

1402 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1402.05 SCREENING

EFF: 10/2008

Anyone may request information about the agency's assistance programs either by telephone, by mail, or in person. Authorized agency staff must furnish information to the inquiring person in accordance with the instructions in Sections 1402.05.05 through 1402.05.15. A request for information may be followed by an application for cash or another form of assistance.

All application packets offered to the public must include officially approved documents including application forms, informational fact sheets, program requirements and participant rights and responsibilities.

When a person expresses interest in programs that can be applied for entirely through the mail, such as Child Care Assistance and Rite Care, a complete mail-in application packet will be provided either directly or will be mailed immediately upon request.

When a person expresses a desire to apply for assistance from programs requiring a face-to-face interview, a face-to-face screening interview is conducted at the earliest possible time.

The purpose of the formal application procedure ensures an individual's right to apply without delay for assistance. It affords the person an opportunity to state her/his needs and to learn what the agency can do to help meet them. It also affords the agency an opportunity to apprise the person of her/his responsibilities in relation to the agency, both as an applicant and, if eligibility is established, as a recipient.

An applicant may be assisted in the application process, including completion of the DHS-2, by one or more individuals of his/her choice and, when accompanied by such individual(s), may be represented by him/her/them. However, the agency requires a face-to-face interview with the applicant during the application process.

1402.05.05 Screening Interview

EFF: 10/2008

When a request for information about assistance is received in the district office and the inquiring person expresses a desire to apply for assistance, a face-to-face screening interview is arranged.

The screening interview is one of the ways that an applicant can begin the application process for Food Stamps, RI Works Cash Assistance, General Public Assistance and other programs, as appropriate. This interview is offered to applicants as a service to assist them in their choice of programs and services for which they may be eligible.

The screening interview begins the processing of the application. The screening caseworker elicits the presenting problem(s) and the salient facts of the applicant's situation which prompted the applicant to seek the agency's assistance.

The screening caseworker determines whether any crisis exists and works with the applicant to resolve it by utilizing suitable DHS and community resources.

During this initial contact, the Domestic Violence Notice (Form WVR-1) is presented to each applicant. Every applicant must be informed that s/he may be excused from certain RI Works requirements under the Family Violence Option if meeting these requirements puts the applicant or her or his children at risk due to domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Notice form should be signed by the applicant acknowledging that s/he understands the contents of the notice. After signing the notice form, a copy is given to the applicant.

If there is disclosure of neglect, risk, or abuse to children, immediate referral must be made to DCYF as specified in Section 0118. The procedures following an applicant's claiming of the Family Violence Option or disclosure of abuse are outlined in Section 1414.10.

During this initial screening process, the DHS-1, Application for Assistance-Part I, is completed to obtain the necessary identifying information. After the DHS-1 is completed, it is dated and signed by the applicant. The DHS-1 is date-stamped to establish the official date of receipt.

If the applicant wishes to apply for the Food Stamp program the DHS-1 is screened for Food Stamp expedited service. If the information offered on the DHS-1 indicates the applicant may be eligible for expedited service, the DHS-2 Statement of Need itself must be completed in full. If eligibility exists, expedited service must be afforded according to the processing standards located in Food Stamp Manual Section 1016.10.

A client applying for cash assistance should also be given the FIP-Supplemental Child Care Assistance (CCAP) application form at screening, as work activities will generally be required promptly; child care assistance eligibility should be determined simultaneously with determining cash assistance eligibility, both as expediently as possible. This CCAP application form should be completed during the initial screening process and the application date should be entered into the system during the interview, in conjunction with requesting in the system that a pending letter be issued that day, as well. The client should be provided with community resources such as the contact information for Options for Working Parents to facilitate obtaining child care. The client must be told that child care must be in place prior to the client's entering work activities which are a requirement of the RI Works Program.

