

Draft Summary Report of the Fourth Quarter 2011 Advisory Group Meeting Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS)

Convened by conference call on December 1, 2011 (2:00 p.m. EST), from the Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC

Meeting Highlights:

Welcome and Adoption of Summary Report

- Karen A. Staha, Chief of the Division of Strategic Planning and Performance for ETA's Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR), led the Advisory Group meeting.
- The Draft Summary Report of the Third Quarter meeting was adopted.

WRIS2 Opt-in Agreements and Implementation Plan

- Twelve states have submitted an opt-in signed WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreements, and three additional states indicated intent to opt-in by December 30, 2011.
- A conference call, or WebEx, focused on WRIS2 implementation and technical issues will be scheduled in December.
- Pennsylvania suggested a list of states that cannot participate in WRIS2 due to statutory constraints.

Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grants

- Kate Louton, OPDR, has received several questions related to the use of WRIS and WRIS2 in conjunction with Workforce Data Quality Initiative grants (WDQI).
- The amended FERPA regulations have been released and are posted at:
<http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/12/02/2011-30683/family-educational-rights-and-privacy>

WRIS Training WebExs

- States interested in scheduling WRIS training for their state's staff were asked to contact WRIS@dol.gov. ETA can tailor training to a state's specific needs.
- An annual Confidentiality Compliance and Incident Response WebEx is tentatively planned for late January 2012 and a winter Town Hall is scheduled for February 2012.

Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

- Second quarter 2011 DDBI data is currently available online; Third quarter 2011 DDBI data will be available January 9, 2012.
- To allow adequate processing time, PACIAs and SUIAs are encouraged to increase their "need-by" reporting date to at least six business days.
- Submittal of large files is requested to take place on different days, especially if the files are sent during high-volume weeks.

Additional Business

- March 8, 2012 was proposed for the First Quarter 2012 Advisory Group Meeting.
- A representative from the U.S. Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center will be invited to discuss the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- The deadline for submitting WRIS2 Agreements has been extended to December 30, 2011, at the request of several states.

Draft Summary Report of the WRIS Advisory Group Fourth Quarter 2011 Meeting

The Fourth Quarter 2011 meeting of the Advisory Group of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) was convened by conference call on December 1, 2011 (2:00 p.m. EST) from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.

I. Welcome and Remarks

Karen A. Staha, Chief of the Division of Strategic Planning and Performance for ETA's Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR), welcomed the WRIS Advisory Group to the Fourth Quarter 2011 conference call meeting and briefly discussed the agenda. In the interest of conserving time for discussion, Ms. Staha asked the Advisory Group representatives to confirm their participation through a subsequent e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov, rather than having a state roll call.

Ms. Staha announced that the voluntary, opt-in WRIS2 initiative is nearing the implementation phase. To date, 12 states have signed the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement to participate in the expanded data sharing opportunity. Ms. Staha noted the value of clusters of states that border each other deciding to opt-in to WRIS2, and confirmed that the deadline for submission of the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement has been extended to December 30, 2011, at the request of several states. Although any state's signed Agreement will be accepted after December 30, it may be more difficult to include the state in the initial test pilot group, although every effort will be made.

Ms. Staha indicated that ETA recently has had positive discussions with states that hold Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) from the Department of Labor or Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grants from the Department of Education. Several states with these grants showed interest in the WRIS and WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreements and asked thought-provoking questions regarding access and use of the data.

II. Adoption of Summary Report for Third Quarter 2011 Meeting

Ms. Staha briefly reviewed the Draft Summary Report of the Third Quarter Advisory Group conference call meeting on September 22, 2011. The Summary Report had been distributed to the Advisory Group on October 3, 2011 for review. Jo Doyal (Alabama) made the motion to approve the Draft Summary Report, and Eliza Arentz (Pennsylvania) seconded. The Third Quarter 2011 Summary Report was adopted without objection.

