choices services—employment and job retention.

A-102: Definitions of Choices Terms

45 CFR – The Code of Federal Regulations is the compilation of general and permanent rules published in the *Federal Register*. The publication is divided into numbered titles. Title 45, issued by ACF, contains the TANF regulations.

Applicant – An adult or teen head of household, in a family that applies for TANF assistance, who previously did not leave TANF in a sanctioned status.

Assessment – An in-depth evaluation of employability, education history, vocational skills, literacy levels, work experience, family circumstances, and support service needs.

Choices – Employment services available to Choices eligible individuals.

Choices Eligible – An individual eligible to receive Choices services including an adult or teen head of household who is an applicant, conditional applicant, recipient, nonrecipient parent, former recipient, or sanctioned family.

Choices Participant – An individual who is participating in or was outreached for Choices services. This includes exempt and mandatory participants.

Choices Plus – Post-employment services funded with TANF that are available to Choices participants who are employed, and to applicants, conditional applicants, former recipients, and sanctioned families that have obtained employment but require additional assistance in retaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency.

Conditional Applicant – An adult or teen head of household who left TANF in a sanctioned status, but who is reapplying for TANF assistance that must demonstrate cooperation with Choices work requirements for four consecutive weeks.

Core Work Activities – Activities that count toward the core-hour participation requirements, including job search and job readiness activities, employment activities, community service, and vocational educational training.

Earned Income Deduction (EID) – A standard work-related and income deduction, available for four months through HHSC.

Employment Activities – Core activities directly related to work, including unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, work experience, and on-the-job training.

Employment Planning Session (EPS) – A meeting with TANF recipient(s) to introduce them to Choices services.

Exempt Choices Participant – TANF recipient who is not required to participate in Choices services, but may volunteer to participate.

Extended TANF – TANF assistance received beyond the 60-month time limit because of a hardship exemption as determined by HHSC.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) – Establishes minimum wages, overtime pay, child labor, and required payroll record-keeping standards.

Family Employment Plan (FEP) – A plan of action agreed upon by the Choices participant and based on assessments (skills, strengths, and abilities) with the goal of self-sufficiency through employment that meets the needs of the local labor market.

Former Recipient – An adult or teen head of household who no longer receives TANF assistance because of employment.

Local Workforce Development Board (Board) – Responsible for planning and oversight of workforce services within a designated local workforce development area (workforce area).

Mandatory Choices Participant – TANF recipient who is required to participate in Choices services.

Noncooperation – A lack of response to outreach notices or a failure to participate in Choices activities in accordance with the FEP.

Non-core Activities – Activities that count toward the overall participation requirement—but are countable only in combination with core activities—including job skills training and educational services for Choices participants who have not completed secondary school or received a GED credential.

Nonrecipient Parent – Adults or teen heads of household not receiving TANF assistance, but living with their own children who are receiving TANF assistance. Nonrecipient parents include parents who are not eligible for TANF assistance.

One-time TANF (OTTANF) – A lump sum grant of \$1,000 offered through HHSC and intended to help TANF applicants experiencing short-term crises by providing upfront financial assistance along with exposure to the services offered by Workforce Solutions Offices. TANF applicants who receive OTTANF are not eligible to participate in Choices or receive TANF assistance for the 12 months following receipt of OTTANF.

Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA) – A condition of TANF eligibility maintained by HHSC and requiring TANF recipients who are caretakers or second parents to:

- participant in the Choices program (unless exempt);
- cooperate with child support requirements;
- not voluntarily quit a job;
- ensure that their child(ren) are screened through the Texas Health Steps program, immunized, and attending school;
- attend parent-skills training if referred; and
- not abuse drugs or alcohol.

Recipient – An adult or teen head of household who receives TANF assistance.

Sanctioned Family – An adult or teen head of household who must demonstrate cooperation for one month to have TANF assistance reinstated.

Secondary School – Educational activities including middle school, high school leading to a high school diploma, or classes leading to the completion of a GED credential.

Self-Attestation – A customer’s statement of participation hours that is used as evidence or verification of those hours.

Self-Declaration – A customer’s declaration of participation hours that requires further documentation in order to serve as evidence or verification of those hours.

Service Codes – Codes used in TWIST to record services provided to participants.

SUPERA – The standard literacy assessments for TANF recipients who communicate primarily in Spanish and are enrolled in Choices.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP is the cornerstone of the Federal food assistance programs, and provides crucial support to needy households and to those making the transition from welfare to work. It also provides low-income households with electronic benefits they can use like cash at most grocery stores. HHSC administers the program at State and local levels, including determination of eligibility and allotments, and distribution of benefits.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) – Assists SNAP recipients by improving their ability to obtain regular employment and reduce their dependence on public assistance.

TANF Applicant Child Care – Child care for TANF applicants who receive a referral—Form H2588—from HHSC to attend a WOA, locate employment, or have increased earnings prior to TANF certification, and need child care to accept or retain employment.

TANF Assistance – The cash grant provided through HHSC to individuals who meet certain residency, income, and resource criteria as provided under federal and state statutes and regulations, including PRWORA, the TANF block grant statutes, the TANF State Plan, TANF assistance provided under Texas Human Resources Code, Chapters 31 and 34, and other related regulations.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families State Program (TANF-SP) – The state-funded temporary cash assistance program designed specifically for two-parent families.

Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) – The statewide standard literacy assessment instrument used to determine the appropriateness of initial state time-limit designations for temporary cash assistance.

Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) – The state agency responsible for providing mental health and substance abuse services to Choices participants. Boards are required to enter into a local-level memorandum of understanding (MOU) with local providers of these services.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) – The lead state agency responsible for certifying TANF eligibility. HHSC provides TWC with information on individuals receiving TANF and eligible Choices services. Boards are required to have a local-level MOU for coordinated case management of Choices participants.

The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) – TWC’s automated support system.

Work Codes – Codes assigned by HHSC to individuals who apply for TANF assistance.

Work-Eligible Individuals – Adults or teen heads of household receiving TANF assistance, and nonrecipient parents—with the following exceptions:

- Noncitizens who are ineligible to receive cash assistance because of their immigration status;
- Parents caring for a disabled family member who lives in the home (provided the need for such care is supported by medical documentation), on a case-by-case basis; and
- Recipients of Social Security Insurance (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), on a case-by-case basis.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – an act that consolidated, coordinated, and improved employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs. Choices participants may be coenrolled in WIA services.

Workforce Orientation for Applicants (WOA) – As a condition of TANF eligibility, applicants and conditional applicants are required to attend a workforce orientation that provides information on options and services available to them. An alternative WOA is provided if extraordinary circumstances prevent a TANF applicant or conditional applicant from attending a regularly scheduled WOA.

Work Ready – A Choices eligible is considered work ready if he or she has skills that are required by employers in the workforce area. A Board must ensure immediate access to the labor market to determine whether a Choices eligible has those skills necessary to obtain employment.

Work Requirement – For the purposes of 42 U.S.C. §607 and 45 CFR §261.10, a Choices participant is deemed to be engaged in work by cooperating with all requirements set forth in the Family Employment Plan (FEP) and all TANF core and non-core activities.

A-103: Choices Responsibilities

In Texas, the following entities are responsible for administering TANF and Choices:

- HHSC at state and local levels
- TWC
- Boards
- Workforce Solutions Offices

A-103.a: HHSC State- and Local-Level Responsibilities

- Administers TANF
- Issues HHSC rules and policies governing TANF eligibility
- Performs reporting and monitoring functions for state and federal purposes
- Determines eligibility for TANF
- Determines work registration for TANF recipients
- Refers TANF recipients to Workforce Solutions Offices for Choices services
- Acts on the Workforce Solutions Office's report of noncooperation with participation requirements
- Refers TANF recipients who wish to resume participation following noncooperation to the Workforce Solutions Office for Choices services

A-103.b: TWC State-Level Responsibilities

- Issues rules, policies, and guidelines for Choices services
- Contracts with Boards to provide Choices services
- Provides technical assistance to Board staff and Workforce Solutions Office staff
- Performs reporting and monitoring functions for state and federal purposes

A-103.c: Board Responsibilities

- Ensures Workforce Solutions Offices provide Choices activities and support services to all Choices eligibles, including the following:
 - Ongoing and frequent monitoring of service requirements and activities;
 - Establishing local policies in accordance with TWC's Choices rules at 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC), §811.4 (<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/twcinfo/rules/ch811.pdf>);
 - Developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and collaborative partnerships in accordance with §811.4 of TWC's Choices rules; and
 - Conducting Choices activities in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

A-103.d: Workforce Solutions Office Staff Responsibilities

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- conducts outreach for all Choices eligibles;
- conducts Workforce Orientations for Applicants (WOAs) and alternative WOAs;
- conducts Employment Planning Session (EPS);
- completes assessments and develops FEPs;
- schedules appointments for and enrolls Choices eligibles in Choices activities;
- assists with job search and job readiness activities;
- determines good cause;
- provides support services including provision of transportation and child care expenses, as needed;
- monitors participation in all Choices activities;
- informs HHSC of Choices participants' employment, need for reconsideration of work registration status, and noncooperation with service requirements; and
- tracks participation and enters all actions into The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) (i.e., performs all appropriate documentation of services).

A-104: Right to Appeal

Boards must ensure Workforce Solutions Office staff informs:

- Choices eligibles of the right to file an appeal if a determination adversely affects the type and level of services provided by the Board or its designee; and
- Choices eligibles who will be participating in Choices activities of their right to appeal a decision related to Choices activities and support services.

Board policies may include the following:

- During the EPS, Workforce Solutions Office staff verbally informs TANF applicants who will be participating in Choices activities of information related to appeal rights;
- Distributing materials at Workforce Solutions Offices, including leaflets and brochures that inform individuals who will be participating in Choices activities of their right to file an appeal; and
- Posting signs at Workforce Solutions Offices regarding the right to file an appeal.

Individuals can also appeal a decision under the hearings process in TWC's Integrated Complaints, Hearings, and Appeals rules at 40 TAC, Chapter 823

(<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/twcinfo/rules/ch823.pdf>).

A-105: Discrimination Complaints

Individuals alleging discrimination on the basis of age, color, national origin, race, or physical or mental disability have a right to file a written complaint of alleged discriminatory acts within 180 calendar days from the date of the alleged discriminatory act. Complaints must be submitted to the following address:

Texas Workforce Commission
Subrecipient Monitoring and Equal Opportunity Department
101 East 15th Street, Room 242-T
Austin, Texas 78778-0001

Boards must ensure that Board staff or Workforce Solutions Office staff advises individuals who express an interest in filing a discrimination complaint of their right to file a complaint and of the complaint procedures.

A-106: Confidentiality

Failure to maintain a customer's confidentiality can result in disciplinary action, job termination, and criminal penalties.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff releases customer information only to the customer or to persons or agencies directly administering programs or providing services to the customer.

Boards also must ensure that persons and agencies requesting information agree to keep the information confidential and use the information only for the purpose stated in the request. This provision must be included in any written reply to the requestor.

A-200: TANF TIME-LIMITED BENEFITS AND EXEMPTIONS

A-201: TANF Time-Limited Benefits

PRWORA established a 60-month lifetime maximum limit on federal TANF benefits for families. The federal legislation prohibits states from using TANF funds to provide assistance to a family that includes an adult who received federal TANF assistance benefits for 60 cumulative months.

A-201.a: 60-Month Federal Time Limit

The federal lifetime limit applies to an entire family and is based on the number of months the family receives cash assistance. The federal time limit begins the first month a family receives TANF benefits. The 60-month federal time limit went into effect for all TANF individuals October 1, 1999, unless an individual was previously outreached. Before that date, the 60-month clock began upon notification of benefits.

The following have no effect on federal time limits:

- Participation in work activities
- Work requirement exemptions
- Granting of good cause

When a family reaches the federal time limit, there is a lifetime TANF freeze-out for the family unless the family receives a federal hardship exemption.

A-201.b: State Time Limit

State time limits apply to the TANF cash benefits received by certified caretakers and second parents who have access to Choices. State time limits apply only to recipients who were outreached or who voluntarily participate in Choices. When a recipient's state time limit expires, the state imposes a five-year freeze-out for the adult; children on the case, however, remain eligible.

A-202: Tiers: 12-, 24-, and 36-Month State Time Limits

The state has a time limit of 12, 24, or 36 months, based on an individual's education, functional literacy level, and work experience. HHSC determines an individual's state time limit. State time limits apply only to adult TANF recipients who are mandatory or who are exempt and voluntarily participate in Choices. When a TANF recipient's state time limits expire, the state imposes a five-year freeze-out for the adult; benefits for the children, however, continue.

There are three time limits, known as tiers. Tiers, with their corresponding state time limits, are defined as follows:

- Tier 5 (12 months) – Individual has an education level that is at least equivalent to a high school diploma and/or has at least 18 months of recent work history.
- Tier 6 (24 months) – Individual completed three years of high school and/or has six to 17 months of recent work history.
- Tier 7 (36 months) – Individual completed fewer than three years of high school and/or has fewer than six months of recent work history.

A-203: TANF State Program State Lifetime Limit

The TANF State Program (TANF-SP), created specifically for two-parent households, is a state-funded program and is not subject to federal time limits.

Each TANF-SP adult has a 60-month state time limit. The time-limit clock starts ticking with the initial receipt of benefits.

For two-parent families, any month of TANF benefits subject to state time limits since October 1, 2001, counts toward the family's lifetime cap, regardless of which parent received the benefits.

TANF-SP is substantively identical to Choices in terms of eligibility, work requirements, exemptions, time limits, and health-related services.

A-203.a: Redetermining State Time Limits

State time limits may change if the individual's functional literacy level score is lower than the individual's completed education level. The individual's literacy is assessed using TABE or SUPERA and does not have any bearing on the federal 60-month time limit.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff reports the literacy test results in grade-level terms in TWIST, and TWIST transfers the results to the HHSC system. This may result in a state time-limit change, but only if the original state time limit was based on education level and not work history.

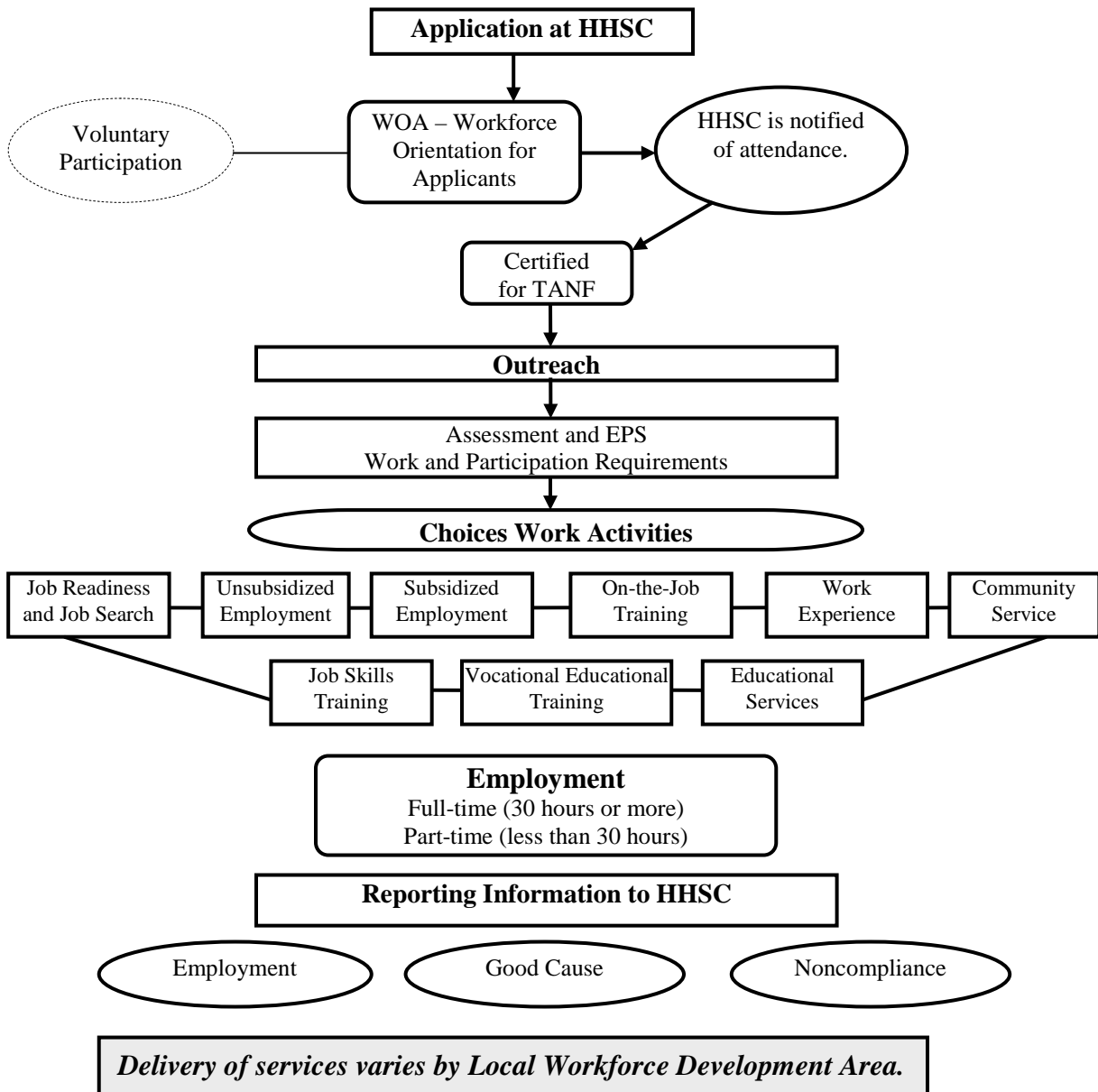
Choices

Part B – Choices Operations

B-100: CHOICES SERVICES

B-101: Choices Service Delivery Flowchart

The following flowchart is provided as a guide for the delivery of Choices services.



B-102: Workforce Orientation for Applicants and Conditional Applicants

Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) must ensure a Workforce Orientation for Applicants (WOA) is offered frequently enough to allow applicants and conditional applicants to comply with the HHSC requirement to attend a WOA as a condition of eligibility. Conditional applicants have 40 days from the date of referral to demonstrate cooperation by attending a WOA and participating in allowable Choices activities for four consecutive weeks.

Boards must ensure that a TANF applicant is not prevented from attending a WOA based on the applicant's interview date. If the TANF applicant has a pending TANF application and needs to attend a WOA to complete the application process, Boards must ensure that the TANF applicant is allowed to attend the WOA.

Note: The four consecutive weeks are not limited to a program or calendar month.

B-102.a: Goal of the WOA

The goal of the WOA is to provide information to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) applicants to enable them to make the best decisions for their families and the best use of their time-limited TANF benefits. The WOA is used to generate interest in workforce services and to inform applicants of the options and tools available to facilitate their entry into the workforce. WOAs are offered to help TANF applicants understand:

- the benefits and advantages of becoming employed;
- available services and referrals offered by the Board;
- the impact of time-limited TANF benefits; and
- individual and parental responsibility.

B-102.b Information Provided during a WOA

Boards must ensure that the WOA includes the following:

- Information on how to find a job;
- Local labor market information;
- Job counseling, including individual assistance from Workforce Solutions Office staff;
- Job search and daily job referrals;
- Assistance with WorkInTexas.com;
- Information about other available services;
- Assistance with applications and résumés;
- Interest, aptitude, and educational testing;
- Books and magazines on, or Internet links to, career and employer information;

- Resource room access (computers, phone, fax, etc.);
- Information on One-time TANF (OTTANF); and
- Information on availability of support services when the applicant locates employment.

Boards also must ensure that, during the WOA, TANF applicants are provided information on Choices services, including:

- participation requirements, and the expectation of applicants' immediate and ongoing participation in allowable Choices activities;
- consequences of nonparticipation for mandatory Choices participants;
- information on good cause and sanctions;
- pay for performance procedures;
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) exemptions; and
- benefits for exempt Choices participants who voluntarily participate in Choices activities.

To allow TANF applicants immediate access to employment planning, job referrals, and local employers that may be hiring, it is recommended that Boards:

- coordinate with their Business Services Unit to have job counselors available during or after WOA presentations;
- have case managers readily available during or after WOA presentations; and
- arrange preplanned job fairs or visits from local employers to coincide with the WOA.

Boards may use automated programs with WOA information only as a supplement to a live WOA presentation by Workforce Solutions Office staff. While automated programs provide a consistent message to all TANF applicants, it is personal interactions with Workforce Solutions Office staff that most assist a TANF applicant in achieving self-sufficiency.

B-102.c: Services Available to TANF Applicants

Boards must ensure that WOAs offer TANF applicants the opportunity to take advantage of available workforce services prior to certification of their TANF applications.

During the WOA, Boards are encouraged to deliver the primary message that *work pays more than TANF*. To illustrate this message, wage and benefit scenario

charts, which are updated annually, are available on the Intranet¹ under *Featured Links* at <https://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/wf/html/index.html>.

Boards must be aware of the following:

TANF applicants who are referred to a WOA and locate employment or have increased earnings after the WOA—but before their TANF application is certified—may be eligible for TANF Applicant child care, transportation, and other work-related expenses. To be eligible for TANF Applicant child care, a TANF applicant must:

- receive a referral—Form H2588—from HHSC to attend a WOA;
- locate employment or have increased earnings prior to TANF certification; and
- need child care to accept or retain employment.

