

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION	TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE MANUAL	
INDEPENDENCE PLAN- 205	COMAR 07.03.03.04	APPLICATION- 200

205.1 The Independence Plan

- A. The Family Independence (FI) plan is the most important step in helping customers to achieve self-sufficiency. The FI plan tells the case manager and the customer where the customer is going and how the customer is going to get there. Leaving any portion of the FI plan incomplete is likely to hinder and delay the customer's success. The FI plan is developed by the case manager and the customer together and starts with an assessment.
- B. Together, the applicant and the Family Investment case manager develop and sign an agreement called the Family Investment Plan (FIP) or the Family Independence Plan that states how the family will become self-sufficient and self-supporting.
- C. The agreement contains:
1. A statement of the customer's/family's goals and the intent of the Plan
 - Many customers don't know how to set goals and don't believe they can reach any goal they set.
 - One of the **goals** of the FIP Plan is to help customers develop and strive for attainable goals.
 2. Activities and other actions the customer/family is expected to participate in or complete such as
 - a. Work activities:
 - Job search
 - Employment or training
 - Community service
 - b. Child Support
 - Filing for child support, and
 - Keeping all appointments for the child support process
 - c. Substance abuse treatment
 - d. Filing for all benefits the family may be potentially eligible to receive

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3. The supportive services the local department is expected to provide to the family such as:
 - Child care subsidy
 - Transportation allowance
 - Counseling
 - Reasonable accommodations.
4. The family's barriers to participation in achieving their goal that must be resolved

205.2 Definitions That Apply to the Plan

- A. **Assessment** is an evaluation completed at application, recertification or as the customer's needs change that considers the customer's educational level, abilities, job skills and readiness, and interests to determine appropriate activities for the customer.
- B. **Good faith effort** means the customer has made every effort to meet the terms outlined for the customer in the Plan.
- C. **Supportive services** are services provided to the TCA family based on the assessed needs of the customer by the local department or through referrals to service providers (such as, counseling, Social Services, vocational rehabilitation referral, education, training, other evaluations).
- D. **Work eligible individuals (WEI)** are the individuals applying for or receiving TCA benefits that are required to be counted in the federal work participation rate.
 - Long term disabled customers are now counted in the federal work participation rate and should be offered supportive services to enable them to become self sufficient.
 - **While long term disabled adults remain exempt from work requirements under state law and COMAR**, they have the right to participate voluntarily in TCA work activities

205.3 Reviewing and Updating the Plan

- A. Update the Plan at redetermination, interim change and when other actions occur.

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- B. The case manager may schedule interim appointments between recertifications that include a review of the agreement and amendments to the agreement as needed
- C. The agreement must be reviewed, and updated if needed, at each recertification
- D. An updated Plan must include the status of:
 - All past and updated assessments
 - Information regarding customer disabilities and accommodations
 - Information on limited English proficiency, if applicable
 - Information on counseling referrals, acceptance, or refusal
 - Social Services referrals and support offered, accepted or refused
 - Other supportive services offered, accepted or refused
 - Testing
 - Education programs referred, accepted or refused
 - Job search history
 - Job training history
 - Work experience
 - Employment
 - History of family violence; and
 - History of substance abuse.
- E. Each local department developed an agreement format tailored to meet the needs of that jurisdiction and its customers.

205.3 Compliance with the FI Plan:

- A. Customers develop the Plan with the case manager and agree to follow the Plan
- B. Non-compliance with the Plan includes:
 - Failure to provide required verification
 - Refusal to sign required forms
 - Not following the steps of the Family Investment Plan
 - Missing scheduled appointments.

205.4 Penalty for Non-Cooperation with the Plan

Send a Notice of Adverse Action (NOAA) and close the TCA case after the 10 day adverse action period.

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EXAMPLES

Example 1. Carol Carroll applies for herself and her sons, Dan, 1 month old, and David, 2 years old. The father of her children left the home a week after Dan was born. Ms. Carroll took a secretarial course in high school, but has no work experience. Ms. Carroll wants to go to work as soon as possible, but thinks she should stay home until Dan is at least 6 months old. Ms. Carroll’s FIP agreement acknowledges that she has a child under 1 exemption for 11 months but wants to participate sooner. The Plan also acknowledges that Ms. Carroll will be required to participate for only 20 hours per week, although she may participate more. It states that she will:

- File for child support for both children now
- Attend appointments with the child support staff and attend any child support hearings
- In the month that Dan turns 6 months old,
 - Call the child care resource line for child care facilities in her area
 - Check out child care providers in her area
 Locate child care for both children
- Practice on her mother’s computer every week
- Attend interim appointments, if scheduled by the case manager, to review compliance with the agreement

Example 2. Ms. Carroll comes to see the case manager when Dan is 6 months old. She indicates she wants to get a job as soon as possible. A child support order was established for both boys and their father is paying support. She has 5 months left on her exemption. Her Plan is updated as follows:

- Ms. Carroll will:
 - Select a day care provider
 - Attend the local department’s job search class
 - Attend a computer class
 - Look for an office job
 - Accept a job that is compatible with available child care and transportation
- The local department will provide:
 - Child care subsidies
 - Transportation allowance during training

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- Other assistance as needed