

Summary Report of the Conference Call of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) Advisory Group

Second Quarter 2010 Conference Call: June 23, 2010

Convened June 23, 2010, from Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC

Meeting Highlights

Welcome and Adoption of Summary Report

- Karen Staha, Director, Division of System Accomplishments, Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR), convened the meeting and provided an overview of the agenda. She reviewed the draft Summary Report of the First Quarter Conference Call on March 25, 2010, which was adopted unanimously.

Third Round Amendments

- During the 30-day comment period, no adverse comments on amendment proposals 10 -13 were received. A comment received on amendment proposal 14 was withdrawn subsequently by the state that had submitted the comment. Amendment proposals for 10-14 will be issued for signatures by the state parties in mid-July.
- During the 30-day comment period conference call on April 28, states raised concerns with the language of amendment proposal 15. ETA revised the language and reissued amendment proposal 15 for a comment period that will close on July 14, 2010.

WRIS 2 – Draft Operations Protocols

- John Glen (Oregon), chairman of the Advisory Group's WRIS 2 Working Group, presented the "Protocol Proposal for WRIS 2 Data Sharing Discussion Draft," e-mailed to the Advisory Group in advance of the meeting.
- WRIS 2 is a voluntary initiative for participating states to share aggregate data and reports with designated third party entities that are public agencies. A separate WRIS 2 Data Sharing Agreement, that must be fully executed by each state wishing to participate, will govern WRIS 2. The WRIS Operator will create and maintain a separate WRIS 2 portal for the exchange.

Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

- The WRIS Operator's technical report discussed data quality, the operation of the WRIS system, processing schedules, and security.
- During the discussion on data quality, Ms. Staha recommended holding a future conference call to address concerns about wage record data quality. ETA will continue to work with states that are concerned they have received inaccurate WRIS data from other WRIS states.

WRIS Confidentiality Compliance Training and Town Halls

- A Confidentiality Compliance Review Webinar is scheduled for August 12, 2010. PACIA, SUIA, and State Information Technology Town Hall Meetings are planned for September 2010.

Additional Business

- The Third Quarter Advisory Group quarterly conference call will be held in September.
- Seven on-site state Confidentiality Compliance Reviews will be conducted in PY 2010.

Minutes of the Conference Call

The Second Quarter 2010 Conference Call Meeting of the Advisory Group of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) was convened on Wednesday, June 23, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. EDT.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Karen Staha, Director, Division of System Accomplishments, Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR), welcomed the WRIS Advisory Group to the conference call and introduced Greg Wilson, Susan Worden, and Lois Zuckerman. Ms. Staha asked that conference call participants send an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov for the participant Roll and outlined the meeting agenda.

II. Adoption of Summary Report of March 2010 Advisory Group Meeting

Ms. Staha briefly reviewed the draft Summary Report of the Advisory Group's First Quarter Conference Call on March 25, 2010. Since there were no comments or questions, Ms. Staha asked for a motion to adopt the Summary Report. Washington moved to approve, and Georgia seconded. There were no objections; the March draft Summary Report was adopted.

III. Third Round Amendments

Greg Wilson, Team Leader, Division of System Accomplishments, discussed the current status of the proposed Third Round Amendments to the WRIS Data Sharing Agreement. Amendment proposals 10-15 were e-mailed to the Advisory Group on March 24, 2010, for the 30-day comment period. No adverse comments were received on amendment proposals 10-13 during that period. A state that had commented on amendment proposal 14 subsequently withdrew its comment. Therefore, Mr. Wilson announced that amendment proposals 10-14 will be issued for the signatures of the WRIS parties in mid-July. As specified in the Data Sharing Agreement at Section 10, the amendments will not be effective until all of the parties to the sharing agreement sign the amendments. After the state representatives sign and return the amendments to ETA, the Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training will sign and the amendments will be effective.

Comments regarding amendment proposal 15 were received during the 30-day comment period. In response to the comments, the language of amendment proposal 15 was revised, by omitting the reference to a number, to permit a state to submit a NAICS code in a format that includes only the number of digits consistent with respective state policy. The revised amendment language reads: "Wage Data" means individually identifiable information reported quarterly by employers as required by Section 1137(a)(3) of the Social Security Act including, but not limited to, employer names and employee names, SSNs, and associated wages. Wage data also includes industry sectors in which employees work, as identified by the North American Industrial Classification System (or "NAICS") codes."

The revised amendment proposal 15 was provided to Advisory Group members and State Contacts by e-mail on June 14. The 30-day comment period conference call discussion on it occurred in conjunction with the Second Quarter Advisory Group meeting on June 23, and revised amendment proposal 15 will be included in the signature package with amendments 10-14 if no adverse comments are received.