Form H2588 is available at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H2588>.

TANF applicants can choose to begin participation immediately following the WOA. As there are no participation requirements for TANF applicants until they become TANF recipients, Boards must ensure that sanctions are not requested for individuals who do not use Workforce Solutions Office services after attending a WOA but prior to the certification of their TANF application.

B-102.d: Alternative WOA

If extraordinary circumstances prevent a TANF applicant or conditional applicant from attending a regularly scheduled WOA, Boards must ensure that an alternative WOA is provided. Extraordinary circumstances may include:

- no available transportation;
- residing more than 30 miles from the nearest Workforce Solutions Office;
- caring for a child under four months;
- conflicting work or school schedule;
- illness or injury of the applicant or spouse;
- illness or injury of another household member that requires the applicant's care; or
- being a victim of family violence in a situation such that attending the WOA would place the applicant or family in danger.

¹ *The Intranet is not available to the general public.*

Boards must ensure that, if requested by a TANF applicant, an alternative WOA is provided within the time frame in which the TANF application is being processed.

Alternative WOA arrangements can include the following:

- Scheduling a WOA at a local HHSC office;
- Offering a WOA during nonbusiness hours;
- Conducting an individual home visit to give the WOA;
- Conducting a WOA by telephone;
- Instituting a computer-based WOA;
- Creating a WOA video; or
- Providing a one-on-one WOA.

If an alternative WOA is not provided during the TANF application time frame, Boards must ensure that the applicant is provided a statement that the TANF applicant attempted to obtain an alternative WOA, which will serve to satisfy the applicant's WOA requirement.

B-102.e: Workforce Solutions Office Staff Responsibilities

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff conducting the WOA:

- coordinates planning for WOAs with local HHSC offices and staff, taking into consideration the location of HHSC offices, customer population, and the estimated number of applicants to be served;
- schedules a sufficient number of WOAs to ensure that applicants have an opportunity to attend;
- conducts the WOA and report it in The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST); and
- verifies applicants' and conditional applicants' attendance at the WOA by signing, stamping, and returning Form H2588 immediately to HHSC by fax, phone, courier, interagency mail, or regular mail.

Note: Time frames for the return of Form H2588 are important because HHSC must verify attendance to complete an individual's eligibility determination.

B-102.f: WOA TWIST Instructions

Boards may choose to:

- manually create a roster for each WOA; and
- maintain the roster in a secure file.

Boards may require that Workforce Solutions Office staff uses *TWIST Scheduler* to:

- generate a roster containing the names of individuals attending each WOA; and
- maintain the roster to verify WOA provision.

Boards must ensure that:

- a *Program Detail* is opened in TWIST for each TANF applicant attending a WOA; and
- *Workforce Services Orientation* is added as a Choices Applicant (fund code 90) service. If the customer does not choose to begin Choices participation at the time of the WOA, the *Program Detail* must be closed immediately after the WOA to allow the customer's entry into the outreach pool upon certification for benefits.

For specific information on using *TWIST Scheduler*, refer to the *Guide to Using TWIST* located under the help menu in TWIST or at ftp://ftp01.twc.state.tx.us/priv/TWIST/TWIST_Administrator_Files/Users_Guide/.

B-103: One-Time TANF

OTTANF is a lump sum grant of \$1,000 offered through HHSC. HHSC determines eligibility for and certifies OTTANF. The intent of OTTANF is to help TANF applicants experiencing short-term crises by providing upfront financial assistance along with exposure to the services offered by Workforce Solutions Offices. Boards must ensure that, during the WOA, TANF applicants are informed of the availability of OTTANF and directed to HHSC for more information regarding OTTANF eligibility criteria.

TANF applicants who receive OTTANF are not eligible to participate in Choices or receive TANF assistance for the 12 months following receipt of OTTANF.

B-104: Outreach

Individuals can receive Choices services through several entry points, including:

- an outreach letter generated by TWIST with a scheduled appointment for an Employment Planning Session (EPS);
- a scheduled appointment at the WOA to attend an EPS;
- contact by telephone, e-mail, or home visit; or
- walking into a Workforce Solutions Office and requesting services.

Boards must ensure that a process is in place at Workforce Solutions Offices to provide Choices services to eligible individuals who inquire about or request employment services.

B-104.a: Outreach Letter

Boards must ensure that Choices eligibles are outreached in writing of the requirement to participate in Choices services.

Boards must ensure that all outreach letters contain the following information:

- Date
- Time
- Location
- Purpose
- Contact name and phone number
- Requirement to participate for mandatory individuals
- Consequences of nonattendance for mandatory individuals

Note: Generating an outreach letter in TWIST will automatically add a notation in *Counselor Notes* indicating the date the letter was generated, the date and time of the scheduled appointment, and the reason for outreach.

If TWIST *Scheduler* is not used to generate the outreach letter, Workforce Solutions Office staff must manually add a notation in *Counselor Notes* indicating the date the letter was sent, the date and time of the scheduled appointment, and the reason for outreach.

B-104.b: Notice to Attend Employment Planning Sessions

It is recommended that Boards ensure that when Workforce Solutions Office staff members complete the WOA, they give applicants and conditional applicants a notice to attend an EPS. An EPS is an entry point for mandatory recipients and exempt recipients who voluntarily participate in Choices services. The EPS is the first step in assessment and development of the Family Employment Plan (FEP) and sets the tone for participation in Choices activities, and provides more details about:

- Choices services;
- assessment and expectations; and
- the FEP process.

B-104.c: Automated Outreach

The most common method of outreach is through TWIST. Workforce Solutions Office staff uses TWIST to:

- select customers to outreach;
- generate automated outreach letters;

- generate a roster of individuals who are scheduled to attend an event; and
- document outreach results.

Workforce Solutions Office staff also can use automated outreach for a specific population by targeting individuals who:

- have a mandatory work requirement; or
- are exempt.

B-104.d: Outreach Results

The most common outreach results include:

- EPS attendance;
- rescheduling; or
- failure to respond.

It is recommended that Boards require outreach results to be documented on each roster in *TWIST Scheduler*.

B-200: CASE MANAGEMENT

B-201: Case Management

Case management is the organization and coordination of formal or informal activities, services, and support. It is designed to help individuals become employed and self-supporting through participation in Choices services.

It is recommended that Boards require Workforce Solutions Office staff to have weekly contact with Choices participants that includes:

- analyzing and gathering information;
- identifying the Choices participant's strengths and weaknesses;
- assisting in the removal of barriers by determining and arranging for any intervention needed to help the Choices participant comply with work requirements;
- determining the need for and provision of support services;
- tracking and reporting support services;
- developing or modifying the FEP;
- ensuring that the Choices participant is progressing toward achieving the goals and objectives in the FEP;
- monitoring progress and all work requirements;
- entering documentation of all Choices participant interactions into *TWIST Counselor Notes* and entering verification of participation hours into *TWIST Daily Time Tracking*; and

- identifying employment opportunities that may assist the Choices participant's progression toward self-sufficiency and independence from public assistance.

During a case management assessment and in ongoing case evaluations, Workforce Solutions Office staff will sometimes learn of individual or family situations that may impact job search, employment, or successful participation in work activities. To help remove barriers to employment, case management involves the following activities:

- Identifying and analyzing individual situations that create barriers;
- Determining whether barriers can be managed by:
 - Choices services;
 - overall Workforce Solutions Office resources;
 - elements of the participant's life circumstances;
 - other agencies or service provider resources; and
 - development of a strategy for dealing with barriers.
- Appropriately documenting existing barriers;
- Creating follow-up strategies to ensure success;
- Referring to other appropriate community organizations; and
- Coenrolling in other Workforce Solutions Office programs.

B-202: Coordination with HHSC

The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Choices rules at 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 811 (<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/twcinfo/rules/ch811.pdf>) include requirements for coordinated case management to help Boards provide consistent and streamlined Choices services. Boards must ensure that, as part of coordination, Workforce Solutions Office staff has ongoing communication with HHSC.

If there is a change in an individual's status while participating in the Choices program, Boards must ensure that Form H2583, Choices Information Transmittal, is used to notify the HHSC Texas Works Advisor of this status change. Changes in status include:

- customer became employed;
- customer has a medical condition, with Form H1836A or B attached; or
- other changes that affect participation in the Choices program.

Form H2583 is available at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H2583>.

Form H1836A or B is available at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H1836-A> or <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H1836-B>.

B-203: Referrals for Community-Based Services

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff develops a system for referral to pre- and post-employment services offered by community-based organizations for Choices participants facing higher-than-average barriers to employment. Boards are

required to have local agreements or MOUs with organizations that address barriers to employment, such as:

- local housing authorities and sponsors of local housing programs;
- agencies or organizations that serve individuals with disabilities; and
- local providers of substance abuse and mental health services.

Additionally, if an individual is a victim of family violence, Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff provides a referral to an individual or agency specializing in family violence issues.

B-300: ASSESSMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PLANNING

B-301: Purpose of Assessment

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff performs initial and ongoing assessments to determine the employability and job retention needs of Choices participants, including wage advancement and career development needs.

Boards must ensure that assessments are provided to:

- Choices participants who are:
 - age 18 or older; or
 - heads of household, as determined by HHSC, and who:
 - are not yet age 18;
 - have not completed secondary school or received a GED credential; and
 - are not attending secondary school; and
- applicants and former recipients who choose to participate in Choices services.

An introduction to Choices services is generally provided to Choices eligibles during the initial EPS. EPSs are generally held weekly or as often as needed.

Boards must ensure that employment planning includes:

- conducting assessments by:
 - gathering information;
 - analyzing the information to identify an individual's strengths and barriers; and
 - determining the steps necessary to enable an individual to achieve employment and self-sufficiency goals;
- developing FEPs;
- completing family work requirement forms for two-parent families; and
- providing post-employment services to assist the individual with employment advancement.

If Workforce Solutions Office staff identifies higher-than-average barriers, referrals can be made to preemployment and post-employment services offered by community-based and other organizations.

If the skills assessment indicates a Choices participant requires job-specific training for placement in a job that pays wages that equal or exceed a Board's identified self-sufficiency wage, the Board must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff, to the extent funds are available and to the extent allowed by the Chapter 811 Choices rules, places the Choices participant in vocational educational training activities or job skills training activities that are designed to improve employment and wage outcomes and job retention.

B-302: Initial and Ongoing Assessments

Initial and ongoing assessments involve:

- establishing a partnership with the individual and ensuring the individual understands expectations;
- giving the individual control over decisions affecting his or her life;
- encouraging the individual to make the most of the opportunities and services provided;
- helping the individual build self-confidence;
- making the individual aware of the skills and employability strengths he or she already possesses;
- discussing employment possibilities with the individual while taking into consideration the individual's skill level as it relates to local employer needs; and
- encouraging the individual to set realistic employment goals.

B-303: Elements of Assessment

Boards must ensure that the following elements are part of initial and ongoing assessment of Choices participants:

- Vocational and education skills, training, and needs;
- Work experience;
- Literacy level, unless the individual is a mandatory Choices participant working 30 hours per week, earning at least \$700 per month, and receiving the Earned Income Deduction (EID);
- Job interests and goals;
- Pre- and post-employment skills development needs in order to determine the necessity of job-specific training;
- Unmet housing needs, and whether those needs are a barrier to self-sufficiency and full participation in the workforce;
- Support services needs, such as child care and transportation; and

- The evaluation of individual and family circumstances, which could create barriers to employment or participation in Choices services.

B-304: Potential Barriers

Boards must ensure that assessments identify Choices eligibles with higher-than-average barriers to employment, as defined by the Board. If such barriers are identified, Boards may specify that Workforce Solutions Office staff makes referrals to preemployment and post-employment services offered by community-based and other organizations.

Boards must ensure that the following potential barriers to employment are considered in the planning and assessment process:

- Physical or mental health problems
- Substance abuse issues
- Criminal record or problems with the criminal justice system
- Family violence and abuse
- Crisis (individual or family crises or circumstances that may preclude participation)
- Lack of child support from absent parent
- Caring for a child or an adult with special needs
- Support services needs

B-304.a: Good Cause

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff grants good cause to Choices participants who are unable to participate in Choices activities because of personal circumstances or issues that are potential barriers to participation.

Boards must ensure that good cause determination for Choices participants:

- is based on individual and family circumstances;
- is based on face-to-face or telephone contact;
- is for a temporary period when Choices participants may be unable to attend scheduled appointments or participate in ongoing work activities;
- is made at the time Workforce Solutions Office staff learns of the change in circumstances; and
- is conditional upon efforts to address circumstances that limit the individual's ability to participate in Choices activities as required in the FEP.

Boards must ensure that good cause is granted to sanctioned families and conditional applicants during the period of demonstrated cooperation, if warranted.

If good cause is granted, Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- opens the appropriate service in TWIST;
- enters good cause in the *Choices History Good Cause* tab; and
- documents the good cause circumstances in *Counselor Notes*.

B-304.b: Reasons for Good Cause

Boards must be aware of the following:

The following circumstances may constitute a reason for good cause:

- Temporary illness or incapacitation;
- Disabled individuals or individuals caring for a disabled family member who participate to the extent determined possible, as supported by medical documentation, but less than the required participation hours;
- Court appearance;
- Caring for a disabled family member who requires the Choices participant's presence in the home, as supported by medical documentation;
- Demonstration that there is:
 - no available transportation and the distance prohibits walking;
 - no available job within reasonable commuting distance, as defined by the Board; or
 - an inability to obtain needed child care;
- Absence of other support services necessary for participation;
- Receipt of a job referral that results in an offer below the federal minimum wage, except when a lower wage is permissible under federal minimum wage law;
- An individual or family crisis or a family circumstance that may preclude participation, including substance abuse, mental health, and disability-related issues (the Choices participant must engage in problem resolution through appropriate referrals for counseling and support services); or
- The individual is a victim of family violence.

B-304.c: Family Violence

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff refers Choices eligible individuals identified as possible victims of family violence to an individual or agency that specializes in issues involving family violence.

Boards must ensure that no less than four hours of family violence training is provided to staff who:

- gives information to Choices eligible individuals;
- requests penalties or good cause; or
- provides employment or retention services.

B-304.d: Good Cause Determinations

Boards must ensure that good cause is:

- reevaluated at least once a month;
- extended if the circumstances giving rise to the good cause exception are not resolved after available resources to remedy the situation have been considered;
- not allowed to exceed a total of 12 consecutive months per occurrence when based on the existence of family violence; and
- determined separately from short-term excused absences.

Boards must ensure that, while the Choices participant is in good cause status, support services are discontinued unless support services are needed to address barriers that resulted in the good cause determination. If the individual needs support services to address the barrier responsible for good cause determination, Boards must ensure that the services are provided.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff makes regular contact with a Choices participant during a good cause period in order to:

- evaluate the individual's situation (if necessary, requiring verification or demonstration of the problem);
- determine the estimated time frame required to remedy the problem;
- assist in removing the barrier using the resources and support services available;
- assist with appropriate referrals and arrangements for community services; and
- report good cause in TWIST if the problem cannot be resolved to allow initiation or continuation of service activities for the present time.

Note: Choices participants are counted in the participation rate denominator during a good cause period.

B-305: Literacy Assessment

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- administers a literacy assessment, using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or SUPERA, to determine the Choices participant's literacy level; and
- reports the grade-level result from the literacy assessment in TWIST as soon as possible, but no later than the data entry deadline for the first month of an individual's Choices participation.

Literacy assessment scores do not expire so retesting is not required, although individuals may be retested to determine whether there is an improvement in basic skills after participation in educational components.

If the literacy assessment is readministered and new scores are entered into TWIST, Boards must be aware that a change in state time limits for the Choices participant can result.

Boards must be aware that Workforce Solutions Office staff is not required to administer TABE to the following:

- Individuals who receive EID from HHSC. These individuals are employed for 30 hours per week and earn at least \$700 per month. They receive TANF only for a four-month period;
- Individuals who receive a hardship exemption after their time limits expire. HHSC's automated system only accepts TABE scores and adjusts the time-limited benefits tier for individuals whose time-limited benefits have not expired; and
- Exempt Choices individuals who volunteer to participate.

The following are exceptions to this rule:

- Individuals who have a language barrier;
- Individuals who lack literacy; and
- Individuals who are working full-time but are not coded as receiving EID.

Note: If the customer is coenrolled in WIA youth services and is found to be basic skills deficient, retesting is required.

B-305.a: SUPERA

SUPERA is a Spanish-language achievement test with results based on the same scale as English-language results. SUPERA uses standard Spanish, avoids regionalism and ambiguous words, and is appropriate and relevant to Spanish-speaking individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Boards must ensure that:

- SUPERA is used to assess Spanish-speaking individuals. For TANF recipients this is the only TWC-approved test that may be administered to Spanish-speaking individuals. Other Spanish-language assessment tests require that staff who administer them be able to read and speak both English and Spanish; and
- the most current norms table for SUPERA is used when converting raw scores to scale scores and converting scale scores to grade equivalents. This information is included with the SUPERA testing materials from the publisher, CTB/McGraw-Hill.

B-306: Assessment of Support Services Needs

During the assessment process, Workforce Solutions Office staff might determine that support services are necessary for the individual to participate in Choices activities.

Boards must ensure that any identified support services are provided.

Choices support services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Child care
- Transportation
- Work-related expenses
- GED credential testing payments

B-307: Family Employment Plan

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff develops FEPs within the parameters of Choices and the work first philosophy. Work first focuses on immediate attachment to the labor force and on post-employment services to help individuals reach the goal of self-sufficiency.

Boards must ensure that FEPs are developed for the following:

- All Choices participants
- Applicants and former recipients who volunteer to participate in Choices

Boards must ensure that FEPs are:

- jointly developed with the Choices participant;
- based on an assessment of the individual's skills and abilities; and
- mutually agreed upon by the individual and Workforce Solutions Office staff.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff discusses and explains the content of the FEP.

Boards must be aware that if participants fail to comply with the terms of the FEP, they are subject to a full family sanction.

B-307.a: Developing the Family Employment Plan

Choices participants and Workforce Solutions Office staff share responsibility in three areas for developing the FEP:

- Establishing employment goals as they relate to employers' workforce needs in the local labor market;
- Assessing service needs; and
- Developing a course of action.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff considers state and federal time limits when developing the FEP. When scheduling activities, take into consideration the amount of time needed to complete FEP objectives.

B-307.b: Required Information

Boards may develop their own FEPs.

However, Boards must ensure that FEPs include:

- individual and family assessments;
- the goal of self-sufficiency through employment, based on an individual assessment that considers the needs of the local labor market;
- development of specific post-employment service strategies with methods and time frames for reaching the goals of an identified self-sufficiency wage;
- provision of information about the following:
 - sanction process;
 - good cause process;
 - right of appeal; and
 - importance of contacting a case manager if individual or family circumstances prevent participation;
- the steps and services to achieve each goal, including the individuals responsible and the scheduled activity;
- the FEP date, required hours, and activity begin and end dates;
- the participation agreement for compliance with work requirements;
- requirements for single- and two-parent families; and
- signatures of the individuals and Workforce Solutions Office staff member unless the individual is employed.

B-307.c: Serving Individuals with Disabilities

Boards may use HHSC Form H1836 A or B (Medical Release/Physician's Statement) to develop a more comprehensive FEP for disabled individuals who have reduced work requirements.

- Form H1836A specifies the number of physician-identified hours an individual is able to participate in work activities.
- Form H1836B specifies the number of physician-identified hours an individual caring for a disabled child or adult in the household is able to participate in work activities.

Boards must ensure that if there is a reduced work requirement indication on HHSC Form H1836A/B, all pertinent information is documented in TWIST under the H1836A/B tab in the *TANF History* section.

Boards must ensure that sanctions are not requested for Choices participants who participate the full number of hours indicated on HHSC Form H1836 A or B.

B-307.d: Family Work Requirement for Two-Parent Families

Boards must ensure that both mandatory adults in a two-parent family sign a Family Work Requirement form acknowledging that they:

- are responsible for meeting the work requirement; and
- can elect to have only one of the adults meet the work requirement.

Boards must ensure that the family work requirement distributes the required hours of participation between one or both adults in accordance with the household's participation agreement for compliance with Choices work requirements.

If the work requirement is not met, the family will be subject to a full family sanction.

Boards must ensure that both adults:

- sign a Family Work Requirement form; and
- receive appropriate notification of their joint work requirements.

Boards may use the sample E-120 Family Work Requirement form included with this guide or develop a local form.

Boards must ensure that the Family Work Requirement form states that:

- both adults understand their 35- or 55-hour work requirement (depending on whether they receive child care services);
- the responsibility for meeting the work requirement is placed on both adults, but the family can choose only one adult to meet the household's responsibility; and

- if the adults do not meet the required participation hours, the family will be subject to full family sanction regarding their TANF assistance grant.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff develops an FEP and completes a Family Work Requirement form for two-parent families with the involvement of both adults. During the development of the FEP, Boards must ensure that both adults agree on who will satisfy the family's participation requirement.