If the applicant is unfamiliar with the DHS-1 and DHS-2, or with the FIP-Supplemental Child Care Application, or is likely to require guidance in their completion, the screening caseworker shows the applicant how to complete them and indicates what documentation must be furnished. At the same time, the applicant is advised that, if

eligibility is found to exist, financial assistance may begin from the date the prepared and signed DHS-1 is date-stamped in the DHS district office.

When an applicant expresses a desire to apply for the RI Works cash assistance program the screening case worker must inform the applicant that:

- o RI Works is time-limited and that assistance units can receive cash assistance under RI Works for up to twenty four (24) months in any sixty (60) months with a lifetime total of forty eight (48) months. Children may receive cash assistance only while their parents receive cash assistance, unless the parent(s) receive(s) SSI or the child is in a loco parentis caretaker household and the non-parent caretaker is not in the payment. Children in SSI or loco parentis households may receive cash assistance until age 18 or until age 19 under certain circumstances as described in section 1406.10; and
- o As a part of the application process and a condition of RI Works eligibility the applicant must meet with a RI Works eligibility technician to determine financial eligibility; and
- o The RI Works Program has immediate work requirements, and these must be explained.

If the applicant decides to apply for the RI Works Program, the applicant is given either a prompt intake appointment or, if indicated, an emergency intake appointment.

Prompt Appointment

All applicants must be scheduled and such appointment interviews must be conducted within five (5) working days of the screening interview. For example, if an applicant is screened on a Monday, the intake interview must be scheduled as soon as possible but no later than the following Monday.

Emergency Appointments

If an applicant indicates that s/he (1) has no available income or resources, and (2) during the current calendar month of application has not had and/or will not have income or resources in excess of the monthly RI Works Standard of Assistance for the appropriate family size, the intake appointment must be scheduled within one (1) working day of the screening interview. If the applicant is unable to keep an appointment the following day, the intake appointment is scheduled for the earliest available time acceptable to the applicant.

For the purposes of determining an "emergency appointment", the screening case worker considers the family's income and resources including all of the applicant's income and resources and the income and resources of those persons for whom s/he is applying which would be counted in determining eligibility for cash assistance. Deemed income must also be included. Income and resources do not include the income and resources of non-legally-liable relatives and friends. Income

which is anticipated in the month of application is counted only if it is reasonably expected to be received, for example, the next regular paycheck or receipt of a government benefit. If it is doubtful that income will be received in the month of application, it should not be considered for the purpose of scheduling an intake appointment.

An applicant who has been scheduled for a prompt intake appointment may have a change in circumstances which makes her/him eligible for an emergency intake appointment; s/he may request to be rescheduled as an emergency intake. The screening caseworker reschedules the appointment for the next business day.

Assessment and Planning

The screening caseworker will conduct an initial preliminary assessment, taking into account: a) the physical capacity, skills, education, work experience, health, safety, family responsibilities and place of residence of the individual; and b) the child care and supportive services required by the applicant to avail himself or herself of employment opportunities and/or work readiness programs. Unless exempt, and on the basis of such assessment, the Department in consultation with the applicant shall develop an individual employment plan for the family. The individual employment plan shall identify employment objectives, work activity(ies) and supportive services to be provided by the Department, taking into consideration factors identified from the assessment as listed above.

The participant shall attend and participate immediately in intensive employment services as the first step of the individual employment plan at the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), unless temporarily or permanently exempt from this requirement, as follows:

- ❖ Participants under age twenty (20) without a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED) shall be referred to special teen parent programs which will provide intensive services designed to assist the participant to complete his/her diploma or GED, and to continue approved work plan activities in accord with Section 1414.05. A minor parent without a high school diploma or the equivalent, who is not married, may claim an exemption of up to twelve weeks from the date of birth of the child.
- ❖ Single-parent household participants who are exempt by TANF guidelines, as a) caring for a child under one in the household (for adults, for a maximum of twelve months during the forty eight (48) months of eligibility for cash assistance), b) caring for a significantly incapacitated family member who resides in the household and requires full time care, c) an SSI recipient, or d) claiming the domestic violence waiver.
- ❖ Two-parent household participants who are exempt by a) both parents receiving SSI, or b) one parent receives SSI and the other parent is caring for a significantly incapacitated family member who resides in the household and requires full time care.
- ❖ A recipient/participant temporarily exempted from the work requirements may engage in an employment plan activity on a

voluntary basis; however, the voluntary participation subjects the participant to the same program compliance requirements as a participant who is not eligible for any exemption.

