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**DFES OPERATIONS MEMO**

**No: 12-02**

**DATE: 01/06/2012**

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| **FS** | ☐ | **MA** | ☐ | **BC+** | ☐ |
| **SC** | ☐ | **CTS** | ☐ | **FSET** | ☐ |
| **CC** | ☐ | **W-2** | ☐ | **EA** | ☒ |
| **CF** | ☐ | **JAL** | ☐ | **JC** | ☐ |
| **RCA** | ☐ | **RMA** | ☐ | **Other EP** | ☐* |

**PRIORITY: HIGH**

TO: **W-2 Agencies**
**Income Maintenance Supervisors**
**Income Maintenance Lead Workers**
**Income Maintenance Staff**
**Workforce Development Boards**
**Job Center Leads and Managers**
**Training Staff**
**Child Care Coordinators**

FROM: Janice Peters, Director
Bureau of Working Families
Division of Family and Economic Security

**SUBJECT: Emergency Assistance Tracking System (EATS)**

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***CROSS REFERENCE***: W-2 Manual Chapter 17
Operations Memo 02-48
Operations Memo 02-52
Operations Memo 02-60
Operations Memo 07-22
Operations Memo 09-22
Operations Memo 09-78

**EFFECTIVE DATE**: January 25, 2012

***PURPOSE***

The purpose of this memo is to outline changes that have been made to the Emergency Assistance Tracking System (EATS). The EATS changes are meant to clarify and enhance the information that is entered for Emergency Assistance tracking and reporting purposes.

***BACKGROUND***

The EA program provides assistance to needy families experiencing a qualifying emergency of: impending homelessness, homelessness, energy crisis, fire, flood, or natural disaster. Eligible families must meet nonfinancial and financial eligibility requirements. An EA payment may be provided to an eligible family no more often than once in a 12-month period.

The Emergency Assistance Tracking System (EATS) was introduced in 2002 and is the automated system that is used to:

- Search and verify each caretaker relative's history of EA payments;
- Track data for all Approved and Denied EA applications; and
- Provide reports on Approved EA payment amounts and Denied applications.

Please refer to the W-2 manual section 17.7.1 and 17.7.2 (11.1 in updated manual) for a link to EATS and policy guidelines for using EATS. Agency staff who currently do not have access to EATS can request this access at https://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dwseats/PrivilegedContent.aspx. Agency staff may contact the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Service Desk at (608) 266-7252 about any problems in accessing EATS.

***EATS CHANGES***

1. On the home page, the text that appeared under the <Search> and <Reports> links has been removed. It was not necessary to define these functions with added text.

2. The <Help> icon that appeared on the far right side of the EATS home screen has been removed. The <Help> function has been replaced by the addition of a tab along the top of the home screen, next to the <Search> and <Reports> tabs. The information available on the <Help> screen includes contact information for questions regarding EATS and EA, the Help Desk number, a link to EA policy, and a link to the EATS Self Study Guide.

3. The <New> tab on the EATS home screen has been removed. Whenever a new application is entered in EATS, the system will do a Search to determine if the individual is already known to EATS. Information required for a Search has not changed. The Search can be done using first and last name, with or without date of birth and/or Social Security number. The Search will result in one of the following:
   - EATS will display entries that match the information entered. If the individual is found the worker can click on the name and continue the information entry process. The information displayed regarding an existing individual will include the last four digits of the individual's Social Security number.
   - If the individual is NOT found, the worker can click on a text box titled "New Adult Applicant" which will auto populate the information that was initially entered and the information entry process can continue.

4. EATS requires entry of a Social Security number for all adult EA applicants. If a Social Security number is entered that is already attached to an individual in EATS, an error message will be displayed. The EA agency will be required to contact the DCF Help Desk for assistance in correcting errors associated with Social Security numbers.

5. Currently, status indicators for EA applications include <Approved> and <Denied.> A third status indicator entitled <On Hold> has been added for applications that are (pending) within the 5 working day eligibility determination timeframe, i.e. an eligibility determination has not been made.

   Currently, any Approved or Denied application entered into EATS that is not Confirmed is deleted from the system 5 working days after the Application Date. The new <On Hold> status will allow EA workers to begin entering application information while verification and/or approval is still pending. However, it is important to note that applications entered as <On Hold> will also be deleted 5 working days after the Application Date. The <On Hold> status must be changed to Denied or Approved and the EA request must be Confirmed within 5 working days of the Application Date or the information will be deleted. In addition:
   - An application that is <On Hold> cannot be Confirmed.
   - An application that has been Confirmed cannot be changed to <On Hold>.
   - Individuals who have an EA application in <On Hold> status cannot be added to a new EA application.