B-307.e: Evaluation of the Family Employment Plan

Boards must ensure that evaluation of the FEP is an ongoing process in which decisions are made about an individual's ability to gain employment and allowable work activities providing the skills or experience necessary to assist the participant in obtaining employment are identified and added.

Elements to be considered in an ongoing evaluation and modification of the FEP include:

- changes in activities and weekly participation hours;
- progress in work activities and meeting scheduled time frames for completion; and
- identification of strategies to overcome problems, including provisions of support services.

Ongoing evaluation means that family employment planning begins with the EPS and continues until Workforce Solutions Office staff closes the Choices case. Workforce Solutions Office staff revises the FEP as activities and schedules change or as additional work-related services or support services are needed, based on an ongoing assessment and evaluation of the progress being made.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff evaluates and updates FEPs for all Choices participants, applicants, and former recipients who volunteer to participate in Choices as necessary.

B-400: PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

B-401: Participation Requirements

Choices participants must work or participate in countable, allowable activities to receive TANF benefits. Participation hours are subject to restrictions regarding core and non-core activities. The hourly work requirement is based on each participant's situation.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff complies with participation hour requirements as set forth in C-107: Sample Participation Requirement Desk Aid.

B-401.a: Single-Parent Families

A single parent with no children under the age of six is required to participate a minimum weekly average of at least 30 hours. Boards must ensure that a minimum of 20 of the required 30 hours are spent in core activities. Additional hours per week above the 20 core hours can be counted toward the minimum weekly average.

Boards also must ensure that a single parent with children under age six spends at least 20 hours in core activities per week.

B-401.b: Two-Parent Families Not Receiving TWC-Funded Child Care

Two-parent families that are not receiving TWC-funded child care are required to have one or both adults in the family participate a minimum weekly average of 35 hours.

Boards must ensure that a minimum of 30 of the required 35 hours are spent in core activities. An average of five hours or more per week can be from participation in non-core activities.

Boards must be aware that in order for all hours of participation to count, at least 30 hours are spent in core activities, or none of the participation hours will count toward participation requirements.

B-401.c: Two-Parent Families Receiving TWC-Funded Child Care

Two-parent families that are receiving TWC-funded child care are required to have one or both adults in the family participate a minimum weekly average of 55 hours.

Boards must ensure that a minimum of 50 of the required 55 hours are spent in core activities. An average of five hours or more per week can be from participation in non-core activities.

Boards must be aware that in order for all hours of participation to count, at least 50 hours are spent in core activities, or none of the participation hours will count toward participation requirements.

B-401.d: Exempt Choices Participants

Exempt Choices participants can volunteer to participate in Choices services. These individuals are not subject to sanction; therefore, a penalty must not be requested for exempt Choices participants who fail to meet participation requirements. However, Boards must ensure that, if support services such as child care and transportation are provided, they are terminated unless good cause has been determined.

Participation in activities by exempt Choices participants may be under the direction of the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) or a similar organization that works with individuals with disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities and individuals caring for a disabled family member as supported by medical documentation have their participation requirements determined by a physician.

Boards must ensure that exempt Choices participants who volunteer to participate comply with all work requirements regarding core and non-core activities according to reduced work hours if applicable.

B-401.e: Sanctioned Families

Boards must ensure that upon initiation of a sanction request:

- cooperation is demonstrated in the program month following the month of noncooperation; and
- when a family demonstrates cooperation, a cooperation notice is sent to HHSC, which reinstates the family's benefits.

Boards must be aware that for sanctioned families that are not TANF recipients, mandated community service is not required and job search or job readiness hours do not count toward the 12-month limit.

B-401.f: Conditional Applicants

Boards must ensure that conditional applicants demonstrate cooperation for four consecutive weeks. The four weeks can begin at any time and fall across two calendar months. A conditional applicant must provide a H2588 referral form from HHSC to attend a WOA and demonstrate cooperation for four consecutive weeks.

For conditional applicants who are not TANF recipients, mandated community service is not required, and the four- or six-week job search or job readiness limits do not apply.

Boards must be aware that all Choices services, including support services, are available as long as the individuals demonstrate cooperation and are meeting participation requirements.

B-401.g: Teen Heads of Household

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- enrolls teen heads of household who have not completed secondary school or received a GED credential in educational activities; and
- counts teen heads of household who have not completed secondary school or received a GED credential as engaged in work if:
 - during months in which school is in session they maintain satisfactory attendance; and
 - during months in which school is not in session they participate in:
 - allowable activities;
 - education directly related to employment for an average of at least 20 hours per week; or
 - any Choices employment and training activities.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- enters actual hours of school attendance into TWIST for weeks of the month school is in session; and
- does not enter scheduled hours into TWIST.

Boards must be aware of the following:

- Teens who attend school satisfactorily have no set hourly requirement and no core-hour requirement.
- Teens who participate in other educational activities for an average of 20 hours per week have no core-hour requirement.
- Teens who do not attend school satisfactorily, or who participate in other educational activities for less than an average of 20 hours per week, must participate a total of 30 hours per week, with 20 hours in core activities to

meet participation requirements (educational activities, including school attendance, do not count as core activities).

- Teens who have a child under age six have a work requirement reduced to an average of 20 hours per week in core activities (educational activities, including school attendance, do not count as core activities).

Boards also must be aware of the following:

Two Parent:

Inclusion in the Two-Parent Families Participation Rate numerator requires that both parents in a two-parent teen family, in which at least one parent is not coded *WPS 15* or *WPS 16*, must have the following average weekly participation:

- 35 hours, with 30 hours in core activities; or
- 55 hours, with 50 hours in core activities, if receiving subsidized child care.

Example: One parent in a two-parent family is age 20 or older, and the second parent is a teen head of household attending school satisfactorily for 15 hours per week. Inclusion in the Two-Parent Families Participation Rate numerator requires that the family participate for 30 hours in core activities, or 50 hours in core activities if the family is receiving subsidized child care.

Note: The 15 hours for a teen head of household attending school satisfactorily do not count as core hours.

Two-parent households with two teen heads of household who have not attained their high school diploma or GED credential, both attending school satisfactorily, or participating in other educational activities for 20 hours per week, will be included in the Two-Parent Families Participation Rate numerator.

Example: A two-parent household has two teen heads of household who have not attained their high school diploma or GED credential. One teen parent attends high school satisfactorily, and the other participates in vocational education for 20 hours per week. The family meets participation requirements and is included in the Two-Parent Families Participation Rate numerator.

B-402: Core Activities

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enrolls Choices participants in a sufficient number of hours to count in participation.

Choices core work activities include:

- job search and job readiness activities;
- community service;

- vocational educational training; and
- employment activities.

Employment activities are core activities directly related to work. Employment activities include:

- unsubsidized employment;
- subsidized employment;
- work experience; and
- OJT.

Example: A single parent can work 20 hours in subsidized employment, which is a core activity and an employment activity, and participate in 10 hours of vocational educational training, which is a core activity but not an employment activity.

B-403: Non-Core Activities

Boards must be aware that the hours for non-core activities count only in combination with sufficient core hours.

Non-core activities include:

- job skills training; and
- educational services for Choices participants who have not completed secondary school or received a GED credential.

B-404: Participation in More Than One Activity

Certain activities are limited by Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements and do not allow sufficient hours to meet core-hour requirements. Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff considers, when necessary, other activities that can be “stacked” to ensure full participation.

FLSA-covered activities include:

- work experience; and
- community service.

Boards must be aware that two FLSA-covered activities cannot be stacked.

FLSA requirements also apply to:

- sanctioned families; and
- conditional applicants.

Boards must ensure that if a Choices participant's hours of community service or work experience are not sufficient to meet the core work activity requirement, the participant is enrolled in additional non-FLSA-covered core activities. Court-ordered community service is subject to FLSA restrictions unless the participant is a volunteer or a trainee.

For more information on the FLSA formula, see B-605: Special Provisions Regarding FLSA.

B-405: Participation Calculation Tool

To determine the exact number of hours individual customers need to meet Choices participation requirements, Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff calculates hours at the beginning of each month. The Participation Calculation tool assists in determining the number of hours each customer needs daily, weekly, and monthly to meet participation.

Additionally, the Participation Calculation tool can be used to calculate FLSA-required hours, any additional hours needed to meet participation, and the beginning and ending of partial months.

The Participation Calculation tool is available on the Intranet under the *Featured Links* section at <https://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/wf/html/index.html>.

The Participation Calculation tool will be updated annually to reflect any changes.

How to Calculate Average Weekly Hours of Participation

- Total all hours of participation per activity for the month. Do not combine all hours from different services.
- Divide the total hours of participation for each activity by the number of days in the month to calculate the average daily hours of participation.
- Multiply the average daily hours by the number of days in a week (7) to calculate average weekly hours of participation and round according to service.

Example: A Choices participant participates a total of 134 hours between June 1 and June 30. There are 30 days in June. To calculate the average daily hours, the total hours of participation are divided by the number of days in the month.

$$134 / 30 = 4.5$$

Average daily hours are then multiplied by the number of days in a week (7) to calculate average weekly hours.

$$4.5 \times 7 = 31.5, \text{ rounded up to } 32$$

How to Calculate Partial Months of Participation

For partial months of participation, average weekly hours are calculated based on the number of days in the month from the date the Choices participant receives TANF benefits.

- Determine the number of days in the month that the Choices participant has received benefits (count from the date the Choices participant first received benefits to the end of the calendar month).
- Total all hours of participation for the partial month per activity. Do not combine all hours from different services.
- Divide the total hours of participation for each activity by the number of days in the partial month to calculate the average daily hours of participation.
- Multiply the average daily hours by the number of days in a week (7) to calculate average weekly hours of participation and round according to service.

Example 1: A Choices participant begins receiving TANF benefits June 18. There are 13 days from June 18 to June 30. The Choices participant participated in 20 hours of job search/job readiness and 36 hours of job skills training with a total of 56 participation hours between June 18 and June 30. To calculate the average daily hours, the total hours of participation are divided by the number of days the participant received benefits.

$$56 / 13 = 4.3$$

Average daily hours are then multiplied by the number of days in a week (7) to calculate average weekly hours.

$$4.3 \times 7 = 30.1 \text{ (round down to 30)}$$

Example 2: A Choices participant begins receiving TANF benefits June 28. There are three days from June 28 to June 30. The Choices participant participated 16 hours between June 28 and June 30. To calculate the average daily hours, the total hours of participation are divided by the number of days the participant received benefits.

$$16 / 3 = 5.3$$

Average daily hours are then multiplied by the number of days in a week (7) to calculate average weekly hours.

$$5.3 \times 7 = 37.1 \text{ (round down to 37)}$$

B-500: CHOICES WORK ACTIVITIES

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff supervises all Choices work activities daily.

Daily supervision means that case managers are accessible daily for Choices participants to discuss progress and obtain additional guidance; it does not mean daily contact with every Choices participant.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters actual daily participation in each appropriate activity into TWIST, as set forth in C-104: TWIST Service Codes and Descriptions.

B-501: Job Search and Job Readiness

Boards must be aware of the following:

Job search and job readiness are core activities and are limited to:

- no more than four consecutive weeks in the preceding 12-month period;
- 120 hours per 12-month period for single parents with a child under age six; or
- 180 hours per 12-month period for all other work-eligible individuals.

Boards must be aware that for two-parent households, each parent is entitled to the 120/180 hours per calendar year.

Any participation above these levels is not counted. Weeks of participation are counted as consecutive until there is a week of no participation in job search and job readiness.

Example: For a single parent with a child under age six:

Week 1: 2 hours in job search

Week 2: 8 hours in job readiness

Week 3: 12 hours in job search

Week 4: 0 hours in job search and job readiness

Week 5: 22 hours total, consisting of 12 hours in job readiness and 10 hours in job search

At the end of the month, the customer has accumulated 44 hours toward the 120-hour limit of participation in job search and job readiness, and one week toward his or her participation limit of four consecutive weeks in job search and/or job readiness (because there was no participation in job search and job readiness in week four). Seventy-six additional hours of participation in job search and/or job readiness can be reported during the 12-month period, after which any participation in job search and job readiness reported will not count toward participation.

After four consecutive weeks of participation in job readiness and job search activities, mandatory Choices participants are not eligible for additional participation in these activities until they comply with community service requirements.

Weeks of participation in job readiness and job search by conditional applicants and sanctioned families that are not TANF recipients are not counted toward the mandatory job readiness and job search limit.

B-501.a: Partial Week

A Choices participant must participate in job search and job readiness for at least three days in order for a partial week of participation in job search and job readiness activities to count as a full week of participation. Partial-week participation can only be used one time per 12-month period.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters partial-week participation into TWIST *Daily Time Tracking* as a “partial week” and calculates the partial-week hours as follows:

1. Calculate the average daily hours of participation in job search and job readiness activities over the three- or four-day period.
2. Credit the Choices participant with the average daily hours of participation for:
 - one day – if the Choices participant participated in job search and job readiness activities for four days; or
 - two days – if the Choices participant participated in job search and job readiness activities for three days.

For a partial week of participation in job search and job readiness activities, Boards must ensure that participation hours entered equal the adult’s portion of the family’s work requirement.

Example: Single-Parent Family—In the first week of October 2010, an adult participates for three days in job search, for a total of 15 hours. Thirty hours of job search participation are entered into TWIST. A partial week cannot be used again until October 2011.

Example: Two-Parent Family—In December 2010, a two-parent family receives child care to allow both adults to participate in Choices. In the first week of December, both parents participate in job search for three days, for a total of 30 hours. Fifty-five hours of participation in job search, split between the two adults, are entered into TWIST. A partial week cannot be used again until December 2011.

In the partial week, a family can receive credit only for hours of participation equal to that family’s work requirement, even if the Board regularly schedules customers for hours in excess of the work requirement. If a Board wants to receive credit for more hours, it must forgo the partial week and seek to increase actual participation hours by encouraging customers to participate more during the week.

B-501.b: Job Search Activities

Boards must be aware of the following:

Job search activities are defined as acts of seeking and obtaining employment and can be either self-directed or supervised. Job search activities include the following:

- Job referrals;
- Information on available jobs;
- Occupational exploration, including information on local emerging and demand occupations;
- Job fairs;
- Applying or interviewing for job vacancies; and
- Making contacts with potential employers.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff reviews the participant's job search activities to:

- ensure that an adequate amount of time is spent in the activity;
- evaluate job search progress; and
- provide additional guidance as necessary.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff reports all job search activities under the appropriate TWIST service code.

B-501.b(1): Supervised Job Search Activities

Supervised job search activities can occur in individual or group settings in a designated area, such as the Workforce Solutions Office resource room, and can include staff-assisted job search.

Supervised job search activities include, but are not limited to:

- Job search in the resource room;
- Group job search or job clubs; and
- Participating in Workforce Solutions Office–sponsored job fairs.

Boards must ensure that staff-assisted job search activities include:

- creating or updating applications in WorkInTexas.com;
- job referrals; and
- job development.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff allows online job search only if it is conducted in a supervised setting such as a Workforce Solutions Office, or another setting with a responsible party physically present to verify that the Choices participant is conducting online job search activities.

B-501.b(2): Self-Directed Job Search Activities

Self-directed job search occurs when Choices participants individually plan, complete, and document their job search activities without any direct supervision or assistance.

Self-directed job search includes the following:

- Preparation time for job search, which includes:
 - researching employers;
 - creating résumés and cover letters;
 - creating a reference list; and
 - setting up appointments with specific employers;
- Employer contacts;
- On-site completion of applications or submission of résumés; and
- Interviews with potential employers.

Boards must ensure that all Choices participants in self-directed job search activities:

- maintain a daily log of their job search participation and employment contacts; and
- submit their logs at least weekly.

B-501.b(3): Job Search Logs

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff accepts only the following forms of documentation to verify job search logs:

- Fax transmittal receipts for résumés and applications submitted to employers—but only if the fax number has been verified as belonging to the listed employer;
- Business cards or brochures from the contacted employer;
- Signed contact verification forms as described below; or
- Printouts of e-mail submissions of résumés and applications—but only if the e-mail address has been verified as belonging to the listed employer.

Boards may design and create their own job search logs, or modify existing ones, to ensure that the job search logs:

- include information on potential employers contacted in person or by phone, mail, or Internet, including:
 - method of contact;
 - date of contact;
 - amount of time spent;
 - position applied for; and
 - employer's name and contact information; and
- are signed and dated by participants.

A short contact verification form also may be developed for participants' use when applying for a position in person. This completed form will serve as verification of participation in self-directed job search and is signed by the employer contact accepting the application.

If Boards use a contact verification form as verification of participation in self-directed job search, it is recommended that:

- the contact verification form be a separate form from the job search log; and
- a discrete contact verification form be used for each employer contact to ensure that other positions for which the participant is applying are not revealed to the employer.

B-501.c: Job Readiness Activities

Boards must be aware of the following:

Job readiness activities can be provided in a variety of ways, including:

- regularly scheduled individual or group activities; and
- a combination of activities that prepare and encourage Choices participants to seek employment.

Job readiness activities include:

- life skills;
- guidance and motivation for development of positive work behaviors necessary for the labor market;
- job skills assessment;
- substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and rehabilitation activities, if the need for treatment and therapy activities is documented by a qualified medical, substance abuse, or mental health professional;
- job counseling;
- interviewing skills and practice interviews; and
- assistance with applications and résumés.

B-501.d: Substance Abuse, Mental Health, and Rehabilitation Activities

Boards must be aware of the following:

- Substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and rehabilitation activities count as participation in job readiness activities. Allowable treatment or therapy activities are necessary to assist Choices participants with seeking, obtaining, or retaining employment. Choices participants are determined to be “otherwise employable” through their assessment with a

Choices case manager. If the assessment indicates possible substance abuse, mental health, or other disability issues, the case manager will refer the Choices participant to a qualified medical or mental health professional for further evaluation.

- Qualified medical or mental health professionals providing the evaluations must be licensed or board-certified by the State of Texas. The qualified medical or mental health professional will provide the case manager with the results of the evaluation.

Boards may grant good cause to those participants requiring more intensive treatment before starting job readiness activities.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters good cause information into TWIST under the *Good Cause* tab. Good cause information is electronically transmitted to HHSC through the TWIST nightly interface.

B-502: Unsubsidized Employment

Boards must be aware of the following:

Unsubsidized employment is a core activity and includes the following:

- Full-time or part-time employment in which wages are paid in full by the employer;
- An internship with wages paid by the employer; or
- Self-employment.

For self-employed Choices participants, Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- does not count more hours toward the work activity than the number derived by dividing the participant's net self-employment income (gross self-employment wages minus business expenses) by the federal minimum wage; and
- enters the calculation of self-employment into TWIST *Daily Time Tracking*.

B-502.a: Participation While Employed

If a Choices participant is employed, Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff reports the actual hours the participant works each day—not the number of hours the participant is scheduled to work. The participant must provide documentation to verify all hours of employment. Hours of employment must be reported for at least the length of time that the recipient receives TANF.

B-503: Subsidized Employment

Boards must be aware of the following:

Subsidized employment is a core activity that includes the following:

- Full-time or part-time employment in the private or public sector, where all or a portion of the participant's wages are subsidized (federal or state funds may subsidize the wages);
- Internship with a portion of the Choices participant's wages subsidized;
- Employment with a staffing agency as the employer of record; or
- Employment with the actual employer acting as the employer of record.

Boards must be aware that they are precluded from being the employer of record for Choices participants enrolled in a subsidized employment activity.

Boards must ensure that:

- subsidized employment placements prepare and move Choices participants into unsubsidized employment;
- employers do not use subsidized employment to displace existing employees;
- subsidized employment placements are allotted to employers expected to retain Choices participants as regular unsubsidized employees once the subsidized placement has ended, unless successful completion of the placement is expected to result in unsubsidized employment with a different employer; and
- wages are at least federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher.

B-504: On-the-Job Training

Boards must be aware that OJT is a core activity and is provided by an employer to a work-eligible participant, on or off the worksite, who is engaged in productive work in a job.

Boards must ensure that OJT:

- provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job;
- provides reimbursement to the employer of a percentage of the wage rate of the Choices participants for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the training;
- is limited in duration, as appropriate, to the occupation for which the Choices participant is being trained, taking into account the content of the training, the prior work experience of the participant, and the service strategy of the participant; and
- includes training specified by the employer (i.e., customized training).

Unsubsidized employment after satisfactory completion of the training is expected. A Board must not contract with employers who have previously exhibited a pattern of

failing to provide Choices participants in OJT with continued long-term employment, which provides wages, benefits, and working conditions, that are equal to those that are provided to regular employees who have worked a similar length of time and are doing a similar type of work.

Boards must be aware that OJT placements are allotted to employers that expect to retain Choices participants as regular unsubsidized employees once the OJT placement has ended, unless successful completion of the placement is expected to result in unsubsidized employment with a different employer.

B-505: Work Experience

Boards must be aware that work experience is a core activity that:

- is time-limited;
- is unpaid;
- is designed to move Choices participants quickly into regular employment; and
- has unsalaried designated hours, tasks, skills, attainment objectives, and daily supervision.

A Choices participant engaged in work experience is subject to the FLSA minimum wage requirements unless the Choices participant is considered a volunteer or trainee. Boards must ensure that work experience participation is not required for any hours additional to the monthly TANF assistance amount plus the monthly SNAP benefit amount divided by the minimum wage.