If the applicant indicates a medical reason for not being able to participate in work readiness activities or work, the screening caseworker gives the applicant a Medical Evaluation for Employment Form C1(b), to be completed by a medical professional. The applicant is still referred to the DLT for intensive employment services and instructed to return the C1(b) to the assigned Department caseworker within thirty (30) days, when it is completed by his/her medical professional. The assigned caseworker may then refer the participant to the Office of Rehabilitation Services for further assessment and assistance and in applying for SSI, based upon the information provided in the C1(b). The assigned caseworker and the applicant will revise the employment plan, as necessary, to reflect the rehabilitation plan activities that will be undertaken by the applicant.

1402.05.10 Data Entry Requirements During Screening

EFF: 10/2008

Using the DHS-1, the screening caseworker inquires through the Person Search (PERS) function of INRHODES to find whether household members are known to INRHODES. If any member is known to INRHODES her/his program status and person information is displayed. If the individual is not known to INRHODES, or is closed, the Application (APPL) must be entered in INRHODES.

As part of the entry of the Application (APPL), the screening caseworker will enter the application date for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and will issue the pending letter at the same time, to allow the applicant to begin seeking appropriate child care as a support for the mandatory RI Works program requirements.

1402.10 COMPLETION OF THE APPLICATION FOR ASSISTANCE

EFF: 10/2008

The Statement of Need (DHS-2) is the basic document used in the application process through which eligibility or ineligibility for assistance is determined. The DHS-1 and the DHS-2, along with appropriate supplementary forms such as the DHS 2 Supplement RIW-20, Cash Assistance Received in Other States, constitute the complete application for assistance. Families eligible for the RI Works Program may also be eligible for Medical Assistance without filing a separate application. The application also serves as the Food Stamp application.

The DHS-2 must be completed and signed under penalty of perjury by the parent or both parents or the caretaker relative (acting in loco parentis) responsible for the support and care of the child(ren) under eighteen (18), or between eighteen (18) and nineteen (19) if enrolled full-time in and expected to complete secondary school prior to the nineteenth birthday. At the close of the interview and upon completion

of the DHS-2, the form must be dated and signed by the applicant(s) and the signature(s) witnessed by the agency representative in the signature box on the last page.

A new screening and new DHS-2 must be completed and signed if any reapplication for assistance is made in a case that has been closed. Further, a new DHS-2 including all pertinent information for a second parent who joins the household, must be completed, reviewed with the ET, and signed by both parents. In an active case when a newborn is added to the assistance unit, a new DHS-2 need not be completed. However, the record must reflect through a CLOG entry and documentation of the birth date, application for Social Security number, and absent parent information, for inclusion of the new member in the request for assistance.

In the case of a one parent household that requests that a second parent be added to the case, both parents must have an assessment appointment at the earliest possible date to assure that each parent has a completed and signed Employment Plan and that one parent in the two parent household is meeting the work requirements of a two parent household.

An applicant who has requested CCAP as a supportive service in order to comply with RI Works program requirements must also be given a FIP Supplemental Child Care Assistance Program application, to be completed and returned at the time of the Intake Interview.

1402.15 INTAKE INTERVIEW

EFF: 10/2008

The Intake interview is scheduled by appointment. The DHS-2 is reviewed with the applicant, and the eligibility and need factors are verified through the appropriate documents supplied by the applicant. If the applicant cannot obtain the documents, DHS staff will assist in obtaining the document or information. The applicant(s) is required to read, or have read to him/her, the statements in the Rights and Responsibilities page and the Declaration of Applicant/Recipient pages of the DHS-2, and sign the form in the signature block. In addition the DHS 2 Supplement RIW-20, Cash Assistance Received in Other States must be completed and signed. The agency representative must witness the signature of the applicant(s).

