Reporting and Documenting Cooperation Hours

These procedures apply to customers who are applying for or receiving TANF benefits and Food Stamps.

We require customers to report and document hours. Although our focus remains helping customers get a job, keep a job or get a better job, we require customers to show us that they are conducting job search activities as we have asked and that they are working as they tell us.

We document cooperation hours in TWIST. We record daily cooperation hours for all activities in the TWIST daily tracking screen.

We document verification sources for all activities in TWIST. We require customers to give us documents for every hour of reported cooperation to verify that they are doing what they tell us.

We will no longer use a monthly sampling method for verifying what customers have told us. We will continue to check customer records for documentation and verification through periodic quality assurance monitoring.

We allow hours for short-term excused absences and approved holidays for customers attending school or working in unpaid work assignments.

✓ Reporting and Documenting Cooperation Hours

1. **Job Search and Job Readiness hours.** A customer who is looking for work must report actual time spent preparing for work and looking for work on Job Search Logs and submit these weekly to The WorkSource as usual.

   Tell the customer we will be verifying her job search and she must provide proof of the job search listed on her job search log.

   We will not count time the customer spends away from The WorkSource researching or contacting employers by telephone or through the internet. Time away from The WorkSource is considered unsupervised and cannot be verified.

   - **Research –** The customer may count time spent using The WorkSource resource room for learning about companies and learning about jobs that are in demand. Time spent looking for work in the resource room is considered to be supervised by resource specialists and may be counted as "research". Help the customer use the internet, newspapers and other materials available at The WorkSource.

     Acceptable Verification: signature or stamp of The WorkSource staff on the job search log

- **Job Search Workshop Classes –** The customer may count time spent attending classes at The WorkSource to learn how to apply for jobs, complete applications, write her resume and prepare for the interview.

  Acceptable Verification: signature of The WorkSource staff instructor on the job search log

- **Applying for Jobs –** The customer may count the actual hours spent applying for jobs. Apply for jobs through Work-in-Texas.com and other internet based job search sites (Monster, Hot Jobs, etc.), or by responding to jobs advertised in newspapers and job postings.

  Acceptable Verification: confirmation fax transmittal receipts or copies of email or business card or brochure from the contacted business or signed contact verification form

- **Job Interviews –** The customer may count the actual hours spent in job interviews.

  Acceptable Verification: business card or brochure from the contacted business or signed contact verification form

- **Follow up to Job Interviews –** The customer may count the time she spent making follow-up telephone calls to the employer after interviews and time spent sending thank you letters.

  Acceptable Verification: copies of thank you letters or employer contact information

- **Networking –** talking with others about available openings. Includes time spent at job club meetings at The WorkSource and other organizations.

  Acceptable Verification: signature or stamp of The WorkSource staff on the job search log

We will not require staff to record multiple sources of verification for job search hours reported for a week. When customers submit more than one verification source with a job search log, choose one source to enter as the verification source in TWIST. File completed logs with all verification sources in the customer's paper file.

Job readiness activities include job search seminars, job skills assessment, job counseling, interviewing skills and practice interviews and help with applications and resumes. Tell customers to report these hours on The WorkSource job search log.

Instructions to give customers are in the information resource *How to Count Hours for Your Job Search* - posted on the web in attachments to information resources of the Expanded Service Standard and Guideline at http://theworksource.org/staff/expandedservices.html. See attachment VII.H.2. How to Count Hours for Your Job Search.

Job readiness activities also include substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment and rehabilitation activities. Instruct the customer to provide a statement from a medical or mental health professional verifying that the treatment is necessary to help the customer get a job or keep a job.

Treatment or therapy agencies may include state agencies such as the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services or the Texas Department of State Health Services, community organizations, or other nonprofit agencies that provide services related to substance abuse, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities. The medical documentation does not need to be certified by a licensed physician, but it must be signed by a health professional qualified to make such determinations.

Countable job search/job readiness is limited to a maximum of four consecutive weeks and up to a maximum of six weeks per year.

2. **Work Hours (Unsubsidized Employment).** Verify unsubsidized employment with documents such as a check stub or letter from an employer or with a Verification of Hours form that the customer and her employer have signed. If we cannot get written verification, office staff may call an employer to verify employment; however, written verification of employment and work hours must be provided by the employer within one week

   - A customer who is working in unsubsidized employment may continue to report her hours by telephone; however, she must submit written documentation of reported work hours within a week. Staff may request written verification of hours from the employer.
   - For paycheck stubs without hours reported, hours of cooperation are calculated by dividing the customer's gross earnings by his or her hourly wage. Documentation in TWIST must include the calculation of hours of cooperation based on gross wages and hourly wage and be entered in the *Comments* box of the TWIST *Verification* screen. Example: Gross wages of $215.25 divided by hourly wage of $6.15 equals 35 hours.
   - The number of hours worked each day must be recorded in TWIST. Divide the total weekly hours by 7 to get the number of daily hours. Enter the daily hours in TWIST for each day of the week Sunday through Saturday.
   - Verification must be received and documented in TWIST every two weeks.

Acceptable Verification Sources: paycheck stubs, time cards or time sheets signed by the employer, signed letters or emails from the employer certifying the hours worked by the customer. The letters must be mailed, emailed or faxed by the employer from an address, email account, or fax number that has been verified as belonging to that employer.