Boards must ensure that a nonfinancial agreement is in place and the agreement identifies the work experience positions into which Choices participants will be placed. Boards may use Form E-2740, Work Skills Training Experience Agreement, or a locally developed agreement, when entering into a nonfinancial agreement with entities that provide job training and work experience

B-505.a: Volunteering

A volunteer in a work experience situation is different from an employee if the volunteer does not perform identical tasks or have the same responsibilities as a regular unsubsidized employee and those tasks do not benefit the employer.

Under FLSA, a Choices participant is considered a volunteer if the individual:

- performs hours of service for a public agency for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services rendered, although a volunteer can be paid expenses, reasonable benefits, or a nominal fee to perform such services;
- offers services freely and without pressure or coercion; and
- is not otherwise employed by the same public agency to perform the same type of services as those for which the participant proposes to volunteer.

B-506: Community Service

Boards must be aware that community service is a core activity that:

- includes employment or training activities through unsalaried work-based positions;
- includes employment or training activities with a public or private nonprofit organization;
- includes structured activities that directly benefit the community; and
- is designed to improve the employability of Choices participants who have been unable to find employment.

Boards must ensure that community service positions provide a direct benefit to the community. Positions can include work performed in:

- a school or Head Start program;
- a church;
- a government or nonprofit agency; or
- AmeriCorps, Vista, or other private volunteer organizations.

Boards must ensure that placements are limited to positions that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social service, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, public assistance, recreation, public facilities, public safety, and child care.

Boards must be aware that Choices participants enrolled in community service programs are subject to the FLSA minimum-wage requirements unless a Choices participant is considered a volunteer or trainee.

If the Choices participant's hours of community service do not meet core work activity requirements, Boards must ensure that the participant is enrolled in additional core activities.

Boards must be aware of the following:

- Court-ordered community service hours do not count toward participation unless they meet all criteria of Choices community service.
- Choices participants are not allowed to arrange their own community service placement.

B-506.a: Special Provisions Regarding Community Service

Boards must ensure that mandatory Choices participants who are not in an employment activity after four weeks of enrollment are enrolled in community service. An employment activity is defined as:

- unsubsidized employment;
- subsidized employment;
- OJT; or
- work experience.

Exceptions to this requirement include:

- teen heads of household;
- conditional applicants;
- sanctioned families; and
- exempt Choices participants.

B-507: Vocational Educational Training

Boards must ensure that vocational educational training, which is a core activity:

- prepares Choices participants for a specific trade, occupation, or vocation that requires training other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree;
- includes activities that provide Choices participants with the knowledge and skills to perform a specific trade, occupation, or vocation;
- relates to current or emerging occupations;
- is consistent with employment goals identified in the FEP, when possible;
- is provided only if there is an expectation that employment will be secured upon completion of the training;
- is subject to the time limitations; and
- is provided by education or training organizations, including but not limited to:
 - vocational or technical schools;
 - community colleges;
 - postsecondary institutions;
 - career schools and colleges;
 - nonprofit organizations; and
 - secondary schools offering vocational education.

Choices participants must be making good or satisfactory progress as determined by the educational institution or training organization.

Note: Vocational education training hours count as a core activity but after the participant is enrolled in Choices for four weeks, he or she also must be in an employment activity in order for the hours in vocational educational training to count.

Boards must be aware that vocational training hours that extend beyond a cumulative 12-month period will not be counted.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff tracks months of activity in vocational training using the *TWIST Daily Time Tracking Summary*.

B-508: Distance Learning

Boards must be aware that distance learning is not an allowable work activity unless it is performed in a supervised setting. Supervised settings include Workforce Solutions Offices, educational institutions, or other applicable settings where a responsible party is physically present and supervising completion of the computer-based training.

B-509: Job Skills Training

Boards must be aware of the following:

Job skills training is a non-core activity designed to increase a Choices participant's employability. Job skills training includes activities designed to ensure that Choices participants become familiar with workplace expectations and exhibit the behavior and attitude necessary to compete successfully in the labor market.

Job skills training must be:

- directly related to employment;
- determined on a case-by-case basis; and
- consistent with employment goals identified in the FEP.

Additionally, as a non-core activity, job skills training must be scheduled to allow for an employment activity so the Choices participant can meet core-hour participation requirements.

Boards must be aware that job skills training includes:

- language or literacy instruction;
- entrepreneurial training provided prior to business start-up; or
- self-employment assistance:
 - for Choices participants currently engaged in operating a small business;
 - for Choices participants based on an objective assessment process that identifies participants likely to succeed; and
 - that can include microenterprise services such as business counseling, financial assistance, and technical assistance.

B-510: Educational Services for Choices Participants Who Have Not Completed Secondary School or Received a GED

Boards must be aware of the following:

Educational services are non-core activities and are available only for Choices participants who have not completed secondary school or received a GED credential. A case-by-case determination is made on whether to authorize, arrange, or refer work-eligible individuals to secondary school leading to a high school diploma or a GED credential. This applies to Choices participants age 20 and older seeking educational services. Individuals who have a high school diploma or GED credential are not eligible.

Boards must ensure that educational services are directly related to employment and include:

- educational activities leading to a high school diploma or completion of a GED credential;
- Adult Basic Education (ABE);
- ESL; and
- workforce adult literacy and language instruction.

Boards must be aware that Choices participants must be making good or satisfactory progress, as reported by the educational institution.

Boards must ensure Workforce Solutions Office staff counsels participants to revisit the activity in which the participants are not making good or satisfactory progress.

Boards must ensure that the FEP includes an estimated time frame for completion of other educational and training services, based on individual factors.

B-510.a: Study and Homework Time

Boards may count study or homework time toward a work-eligible individual's overall family participation requirement, if:

- it is directly correlated to the demands of the coursework for out-of-class preparation as described by the educational institution;
- the educational institution's policy requires a certain number of out-of-class preparation hours; and
- supervised study or homework time has been directly verified by the educational institution.

Boards must be aware that unsupervised homework time of up to one hour for every hour of class time is allowed.

Boards must ensure that:

- all homework hours in excess of one hour per every hour of class time are directly monitored, supervised, verified, and documented; and
- total homework time counted for participation does not exceed the hours required or advised by a particular educational institution.

Boards must ensure that only a responsible party supervises study or homework time. Responsible parties include instructors, teachers, librarians, tutors, service providers' designated representatives, and case managers who can verify and document that Choices participants are actually studying the material related to the Choices education or training activity in which they are enrolled.

B-510.b: Required Documentation

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff documents study and homework activities monthly in TWIST and maintains the following documents in the participant's file:

- The instructor's expectation or recommendation for out-of-class preparation time for each course syllabus.
- The instructor's documentation briefly describing and indicating the number of hours spent daily on study time or homework during each week for each course.
- A confirmation from the instructor that the participant is making progress. The instructor must determine this at least monthly with documentation that includes signed letters or e-mails and:
 - a note in the TWIST *Counselor Notes* about the conversation;
 - a copy of the grades or evaluation; or
 - a letter from the instructor.

B-600: DOCUMENTATION AND VERIFICATION

B-601: Documentation and Verification of Work Activities

Each work activity has specific documentation and verification requirements. Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff documents and verifies all work activities in accordance with this guide and enters the documentation and verification into TWIST *Daily Time Tracking*.

Boards must be aware of the following:

Under the TANF interim final regulations and the Chapter 811 Choices rules, self-attestation does not serve as acceptable documentation for Choices participation hours. Boards must ensure that self-attestation is not accepted as documentation in any Choices work activity and that it is not used to enter Choices participation hours into TWIST.

Self-declaration can be used to enter Choices participation hours into TWIST prior to receiving verification—only if the hours are later reconciled with an acceptable form of verification.

For weekly management of Choices, it is acceptable to enter self-declared hours into TWIST:

- pending verification within the appropriate time frame; and
- with the understanding that if documentation does not agree with the reported hours, the *Daily Time Tracking* verification screen will be updated accordingly.

After the data entry deadline, participation hours that have not been verified by acceptable documentation beyond the self-declaration are considered “ignored hours,” and do not count toward performance. Once acceptable verification is obtained and entered into the *Daily Time Tracking* verification screen in TWIST, the ignored participation hours become countable. At this point, participation hours originally classified as self-declaration participation hours become verified participation hours, as reflected in the TANF Federal Management Report.

B-602: TWIST Documentation – Counselor Notes

Boards must ensure that TWIST *Counselor Notes* are a record of contact, progress, and any interaction with the Choices customer. Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters information that is:

- clear and easily understood;
- concise and include only the facts, keeping the information short and to the point;
- complete and include only pertinent information about actions, activities, and interactions with the customer; and
- accurate.

Example: It is not sufficient to note that a Choices participant works 30 hours in a particular week. *Counselor Notes* also must include how the information was verified, the names of the participant’s employer and supervisor, and the employer’s address and phone number.

Boards must ensure that:

- all contact with customers is documented in *TWIST Counselor Notes* and includes the following:
 - Monthly eligibility;
 - Contact with customers weekly;
 - Phone contacts or attempts to contact;
 - Documentation of participation hours; and
 - Change in activities;
- *TWIST Counselor Notes* for each case include the following:
 - Who – customer’s name, employer name, etc.;
 - What – activity and circumstance being reported;
 - Where – customer’s work location, etc.;
 - When – the date the activity was reported;
 - Why – to verify or document service activities; and
 - How – office visit, customer called, case manager called or left message, submitted information to another case manager, etc.;
- documentation to be entered into *TWIST Counselor Notes* includes the following:
 - required monthly verification of eligibility;
 - assessment;
 - monitoring of participation; and
 - closure of case.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- does not enter confidential information into *TWIST Counselor Notes*, which are public records;
- maintains strict confidentiality of all customer information;
- secures case files in locked cabinets at the Workforce Solutions Office to protect the confidentiality of customers; and
- does not remove information or case files from the Workforce Solutions Office.

B-603: TWIST Documentation – Work Activities

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters daily hours of participation in all activities into the *TWIST Daily Time Tracking*.

For further details, see the *Guide to Using TWIST, Daily Time Tracking* for Choices section (the *Guide to Using TWIST* is located under the help menu in TWIST or at ftp://ftp01.twc.state.tx.us/priv/TWIST/TWIST_Administrator_Files/Users_Guide/).

B-604: Options for Verification of Participation in Self-Directed Job Search

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- conducts verification reviews of Choices participants' job search logs every 31 days, or more often as directed by the Boards; and
- uses only the five forms of documentation described in C.105.b: Self-Directed Job Search as acceptable verification of Choices participants' weekly job search logs.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff complies with Board policy as referenced in B-1105: Self-Directed Job Search Verification.

B-605: Special Provisions Regarding FLSA

Boards must ensure that employment and training activities are conducted in compliance with FLSA as follows:

- The amount of time per week that a Choices participant can be required to participate in activities that are not exempt from minimum wage and overtime under FLSA must be determined by the TANF assistance and SNAP benefits' amount being divided by the minimum wage, so that the amount paid to the Choices participant is equal to or more than the amount required for payment of wages, including minimum wage and overtime.
- The amount of time per week that a sanctioned family or conditional applicant can be required to participate in activities that are not exempt from minimum wage and overtime under FLSA must be determined by the SNAP benefits' amount being divided by the minimum wage, so that the amount paid to the sanctioned family is equal to or more than the amount required for payment of wages, including minimum wage and overtime.
- If a Board provides activities that meet all of the following categories, the activity is considered training under FLSA and minimum wage and overtime are not required:
 - The training is similar to that given in a vocational school;
 - The training is for the benefit of the trainees;
 - The trainees do not displace regular employees;
 - The employers derive no immediate advantage from trainees' activities;
 - The trainees are not entitled to a job after training is completed; and
 - The employers and trainees understand that trainees are not paid.

Before enrolling Choices eligibles in a Choices activity (e.g., work experience), Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff references the policy set forth in 29 U.S.C., Chapter 201, and explores whether an employee/employer relationship exists, the Choices activity must be conducted in compliance with FLSA.

The term *employee* does not include an individual who volunteers to perform services for a public agency—i.e., a state, a political subdivision of a state, or an interstate government agency—if:

- the individual receives no compensation or is paid expenses, reasonable benefits, or a nominal fee to perform the services for which the individual volunteered; and
- the services are not the same type of services that the individual is employed to perform for such public agency.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- verifies TANF and SNAP benefit amounts monthly at the end of the previous month for the beginning of the new month in order to determine the number of participation hours allowed; and
- enters TANF and SNAP benefit amounts and the FLSA calculation into the TWIST *Daily Time Tracking Verification Comments* section as well as documents the information in TWIST *Counselor Notes*.

B-606: Excused Absences

Boards must be aware that short-term excused absences count in unpaid work activities as actual participation if they meet the following conditions:

- Absence is because of a holiday;
- Excused absences for days other than holidays total no more than 80 hours within a 12-month period and do not exceed 16 hours of excused absences per month; and
- The individual is scheduled to participate in work activities during the time period in which the holiday or excused absence falls. Participation credit for excused absences cannot exceed the number of hours the participant was scheduled to participate on the date of the excused absence.

B-606.a: Reasons for Excused Absences

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters participation hours for excused absences into TWIST *Daily Time Tracking* as excused absences and documents the information in TWIST *Counselor Notes*.

The following reasons can constitute an excused absence:

- Temporary illness or incapacitation;
- Court appearance;
- Caring for a disabled or ill family member who requires the Choices participant's presence in the home;
- A demonstration that there is:
 - no available transportation and the distance prohibits walking; or
 - no available job within reasonable commuting distance, as defined by the Board;
- An inability to obtain needed child care, as defined by the Board and based on the following reasons:

- Informal child care by a relative or under other arrangements is unavailable or is unsuitable based on the parent's evaluation or Board policy regarding child care, where applicable;
- Eligible child care providers are unavailable;
- Affordable child care arrangements within maximum rates established by the Board are unavailable;
- Appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from home or the worksite is unavailable; or
- Child care arrangement is interrupted, precluding participation;
- An absence of other support services necessary for participation;
- An individual or family crisis or a family circumstance that may preclude participation; or
- Family violence.

B-607: Federal Holidays

Federal law (5 USC §6103) establishes the following public holidays for federal employees. If a service provider closes on one of these federal holidays, TWC considers the date to be a holiday for the purpose of excused absences for unpaid work activities.

- New Year's Day
- Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Washington's Birthday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

Boards must ensure that holiday time is used only for unpaid work activities and is entered into TWIST *Daily Time Tracking* as holidays.

B-700: SUPPORT SERVICES

Boards must ensure that support services are provided to Choices eligibles in order to address barriers to employment or participation in Choices services.

Examples of support services for Choices eligibles include:

- TWC-funded child care (as appropriate);
- transportation;
- work-related expenses;
- Wheels to Work;
- GED testing payments;
- individual development accounts (IDAs); and
- one-time, short-term, and non-recurrent payments.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff does not extend support services for unemployed sanctioned families and conditional applicants beyond their demonstrated cooperation period. After successfully demonstrating cooperation, support services can continue for conditional applicants and sanctioned families as long as the TANF case has not been denied.

Boards may provide support services to unemployed applicants and former recipients under the TANF *short-term, non-recurring* definition for up to four months. Services that are provided longer than four months are defined as assistance.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters support services into TWIST under the *Support Services* tab.

B-701: Evaluation and Authorization for Child Care Services

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- evaluates the need for child care either when an individual attends the WOA or during the initial or ongoing assessment; and
- when appropriate, authorizes child care and refers individuals to child care staff for services; and
- documents the need for child care as a separate entry in TWIST *Counselor Notes*.

Boards must ensure that if a Choices participant indicates a need for support services such as child care, that support is provided in order to remove any barrier to participation.

However, Boards must ensure that at the time child care is authorized or when changes in child care occur, Choices case managers inform participants of the following:

- The importance of cooperating with TWC's Child Care Services rules at 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 809, and child care program policies, and meeting all requirements of the child care program.
- If participants fail to meet all requirements, they are still required to meet participation requirements and are responsible for making their own child care arrangements.

Boards also must ensure that:

- if a participant is denied child care due to failure to comply with Chapter 809, Child Care Services rules, good cause is not granted; and
- if the participant fails to participate, a penalty is requested.

Boards must ensure that:

- Choices eligibles have access, as needed, to:
 - TANF Applicant child care;
 - Choices child care; and
 - Transitional child care.
- Parents of eligible children are allowed to choose the child care arrangement that best meets the needs of the parents and children.
- Parents can choose to enroll their children with regulated child care providers or relative child care providers.
- Authorization or changes to child care services are documented as a separate entry in *TWIST Counselor Notes* by Workforce Solutions Office staff, if:
 - an applicant is referred to a WOA and needs child care to accept employment;
 - a Choices participant needs child care to participate in Choices services;
 - child care is no longer needed;
 - the individual accepts or retains employment;
 - the individual voluntarily withdraws from services;
 - the individual has a change (such as a new address or work schedule, change in child care provider, or number of children);
 - the individual was good caused and is unable to participate;
 - child care needs to be reauthorized;
 - the case is closed; or
 - the individual is not meeting Choices work requirements.

Boards may use Form E-2510, Notification of Child Care Eligibility, or a locally modified Form E-2510 when arranging child care services.

Boards must ensure that a locally modified form, at a minimum, indicates the following:

- Action to be taken, such as provide or discontinue care;
- Eligibility start date; and
- Eligibility redetermination date or discontinue date.

Boards also must ensure that a separate entry is entered into *TWIST Counselor Notes* indicating the following:

- Date child care services are authorized;
- Date child care services are reauthorized; and
- Date and reason for discontinuing child care (including failure to comply with Chapter 809, Child Care Services rules and provisions).

B-701.a: TANF Applicant Child Care

Boards must be aware of the following:

- Individuals who apply for TANF and obtain employment prior to TANF certification are eligible to receive child care. To receive TANF Applicant child care, individuals must:
 - receive a referral from HHSC to attend a WOA;
 - locate employment or have increased earnings prior to TANF certification; and
 - need child care to accept or retain employment.
- Conditional applicants who gain employment during the demonstrated cooperation period are eligible to receive TANF Applicant child care.

B-701.b: Choices Child Care

Boards must be aware of the following:

Choices-eligible individuals must be participating in the Choices program to be eligible for Choices child care. Other qualified individuals include:

- mandatory individuals and exempt recipients who voluntarily participate in Choices services;
- sanctioned families and conditional applicants who demonstrate cooperation prior to resuming TANF assistance; and
- individuals approved for Choices services who are waiting to enter an approved initial component. These individuals can receive up to two weeks of Choices child care when child care will prevent loss of a job placement, and child care is available that meets the needs of the child and parent.

B-701.c: Transitional Child Care

Boards must be aware of the following:

Choices participants who are denied TANF may be eligible for Transitional child care.

A parent is eligible for Transitional child care if the parent:

- has been denied TANF because of increased earnings; or
- the parent's time limits expired within the last 30 days; and
- the parent requires child care to work or attend a job training or educational program for a combination of at least 25 hours per week for a single-parent family or 50 hours per week for a two-parent family, or a higher number of hours per week as established by a Board.

For additional information refer to Child Care Services rule §809.48.

B-701.d: Termination of Child Care

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- terminates child care services immediately after determining that a Choices participant failed to meet the monthly work requirements unless otherwise determined by the Board's service provider; and
- immediately notifies the Board's child care contractor of the failure.

Boards must ensure that child care is not terminated if a legitimate good cause reason existed or an agreement was made to make up hours.

B-702: Transportation Services

Boards must ensure that transportation assistance is provided when needed to enable a Choices participant to work or attend and participate in required Choices activities.

TANF funds can provide a wide variety of transportation services, as long as the expenditure reasonably accomplishes a TANF purpose such as supporting job preparation, education, and work.

Boards must be aware that good cause is granted to Choices participants if transportation assistance is not available prior to participation or if transportation issues remain a barrier to participation.

B-702a: Examples of Allowable Transportation Assistance

Examples of allowable transportation assistance include, but are not limited to:

- bus passes/tokens/tickets (issued daily, weekly, or monthly)
- basic cash allowance
- prepaid gas cards
- mileage reimbursement (personal vehicles only)
- car pools
- minor car repairs
- taxicab services
- contracts with private entities, such as transit providers that provide shuttle or van services
- Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) projects
- one-time short-term assistance
- car insurance
- driver license fees (includes renewals)
- vehicle inspection fees

- contracting with private organizations or services to refurbish previously owned cars
- financial support (loans or grants) that enables customers to purchase a vehicle
- purchase of tires or automobile batteries

Additionally, Boards may issue basic cash allowances for transportation services to unemployed TANF recipients.

Evaluation of the Choices participant's need for transportation and other available resources is part of the initial and ongoing assessment process. When assessing the need for transportation, it is recommended that Boards consider current economic circumstances, such as:

- fluctuating gas prices;
- higher costs to repair vehicles or purchase tires;
- increases in bus fares; and
- increases in travel costs for individuals who travel longer distances for work activities and longer distances to and from job sites and child care facilities.

Boards must ensure that transportation services are reasonable, necessary, and directly related to participation in allowable work activities, post-employment services, and access to child care.

