W-2 Policy Changes

• Introduction

Since the original W-2 policies were published in June 1997, a variety of significant policy changes have occurred that may account for variations in caseloads, benefit levels, sanctioning efforts, and a host of other topics of interest to researchers. The W-2 Policy table attempts to concisely display those policy changes. *(In the future, this information may be entered into a database format to facilitate ease of use.)*

• Background

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has published a manual for the W-2 program which attempts to detail all policies and procedures which affect the program and its clients. The first publication of the W-2 Manual (June 1997) was titled “W-2: Policies and Procedures.” DWD periodically publishes “updates” (also called “releases”) to the W-2 Manual that specify additions and revisions to the previous edition. The first Update (numbered 98-01) was published in January 1998. It not only contained new policy additions and revisions, but completely reformatted the W-2 Manual. Therefore, Update 98-01 is the framework upon which all other updates are based. More recent updates are not sent in the form of the manual in its entirety, but rather, they only include certain pages that are to be substituted or added to the manual. Pages that are removed from the Manual contain obsolete policies, while new pages contain the revised or added text.

• Methodology

In order to document policies that have changed, each Manual update is compared with the most recent version of the W-2 Manual. (For example, policy changes announced in Update 98-03 were compared with the W-2 Manual as modified through Update 98-02.) All significant changes are then documented onto the following table. Significant changes are defined as those which affect a family’s eligibility, benefit level (cash or in-kind), or exposure to sanctions.

An attempt was made to reference each policy change found in an Update with a corresponding Bureau of Welfare Initiatives’ Operations (OPS) Memo. OPS memos typically precede the release of an update. They announce the policy change and the day in which workers are to implement the particular change.

*NOTE:*
- Many policy changes are announced for the first time within the context of an update. Therefore, not all changes will have a corresponding OPS memo.

• Resources

All materials referred to in the following table are stored at IRP in Room 3470. The most updated version of the W-2 Manual is kept along with its former pages. In addition, supplementary resources are shelved including all OPS memos from 1997 to the present as well as DXBM messages dating from 1998 to the present. (DXBM messages appear on the computer screen when W-2 workers log on for the day. They typically include brief instructions for workers regarding implementation of particular W-2 policy changes in the CARES database system. Occasionally, they are of assistance in determining the day of a policy change implementation.)

• Using the Table

**POLICY:** For the ease of use, policy changes are listed here in their most concise form. More complete descriptions of these changes can be found by referencing the manual and appropriate memos.

**POLICY TYPE:** Policies are classified into three categories:
1. New: The policy is an entirely new policy, an addition to a former policy, or a significant revision of a former policy.
2. Clarification: When a policy is “clarified,” usually a word change or a phrase is added to the current policy. Only those clarifications deemed significant are included.
3. Routine: Changes in policy that have been made to reflect inflation (i.e. benefit levels).

**KEY WORDS:** The table attempts to categorize policies for searchability. In the future, key words will be particularly helpful when this information is available in database format.

**RELEASE DATE:** the day in which a policy is announced to W-2 agency workers by the department.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** the day in which a policy is supposed to be implemented by W-2 agency workers.

**ACTUAL DATE:** the day in which a policy was actually implemented by W-2 agency workers.

**NOTE:**
- This category is difficult to pinpoint. It assumes that there may be delay between some effective dates and the day in which workers actually carry out a change. In the absence of reliable information regarding the “actual date,” the effective date is typically accurate.
- When no supplementary resources are found regarding a policy change, the date of the Update in which the policy appeared is used as the effective/release date. These are signified with an “*.”

**UPDATE NUMBER:** this specifies in which Update the policy change appeared.

**MANUAL SECTION:** This specifies where one can find the policy in the W-2 Manual. The numbering code reflects the same categorization method used in the manual.

**FORMER POLICY:** This provides the location of the former policy relating to the entry. By comparing the new policy to the old, the exact specification of the change may be better understood.

**REFERENCE:** This column gives information on where to find supplementary information regarding a policy change. Typically this information is found in OPS memos.

**SEE UPDATED POLICY:** In cases where a policy change in the table has been updated by a more recent policy also listed in the table, the location of the more recent policy change is listed in this column.