

6.1 Overview

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6.1.1 What is resolving issues?

Resolving issues begins with identifying issues-barriers that can interfere with a person's ability to look for work or work or participate in other WorkFirst activities. When issues are identified, we can provide necessary supports to help the parentparticipant engage in activities that lead to employment.

Many participants need to resolve some issues to succeed in WorkFirst. People come to us without basic supports or perhaps, not much experience in being a working parentparticipant. Although, we may not even think of authorizing child care or making a family planning referral as "resolving issues" -- it is.

Many participants come to us with more serious concerns that take longer to resolve, like disabilities or family violence. It is important to start working through these problems as quickly as possible - and add other activities as soon as individualsparticipants are able - so they can start building on their strengths while eliminating some negatives.

Last, some individualsparticipants face issues so severe, that it is unlikely they are able to enter the job market. WorkFirst Social Service Specialists (WFSSSs) may need to work intensively with these individualsparticipants, perhaps helping them apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

6.1.2 When do we resolve issues?

We look for issues that may need to be resolved at:

- Application
- Comprehensive evaluation
- Eligibility review
- Assessment
- Anytime upon the parentparticipant's request.

If issues are identified when a participant starts working or engaging in WorkFirst activities, you should work with the individual to resolve these issues.

As shown in the chart below, the level of intervention required to work with issues varies, depending on the type of problem the person faces.

Issue	Likely intervention
Lacks basic supports	<p>Likely a shorter-term intervention by the WorkFirst Program Specialist (WFPS) or WorkFirst Social Service Specialist (WFSSS) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer for medical/dental care. • Provide child care (WFSSS may help find suitable child care). • Provide AREN to find or keep housing or refer for emergency housing. • Explore transportation options and provide support services to pay for it.
Lacks expert advice	<p>Likely a shorter-term intervention by the WFSSS (that can be combined with looking for work or work) to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prenatal care. • Family planning. • Parenting classes. • Child health/nutrition advice. • Legal advice.
Family & health concerns	<p>Likely requires a longer-term WFSSS intervention. These situations may need to be stabilized before adding other activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for a child (or adult) with special needs. • Family violence. • Substantial physical/mental/learning disabilities. • Substance abuse/chemical dependency.

6.1.3 What are the principles for resolving issues?

There are some common themes you see whenever we talk about resolving issues.

Overall principles for resolving issues

Identify and begin to resolve issues as soon as possible to give the parent participant any additional supports they need to succeed.

The purpose of issue resolution is to help the parent participant find ways to participate in WorkFirst activities while also assuring the family's medical and other needs are addressed. Employment remains a major focus with self-sufficiency/economic stability as the ultimate goal.

Temporary deferments may be necessary and appropriate in some situations. Most parentparticipants, however, want to work and may see work as very therapeutic in helping them cope with other concerns.

Finding creative ways for the parentparticipant to participate without a temporary deferment is usually the best option. It is often possible to accommodate a family's special needs while at the same time supporting the parentparticipant's employment efforts.

Resolving issues, while encouraging employment can help us increase cash assistance exits, reduce WorkFirst returns, and keep caseloads down.

6.1.4 What is the role of the WorkFirst Program Specialist?

The WFPS is a central player in identifying issues and collaborates with the WFSSS and other service providers to:

- Determine needs
- Obtain resources
- Complete comprehensive evaluations
- Develop the IRP with the parentparticipant's input and consideration of other relevant information-
- Ensure the participanterson has adequate child care and transportation and coordinates other services as necessary

6.1.5 What is the role of the WorkFirst Social Service Specialist?

The WFSSS plays a key role in providing screening, assessment, referral services, and has valuable expertise in intensive case management. The WFSSS coordinates services with WorkFirst partners and other service providers as needed. WFSSSs assist in helping participants (such as parenting minors, teen head of households, pregnant, hard to engage, sanctioned, and disabled/incapacitated individualsparticipants) resolve issues, including:

- Mental, physical, and learning disabilities
- Caring for a child with special needs
- Alcohol or substance abuse/chemical dependency
- Family violence
- Homelessness
- Family planning
- Parental Education or support
- Pregnancy to Employment
- Child Protective Services

Upon referral the WFSSS:

- Completes assessment using the Pathway Development Tool (see WFHB 3.2.3)^[KMG1]
- Provides intervention and support to help the participant address issues that may interfere with their ability to complete the comprehensive evaluation or impede movement toward economic ~~self-sufficiency~~economic stability
- Develops a plan for issues identified and make appropriate referrals to specialized services to help resolve these issues
- Helps the participant resolve issues identified by WorkFirst partners and other service providers
- Stacks services, if appropriate, to help participants engage in activities that leads to employment
- Attends case staffings
- Provides specific, intensive, and time-limited services to participants at risk of losing benefits or services
- Provides follow-up services, as needed, to keep the person engaged

Resources

Related WorkFirst Handbook Sections

- [3.2.1 Comprehensive evaluation](#)
- [3.2.2 Personal Pathway](#)
- [3.2.3 Pathway Development Tool](#)
- [3.3.1 IRP](#)
- [2.1 Supports for WorkFirst Participants](#)

Forms & Other Resources

- [Customer-Driven Severity Scale – only accessible to CSD staff](#)
- [Personal Pathway \(DSHS 11-154\)](#)