Additionally, it recommended that Boards consider:

- *not* specifying set dollar amounts for a set time frame and a particular type of transportation (e.g., limiting customers to \$20 for a bus pass in a 12-month period);
- changes to the local economy and special circumstances that can be encountered; and
- determining time frame and dollar amount limitations for eligible customers on a case-by-case basis.

It is recommended that Boards do not place unnecessary restrictions—with the exception of available funding considerations—on the use of funds for transportation services as they can:

- cause undue hardships for customers who do not receive transportation assistance until after they have met certain participation requirements;
- place additional administrative burdens on Workforce Solutions Office staff, who are required to verify whether public transportation is a more beneficial or economical mode of transportation than the use of a personal vehicle; and
- require Workforce Solutions Office staff to collect unnecessary documentation to prove that the customer used the funds as intended.

It is a recommended best practice for Boards to require Workforce Solutions Offices to maintain current lists of the following:

- Public transit system, including buses and vans and their applicable schedules;
- Taxi services;
- Shuttle services;
- Van and car pools; and
- Vehicles or transportation services operated by housing authorities, job training programs, local government, community organizations, and other entities.

As set forth in B-1108: Transportation, Boards must ensure that case managers adhere to established Board transportation policies.

B-702.b: Job Access and Reverse Commute Program

The Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program was authorized as a discretionary program under the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century and later changed under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act on August 10, 2005. This program is federally administered under the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration Agency (USDOT-FTA). The JARC program provides formula funding to states and designated recipients to support the development and maintenance of job access projects designed to transport public assistance and eligible low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to employment.

Boards may maximize transportation services by:

- applying for JARC project funds;
- contributing matching funds for a JARC project; and
- coordinating transportation efforts with other human service and transportation providers in the workforce area through a JARC project or other related projects.

Boards may use TANF/Choices funds for a JARC project to:

- implement new transportation initiatives; or
- expand existing transportation initiatives.

Boards must ensure that expenditures under TANF/Choices are associated with:

- transportation services for Choices eligibles; or
- improvement of existing transportation services—i.e., expansion of existing rural or urban transit routes—to help eligible low-income individuals, or individuals at risk of requiring public assistance, access jobs.

Note: USDOT-FTA defines an eligible low-income individual as one whose family income is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line—as is defined in §673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2))—for a family of that size. This information can be determined from the latest available U.S. Census data. Additionally, JARC project subrecipients are responsible for determining, verifying, and documenting income eligibility.

JARC projects are awarded on a cost reimbursement basis and funds are available for three years. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) posts a Notice of Request for Proposals for transportation projects in the *Texas Register* at <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml>.

See the TxDOT Website at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/business/> for more information about JARC and other transportation projects.

B-703: Work-Related Expenses

Boards may provide work-related expenses when they are necessary for Choices eligibles to accept or retain employment that pays at least the federal minimum wage.

Boards may pay for work-related expenses in advance or as a reimbursement, based on a participant's needs in relation to employment.

Examples of work-related expenses include:

- tools;
- uniforms;
- equipment;
- transportation;
- car repairs;
- housing or moving expenses; and
- cost of vocationally required examinations or certificates.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff authorizes and reports work-related expenses under the TWIST *Support Services* tab and documents the expenses in *Counselor Notes*. Boards must establish local policies and procedures regarding methods of and limitations on work-related expenses.

Work-related expenses are also allowable when an individual participates in community service and work experience.

B-704: Wheels to Work

The Wheels to Work program consists of local nonprofit organizations donating vehicles for Choices eligibles that obtain employment but are unable to accept or retain the employment because they lack transportation.

Boards using a Wheels to Work program must develop local policies and procedures establishing services to assist Choices eligibles.

Boards must ensure that individuals have a verifiable job offer with wages that will support self-sufficiency and car ownership.

Choices work-related expenses may cover other costs associated with ownership of a vehicle including:

- repairs;
- fees; and
- inspections.

Note: Individuals are responsible for purchasing liability insurance.

B-705: Payment for GED Testing

Boards may authorize and pay for the cost of GED testing and issuance of the certificate.

Payments cover:

- the actual cost of testing;
- any national or state processing fees; and
- the cost of the certificate.

Boards must ensure that payments are made directly to GED test centers and the Texas Education Agency for GED testing costs and issuance of the certificate to Choices participants.

B-706: Individual Development Accounts

Boards must be aware of the following:

For Choices participants, IDAs are similar to savings accounts. IDAs enable Choices participants to save for specific “big ticket” items, such as:

- postsecondary education expenses;
- first home purchase; or
- business capitalization.

Individuals can contribute earned income and up to 50 percent of their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to an IDA. Amounts derived from earned income are eligible for matching TANF funds.

HHSC does not consider IDAs that meet TANF requirements as resources for the purpose of TANF eligibility. However, when a Choices participant withdraws money from an IDA that is not for an allowable qualifying purchase, it is then counted as income for the purpose of TANF eligibility.

Boards may set policy and procedures to provide for implementation and oversight of IDAs.

B-707: Incentives for Choices Participants

Issuing incentives to Choices participants gives Boards opportunities to improve employment, training, and education outcomes.

Incentives are compensation in the form of cash, checks, gift cards, and nonmonetary gifts or vouchers provided to a customer in exchange for meeting specified goals as defined by the Board. Incentives do not include support services such as child care, transportation, or reimbursement of work-related expenses.

Boards choosing to offer nonmonetary incentives must develop guidelines and strategies that:

- provide for the use of the incentives (eligibility, limitations, etc.); and
- ensure that the incentives are accurately documented in TWIST in a timely manner.

For example, nonmonetary incentives can be awarded for the following:

- Job retention, wage gains, and career progression;
- Successful completion of training services;
- Attainment of educational goals; and
- Voluntarily participating in Choices services when individuals are exempt.

Boards must ensure that guidelines include a provision for the identification of Choices participants who are eligible to receive a nonmonetary incentive.

Eligible Choices participants include those who are:

- working in full-time unsubsidized employment;
- attending training services;
- attending vocational educational training or other educational services;
- working and participating in educational services full time;
- participating full time in a subsidized or unsubsidized internship program; or
- exempt and voluntarily participating in Choices services.

As referenced in B-1103: Incentives, Boards must ensure that case managers adhere to the established Board incentive policies.

B-707.a: TWIST Data Entry for Incentives

When Choices participants are determined eligible for an incentive, Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters accurate documentation into TWIST under the appropriate support service code as well as documents the information in TWIST *Counselor Notes*.

Additionally, Boards must ensure that when Workforce Solutions Office staff enters incentive information into TWIST, the:

- *start date* is either the date the participant was notified of possible eligibility for a nonmonetary incentive or is the date on which activity toward achievement begins;
- *planned end date* is the deadline to reach the achievement;
- *end date* is the actual date of achievement;
- *actual amount* is the value of the incentive; and
- *comments* section notes:
 - the date the incentive payment (or voucher) was issued;
 - the type of payment (TOP); and
 - what the customer achieved—e.g., Issued 6/1/10: TOP – prepaid gas card for attaining GED credential early.

B-800: NONCOOPERATION

B-801: Full Family Sanction

Under the Human Resources Code, §31.0032 and House Bill 2292, passed by the 78th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2003), mandated “pay for performance” requirements for TANF recipients, effective September 1, 2003. Under the pay for performance model, TANF recipients who fail to cooperate with Choices work requirements face full family sanction of their TANF benefits. Additionally, under certain circumstances, sanction for noncooperation can include removal of the adult’s Medicaid benefits.

B-801.a: Cooperation

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff verifies monthly that Choices participants are:

- cooperating with all work requirements; or
- granted good cause.

B-801.b: Noncooperation

Noncooperation is often determined by the following two situations:

- Failure to respond to intake or outreach appointments; or
- Failure to meet participation requirements after intake.

If Choices participants do not cooperate with work requirements and do not have good cause, Boards must ensure that:

- a sanction is requested for mandatory Choices participants; or
- Choices services, including support services, are terminated for exempt Choices participants.

Boards also must ensure that:

- pursuant to Human Resources Code §31.0033, a timely and reasonable attempt is made to contact mandatory Choices participants to determine the reason for noncooperation prior to requesting a sanction; and
- if good cause is not established, the mandatory Choices participant is informed of the:
 - violation requiring sanction;
 - right to appeal; and
 - necessary procedures to demonstrate cooperation.

Boards must ensure that within seven calendar days of noncompliance by a Choices participant, Workforce Solutions Office staff:

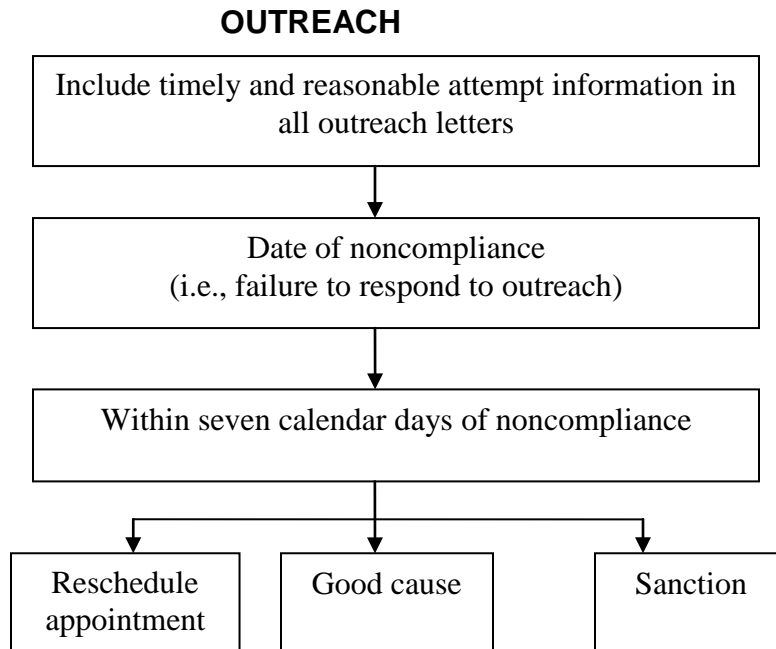
- reschedules appointments for intake;
- ensures the Choices participant resumes cooperating with all work requirements;
- determines good cause; or
- initiates a sanction.

Boards must be aware that the seven-day time limit begins on the date of noncompliance or the date of discovery of noncompliance, whichever occurs later.

B-802: Timely and Reasonable Attempt for Outreach Activities

Boards must ensure that all outreach letters state the consequences of failure to respond.

Boards must ensure that before initiating a sanction within the seven-day period, Workforce Solutions Office staff makes timely and reasonable attempts to contact the customer by phone, e-mail, letter, or in person.



B-803: Timely and Reasonable Attempt for Failure to Meet Participation Requirements

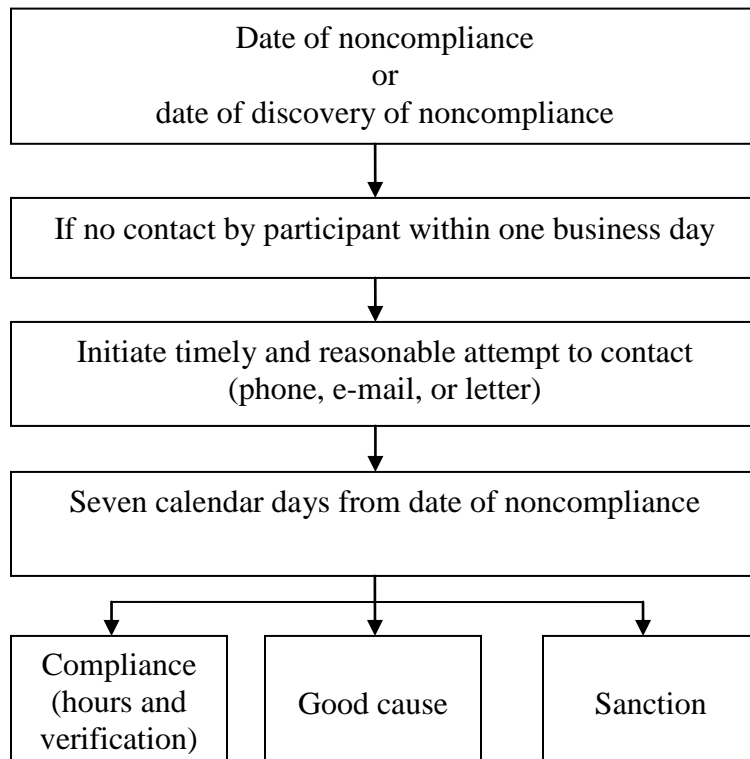
Boards must be aware of the following:

After the date of noncompliance with participation requirements, such as a missed appointment—or the date of Workforce Solutions Office staff discovery of noncompliance—a Choices participant has one business day to contact the Workforce Solutions Office.

Boards must ensure that:

- if the Choices participant does not contact Workforce Solutions Office staff within one business day of noncompliance, a timely and reasonable attempt to contact the participant by phone, e-mail, letter, or in person is initiated to determine whether the participant:
 - was in compliance; or
 - had good cause; and
- if the Choices participant is found to be in noncompliance and does not have good cause, a sanction is initiated;
- it is required that on the seventh calendar day from the date of noncompliance, the Choices participant is either fully participating, been granted good cause, or a penalty has been initiated.

ONGOING PARTICIPATION



Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff documents:

- the date of identification of noncompliance; and
- the date of the timely and reasonable attempt in *TWIST Counselor Notes*.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters a notice of noncooperation into TWIST in the *Penalty* tab, accessed through the *TANF History* menu selection under the *Customer Information* window. TWIST automatically forwards the notice to HHSC.

Example: A participant is scheduled for an appointment on August 18, 2010, and fails to keep the appointment. This is the date that noncompliance is identified. If the participant fails to contact Workforce Solutions Office staff within 24 hours, the timely and reasonable attempt must be made. If the participant fails to respond to the timely and reasonable attempt, penalty must be initiated by August 24, 2010. That is seven calendar days from the date of noncompliance.

Example: A participant is scheduled for an appointment on August 2, 2010, and fails to keep the appointment. This is the date that noncompliance is identified. If the participant fails to contact Workforce Solutions Office staff within 24 hours, the timely and reasonable attempt must be made. If the participant fails to respond to the timely and reasonable attempt, penalty must be initiated by August 9, 2010. That is allowing for the fact that the seventh calendar day fell on a Sunday.

B-804: Demonstrated Cooperation for Sanctioned Families and Conditional Applicants

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff gives all sanctioned families and conditional applicants the opportunity to demonstrate cooperation with Choices in order to receive TANF benefits. Sanctioned families are required to demonstrate cooperation for the program month following the month in which noncooperation took place.

Boards must be aware that conditional applicants are required to:

- attend a WOA and immediately begin demonstrating cooperation by meeting participation requirements for the next four consecutive weeks; and
- continue to cooperate with their Choices work requirement while waiting for their TANF benefits to be certified.

Boards may determine that sanctioned families and conditional applicants can be granted good cause during their period of demonstrated cooperation, if warranted.

B-805: Penalty Status for Noncooperation

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff is aware of the following:

- Families can be sanctioned for noncooperation with elements of the Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA), including Choices.
- Families sanctioned for noncooperation with Choices must demonstrate cooperation through Choices.

Mandatory Choices participants sanctioned for noncooperation with Choices or other elements of the PRA for two consecutive months will be denied TANF benefits and the adult's Medicaid benefits can be removed. Families must reapply to have TANF and Medicaid benefits restored.

B-806: Notice of Cooperation

During the demonstrated cooperation period, HHSC assumes noncooperation unless notified otherwise. Therefore, Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff sends a notice of cooperation to HHSC upon the successful completion of a mandatory Choices participant's demonstrated cooperation period.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters the notice of cooperation for sanctioned families into TWIST in the *Penalty* tab, accessed through the *TANF History* menu selection under the *Customer Information* window. TWIST electronically transmits the notice to HHSC through the automated interface.

B-806.a: Choices Activities during Demonstrated Cooperation

Boards must be aware of the following:

- During demonstrated cooperation periods, sanctioned families and conditional applicants can be enrolled in all allowable Choices activities;
- The total limits on job search and job readiness activities are waived for sanctioned families during their penalty month and for conditional applicants during their demonstrated cooperation period prior to receiving TANF; and
- The maximum amount of time sanctioned families and conditional applicants can participate in FLSA-covered activities is based only on their SNAP benefits, because the full family sanction eliminates the entire TANF grant.

B-806.b: Support Services

Boards must be aware of the following:

During the demonstrated cooperation periods, sanctioned families and conditional applicants are eligible to receive support services, which include the following:

- TWC-funded child care services;
- Sanctioned families receiving child care will continue to receive Choices child care during the penalty month;
- Conditional applicants who need child care in order to demonstrate cooperation will receive Choices child care; and
- Conditional applicants who gain employment during their demonstrated cooperation period will receive TANF Applicant child care.

B-807: Voluntary Withdrawal from TANF

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff uses Form H1802, Voluntary Withdrawal from TANF, when discussing a Choices participant's voluntary withdrawal from TANF. The form contains information on continued eligibility for Medicaid and other services and informs customers of their options and the consequences of voluntary withdrawal.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff completes an original Form H1802 and two copies, then:

- sends the original to the Texas Works Advisor;
- provides the customer with one copy; and
- retains a copy in the customer's file for three years.

Form H1802 available at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H1802>.

Boards must ensure when a customer voluntarily withdraws from TANF, a sanction is initiated in accordance with HHSC policy in the HHSC Texas Works Handbook.

B-900: POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND CHOICES PLUS

B-901: Earned Income Deduction

Boards must be aware of the following:

EID is a standard work-related income deduction available to some TANF recipients following employment entry. Eligibility for EID is determined by HHSC.

To promote access to needed post-employment services, all Choices participants who receive EID must participate in Choices, even if not enrolled in Choices at the time of employment. The participation requirement for Choices participants who are working at least 30 hours per week and earning at least \$700/month is limited to reporting the hours of employment to Workforce Solutions Office staff.

Choices participants who receive EID are included in the denominator in calculating Choices work participation rates.

A mandatory Choices participant coded by HHSC as receiving EID is required to report actual hours worked. Failure to properly report work hours will result in a sanction.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff enters hours of employment into TWIST *Daily Time Tracking*.

When HHSC certifies or recertifies TANF assistance, HHSC informs each individual of his or her responsibility to report changes in household income, including change in income status, within 10 days of occurrence.

A standard outreach letter can be customized in TWIST to:

- inform an EID individual of the requirement to report his or her actual hours worked;
- provide instructions on how to report hours worked and who to report this information to;
- state the consequences of failing to report work hours, such as denial of cash assistance benefits and adult Medicaid; and
- provide information on available post-employment services.

B-902: Post-Employment Services

Post-employment services assist individuals to achieve employment stability and deal with crises that can lead to job loss. The first few months of employment are a critical time for new workers, so post-employment follow-up and support services are important to the success of individuals in retaining employment.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff offers post-employment services to Choices individuals, including applicants, conditional applicants, and former recipients who obtained employment but require additional assistance in retaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency.

Key post-employment services include:

- extended or ongoing case management;
- child care, transportation, and work-related expenses;
- job search, job placement, and job development services;
- referrals to available education and training resources;
- referrals to support services available in the community;
- additional career planning and counseling;
- referrals to other service providers and community resources; and
- mentoring.

B-902.a: Applicants

Boards may provide post-employment services to help applicants retain employment and advance their careers, including the following:

- Applicants who become employed after the WOA and before TANF certification may receive 12 months of applicant child care services through the local child care services contractor.
- Applicants who are transitioning into employment may receive assistance and other support services to remove barriers and eliminate the need for TANF assistance.
- Applicants who become employed may also be coenrolled in other workforce programs, such as Workforce Investment Act (WIA), to receive post-employment services.

B-902.b: Former Recipients, Conditional Applicants, and Sanctioned Families

Boards must be aware that post-employment services for former recipients, conditional applicants, and sanctioned families are time-limited and depend on:

- family circumstances;
- whether the individual is considered at-risk for returning to TANF;
- the ongoing receipt for services such as SNAP benefits or child care; and
- the availability of funds for post employment services.

B-903: Choices Plus

Boards must be aware of the following:

Choices Plus is a separate TANF-funded post-employment service available to individuals who are no longer receiving cash assistance benefits who are at risk of returning to TANF. A person is considered at risk of returning to TANF if he or she is a SNAP recipient or receiving TWC-funded child care.

Sanctioned families and conditional applicants are eligible for Choices Plus services if they obtain employment during their demonstrated cooperation period.

B-903.a: Choices Plus in TWIST

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff opens a Choices Plus case in TWIST under one of the following three scenarios:

1. If Workforce Solutions Office staff is working with the Choices participant when the TANF benefits are denied, the Choices case must be closed and a Choices Plus case created.
2. If a Choices case is reopened, and Choices Plus services will be provided, a Choices Plus case must be created.
3. If a former recipient was never enrolled in Choices, and Choices Plus services will be provided, a Choices Plus case must be created.

Boards must ensure that, if an applicant receives Choices Plus services and subsequently begins receiving TANF assistance again, Workforce Solutions Office staff—upon certification for TANF assistance—transfers any participation hours counted and tracked in TWIST from the Choices Plus case to a new Choices case.

B-904: WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit used to reduce the federal tax liability of private, for-profit employers.

