

How Long Do We Keep A WO Step Open?

With the recent focus on participation and maximizing every hour, there has been significant discussion about when to open and close steps. The TANF policy team hopes that the following guidance will clear up some of the more confusing aspects of WO steps.

When converting cases that are going over income, the goal is to allow the family access to stable benefits that will assist in their path to self-sufficiency. It is also important to capture participation whenever possible. For open TANF cases, WO is the activity step to capture participation hours.

- TANF remains open until the family has actually gone over income (example: if a participant reports a new job on the March 15th but they will not be paid until April 1st, they should still receive April TANF benefits).
- The participation data is gathered based on a TRACS month and does not align with the grant closure date (example: last TANF issued for April is connected to the TRACS month that ends the first Friday in May).
- Create a planned WO step. Expected start date is the date the job started or is expected to start. Expected end date should be the last day of the TANF certification. Leave the WO step in planned status until one of the following occurs:
 - 1) We have received two-consecutive weeks of work verification and determined the average weekly hours. Add actual start date and at least two weeks of the average hours determined.
 - If the case is going OVI, adjust the WO end date to be the first Friday after the month the TANF grant closes.
 - 2) We gave the family (and DHS) until the end of the TANF certification. *Where the employment is reported but never verified, the WO activity should be ended with “no show” as the reason.*
- When work hours are verified, and the TANF remains open, the WO step should stay open until the job ends. Re-verify work hours at each TANF certification date or every six months, whichever is sooner; adjust the work hours on the WO step as needed, and project new expected end date to match the next certification period.
- Ideally, JPI eligibility will be determined prior to the WO closing so that the family can continue to meet participation.

Example 1: Wilma turns in a change report on 12/7 stating that she got a job on 11/17 and received her first paycheck on 12/5. She provides a copy of her first paycheck and states that it is representative of two-weeks and she anticipates the same for ongoing paychecks. Based on this information, she is over income. The worker would take the following steps:

- Set the TANF and any appropriate support services to close 12/31 and send timely notice;
- Create the WO step with actual start date of 11/17 and a planned end date of the first Friday in January (this is the end of the “TRACS month”);
- Enter at least the first two weeks of attendance so that the rest of the WO attendance auto populates;
- Consider JPI eligibility for 1/1.
- Tickle calendar to go in and close WO step after the first Friday in January has passed and updating any attendance that has not auto-populated (auto population occurs approximately the 12th of every month so in this scenario December would not have auto populated)

Example 2: Fred calls in on 12/10 and reports that he started a job on 12/1. The worker must pend for income verification as Fred says he has no idea how much he will be making but he is paid on the first of every month. Based on this information, Fred’s eligibility is unclear. The worker would take the following steps:

- Send a pending notice (DHS 210A) asking for verification of the first paycheck and due by 1/10 (ten days after first paycheck);
- Start the planned WO for 12/1; set the planned end date to match with the end of the TANF recertification;

Fred turns in proof of his income and hours on 1/3. Based on this information, Fred is now over income. The worker should now take the following steps:

- Set the TANF to close 1/31 and send timely notice;
- Enter the first two weeks of attendance so that the rest of the WO attendance auto populates;
- Consider JPI eligibility for 2/1.
- Tickle calendar to go in and close WO step after the first Friday in February has passed and updating any attendance that has not auto-populated (auto population occurs approximately the 12th of every month so in this scenario January would not have auto populated).