The employer's designated representative (e.g., supervisor) may sign any document requiring an employer's signature.

3. **Work Hours (Self-Employment).** To calculate cooperation hours for self-employed customers, divide the customer's reported net income by minimum wage. Net income is total (gross) income received minus reported business expenses. Self-employment hours may not exceed a customer's reported income divided by the minimum wage. If the customer's cooperation hours for self-employment are not sufficient to meet her requirement for full cooperation, staff must assign additional activities to help the customer get and keep a better job. i.e. job search, community service, etc.

   Tell the customer to give you a written statement of her total gross income and her business expenses for the past three months.

   The number of hours worked each day must be recorded in TWIST. Divide the total hours by the number of calendar days in the period to get the number of daily hours. Enter the daily hours in TWIST for each day of the week Sunday through Saturday.

   Acceptable Verification Sources: quarterly tax filings, invoices, receipts, copies of checks for payment of services rendered. Enter the *type of self-employment* and the *calculation of cooperation hours based on verified self-employment wages* in the TWIST Verification Screen Comments Box.

4. **Volunteer Work Hours (Community Service/Workfare) or School Hours.** A customer who is working at a volunteer work assignment or attending school must submit attendance records, time cards or time sheets signed by a supervisor or instructor. Enter the calculation of FLSA hours as applicable in the TWIST Verification Screen Comments Box.

5. **School Hours for Teen Parents.** A customer who is a teen parent must maintain satisfactory attendance at a secondary school or the equivalent during months in which school is in session and participate in other activities during months in which school is not in session.

   - The customer must provide proof she is registered in school.

- The customer must submit weekly attendance reports or progress reports for each grading period. Either of these documents will document whether or not the customer is maintaining satisfactory attendance.

- If the customer is not maintaining satisfactory attendance, staff must work with her to develop solutions and document problems and solutions in TWIST counseling notes.

6. **Study and Homework Hours.** A customer may be given credit for actual study or homework hours. The time must be monitored, supervised and documented. There is no longer any hour limit for study or homework hours. To count the hours as cooperation, the time must meet all of the following:

    - The time must be directly related to the demands of the course work for out-of-class preparation as described by the school.
    - The school's policy requires a certain number of out-of-class preparation hours.
    - The time must be supervised by a teacher or school official, The WorkSource staff, or staff from other organizations.
    - The time must be documented and verified.

    Acceptable documentation and verification include: a weekly attendance report or the verification of hours form signed by an instructor or school official, The WorkSource staff or staff from other organizations.

7. **Verification of Hours form.** The customer may use the Verification of Hours form to report hours in any activity ***except*** job search. The customer submitting it must sign the Verification of Hours form and have the form signed by a work supervisor or teacher. The customer may hand deliver or fax the form to The WorkSource office on the day the office specifies.

8. **Follow-up Letter for working TANF customers.** The follow-up letter is mailed to congratulate customers who have gone to work – and to remind customers to report work hours. You can find the follow-up letter in the information resources attached to the Basic Service Standard and Guideline at http://theworksource.org/staff/basicservicessandg.html. It is letter **VII. I.7.A. Follow up letter for working TANF customers.**

9. **File documentation.** Keep all documentation including Verification of Hours forms in the customer's individual paper file.

✓ Recording Cooperation in TWIST

1. Record hours obtained in TWIST Service Tracking:
   a. Enter Cooperation Hours
      - On the ***Service Tracking - Daily Time Tracking*** screen, select the appropriate month and year and click on the applicable week.
      - All current open services for the selected month will display in the Service section of the screen. C**lick on the "+" plus sign next to the name of the service to display the daily hours fields.**
      - Enter the cooperation hours for each day of the week.
      - Enter partial hours using 2 digits, decimal point, 2 digits. Example: One hour and six minutes would be entered as 1.10 hours (six minutes =.10 of an hour). One hour and 30 minutes would be entered as 1.50 hours (30 minutes = .50 of an hour). TWIST will calculate total hours and round appropriately.

   b. Enter Daily Time Verification
      - In the ***Daily Time Tracking*** screen under ***Last Verification***, click on the ***Verification*** tab. The ***Daily Time Verification*** screen displays.
      - Complete all data fields in the sections for Verification Information and Verification Provider Information.
         - ***Verification Type*** = click on the drop-down box and select the appropriate type.
         - ***Received Date*** = enter the date the verification document was received at The WorkSource office. The Verification Received Date must be greater than or equal to the Verification "Valid To" date.
         - Date fields for ***Verification Valid From*** and ***Verification Valid To*** = enter the period of time covered by the verification document. The maximum duration between the *Valid From* and *Valid To* dates is 14 days.

   c. Enter Employment/Employer Information:
      - On the ***Service Tracking – Service*** screen, double-click on the applicable service. The ***Service Information*** screen displays the service information.
      - Click on the ***Employment Outcome*** or ***Referral Detail*** button (depending on the service). Information related to the applicable service will display.
      - Enter all of the employment information details in the fields provided in the ***Employment Outcome*** or ***Referral Detail*** screens.
      - When customers report changes in employment, update the employment information in the screens.

2. If office staff believe the hours a customer has reported are false or inaccurate, staff will investigate before counting the hours.