Long-term TANF recipients who began work after December 31, 2006, and before September 1, 2011, can earn Texas employers up to \$9,000 if they are a member of one of the following:

1. A family that received TANF for at least 18 consecutive months before the hire date.
2. A family whose TANF eligibility under federal or state law expired after August 5, 1997 (for applicants who have been hired within two years after their eligibility expired).
3. A family that received TANF for at least 18 months, after August 5, 1997, and were hired not more than two years after that 18-month period.

Employers may hire qualified TANF individuals and receive a credit of up to \$2,400 per eligible worker. The credit is based on 40 percent of up to \$6,000 in qualified wages during the employee's first year of employment.

B-905: Earned Income Tax Credit

Rider 12 in the General Appropriations Act, established by the Texas Legislature, requires TWC to assist employed TANF recipients and other low-income workers who may qualify for the federal EITC with applying for its benefits.

Rider 12 also states that TWC can assist eligible individuals in preparing and filing income tax returns by working with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to establish Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites within Workforce Solutions Offices.

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Offices in their local workforce development areas (workforce areas) assist employed TANF recipients and other low-income workers who may qualify for EITC.

To assist eligible individuals in preparing and filing federal tax returns for the current calendar year, Boards may provide space for VITA sites within Workforce Solutions Offices in their workforce areas. VITA site volunteers will provide free assistance with preparing and filing tax returns.

B-1000: CHOICES PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures are important indicators of progress in efforts to offer employment, training, transition, and retention resources to Choices individuals.

The following two performance measures are contracted to the Boards:

- Average Single-Parent Participation Rate
- Average Two-Parent Participation Rate

For more information on performance calculations see Performance Analysis and Reporting on the Intranet at <http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/plan/html/index.html>.

B-1001: Average Choices Single-Parent Participation Rate

This performance measure reports the percentage of single-parent TANF recipients with work participation requirements under federal regulations, Texas law, and HHSC rules that are meeting those requirements.

The monthly denominator is generally single-parent families who receive a TANF benefit in the month for the month (including families with nonrecipient parents). However, unless in the numerator, families are excluded from the denominator if the parent is a federally exempt work-eligible individual who is a:

- single parent caring for a child under the age of one;
- nonrecipient parent receiving SSI; or
- parent caring for a disabled family member (adult or child).

The monthly numerator is the number of families from the denominator who meet work requirements.

Performance is calculated by dividing the numerator by the denominator for each month of the performance period and averaging the monthly results.

B-1002: Average Two-Parent Families Participation Rate

This performance measure reports the percentage of TANF two-parent recipients with federal work participation requirements.

The monthly denominator is generally all two-parent families who receive a TANF benefit in the month for the month (including families with nonrecipient parents).

However, unless in the numerator, families are excluded from the denominator if one parent is a federally exempt work-eligible individual who is a:

- disabled adult;
- nonrecipient parent receiving SSI; or
- parent caring for a disabled family member (adult or child).

The monthly numerator is the number of families from the denominator who meet work requirements.

Performance is calculated by dividing the numerator by the denominator for each month of the performance period and averaging the monthly results.

B-1003: 30 Percent Limit on Individuals in Educational Activities

No more than 30 percent of Choices participants from each population engaged in work activities in a month can be included in the Board's numerator because they are:

- participating in vocational educational training; or
- teen heads of household participating in educational activities.

B-1100: BOARD POLICIES

B-1101: Choices Services Strategies

Boards must identify the workforce needs of local employers and design Choices services to ensure that local employer needs are met and that the services are consistent with Choices goals and purposes.

Boards must include the following in their Choices service strategies:

- Workforce Orientation for Applicants
- Work First Design
- Post-Employment Services
- Adult Services
- Teen Services
- Choices Eligibles with Disabilities
- Target Populations
- Local Flexibility

Boards must establish policies² regarding the following:

- A Choices service strategy that coordinates various service delivery approaches to:
 - assist applicants and conditional applicants in gaining employment as an alternative to public assistance;
 - use a work first design that provides Choices participants access to the labor market; and
 - assist former recipients with job retention and career advancement so they can remain independent of TANF assistance;
- The amount of wages subsidized for subsidized employment placements; and
- The methods and limitations for provision of work-related expenses.

B-1102: Required Memoranda of Understanding

Boards must ensure that the following memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and collaborative partnerships are developed:

- Local-level MOUs with the appropriate agencies to serve Choices eligibles with disabilities to maximize their potential for success in employment;
- A local-level MOU in cooperation with HHSC for coordinated case management that is consistent with the MOU between HHSC and TWC;
- A local-level MOU with the Texas Department of State Health Services for providing mental health and substance abuse services to Choices participants; and
- A collaborative partnership with housing authorities and sponsors of local housing programs and services to address the unmet housing needs of recipients.

B-1103: Incentives

Boards must ensure that cash or check incentives are not offered to Choices participants.

Boards choosing to offer nonmonetary incentives must develop guidelines and strategies to:

- provide for the use of the incentives (eligibility, limitations, etc.);
- ensure that the incentives are accurately documented in TWIST in a timely manner; and
- ensure that nonmonetary incentives are awarded only to Choices participants who exceed the minimum requirements of a program, employer, educational institution, or

² As required by TWC rule at 40 TAC §802.1(f) and as detailed in WD Letter 10-07, Board members must take such actions in an open meeting.

training provider—i.e., to participants that achieve or exceed goals beyond those considered requirements of participation.

Boards must ensure that guidelines set forth realistic minimum and maximum time frames for Choices participants working toward achieving a nonmonetary incentive.

Additionally, Boards must ensure that guidelines include deadlines for claiming nonmonetary incentives. This provision ensures that participants are responsible for notifying Workforce Solutions Office staff and providing verification when they attain an achievement within a designated time frame.

Example: An exempt Choices teen head of household who successfully completes two weeks of job readiness activities and enters part-time employment is eligible for an incentive. The participant is notified that he or she has up to 15 days to provide appropriate verification and to claim a nonmonetary incentive.

B-1103.a: Strategies for Issuing Nonmonetary Incentives

Boards must ensure that the value of nonmonetary incentives:

- is tied to the size and nature of the achievement for which they are awarded; and
- scaled to inspire participants to work toward the associated achievements.

Examples:

- Participants who remain in continuous full-time employment for 90 days receive a \$50 prepaid gas card or gift card.
- Participants who remain in continuous full-time employment for 120 days receive a \$50 prepaid gas card and a \$50 gift card.
- Exempt Choices participants who participate in an identified core activity for 30 days or more receive a coupon or gift certificate worth up to \$25.
- Participants who remain in continuous employment for 180 days receive a \$200 prepaid gas card and a \$100 gift card to a local merchant.
- Participants receiving substance abuse treatment who work or attend school at least 30 hours a week for 60 days receive a \$50 gift certificate of their choice.

B-1103.b: Menu of Nonmonetary Incentives

It is recommended that Boards' guidelines include a menu of nonmonetary incentives, to be provided at intake or when notifying Choices participants of their eligibility for an incentive.

Additionally, it is recommended that the menu have at least three incentives of comparable value—e.g., \$30 prepaid credit card, \$30 prepaid gas card, or \$30 gift

certificate—to select from. Some examples of nonmonetary incentives include the following:

- Prepaid credit cards such as a VISA Incentive card in incremental amounts—e.g., \$10, \$20, \$25, \$30, with no cash-back option;
- Prepaid merchant gift cards with no cash-back option;
- Prepaid gas cards available in incremental amounts—e.g., \$10, \$20, \$25, \$30;
- Prepaid telephone or “Go” cards;
- No-contract mobile phone services or pay-as-you-go phone plans;
- Disposable telephones with prepaid minutes;
- Specialty gift certificates or vouchers for discounted or free goods or services, e.g., movie passes, car washes, amusement parks, video rentals, car rentals, carpet cleaning, grocery stores, beauty salons, toy stores; and
- Surplus computer inventory.

Items such as merchant and specialty gift cards or vouchers are allowable if they are reasonable and support enhanced program performance and self-sufficiency.

Surplus computer inventory refers to computers that are eligible for disposition in accordance with Chapter 13 of TWC’s Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts (FMGC), which includes thresholds for determining when prior approval is required to dispose of property. In most instances, computers do not meet the threshold; however, if circumstances exist in which a surplus computer does meet these criteria, the appropriateness of a Board’s decision to donate it depends on whether or not the Board has requested and received the requisite TWC approval.

To ensure that proper control measures are in place, it is recommended that Boards implement a voucher system by which Workforce Solutions Office staff issues Choices participants who are eligible for nonmonetary incentives a voucher that they redeem for their incentives through other designated Workforce Solutions Office staff. Designated Workforce Solutions Office staff can serve as the point of contact for:

- issuing nonmonetary incentives;
- reconciling amounts of on-hand nonmonetary incentives with amounts received and distributed; and
- maintaining a receipt log with a record of each incentive issued and the signature of the participant redeeming a voucher for that incentive.

Boards must ensure that:

- policies in Chapter 2 of the FMGC are followed to ensure effective internal control and accountability for all grant and sub-grant cash, real and personal property, and other assets; and
- all such property is adequately safeguarded and used solely for authorized purposes.

Boards choosing to offer nonmonetary incentives must ensure that sufficient funds are budgeted from available resources to support the Boards’ nonmonetary

incentive policy, particularly as it applies to participants who choose to target long-term achievements.

Example: A participant starts training in Fiscal Year 2010 and is informed that he or she may be eligible to receive a nonmonetary incentive. The training will not be completed until FY' 11 and the Board must budget accordingly.

To evaluate the effectiveness of strategies for the provision of nonmonetary incentives, Boards must ensure that once Choices participants have been determined eligible for a nonmonetary incentive, accurate documentation is entered into TWIST.

B-1104: On-the-Job Training and Customized Training Services

Boards are not required to procure employers for OJT and customized training. However, if a Board chooses to offer OJT and customized training, it must establish local policies for identifying employers for OJT and customized training services.

For example, Boards may develop an application process to:

- gather adequate information on employers prior to contracting with them for OJT or customized training;
- determine whether the training is for an occupation with a high potential for sustained demand or growth in the workforce area; and
- determine whether training providers are needed for customized training.

It is recommended that Boards use the application to collect relevant information on the employer's customized training and skills needs, such as the number of employees to be trained, the occupations or industries to be included, the dates of training, and the amount of funding requested.

B-1104.a: Contracting with Employers for On-the-Job Training and Customized Training

Boards must establish a threshold for employer reimbursement in the contract with the employer. Boards must be aware that there is no specific threshold for employer reimbursement for Choices OJT.

Boards must not enter into OJT contracts with employers that have received payments under previous contracts and have exhibited a pattern of failing to retain OJT participants as long-term, regular employees with wages, employment benefits (including health benefits), and working conditions at the same level as other employees in similar positions.

If a Board chooses to enter into a contract with an employer for customized training, it is recommended that the Board develop criteria for selecting training providers and developing the training or curriculum.

Employers play a major role in the development of customized training and curriculum. An employer can:

- provide the customized training to its employees through in-house training resources;
- partner with a training provider, such as a community college or other training institution, to provide all or part of the training on behalf of the employer; or
- request that the Board select a training provider on the employer's behalf.

B-1105: Self-Directed Job Search Verification

Boards must choose one of the following three options when developing procedures for verification of Choices participants' self-directed job search.

B-1105.a: Option 1: 100 Percent Verification

- Choices participants furnish Workforce Solutions Office staff with verification for 100 percent of the employer contacts on each job search log.
- Workforce Solutions Office staff enters all job search hours from Choices participants' job search logs into TWIST.
- Job search hours associated with unverified employer contacts are not entered into TWIST.
- Workforce Solutions Office staff enters verification for 10 percent of the employer contacts into TWIST.

B-1105.b: Option 2: 10 Percent Sample

- Workforce Solutions Office staff enters all job search hours from Choices participants' job search logs into TWIST.
- Workforce Solutions Office staff randomly selects 10 percent of the employer contacts from each job search log to verify and enter into TWIST.
- Board staff randomly selects 10 percent of the Choices self-directed job search cases and ensures that Workforce Solutions Office staff has verified the employer contacts for each job search log in accordance with Board policy.

B-1105.c: Option 3: Blended Policy

- Choices participants furnish Workforce Solutions Office staff with verification for 100 percent of the employer contacts on each job search log.

- Workforce Solutions Office staff enters verification for 10 percent of the employer contacts into TWIST.
- Job search hours associated with unverified employer contacts are not entered into TWIST, but are placed into an “unverified pool.”
- Workforce Solutions Office staff randomly selects 10 percent of the employer contacts from the unverified pool to verify and enter into TWIST.
- Board staff randomly selects 10 percent of the Choices self-directed job search cases and ensures that Workforce Solutions Office staff has verified the employer contacts for each job search log in accordance with Board policy.

B-1105.d: Unverified Employer Contacts

This applies only to Option 2, 10 percent sample, and Option 3, blended policy.

Boards must ensure that:

- if a participant’s employer contacts cannot be verified through no fault of the participant (e.g., the employer is not sure whether the participant applied), the unverifiable employer contact is replaced with another employer contact from the participant’s job search log and, if this contact is verified, the hours associated with the verified contact are entered and counted toward participation; or
- if the employer states that the participant did not apply or make contact regarding employment, the hours associated with the employer contact are not counted toward performance and are removed from TWIST.

Boards must ensure that employer contacts in any given sample have a 90 percent accuracy rate.

B-1106: Board Support Service Policies

It is recommended that Boards develop policies to ensure that support services are provided if needed to enable Choices participants to work, attend, and participate in required Choices services. If a Choices participant indicates a need for support services, the support must be provided to remove any barrier to participation. If the barrier is not removed and the Choices participant is unable to participate, good cause must be granted and no penalty initiated.

B-1107: Individual Development Accounts

Boards may set policies to provide for implementation and oversight of IDAs.

Boards must certify that an IDA account meets the TANF definition. Boards must develop a form for Choices individuals to submit to the HHSC Texas Works Advisor that certifies that their IDA is disregarded.

Boards must:

- develop policies and procedures to address unauthorized withdrawals; and
- ensure that eligible individuals make only qualified withdrawals.

Policies and procedures addressing unauthorized withdrawals must include:

- notification to the individual that:
 - unauthorized withdrawals may impact the individual's eligibility for public assistance programs; and
 - matching funds have been forfeited; and
- notification to HHSC within seven working days of the unauthorized withdrawal.

Boards must develop policy regarding an individual's right to access his or her accounts. If using TANF funds, Boards must follow the TANF requirements specified under this policy. Other types of savings accounts do not qualify to be disregarded for eligibility purposes.

B-1108: Transportation

Boards must ensure that transportation policies address the following:

- Personal:
 - Bus passes
 - Gas cards
- Vehicular:
 - Repair
 - Insurance
 - Registration
 - Inspection
 - Consumables (e.g., tires)

Boards must ensure that all transportation policies meet the following minimum standards:

- All expenses must be reasonable and necessary to assist a participant in achieving the goals of his or her employment plan (EP) or family employment plan (FEP).
- Boards must establish financial caps based on:
 - type of support—vehicle repair, prepaid gas cards, bus passes, etc.; and
 - time period—week, month, quarter, etc.

It is recommended that Boards keep the specified cap consistent across programs. A discretionary override of the cap is allowed, as long as a specific process and safeguard for the override—e.g., director signature, two signatures, etc.—is detailed in the transportation policy.

Boards are encouraged to develop a structural framework in their policies and procedures that aids in identifying routine transactions from those that rise to the level of suspicious activity.

Example: A Board allows participants a maximum of \$40 per week for gas cards. The Board-established safeguard for exceeding \$40 a week is three signatures—e.g., participant, specialist, and manager. The reconciliation process then identifies any staff member or participant who exceeds the limit and an audit verifies whether the safeguard was followed, i.e., if the three signatures are in place.

Boards must:

- require receipts for all reimbursements;
- develop consistent policies to monitor and maintain receipts;
- require participants to demonstrate ownership of a vehicle before any payment of expenses for repairs, insurance, or registration;
- ensure that prepayment for a participant’s vehicle repairs is prohibited (larger and more involved expenses other than repairs can require bids and are payable directly to the vendor after completion of repairs and receipt of invoice); and
- be aware that payments for car insurance, tires, registration, and other transportation-related expenses other than repairs also are payable directly to the vendor after receipt of invoice.

If Board policy allows for the vehicle to be owned by another individual, Boards must ensure the following safeguards are in place:

- Before inclusion of the vehicle’s use in an EP or FEP, a signed statement indicating that the participant has use of the vehicle for employment-related purposes, along with a copy of supporting ownership documentation, must be provided.
- Before repairing a third-party vehicle, a hold harmless agreement or other protection is signed by the vehicle owner and maintained in the participant’s case file.

B-1109: Records Retention

Boards must ensure that Workforce Solutions Offices retain financial records for three years, unless there are questioned costs, disallowed costs, or other unresolved audit issues. In these cases, records must be retained for three years after the issue is resolved.

B-2000: FORMS USED FOR CHOICES SERVICES

The following forms used in the provision of Choices services are available on the Intranet at https://intra/intranet/gl/html/workforce_forms.html.

- E-120 Family Work Requirement Form
- E-2510 Notification of Child Care Eligibility
- E-2735 Education Service Provider and GED Testing Authorization Referral

The following forms used in the provision of Choices services are available on the Internet.

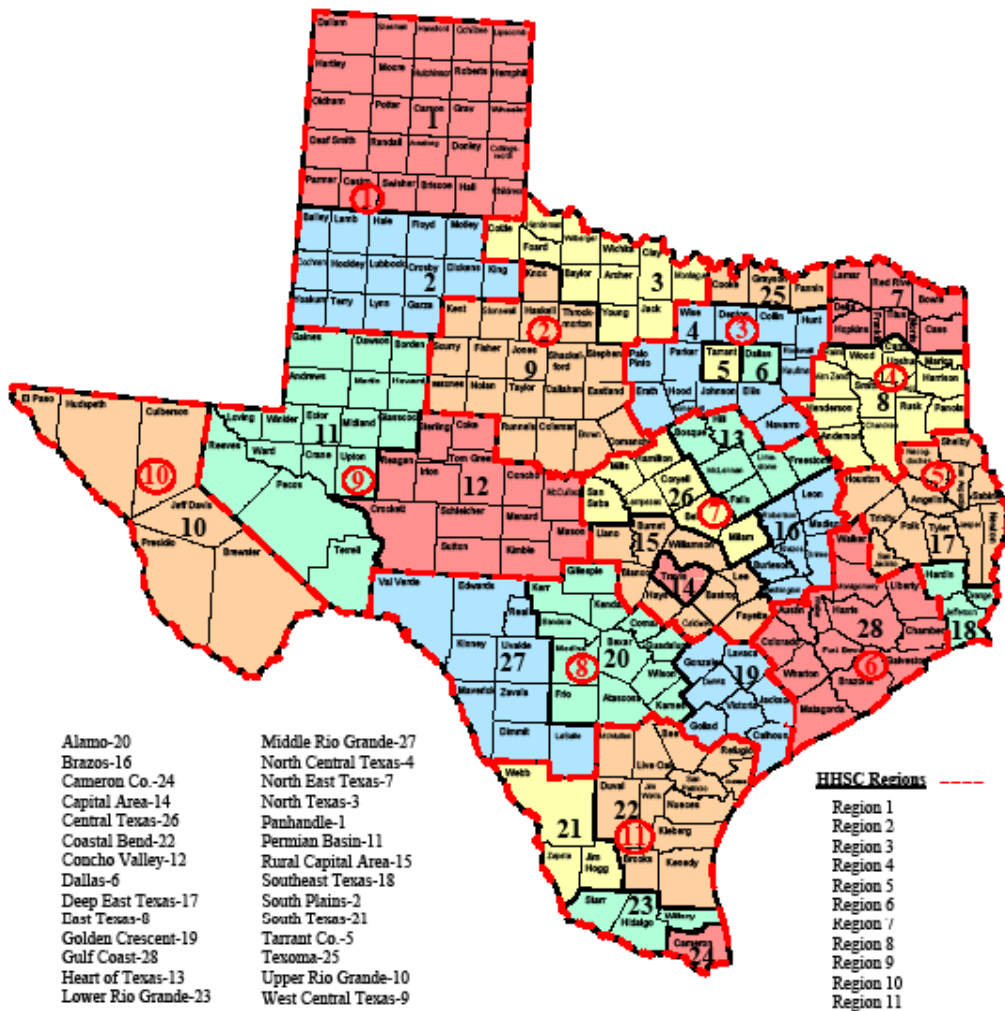
- H1802 Voluntary Withdrawal from TANF
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H1802>
- H1836 A Medical Release / Physician's Statement (Personal Disability)
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H1836-A>
- H1836 B Medical Release / Physician's Statement (Caring for Disabled)
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H1836-B>
- H2583 Choices Information Transmittal
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H2583>.
- H2588 Workforce Orientation Referral
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/forms/H2588>

Choices

Part C – Appendix

C-100: APPENDICES

C-101: Local Workforce Development Boards and Health and Human Services Commission Regions