The applicant is advised that if they received family cash assistance in another state that those months of receipt will be counted as part of the RI Works cash assistance time limits in Rhode Island.

The applicant is advised that pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws, Section 40-6-9, and without signing any document other than the DHS-2 Statement of Need, he or she has assigned any and all rights that he or she may have for and on behalf of himself or herself and for and on behalf of a child or children to the Department of Human Services against any parent failing to provide for support and maintenance of any minor child(ren) for whom assistance is paid by DHS. Additionally, DHS through the Office of Child Support Services is authorized to act

to institute suit to establish paternity and/or to collect support for said child(ren) who receives or received assistance from DHS.

The eligibility technician reviews the AP-35, the Notice of Requirement to Cooperate and the Right to Claim Good Cause for Refusal to Cooperate in Child Support Enforcement, with each applicant with children whose parent(s) is not in the home and obtains the applicant's signature. The Information on the Family Violence Option sheet (Form WVR-1a) is reviewed with the applicant. If the applicant relates that s/he wishes to claim the option or discloses abuse, the procedures the eligibility technician must follow are outlined in Section 1414.10.

The applicant is further advised that s/he must present the agency with personal identification, such as a driver's license, Social Security Number, birth certificate, or other form of identification, as detailed in section 0304.05.10.05.

Items on the DHS-2 are indicated as verified by the agency representative entering in red ink a verification mark "V" beside the item in the verification area of the DHS-2. The documentary source for each factor of eligibility and need is noted in the verification area.

If any potential resource exists, or further verification is needed, the applicant is advised of the necessary steps s/he or the staff member must take to obtain the information. S/He is advised that the agency uses, but is not limited to, on an ongoing basis, public records, other State agency files, such as State Employee records, Employment Security Benefits (ESB) records, TDI records, State Income Tax records, Social Security Administration records, IRS records, and bank clearances to document the applicant's information.

However, the applicant is advised that s/he is responsible also to inform the agency of any changes in her/his situation such as change of address, income, resources, family composition, or other factors that affect her/his eligibility and/or payment level within ten (10) days, or as otherwise directed.

If the application for cash assistance is necessary by reason of accident, injury, or illness for which a third party may be liable, such applicant is informed that s/he has assigned any or all rights for amounts recoverable from a third party equal to the amount of financial and medical assistance provided as a result of accident, injury, or illness (see Section 1408.20).

All applicants are informed of the requirement of assignment and of their further responsibility to report a pending settlement which may occur during the receipt of assistance.

If such assignment is appropriate, the applicant is advised that eligibility to receive medical services shall continue to exist, although payment of medical bills shall be suspended by the Department and is not the responsibility of such applicant pending the settlement.

If outstanding verification exists and collateral sources of information must be used to obtain such documentation, the applicant is informed of why the information is necessary and how it will be used by the agency. If the applicant is unwilling to obtain further

verification, or have the agency obtain it, the applicant may choose to have the application rejected.

If the applicant decides s/he does not want assistance and does not complete the DHS-2, the applicant is requested to sign the area on the DHS-1 confirming her/his withdrawal of the application.

1402.15.05 Forms Needed at Intake Interview

EFF: 10/2008

The forms and materials that may be needed at the Intake Interview are:

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| DHS-2 | Statement of Need - should be completed Prior to the interview if possible with the exception of the signature on the last page |
| RIW-20 | RIW-Supplement to DHS-2 (Counting time in Other Sates) |
| RIW-21 | Request for Information on Months on Cash Assistance |
| AP-35 | Notice Concerning Good Cause for Refusal to Cooperate - the applicant must sign the form when a child's parent(s) is absent. The original is filed in the case record and a copy given to the applicant. |
| WVR-1 | Domestic Violence Notice |
| MARC-5 | Supplement for Citizenship and Identity |

Verification

1402.15.10 Review of the DHS-2

EFF: 10/2008

The agency representative reviews the DHS-2 and supplements for completeness, helping the applicant, as needed, to rectify any omissions.

