

Welfare to Work and Substance Abuse



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Welfare-to-Work Targets Those Needing Substance Abuse Treatment

The DOL Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Grants program is designed to provide traditional assistance to the hardest-to-employ welfare recipients by providing them with the job readiness, job placement, transitional employment, and other job retention and support services they need to achieve long-term unsubsidized employment and self-sufficiency. WtW has identified the need for substance abuse treatment as one eligibility factor and recognizes non-medical treatment as an example of an allowable job retention service. Using Federal WtW funds for non-medical substance abuse treatment is programmatically sound since it addresses the need of a particular target group and can help individuals make successful transitions to work.

While all WtW programs may serve individuals with substance abuse treatment needs, to date approximately \$88 million worth of grants have been awarded that specifically employ strategies to address substance abuse. In addition, the Round 3 WtW competitive grant announcement specifies those individuals requiring substance abuse treatment as one of five high priority populations.

Substance Abuse-Related WtW Questions

In what circumstances would substance abuse treatment be an allowable activity under WtW grants?

WtW funds can be used for drug and alcohol abuse treatment services to the extent that treatment services are not medical, not otherwise available to the participant, and provided only after placement in a job readiness activity, an employment activity or subsidized/unsubsidized employment in keeping with the WtW “work first” approach.

What substance abuse treatment services may be considered “non-medical”?

Services performed by those not in the medical profession--such as counselors, technicians, social workers and psychologists--and services not provided in a hospital or clinic--including 24-hour care programs--may be considered non-medical. States and localities are encouraged to look at the range of services available in their area and differentiate between medical and non-medical services.

What if WtW clients require medical treatment for drug addiction?

States may use their own state funds or other funds to provide medical treatment as long as they do not commingle these outside funds with federal WtW funds. Medicare and Medicaid may provide another source of funding for medical substance abuse treatment.

Who determines whether services are "not otherwise available"?

The grantee or service provider makes this determination and should set up procedures for documenting "not otherwise available" in the participant's files.

How is the need for substance abuse treatment determined?

The State and local agencies administering the WtW grants are responsible for defining this eligibility criteria and for developing a policy and process for determining whether clients meet the criteria. These policies and procedures should be developed in conjunction with the local PIC and TANF agency, in accordance with State policies and in consultation with alcohol and drug agencies and treatment providers.

Does “needing substance abuse treatment for employment” automatically make a welfare (TANF) recipient eligible for WtW services?

No. “Needing substance abuse treatment for employment” is only one of three “barriers to employment.” An individual must face another of the two “barriers to employment” and be a long-term recipient or have characteristics associated with--or predictive of--long-term welfare dependence to qualify for services.

Could the “need for substance abuse treatment” be considered a characteristic or predictor of long-term welfare dependence?

Yes. States and local areas administering the WtW grants have the authority to define which characteristics they will use. Characteristics or predictors of long-term welfare dependence might include a range of factors including existence of a substance abuse problem.

Is transportation of a WtW participant to a drug treatment facility an allowable cost?

Yes, if the transportation services are not otherwise available to the participant.

Does the barrier "requires substance abuse treatment for employment" include individuals in recovery who continue to require on-going treatment?

Yes. Such individuals may be included in accordance with the state or local plan or practice.

Can WtW funds be used to make drug-free workplace (DFWP) services, such as drug testing or employee assistance programs (EAP) services available to participants in the companies where they are placed?

Yes, where existing resources are not otherwise available to the participant. This means that if an employer already provides DFWP services, WtW funds cannot be used to provide these services to WtW participants. However, if DFWP services are not currently provided by the employer, WtW funds might be used to make such services available to WtW participants, but other funds must be used to provide these services to non-WtW employees. Enhanced services, such as support groups, provided through the EAP exclusively to WtW participants can be funded by WtW.

For more information on the value of drug-free workplace services to WtW clients and companies that employ them, visit the Department of Labor’s Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace Web site at www.dol.gov/dol/workingpartners.htm.