C-102: Choices Single-Parent Family Desk Aid

TWIST Code / TIERS Code	Participant Type	Performance Measure	In the Denominator	Average Weekly Hours to be Counted in the Numerator
A (2)	A child age 18 or younger	Nonmandatory, if an adult or teen head of household (SIG 7 or 8; this should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding errors), or if a child (SIG 5) not eligible for Choices	Yes, if adult or teen head of household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One adult in family must have at least 30 hours of participation with at least 20 hours in core activities.
B (3)	A caretaker or second parent, age 18 or younger, attending elementary, secondary, vocational, or technical school full-time	Mandatory (FEP should be flexible and consider the school attendance of the participant)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single-parent family with no other caretakers and a child under six must have at least 20 hours of participation in core activities.
C (4)	Needed at home to care for an ill or disabled child in the household	Nonmandatory	Yes	
E (6)	Unable to work due to a mental or physical disability expected to last more than 180 days	Nonmandatory	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A teen attending school (middle school, high school, GED classes) satisfactorily has no hourly requirement, but must be meeting all requirements of the school.
F (7)	An individual age 60 or older	Nonmandatory	Yes	
G (8)	A single parent or single caretaker relative caring for a child under age one at initial application	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A teen not attending school must be participating in other educational activities for 20 hours.
H (9)	Needed at home to care for a disabled adult in the household—even if that person is not a member of the certified group—and the disability is expected to last more than 180 days	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	

TWIST Code / TIERS Code	Participant Type	Performance Measure	In the Denominator	Average Weekly Hours to be Counted in the Numerator
J (11)	Ineligible for TANF and for Choices	Nonmandatory	Yes, if the J-coded adult received TANF benefits (This should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One adult in family must have at least 30 hours of participation with at least 20 hours in core activities. • A single-parent family with no other caretakers and a child under six must have at least 20 hours of participation in core activities. • A teen attending school (middle school, high school, GED classes) satisfactorily has no hourly requirement, but must be meeting all requirements of the school. • A teen not attending school must be participating in other educational activities for 20 hours.
K (12)	Appealing a Choices sanction	Mandatory	Yes	
L (13)	Receiving TANF after expiration of state time limits due to local economic factors	Mandatory	Yes	
M (1)	Does not qualify for any of the exemptions and does not meet work code P criteria	Mandatory	Yes	
N (14)	Receiving TANF after expiration of state time limits due to lack of available employment in the local area	Nonmandatory	Yes	
P (15)	Employed or self-employed at least 30 hours per week, and receiving earnings of at least \$700 per month	Mandatory	Yes	
Q (16)	Receiving TANF after expiration of state time limits due to severe personal hardship	Nonmandatory	Yes	
R (17)	A single parent or single caretaker relative caring for a child under age one at initial application	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	
T (19)	Pregnant and unable to work	Nonmandatory	Yes	

TWIST Code / TIERS Code	Participant Type	Performance Measure	In the Denominator	Average Weekly Hours to be Counted in the Numerator
U (22)	A single grandparent, age 50 or over, caring for a child under age three	Nonmandatory	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One adult in family must have at least 30 hours of participation with at least 20 hours in core activities. • A single-parent family with no other caretakers and a child under six must have at least 20 hours of participation in core activities. • A teen attending school (middle school, high school, GED classes) satisfactorily has no hourly requirement, but must be meeting all requirements of the school. • A teen not attending school must be participating in other educational activities for 20 hours.
V(24)	Legal parent receiving SSI with children receiving TANF	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	
W (20)	Sanctioned for non-participation with Choices	Mandatory	No, unless the family actually received a TANF benefit in the month for the month (This should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding errors)	
X (23)	Legal parent who has exhausted state time limits with children receiving TANF	Nonmandatory	Yes	
Y (25)	Other disqualified parent with children receiving TANF	Nonmandatory	Yes	
Z (21)	Needed at home to care for an ill or disabled child in the household who is not in school full-time	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	

C-103: Choices Two-Parent Family Desk Aid

TWIST Code / TIERS Code	Participant Type	Performance Measure	In the Denominator	Average Weekly Hours to be Counted in the Numerator
A (2)	A child age 18 or younger	Nonmandatory, if an adult or teen head of household (SIG 7 or 8; this should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding errors), or if a child (SIG 5) not eligible for Choices	Yes, if adult or teen head of household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-parent families not receiving subsidized child care must have a combined total of 35 hours of participation with 30 hours in core activities • Two-parent families receiving subsidized child care must have a combined total of 55 hours of participation with 50 hours in core activities • <i>Note:</i> In two-parent families, the hours of teens attending school satisfactorily count as 20 hours or actual hours, whichever is greater. These hours are non-core
B (3)	A caretaker or second parent, age 18 or younger, attending elementary, secondary, vocational, or technical school full-time	Mandatory (FEP should be flexible and consider the school attendance of the participant)	Yes	
C (4)	Needed at home to care for an ill or disabled child in the household	Nonmandatory	Yes	
E (6)	Unable to work due to a mental or physical disability expected to last more than 180 days	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	
F (7)	An individual age 60 or older	Nonmandatory	Yes	
G (8)	A single parent or single caretaker relative caring for a child under age one at initial application	Nonmandatory	Yes, if on a two-parent case (This should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding errors)	
H (9)	Needed at home to care for a disabled adult in the household—even if that person is not a member of the certified group—and the disability is expected to last more than 180 days	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	

TWIST Code / TIERS Code	Participant Type	Performance Measure	In the Denominator	Average Weekly Hours to be Counted in the Numerator
J (11)	Ineligible for TANF and for Choices	Nonmandatory	Yes, if the J-coded adult received TANF benefits (This should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-parent families not receiving subsidized child care must have a combined total of 35 hours of participation with 30 hours in core activities • Two-parent families receiving subsidized child care must have a combined total of 55 hours of participation with 50 hours in core activities <p><i>Note:</i> In two-parent families, the hours of teens attending school satisfactorily count as 20 hours or actual hours, whichever is greater. These hours are non-core</p>
K (12)	Appealing a Choices sanction	Mandatory	Yes	
L (13)	Receiving TANF after expiration of state time limits due to local economic factors	Mandatory	Yes	
M (1)	Does not qualify for any of the exemptions and does not meet work code P criteria	Mandatory	Yes	
N (14)	Receiving TANF after expiration of state time limits due to lack of available employment in the local area	Nonmandatory	Yes	
P (15)	Employed or self-employed at least 30 hours per week, and receiving earnings of at least \$700 per month	Mandatory	Yes	
Q (16)	Receiving TANF after expiration of state time limits due to severe personal hardship	Nonmandatory	Yes	
R (17)	A single parent or single caretaker relative caring for a child under age one at initial application	Nonmandatory	Yes, if on a two-parent case (This should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding errors)	
T (19)	Pregnant and unable to work	Nonmandatory	Yes	

TWIST Code / TIERS Code	Participant Type	Performance Measure	In the Denominator	Average Weekly Hours to be Counted in the Numerator
U (22)	A Single grandparent, age 50 or over, caring for a child under age three	Nonmandatory	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-parent families not receiving subsidized child care must have a combined total of 35 hours of participation with 30 hours in core activities • Two-parent families receiving subsidized child care must have a combined total of 55 hours of participation with 50 hours in core activities <p><i>Note:</i> In two-parent families, the hours of teens attending school satisfactorily count as 20 hours or actual hours, whichever is greater. These hours are non-core</p>
V(24)	Legal parent receiving SSI with children receiving TANF	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	
W (20)	Sanctioned for non-participation with Choices	Mandatory	No, unless the family actually received a TANF benefit in the month for the month (This should not happen, but sometimes does due to HHSC coding errors)	
X (23)	Legal parent who has exhausted state time limits with children receiving TANF	Nonmandatory	Yes	
Y (25)	Other disqualified parent with children receiving TANF	Nonmandatory	Yes	
Z (21)	Needed at home to care for an ill or disabled child in the household who is not in school full-time	Nonmandatory	No, unless the family is meeting participation requirements	

C-104: TWIST Service Codes and Descriptions

Service Code	Service Name	Service Description
1	Occupational/Vocational Training	Training conducted in an institutional setting that provides specific technical skills and knowledge required for a specific job or group of jobs and results in the attainment of a certificate
2	Basic Educational Skills/ABE	Training designed to enhance the employability of the job seeker by upgrading basic skills
3	On-the-Job Training	Employee training at the place of work while he or she is doing the actual job
12	Job Search Assistance	Individual activities designed to help the participant secure immediate employment
13	Supervised Job Search	Individual or group job search activities performed in a supervised setting
14	Concurrent Participation	Use when a job seeker is being served by a TWC program and at the same time participating in a service (not training) provided by another entity such as the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services
27	LD Diagnostic Assessment	Special learning disabilities assessments (valid only with fund codes 89 and 91)
30	Workforce Services Orientation	Job seeker participated in an individual or group orientation to learn about the purpose of the Workforce Solutions Office; the services and programs offered, including program eligibility requirements and alternatives to public assistance; and the overall resources available
38	Job Readiness/ Preemployment Skills	An activity to improve an individual's work readiness skills including personal presentation, application completion, résumé writing, interview tips, networking, and job retention
39	Unsubsidized Employment	Full- or part-time employment for a Choices customer even if they already have the job
40	Community Service	Community service (with nonprofit organizations)
42	Subsidized Employment	Full- or part-time employment in either the private or public sector that is subsidized in full or in part with wages of at least federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher

44	English as a Second Language	Training activities designed to enhance the English speaking ability of nonnative speakers
45	Mentoring	Forming relationships with adults in which the adult can help with the youth's personal development; relationship formation; academic and career assistance as such job coaching, role models, workplace and peer mentors; and advising and consulting
47	Unpaid Public Work Experience	Unpaid work experience, time-limited training in the public sectors
48	Unpaid Nonprofit Work Experience	Unpaid work experience, time-limited training in the nonprofit sector
49	Unpaid For-Profit Work Experience	Unpaid work experience, time-limited training in the for-profit sector
53	High School – CHOICES	For teen heads of household and adults without high school diploma or GED credential, who are attending high school
54	GED Credential	For job seekers without a high school diploma or GED credential who are attending GED classes as a training service conducted in an institutional setting designed to enable an individual to pass a GED exam
58	Entrepreneurial Training	Training that assists job seekers to achieve their goals for economic self-sufficiency by providing information on starting and running their own businesses
68	Employability Development Plan	Workforce Solutions Office staff helped a job seeker develop a written strategy by outlining necessary steps and timetables to achieve employment. Use this code to track the development of an employment plan (EP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) with the job seeker.
84	Short-term Work Readiness Services	Short-term (as defined by Board policy, must be six months or less) services designed to prepare the individual for unsubsidized employment and increase employability, e.g., interviewing skills, job retention skills, personal maintenance skills, professional conduct, etc.—can include introductory computer skills
86	Second-Parent Assessment	Open the case of a noncontributing mandatory adult in a two-parent household.
87	Work-Based Literacy	Work-based (tied to employment) literacy component (ABE, ESL, Workforce Adult Literacy)
91	Determine Good Cause	Must be entered for each month that a job seeker has been granted good cause, AND they are not

		engaged in any other service during that month
92	Middle School	For teen heads of household and adults without high school diploma or GED, who are attending middle school
202	Family/Child Care	Assistance in obtaining family/child care necessary to allow a participant to successfully complete program goals
203	Transportation	Transportation assistance necessary to allow a participant to successfully complete program goals.
204	Housing/ Rental Assistance	Housing/rental assistance necessary to allow a participant to successfully complete program goals
205	Counseling	Provision of or referral to counseling services necessary to allow a participant to successfully complete program goals
207	Other	Those support services that do not fit within any other category. If an appropriate category is available, it must be used. "Other" is used as a last resort only.
208	Substance-Abuse Treatment	Referral to substance-abuse treatment as needed to allow a participant to successfully complete program goals
209	IDA (Individual Development Account)	IDAs provide certain low-income individuals who choose to participate with an opportunity to accumulate assets and to facilitate and mobilize savings.
210	Wheels to Work	The Wheels to Work program provides low-cost automobiles to eligible participants.
211	GED Test Payment	Provision of financial assistance to help a participant pay for GED testing
212	Work-Related Expense	Provision of financial assistance to assist participants to pay for necessary, work-related items and can include clothing and tools needed for employment
218	Financial Planning Assistance	Provision of information on financial/debt management. For individuals participating in rapid response activities, this includes workshops/group activities that provide information on coping with financial matters before, during, and after a job loss.
219	Incentives	Incentive payments are funds paid to participants based on actions such as attendance, successful performance, or completion of a program activity to encourage the participant to continue in the program.

C-105: Acceptable Verification Sources and Required Documentation Desk Aid

C-105.a: Supervised Job Search

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records from the service provider • Time cards or time sheets signed by service provider or service provider’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the service provider or the service provider’s designated representative certifying the hours of participation by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed from the service provider from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that provider. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of service provider • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Daily hours reported on verification source <p>TWIST <i>Daily Time Tracking</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation hours entered into TWIST for approved holiday excused absences or short-term excused absences 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.b: Self-Directed Job Search

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job search logs • Fax transmittal receipts for résumés/applications submitted to employers—but only if the fax number has been verified as belonging to the listed employer • Business cards or brochures from the contacted employer • Signed contact verification forms • Printouts of e-mail submissions of résumés/applications—but only if the e-mail address has been verified as belonging to the listed employer 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> Screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Daily hours reported on verification source 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.c: Job Search/Job Readiness—Substance Abuse, Mental Health & Rehabilitation Activities

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records from the service provider • Time cards or time sheets signed by service provider or service provider’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the service provider or the service provider’s designated representative certifying the hours of participation by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed from the service provider from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that provider. <p>Initial verification for authorizing participation in treatment activities must include each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a statement from the qualified medical or mental health professional that treatment is necessary for the individual to seek, accept, or retain employment; • the type and expected duration of the treatment; and • the allowable hours of participation in work or work-related activities outside of treatment. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of service provider • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Daily hours reported on verification source <p>TWIST <i>Daily Time Tracking</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation hours entered into TWIST for approved holiday excused absences or short-term excused absences 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.d: Unsubsidized Employment

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paycheck stubs • Time cards or time sheets signed by the employer or the employer’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the employer or the employer’s designated representative certifying the hours worked by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed by the employer from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that employer. • Online documentation services, such as TALX, The Work Number, etc. <p>Self-Employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly tax filings • Invoices • Receipts • Copies of checks for payment 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of employer • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source <p><i>Note:</i> For paycheck stubs without hours reported, hours of participation are calculated by dividing the participant’s gross earnings by his or her hourly wage. TWIST documentation must include the calculation of hours of participation based on gross wages and hourly wage and be entered into the <i>Comments</i> box of the TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen.</p> <p>Self-Employment:</p> <p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Wages reported on verification source <p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen, <i>Comments</i> box:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of self-employment • Calculation of participation hours based on verified self-employment wages 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.e: Subsidized Employment

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paycheck stubs • Time cards or time sheets signed by the employer or the employer’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the employer or the employer’s designated representative certifying the hours worked by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed by the employer from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that employer. • Online documentation services, such as TALX, The Work Number, etc. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of employer • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source <p><i>Note:</i> For paycheck stubs without hours reported, hours of participation are calculated by dividing the participant’s gross earnings by his or her hourly wage. TWIST documentation must include the calculation of hours of participation based on gross wages and hourly wage and be entered into the <i>Comments</i> box of the TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen.</p>	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.f: On-the-Job Training

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paycheck stubs • Time cards or time sheets signed by the employer or the employer’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the employer or the employer’s designated representative certifying the hours worked by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed by the employer from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that employer. • Online documentation services, such as TALX, The Work Number, etc. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of employer • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source <p><i>Note:</i> For paycheck stubs without hours reported, hours of participation are calculated by dividing the participant’s gross earnings by his or her hourly wage. TWIST documentation must include the calculation of hours of participation based on gross wages and hourly wage and be entered into the <i>Comments</i> box of the TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen.</p>	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.g: Work Experience

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records from the service provider • Time cards or time sheets signed by the employer or the employer’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the employer or the employer’s designated representative certifying the hours worked by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed by the employer from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that employer. • Online documentation services, such as TALX, The Work Number, etc. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of employer • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source <p>TWIST <i>Daily Time Tracking</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation hours entered into TWIST for approved holiday excused absences or short-term excused absences <p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen, <i>Comments</i> box:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculation of FLSA hours, as applicable 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.h: Community Service

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records from the service provider • Time cards or time sheets signed by the employer or the employer’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the employer or the employer’s designated representative certifying the hours worked by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed by the employer from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that employer. • Online documentation services, such as TALX, The Work Number, etc. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of employer • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source <p>TWIST <i>Daily Time Tracking</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation hours entered into TWIST for approved holiday excused absences or short-term excused absences <p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen, <i>Comments</i> box:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculation of FLSA hours, as applicable 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.i: Vocational Educational Training

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records from the service provider • Time cards or time sheets signed by the service provider or the service provider's designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the service provider or the service provider's designated representative certifying the hours of participation by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed from the service provider from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that provider. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of service provider • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider's designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source • Type of hours reported by verification source (classroom or study/homework hours) • Statement that verification source shows the Choices participant is making acceptable progress in the educational or training activity <p>TWIST <i>Daily Time Tracking</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation hours entered into TWIST for approved holiday excused absences or short-term excused absences 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.j: Job Skills Training

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records from the service provider • Time cards or time sheets signed by the service provider or the service provider’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the service provider or the service provider’s designated representative certifying the hours of participation by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed from the service provider from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that provider. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of service provider • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source • Type of hours reported by verification source (classroom or study/homework hours) • Statement that verification source shows the Choices participant is making acceptable progress in the educational or training activity <p>TWIST <i>Daily Time Tracking</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation hours entered into TWIST for approved holiday excused absences or short-term excused absences 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-105.k: Educational Services

ACCEPTABLE VERIFICATION SOURCES	MINIMUM REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION IN TWIST	WHEN VERIFICATION IS RECEIVED AND DOCUMENTED IN TWIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records from the service provider • Time cards or time sheets signed by the service provider or the service provider’s designated representative • Signed letters or e-mails from the service provider or the service provider’s designated representative certifying the hours of participation by the participant. The letters must be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed from the service provider from an address, e-mail account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that provider. 	<p>TWIST <i>Verification</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of service provider • Contact information for verification source—name, address, phone number, and e-mail, as applicable, of service provider’s designated representative • Type of verification received • Date verification received • Time frames covered by verification • Hours reported on verification source • Type of hours reported by verification source (classroom or study/homework hours) • Statement that verification source shows the Choices participant is making acceptable progress in the educational or training activity <p>TWIST <i>Daily Time Tracking</i> screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation hours entered into TWIST for approved holiday excused absences or short-term excused absences 	<p>Every 31 days</p>

C-106: Choices Documentation Desk Aid

Allowable Activities

Source	Unsubsidized Employment Service Code 39	Subsidized Employment Service Code 42	Work Experience Service Codes 47, 48, 49, & 50	On-the-Job Training Service Code 3	Self-Directed Job Search Service Code 12	Supervised Job Search/Job Readiness Service Code 13 & 38 (see note below for rehab activities)	Community Service/Workfare (SNAP E&T) Service Codes 40 & 59	Vocational Education Training Service Code 1	Short-term Work Readiness Service Code 84	Educational Services Service Codes 54, 53, & 92
Paycheck stubs	✓	✓		✓						
Attendance records (time sheets, time cards) signed by person providing verification	✓	✓	✓	✓	See notes on next page for this service code	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Signed letters or e-mails from employer	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Documentation Sources (TALX, The Work Number, etc.)	✓	✓	✓							

For substance abuse, mental health, and rehabilitation activities, the *initial* verification for authorizing participation in the activity must include each of the following:

- A statement from qualified medical or mental health professional stating that treatment is necessary;
- The type and duration of the treatment; and
- The allowable hours in other activities outside treatment.

Self-Directed Job Search Documentation

Job search log containing the following:

- Employer name and address;
- Person contacted with contact phone number;
- Position applied for;
- Type of contact (in person, telephone, e-mail/fax, mail, or online form);
- Time spent making contact – indicate date and total time spent making contact;
- Travel time between contacts;
- Total time for contact;
- Statement certifying that the information is true and correct;
- Statement notifying participants of the civil, criminal, or administrative penalties for providing false information.

Boards must ensure that job search logs are signed and dated by participants and are maintained in their case files.

Acceptable employer contact documentation sources:

- Business cards or brochures
- Fax transmittal receipts for résumés/applications submitted to employers (verify that fax number belongs to employer)
- Printouts of e-mail or online submissions of applications (only used to document the contact and not acceptable for establishing time spent on that contact)
- Contract Verification Form signed by employer (local policy determines use)

When calculating hours of job search, review for completeness and use reasonableness test for travel time and preparation time.