Additions or changes are made, in red ink, by the agency representative, and the date and initials of both the applicant and the agency representative are entered on the page to denote authorization of the change.

Eligibility for cash assistance is based on both financial and non-financial criteria. In determining eligibility, the DHS-2 is reviewed and evaluated as described in Section 1402.20. In addition the applicant must be assessed for education and employment history and must complete an individual employment plan before eligibility can be established.

1402.20 COMPLETING INITIAL ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

EFF: 10/2008

All items on the DHS-2 which were not verified at intake must be verified in the following contact through a source document in accordance with policies relating to resources (Section 1422) and income (Section 1424).

The eligibility technician gives the applicant the opportunity to clear up any inconsistencies or to provide any additional information needed to clarify or complete the information on the DHS-2 by whichever is the most appropriate method: telephone, mail, or an office or field interview. If the applicant is unable, either alone or with the help of the eligibility technician, to clear up any inconsistencies or to provide any additional information needed, the eligibility technician advises the applicant that it will be necessary to use collateral sources of information. If other sources must be used to obtain such documentation, the applicant is informed of why the information is necessary and how it will be used by the agency and plans with the applicant how this is to be done.

Under certain circumstances, the eligibility technician must refer the case to the Front End-Detection (FRED) Unit for investigation before the determination of eligibility can be made. See Section 0112.10.05 for policy and procedures.

During the intake interview, the applicant's rights and responsibilities, as outlined in the DHS-2 are reviewed with her/him.

When the eligibility technician receives the Findings portion of Form WVR-2 from the Domestic Violence Advocate, s/he acts on the recommendation(s) in accordance with Section 1414.10, as appropriate.

Prior to authorizing eligibility for cash benefits the eligibility technician must also verify that the applicant, unless exempt, has entered into an Individual Employment Plan.

The applicant's failure to enter into and comply with an Employment Plan, without good cause, at any point during the thirty (30) day period during which the applicant establishes eligibility for cash, will result in an immediate denial of the application for cash assistance.

The determination of eligibility and authorization of payment are completed as soon as possible.

1402.30 DECISION ON APPLICATION

EFF: 10/2008

Applications are acted upon promptly. A decision on eligibility and payment or ineligibility must be made within thirty (30) days from the filing date. This standard is not used as a waiting period before granting assistance nor as a basis for denial of an application. The

applicant must be informed of the reason for any delay in a decision and her/his right to a hearing if the delay exceeds thirty (30) days.

1402.30.05 Notification of (In)Eligibility

EFF: 10/2008

When the applicant is found to be ineligible, or makes the decision after signing the application that s/he does not want assistance, the applicant is notified of the denial and the reasons for denial through INRHODES. This notice informs the applicant at the same time of her/his right to appeal the decision, and the method by which the applicant can request a hearing.

When the applicant is found to be eligible for RI Works cash assistance, the acceptance date is the date that all factors of eligibility are met. However, it may be as early as the date the application was filed, if the applicant was eligible then, but cannot be prior to the date of application. If a monthly deficit exists for the month in which the application was filed, the initial payment is pro-rated according to the number of days of eligibility from the date of application (see Section 1426.10).

INRHODES issues a notice notifying the applicant of her/his eligibility.

If the family's monthly deficit is less than ten dollars (\$10) per month, the case is considered eligible for the RI Works program but no payment is issued (see Section 1426.10).

The agency representative enters all actions taken in the Case Log (CLOG).

1402.35 REFERRAL TO DCYF

EFF: 10/2008

Whenever there is reason to believe that the home in which the relative or child(ren) applying for or receiving assistance from the RI Works program reside is unsuitable because of neglect or abuse, referral procedures must be followed as outlined in the DHS Manual General Provisions Section 0118.