III. WRIS2 Opt-in Agreements and Implementation Plan

Kate Louton, OPDR, and John Glen, Chairman of the WRIS2 Work Group, provided an update on the status of the voluntary, opt-in WRIS2 Agreements and the implementation plan. In addition to the 12 states that had submitted Data Sharing Agreements by December 1, three additional states had indicated intent to opt-in by December 30, 2011. Ms. Louton indicated that an Advisory Group conference call, or WebEx, would be held to review WRIS2 technical issues and the implementation plan. States that are considering participation in WRIS2, as well as the states that have signed the Agreement, are invited to attend and raise questions. Eliza Arentz (Pennsylvania) noted that Pennsylvania had now signed the WRIS2 Agreement. In response to Ms. Arentz's question regarding development of list of states that cannot participate in WRIS2 due to statutory constraints, Ms. Staha requested that Advisory Group members send an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov if they are aware of specific prohibitions within their own state's statutes related to unemployment insurance information. John Glen reminded the Advisory Group that a state may e-mail a PDF file of its WRIS2 Agreement and then send a signed, original copy by mail. He expressed his appreciation for the continuing work by the members of the WRIS2 Work Group: Clinton Flowers, Adam Leonard, Rick Little and Stephen Maas; and, invited states to continue to raise WRIS2 implementation issues through: WRIS@dol.gov.

Ms. Staha indicated there is significant interest in seeing how WRIS2 will function as stakeholders are recognizing the value of using administrative records to verify performance outcomes. Ms. Staha explained that with the increasing demand for federal funds, the emphasis on accountability continues to broaden. The use of wage records expedites the verification of performance, and WRIS2 will provide a systematic approach to sharing the information. Ms. Staha reminded the group that WRIS2 is a learning pilot, and that emerging issues will be addressed on an on-going basis.

IV. Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grants

Ms. Louton reported receiving several questions related to the use of WRIS and WRIS2 in conjunction with Workforce Data Quality Initiative grants (WDQI), specifically regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Ms. Louton advised that, immediately prior to the Advisory Group meeting, the U.S. Department of Education had released the amended FERPA regulations, to be effective on January 3, 2012. The regulations may be found at the following links:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-12-02/pdf/2011-30683.pdf>

and

<http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/12/02/2011-30683/family-educational-rights-and-privacy>.

Ms. Louton encouraged the group to review the final FERPA regulations to determine how they may be helpful to individual states.

V. WRIS Training

Ms. Staha provided a summary of recent WRIS training events. Fifty-one staff members from thirty-seven states participated in the autumn Town Hall, and a winter Town Hall will be held in February. At the request of the Wyoming PACIA, a November Confidentiality Compliance training module was presented for Wyoming staff members, who were joined by staff from nine additional states. A similar training had been offered in June 2011 to staff members in Maine, in response to its request. In late January 2012, Confidentiality Compliance training for all states will again be offered. At the request of several Advisory Group members, a December WRIS2 technical discussion will be held. Ms. Staha suggested that states interested in scheduling a specific training, or orientation, for their staff inform ETA through an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov. ETA can adjust the offered training to meet specific state needs.

VI. Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

Martha Stephens of ACS, the WRIS operations contractor, discussed the quarterly Technical Operations Review, e-mailed to the Advisory Group in advance of the meeting. Ms. Stephens provided an overview of the state participants, noting that 49 states and the District of Columbia submitted data for the Distributed Data Base Index (DDBI) in the Third Quarter. Hawaii continues to test its SUIA programming and hopes to participate in the next DDBI cycle. Although Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are not currently participating in the DDBI, both are eligible for WRIS membership. Ms. Stephens reported that the Second Quarter 2011 DDBI data is now available online, and the Third Quarter 2011 DDBI data will be available January 9, 2012. The 2012 DDBI schedule was included on page six of the Operations Review.

Ms. Stephens encouraged PACIAs to increase their “need-by” reporting date to at least six business days to allow adequate processing time. Ms. Stephens also requested that submittal of large files take place on different days, especially if the files are sent during high-volume weeks. Clinton Flowers (Missouri) raised the question if it is permitted to send zip files rather than multiple files. Ms. Stephens subsequently confirmed by e-mail that zip files were acceptable as a text file (.TXT); and, the instructions are now included in the “WRIS User Guide” posted on the WRIS Operator’s PACIA Web site.

VII. Additional Business

Ms. Staha proposed March 8, 2012, for the First Quarter Advisory Group meeting. A representative from the Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) will be invited participate in the meeting to discuss issues related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Ms. Staha reminded the group the deadline for submitting WRIS2 Agreements has been extended to December 30, 2011, at the request of states.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Staha thanked Advisory Group members for their participation in the Fourth Quarter 2011 meeting and invited them to e-mail any follow-up questions to WRIS@dol.gov. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m. EST.