C-107: Sample Participation Requirement Desk Aid

Participation Requirements

Participant	Total Participation Hours for a 30-day Month	Total Participation Hours for a 31-day Month	Weekly Core Activities	Weekly Non-Core Activities
Single-Parent Child under 6	86 Hours	89 Hours	20 Hours	
Single-Parent Child 6 or over	129 Hours	133 Hours	20 Hours	10 Hours
Two-Parent Family without Child Care	155 Hours	150 Hours	30 Hours	5 Hours
Two-Parent Family with Child Care	236 Hours	244 Hours	50 Hours	5 Hours

Core activities include the following:

- Occupational / Vocational Training
- On-the-Job Training
- Unpaid Public Work Experience
- Unpaid Nonprofit Work Experience
- Unpaid For-profit Work Experience
- Job Search Assistance
- Supervised Job Search
- Job Readiness / Preemployment Skills
- Unsubsidized Employment
- Community Service
- Subsidized Employment
- Substance Abuse Treatment

Non-Core Activities include the following:

- Basic Educational Skills / ABE
- English as a Second Language
- High School – CHOICES
- GED
- Short-Term Work Readiness
- Entrepreneurial Training
- Work-Based Literacy
- Middle School

C-108: Choices Work Code Crosswalk

TWIST / SAVERR / TIERS Choices Work Code Crosswalk

TWIST Code	TWIST Description	SAVERR Value	TIERS Value	TIERS Description
1	Mandatory	M	M	Mandatory registrant
2	Child age 18 & younger who is a SIG 5 or SIG 5L	A	V	Child under 19 years of age
3	Child age 19 & younger who is a SIG 8L or SIG 7L	B	B	Caretaker/parent under age 19 in school full time
4	Caring for a disabled child	C	C	Caring for ill or disabled child in home/child in school
6	Unable to work due to mental/physical disability > 180 days	E	EE	Disability expected to last greater than 180 days
7	Age 60 or older	F	F	60 years of age or older
8	Single parent/caretaker relative caring for a child under age 1	G	GG	Meets caretaker exemption criteria, child in EDG
9	Caring for a disabled adult	H	HH	Cares for disabled adult in home (expected to last less than 180 days)
11	No subject to participation/not TANF eligible	J	J	Not certified for TANF
12	Mandatory pending an appeal on TANF sanction	K	K	Appeal pending with Choices
13	Time-limited local economic exemption factor	L	L	Time-limited severe economic hardship (lives in economically deprived county)
14	Time-limited economic hardship exemption	N	N	Time-limited employment hardship
15	Mandatory – employed 30+hrs/wk @ \$700/mth	P	FP	Meets TANF full-time employment requirement
		P	SP	Meets TANF-SP full time employment requirement
16	Time-limited severe personal hardship	Q	Q	Time-limited personal hardship
17	Caring for a child < 1 not receiving TANF	R	R	Meets caretaker exemption criteria, child not in EDG

TWIST Code	TWIST Description	SAVERR Value	TIERS Value	TIERS Description
19	Pregnant and unable to work	T	T	Pregnant and unable to work
20	Mandatory failure to comply with participation	W	W	Sanctioned for Choices nonparticipation
21	Cares for disabled kids who do not attend school	Z	Z	Caring for ill or disabled child in home/child not in school
22	Single grandparent age 50 or over caring for a child under age 3	U	U	Single grandparent 50 or older caring for child under 3
23	Legal parent who exhausted state time limit with child(ren) receiving TANF	X	XA	Exhausted STL
24	Legal parent receiving SSI with child(ren) receiving TANF	V	VA	SSI recipient
25	Other disqualified parent with child(ren) receiving TANF	Y	YA	Noncompliance w/TPR
		Y	YB	Noncompliance w/SSN
		Y	YC	Noncompliance w/QC
		Y	YD	Has an IPV
		Y	YE	Failed to timely report temp absence of certified child
		Y	YF	Has a felony drug conviction
		Y	YG	Is a fugitive
		Y	YM	Noncompliance with minor parent domicile

TWIST/SAVERR Codes with no TIERS Mapping		
18	DELETED VISTA volunteer	S
5	DELETED Temporary illness or injury	D
10	DELETED Too remote to effectively participate	I

C-109: Sample E-120 Family Work Requirement Form

Family Work Requirement Form

Families that receive TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits are required to participate in Choices activities. Choices activities help you find and keep a job to support your family.

Two Mandatory Adults

In your family _____ and _____ are required to participate a combined total of _____ average hours per week in Choices activities (example: Job Search, Employment, etc.)

If this work requirement is not met by the family (one or both adults), BOTH adults will receive a reduction in their TANF benefits.

_____ has agreed to participate _____ hours per week.

_____ has agreed to participate _____ hours per week.

My signature confirms that I understand my family's work requirements:

Name (please print) _____ SSN _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Name (please print) _____ SSN _____

Signature _____ Date _____

One Mandatory and One Exempt Adult that Volunteers

In your family _____ is required to participate and _____ has volunteered to participate a combined total of _____ average hours per week in Choices activities (example: Job Search, Employment, etc.)

If this work requirement is not met by the family (one or both adults), the mandatory adult's portion of the family's TANF benefits will be reduced.

_____ has agreed to participate _____ hours per week.

_____ has agreed to participate _____ hours per week.

My signature confirms that I understand my family's work requirements:

Name (please print) _____ SSN _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Name (please print) _____ SSN _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Family Work Requirement Form

PURPOSE

- To notify the two-parent family of their work requirement.
- To document the individual responsibility of each adult in achieving the family work requirement.
- To notify the two-parent family of the penalty that will be initiated on one or both adults, if the family work requirement is not met.

PROCEDURE

When to Prepare

- This form must be completed after the Family Employment Plan has been finalized.

Number of Copies

- Workforce Solutions Office staff completes an original and one or two copies (as appropriate).

Transmittal

- **Two Mandatory Adults:** Workforce Solutions Office staff gives one copy to the family and retains the original.
- **One Mandatory and One Exempt Adult Who Volunteer:** Workforce Solutions Office staff gives one copy to the family and retains the original.

Form Retention

- Workforce Solutions Office staff retains the form for three years from the date of case closure.

DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS

Workforce Solutions Office staff selects the correct section to use and **Xs** out the unused sections. For example, if both adults in the two-parent family are mandatory, you would use the section entitled **Two Mandatory Adults** and **X** out the unused sections.

Two Mandatory Adults

1. Insert the names of both mandatory adults and the combined total of hours per week that they are required to participate.
2. Insert the names of both mandatory adults and individually list the hours they will participate per week.
3. *Name-* self-explanatory
SSN- self-explanatory
Signature- self-explanatory
Date- date form was signed

One Mandatory and One Exempt Adult Who Volunteer

1. Insert the names of the mandatory adult and the exempt adult who have volunteered to participate. Insert the combined total of hours per week that the family is required to participate.
2. Insert the names of both adults and individually list the hours they will participate per week.
3. *Name-* self-explanatory
SSN- self-explanatory
Signature- self-explanatory
Date- date form was signed

C-110: Form 1836-A

Texas Health and Human
Services Commission

Medical Release/Physician's Statement

Form H1836-A
April 2003

SECTION I — TO BE COMPLETED BY STAFF

Name of Patient	Date of Birth	Social Security No.
Case Name (caregiver)	Case No.	Patient's Usual Job
Advisor's Name	BJN	
Office Address/Mail Code/FAX No.		

SECTION II — TO BE COMPLETED BY PHYSICIAN

The patient named above has applied for benefits with our agency. Federal and state regulations require that persons receiving benefits work or participate in activities to prepare them for work unless they are physically or mentally incapable of working. This patient claims that disability. Please complete the appropriate parts. After you complete the form, you may give it to the client or mail it to HHSC at the address in Section I.

PART A – PERSONAL DISABILITY:

To what extent is the individual able to work or participate in activities to prepare for work? Please check **one** of the following boxes:

- 1) The individual is able to work, or participate in activities to prepare for work, without restrictions:
 - a) Full time (40 hours/week)
 - b) Part time at ___ hours/week
- 2) The individual is able to work, or participate in activities to prepare for work, with restrictions: (Please complete Part B and C)
 - a) Full time (40 hours/week)
 - b) Part time at ___ hours/week
- 3) The individual is unable to work, or participate in activities to prepare for work, at all: (Please complete Part C)
 - a) The disability is permanent.
 - b) The disability is not permanent and is expected to last more than 6 months.
 - c) The disability is not permanent and is expected to last 6 months or less.

PART B – ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

What can this individual do now? Check the appropriate boxes that are applicable during a workday:

Maximum hours per workday:	2	4	6	8	Other
Sitting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climbing stairs/ladders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kneeling/Squatting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bending/Stooping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pushing/Pulling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keyboarding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lifting/Carrying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe)					

The individual may not lift/carry objects more than ___ lbs. for more than ___ hours per day.

Individuals with employment limitations may still be assigned to complete community work in an office environment with little physical strain or demand (answering phones, filing while seated, etc.) Others may be assigned to complete employment related activities in a classroom setting. In your opinion, can this individual participate in activities of this nature?

Yes No

Any other remarks, recommendations or restrictions? _____

PART C – DIAGNOSIS

Primary disabling diagnosis	Secondary disabling diagnosis
Comments: _____	
Name of Physician (please type or print)	Physicians License No.
Signature-Physician _____ Date _____	
Office Address (Street or P.O. Box, City, State, ZIP)	Telephone Number (Include Area Code) () -

Authorization to Release Medical Information
Autorización para Divulgar Información Médica

SECTION III – TO BE COMPLETED BY CLIENT/SECCIÓN III, EL CLIENTE DEBE LLENAR ESTA SECCIÓN

Patient's Name/Nombre del paciente: _____

HHSC is requesting verification of the medical condition that prevents you from participating in the employment services program. When you sign this authorization, you are giving HHSC permission to contact your doctors, medical facilities, or other health care providers to request copies of your health information as indicated below. You do not have to sign this form to be eligible for TANF, Food Stamps, or Medicaid. However, you must sign this form if you want to be eligible for an exemption from the employment services program.

La Comisión de Salud y Servicios Humanos de Texas (HHSC) necesita verificación sobre el padecimiento médico que le impide participar en el programa de servicios de empleo. Cuando firme esta autorización, le dará permiso a la HHSC para comunicarse con su doctor, centros médicos u otros proveedores de atención médica para pedir copias de su información médica como se indica más adelante. No necesita firmar esta forma para llenar los requisitos para TANF, estampillas para comida o Medicaid. Sin embargo, es necesario que firme esta forma si desea llenar los requisitos para una exención del programa de servicios de empleo.

I authorize/Yo autorizo a _____

Doctor, Medical Facilities, or other Health Care Providers/
Doctor, centro médico u otro proveedor de atención médica

To complete Form H1836-A, Medical Release/Physician's Statement, and release the information to HHSC and the Texas Workforce Commission for purposes of verifying the medical condition that prevents me from participating fully in the employment services program.

Para llenar la Forma H1836-A, *Medical Release/Physician's Statement*, y poner la información a disposición de la HHSC y de la Comisión Laboral de Texas para verificar el padecimiento médico que me impide participar completamente en el programa de servicios de empleo.

This authorization expires on/Esta autorización se vence el: _____

Client or Personal Representative's Signature/
Firma del Cliente o del Representante personal

Date/
Fecha

If you are signing for the client, please describe your authority to act for the client:
Si usted va a firmar por el cliente, por favor, describa la autoridad que tiene para actuar en nombre de él:

Note: If the person requesting the release of case information cannot sign his/her name, two witnesses to his/her mark (X) must sign below:
Nota: si la persona que solicita la divulgación de información del caso no puede firmar, debe poner una marca (X) ante dos testigos, que deben firmar a continuación:

Witness/
Testigo

Date/
Fecha

Witness/
Testigo

Date/
Fecha

<p>Notice to Client</p> <p>HHSC, as receiver of this information, will protect your personal health information in accordance with federal and state privacy regulations. If you authorize release of your health information to other parties it may no longer be protected by privacy regulations.</p> <p>You can withdraw permission you have given your doctor or health care provider to use or disclose health information that identifies you, unless they have already taken action based on your permission. You must withdraw your permission in writing.</p>	<p>Aviso al cliente</p> <p>La HHSC, como destinataria de esta información, protegerá su información médica personal conforme a las regulaciones estatales y federales del derecho a la vida privada. Si autoriza la divulgación de su información médica a terceros, es posible que ya no tenga la protección de las regulaciones del derecho a la vida privada.</p> <p>Usted puede retirar el permiso que le haya dado a su doctor o al proveedor de atención médica para usar o divulgar información médica que lo identifique a usted, a menos que éste ya haya actuado de acuerdo con su permiso. Tiene que retirar su permiso por escrito.</p>
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C-111: Form 1836-B

Texas Health and Human
Services Commission

Medical Release/Physician's Statement

Form H1836-B
April 2003

SECTION I — TO BE COMPLETED BY STAFF

Name of Patient	Date of Birth	Social Security No. - -
Case Name (caregiver)	Case No.	Patient's Usual Job
Advisor's Name	BJN	
Office Address/Mail Code/FAX No.		

SECTION II — TO BE COMPLETED BY PHYSICIAN

The person caring for the patient named above has applied for benefits with our agency. Federal and state regulations require that persons receiving benefits work or participate in activities to prepare them for work unless they are unable to do so due to a circumstance such as being needed in the home due to the patient's disabling illness or injury. This person claims that circumstance. Please complete parts A and B below. After you complete the form, you may give it to the client or mail it to HHSC at the address in Section I.

PART A – CARING FOR A DISABLED FAMILY MEMBER

To what extent is the caregiver able to work or participate in activities to prepare for work? Please check **one** of the following boxes:

1. The caregiver is able to work, or participate in activities to prepare for work (outside or inside of their home), full time
2. (a) The caregiver is able to work, or participate in activities to prepare for work (outside of their home), part time at ___ hrs/wk
(b) The caregiver is able to work, or participate in activities to prepare for work (inside of their home), part time at ___ hrs/wk
3. The caregiver is unable to work or participate in activities. If you check this box, please indicate which of the following applies:
 (a) The disability is permanent
 (b) The disability is not permanent and is expected to last more than 6 months.
 (c) The disability is not permanent and is expected to last 6 months or less.

If necessary, provide further detail _____

PART B– DIAGNOSIS

Primary disabling diagnosis	Secondary disabling diagnosis
Comments: _____	
Name of Physician (please type or print)	Physicians License No.
Signature-Physician _____ Date _____	
Office Address (Street or P.O. Box, City, State, ZIP)	Telephone Number (Include Area Code) () -

Authorization to Release Medical Information
Autorización para divulgar información médica

**SECTION III – TO BE COMPLETED BY PATIENT OR PATIENTS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE /
SECCIÓN III, EL PACIENTE O SU REPRESENTANTE PERSONAL DEBE LLENAR ESTA SECCIÓN**

Patient's Name/Nombre del paciente: _____

The applicant is requesting an exemption from participating in the employment services program because he/she is needed in the home due to your disabling illness or injury. When you sign this authorization, you are giving HHSC permission to contact your doctors, medical facilities, or other Health Care Providers to request copies of your health information as indicated below. You must sign this form if you want the applicant to be eligible for an exemption from the employment services program.

El solicitante pide una exención de la participación en el programa de servicios de empleo porque se le necesita en el hogar debido a que usted tiene una discapacidad causada por una enfermedad o lesión. Al firmar esta autorización, le dará permiso a la Comisión de Salud y Servicios Humanos de Texas (HHSC) para comunicarse con su doctor, centros médicos u otros proveedores de atención médica para pedir copias de su información médica como se indica más adelante. Es necesario que firme esta forma si desea que el solicitante llene los requisitos para una exención del programa de servicios de empleo.

I authorize/Yo autorizo a _____

Doctor, Medical Facilities, or other Health Care Providers/
Doctor, centro médico u otro proveedor de atención médica

To complete Form H1836-B, Medical Release/Physician's Statement, and release the information to HHSC and the Texas Workforce Commission for purposes of verifying that the applicant is needed in the home due to my disabling illness or injury, and therefore, cannot participate fully in the employment services program.

Para llenar la Forma H1836-B, *Medical Release/Physician's Statement*, y poner la información a disposición de la HHSC y de la Comisión Laboral de Texas para verificar que el solicitante es necesario en el hogar debido a mi discapacidad por enfermedad o lesión, y por lo tanto, no puede participar completamente en el programa de servicios de empleo.

This authorization expires on/Esta autorización se vence el: _____

_____ Patient or Personal Representative's Signature/ Firma del Paciente o del Representante personal	_____ Date/ Fecha
--	--------------------------------

If you are signing for the patient, please describe your authority to act for the patient:
Si usted va a firmar por el paciente, por favor, describa la autoridad que tiene para actuar en nombre de él:

Note: If the person requesting the release of case information cannot sign his/her name, two witnesses to his/her mark (X) must sign below:
Nota: si la persona que solicita la divulgación de información del caso no puede firmar, debe poner una marca (X) ante dos testigos, que deben firmar a continuación:

_____ Witness/ Testigo	_____ Date/ Fecha
_____ Witness/ Testigo	_____ Date/ Fecha

<p>Notice to Client</p> <p>HHSC, as receiver of this information, will protect your personal health information in accordance with federal and state privacy regulations. If you authorize release of your health information to other parties it may no longer be protected by privacy regulations.</p> <p>You can withdraw permission you have given your doctor or health care provider to use or disclose health information that identifies you, unless they have already taken action based on your permission. You must withdraw your permission in writing.</p>	<p>Aviso al cliente</p> <p>La HHSC, como destinataria de esta información, protegerá su información médica personal conforme a las regulaciones estatales y federales del derecho a la vida privada. Si autoriza la divulgación de su información médica a terceros, es posible que ya no tenga la protección de las regulaciones del derecho a la vida privada.</p> <p>Usted puede retirar el permiso que le haya dado a su doctor o al proveedor de atención médica para usar o divulgar información médica que lo identifique a usted, a menos que éste ya haya actuado de acuerdo con su permiso. Tiene que retirar su permiso por escrito.</p>
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C-113: TWIST Guide – *Daily Time Tracking* for Choices

Processing Steps to Use Daily Time Tracking

To access *Daily Time Tracking*:

1. Select the *Customer Information* icon.
 2. Select *Service Tracking* from the *Menu Selections*.
 3. Select the *Daily Time Tracking* tab.
-

Processing Steps for Daily Time Tracking Data Entry with Verification

To enter data into *Daily Time Tracking*:

1. Select *Daily Time Tracking* for a specific customer.
2. Choose *Service Month* and *Year* (defaults to current month).
3. Select week with open services (open services automatically populate for service month selected).
4. Click “+” to expand view to record participation.

Examples of participation type codes based on type of service:

- *Classroom/Instruction* = hours of participation in a classroom or instructional setting
- *Study/Homework* = hours of participation in educational activities through studying or completing homework

*Processing Steps for
Daily Time Tracking
Data Entry with
Verification
(continued)*

- *Self-Directed Job Search* = hours of participation in self-directed job search activities
- *Work* = hours of participation in paid or unpaid work activities
- *Holiday* = hours of participation in an unpaid activity credited to a Choices participant for participation hours missed due to the holiday closure of a work/participation site
- *Excused Absence* = hours of participation in an unpaid activity credited to a Choices participant for participation hours missed due to an acceptable excuse
- *Non-Choices* = hours of participation for all program types other than Choices, Choices Plus, TANF Applicant, SNAP Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, and SNAP General Population.

5. Enter participation hours per day. TWIST calculates daily and weekly totals. You may split hours of participation over several participation type codes.
6. Click button under *Last Verification* column to access the *Verification* window. (Button face displays either *No Verification* or *valid from date* of last verification.)

Note: At the top of the verification window is a summary of verifications. Right click/add in the lower window if you have multiple verifications for the same service or new verification period entries to make.

***Processing Steps for
Daily Time Tracking
Tab Entry with
Verification
(continued)***

7. Right click/add in the lower window to enter appropriate data into *Verification Information* and *Verification Provider Information* fields based on verification received.

Examples of verification type codes based on service(s) selected:

- *Attendance Records*
- *Paycheck Stubs*
- *Time Card/Time Sheet (Signed)*
- *Signed Letter*
- *Online Services*
- *Self-Directed Job Search – Contact Verification Form*
- *Self-Directed Job Search – Business Card/Brochure*
- *Self-Directed Job Search – Fax/E-mail Submission*
- *Phone Call*
- *Self-Employment – Invoices*
- *Self-Employment – Receipts*
- *Self-Employment – Contracts*
- *Self-Employment – Quarterly Tax Filing*
- *Self-Employment – Copies of Checks*

8. Click *OK*. TWIST populates latest verification *valid from* date on the button face under the last verification column.

***Processing Steps for
Daily Time Tracking
Tab Entry with
Verification
(continued)***

9. Save the *Daily Time Tracking* entries.

Recommendation: Save after completing the verification for each service individually. Collapse the expanded view of services to verify other existing services.

Note: The verification validation dates are rolling dates based on and including the start date. They are exactly seven days (including the start date) for the *Job Search/Job Readiness* service and exactly 14 days (including the start date) for all other services.

***Processing Steps for
Data Entry of
Excused Absence or
Holiday***

Follow above step 1 through step 5:

1. When *Excused Absence* or *Holiday* is appropriate in a specific week, data enter specific hours. (There are limitations associated with excused absences within a month and year.)
 2. Click *Comments* button.
 3. Select appropriate item from dropdown menu and explain in the *Comment* box.
 4. Save information.
-

Choices

Part D – List of Revisions

Note: Minor, nonsubstantive editorial revisions may be made to the guide that are not included on the List of Revisions.

DATE	SECTION	COMMENTS