



DATE: March 15, 2017

TO: Steph Tatham
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

FROM: Carli Wulff
Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE)
Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

SUBJECT: Summary of Requested Changes to Job Search Assistance Strategies Evaluation Staff Survey (OMB Control Number 0970-0440)

This memorandum summarizes proposed revisions to the on-line staff survey instrument for sites participating in the Job Search Assistance (JSA) Strategies Evaluation (hereafter, JSA Evaluation) funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The evaluation is examining different approaches to providing job search assistance to individuals applying for and/or receiving cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The study includes: (1) an implementation study to examine program operations and (2) an impact study to measure effects the services on employment and other outcomes using a random assignment study. The evaluation includes in four sites where both the implementation and impact study are being conducted (Genesee and Wayne County, MI, New York, NY, Sacramento County, CA, Westchester County, NY), and one with an implementation study only (Ramsey County, MN).

The JSA staff survey instrument, administered to TANF line staff involved in providing services to TANF applicants and recipients, will be used as part of the implementation study to systematically document program operations and the type of services provided. The staff survey will be important for documenting differences in staff practices in the impact sites where the outcomes of different approaches are being compared. The survey instrument was previously approved under OMB Control Number 0970-0440, with an expiration date of 02/28/2018.

Since the initial OMB approval, the estimated number of staff survey respondents has been reduced by a little more than half because there are fewer sites participating in the study than originally planned. Similarly, because of the smaller number of sites, we also reduced the estimates of the numbers of participants who will complete the baseline information form (BIF) and staff to be interviewed. The overall burden estimate has been reduced by 50 hours. Consequently the burden estimates have been revised in OMB Supporting Statement A and Supporting Statement B. It is important to note that after administering the staff survey with respondents at the first of five JSA sites, we determined that our original estimate (developed before the survey was administered) for average completion time was low

(20 minutes). Based on actual completion time data, the average completion time is approximately 25 minutes, and we have adjusted our burden estimates to reflect this.

The JSA staff survey approved by OMB focuses largely on the types of job search assistance services that are provided (use of group activities, one-on-one assistance, and use of different job search tools and resources). However, two of the sites that we have recruited since the staff survey was approved (Ramsey County and Genesee and Wayne Counties, Michigan) have a focus that the original staff survey does not fully address. In particular, the Ramsey and Michigan interventions focus on goal-setting and coaching to achieve well-defined and incremental goals on the path to self-sufficiency, rather than on providing specific job search assistance services and tools.

The JSA staff survey is not currently designed to capture staff activities related to goal setting, and thus does not allow the evaluation to gain critical, systematic information on how staff provide these services. For both sites, we are proposing modifications to one section of the staff survey. These changes will not change the burden associated with the survey in Michigan and in Ramsey will reduce the burden. In Ramsey County, where we are conducting only an implementation study with a more limited scope than the impact study, we propose dropping several sections of the staff survey because we will not be comparing contrasting approaches. In the other three sites participating in the JSA impact evaluation we will use the staff survey approved by OMB in November 2014. The proposed modifications are summarized below and shown in the attached survey.

- *For both Ramsey and Michigan, replacing one section including questions specific to job search assistance activities with questions about the goal-setting approaches.* To better understand how these goal-setting approaches have been implemented, we request permission to replace the questions from Section B (Types of Job Search Assistance Services Provided) of the OMB-approved survey, which are currently specific to the provision of job search assistance activities, with questions about the use of specific goal-setting tools and approaches used with TANF applicants and recipients. These revised questions are similar in scope and take the same amount of time to complete as the original questions, and thus the burden estimate for the survey in Michigan does not change.
- *For Ramsey County only, reducing the number of questions to focus primarily on use of the goal setting approach.* This includes cutting back Organizational and Staff background (Section A) and Staff Responsibilities (Section C) and eliminating Barriers to Employment (Section D); Program Participation and Nonparticipation (Section E); TANF Program and Organizational Performance (Section F); and Staff Demographics (Section G). Eliminating these questions will reduce the length of the survey and consequently will reduce the burden on staff completing the survey

With these changes, the JSA Evaluation will be able to provide important information to ACF and the broader policy and program community on the practices used by staff in implementing a goal-oriented approach to moving TANF recipients to work. Please let us know if you need additional information.