- Other EA agencies will be able to view applications in the <On Hold> status.

In all cases, EATS will display an error message to inform the worker about the nature of the error and/or about what steps to take to correct the error.

6. A new report has been created that will list <On Hold> applications. The report can be created, viewed and printed in the same way as other EATS reports. However, the On Hold Report is different from other EATS reports in that it only lists <On Hold> applications with an application date within 5 working days prior to the date the report is generated. This is because EATS deletes all applications after 5 working days if they are not Confirmed. The <On Hold> report is intended to be used as a tool for EA workers and supervisors to track applications that have not been Confirmed as Approved or Denied. <On Hold> applications do not appear on the other EATS reports.

7. Agencies must enter EA application information within 5 working days of the application date. EATS is designed as a tracking system which enables multiple EA agencies to access information about payments received by a particular EA applicant. The system is also designed to store and display information regarding the recipients of the EA payments. EATS will no longer allow EA application information to be entered "back dated" more than one year. In addition, if an EA application is "backdated" when entered into EATS and the date is more than 5 working days prior to the date of entry, the application must be Confirmed on the same day. This is because EATS deletes all unconfirmed applications 5 working days after the EA application date.

8. EATS will no longer allow the total payments in the <Payment Details> section to exceed the Maximum Payment Amount listed in the <EA Details> section. The Maximum Payment Amount is entered along with the date of application and application status. The payment amount(s) must be entered separately in the <Payment Details> section along with the date of the payment/voucher, check/voucher number, payee information, etc.

9. If payment information is entered on an Approved and Confirmed EA application, and later the EA application status is changed to Denied, an edit must be done to change the payment information to zero ($0.00) before the status can be changed to Denied.

10. A number of <Denial Reasons> have been deleted including the following:
    Denied - Landlord or bank will not agree to stop eviction/foreclosure action.
    Denied - Need for assistance is the result of failure to pursue other payment options.
    Denied - Income and/or assets exceed need.
    Denied - Did not apply in the calendar month of the emergency or the next calendar month.
    Denied - Received EA payment within the 36 month EA payment limit.
    Denied - Group is in doubled-up housing.

11. The following <Denial Reason> has been revised:
    **Current:** Denied - Unable to obtain permanent home within 30-day Payment Delay Exception timeframe.
    **Will be replaced with:** Denied – Application lapsed. Unable to obtain permanent housing with Payment Delay Exception timeframe.

12. The following <Denial Reason> has been added:
    Denied – Payment Returned.

13. The following <Denial Reason> is now available for use in cases of Impending Homelessness and Energy Crisis:
    Denied - The emergency is not beyond the control of the adult applicant.

14. The following emergency types have been added:
    Impending homelessness - Financial Crisis and Notice to Terminate Tenancy.
    Homelessness - No housing.
    Homelessness - Temporary housing.
    Homelessness - Uninhabitable.

15. The functionality that identifies an EA application as confidential due to domestic violence has been deleted. .The “pad lock” icon will not appear for any emergency type. Emergency types due to domestic violence will be stored and displayed in the same way as all other emergency types.

16. Several changes have been made to wording or terminology in EATS. These changes will be found on all relevant screens, including in the <Reports> function. These changes include the following:
    - The word <Grant> has been replaced with the words <Request> or <Payment> to clarify that at some stages of the application process, and depending on whether the application has been Approved and/or Confirmed, it is considered a request. The word <Payment> more accurately describes that the EA application process results in a payment to either the applicant, landlord, financial institution or other agency.
    - The terms <Assistance Group> and <Assistance Group Members> have been replaced with the terms <EA Group> and <EA Group Members.> This is to clarify that the members of an EA Group may or may not be the same or similar to an assistance group for other public assistance programs.

***ACTION REQUIRED***

W-2 agencies must discuss this policy change with staff and update any relevant local agency procedures.

***TRAINING***

An updated “EATS Guide” is attached and is available at the PTS Learning Center.

***CONTACTS***

For Policy Questions in the Balance of State: Bureau of Regional Operations, W-2 Regional Coordinators

For Policy Questions in Milwaukee: Milwaukee Operations Section Regional Administrators

For CARES Processing and EATS Questions: W-2 Help Desk 608-264-1656

*Program Categories – FS – FoodShare, MA – Medicaid, BC+ – BadgerCare Plus, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – FoodShare Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC - Job Center Programs, RCA – Refugee Cash Assistance Program, RMA - Refugee Medical Assistance Program, *Other EP – Other Employment Programs.

DCF/DFES/BWF/JZ