Mr. Wilson also noted that there had been an e-mail discussion regarding Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA) issues related to

amendment proposal 15. Prior to the conference call, he had e-mailed additional clarification to Advisory Group members about communications that ETA had with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and hoped that his clarification would address any continuing concerns. During the call, it was noted that BLS Commissioner's Order 1-06 provided additional authority to relieve state concerns about providing NAICS codes in this context. In response to issues raised, Mr. Wilson confirmed that the disposition discussion on CIPSEA is not part of the amendment itself and will not be included to the Data Sharing Agreement.

IV. WRIS 2 – Draft Operations Protocols

John Glen (Oregon), chairman of the WRIS 2 Working Group, outlined the “Protocol Proposal for WRIS 2 Data Sharing Discussion Draft,” previously e-mailed to the Advisory Group; and, requested that additional comments and suggestions be e-mailed to WRIS@dol.gov. Mr. Glen thanked Adam Leonard (Texas), Clinton Flowers (Missouri), and Rick Little (Utah) of the Working Group and Amanda Gohl of ACS for their help in the development and review of the draft. Mr. Glen indicated the Working Group would be reviewing comments received from Connecticut and Ohio during its next meeting on July 12.

Mr. Glen confirmed that participation in WRIS 2 would be entirely voluntary for the states. It is believed that the benefits of WRIS 2 will readily outweigh the marginal increases in the processing costs that are attributed to the states as a result of their participation. States will be required to sign a separate WRIS 2 Data Sharing Agreement in order to participate, and the existing PACIAs will be responsible for aggregating the wage records that will be provided to the third party entities. Only those states that have signed the WRIS 2 Data Sharing Agreement will have access to the WRIS 2 portal to upload Social Security numbers. The WRIS 2 Distributed Data Base Index (DDBI) file will be a separate index file from the WRIS DDBI file. However, all WRIS states will continue to submit only one DDBI file each quarter to the WRIS Operator. The Operator will copy the DDBI files of the states participating in WRIS 2 to create the separate WRIS 2 DDBI, minimizing the workload for states.

Ms. Zuckerman noted that WRIS 2 must pass through the clearance process in the Department of Labor and that the Department will be a party to the WRIS 2 Data Sharing Agreement. Ms. Staha noted that ETA has the documentation necessary to move WRIS 2 to the next rung on the ladder of operations.

V. Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

Amanda Gohl and Martha Stephens of ACS, the WRIS Operator contractor, discussed the quarterly technical report, previously e-mailed to Advisory Group members and State Contacts of record. Their presentation covered process revisions that PACIAs could make to minimize the impact on SUIAs and that SUIAs could make to minimize the impact on PACIA processing. The presentation also discussed data quality, the operation of the WRIS system, processing schedules, and security. The volume of WRIS requests continue to increase in the two weeks prior to, and after, the submission of the DDBI files.

During the discussion on data quality, Mr. Wilson suggested that PACIAs filter out the clearly invalid Social Security numbers before making their requests. Ms. Staha recommended holding a future conference call to address the ongoing concerns with the quality of wage record data and asked that suggestions to improve data quality be sent to WRIS@dol.gov. Gary Kamimura (Washington) asked if a formal protocol for reporting erroneous WRIS-acquired data was available. Ms. Gohl indicated that the WRIS Advisory Group (AG) does not yet have a protocol, but States notify ETA or the WRIS Operator whenever receiving problem files from another State. The WRIS Operator works with the reporting state and ETA to determine if a notification to all states would need to be issued. Mr. Wilson stated that ETA has worked with states that indicate they have received inaccurate data from a WRIS member, and ETA has notified the respective

state that its response data is being questioned. Occasionally, a system change within a state has temporarily caused erroneous data to be sent.

VI. WRIS Confidentiality Compliance Training and Town Halls

The next WRIS Confidentiality Compliance Training will be held on August 12, 2010, at 1:30 p.m. (Eastern). Webinar access information and materials will be distributed in advance. Town Hall Meetings for PACIA, SUIA, and IT staffs are planned for September, although the dates have not yet been finalized.

VII. Additional Business

Ms. Staha reminded the Advisory Group of the importance of the WRIS Confidentiality Compliance Training Webinar scheduled for August and indicated the Advisory Group's Third Quarter conference call will be held in mid-September. The Assistant Secretary has expressed interest in participating in an Advisory Group quarterly conference call, but both she and Tom Dowd, the Administrator of OPDR, could not join this meeting due to prior commitments.

Mr. Flowers volunteered his state, Missouri, for participation in a 2010 on-site Confidentiality Compliance Review. Mr. Wilson indicated ETA and its contractor, CDS2, would work with Mr. Flowers to schedule a date convenient for Missouri's staff. During 2010, on-site confidentiality reviews will be held in seven states.

VIII. Adjournment

Receiving no further responses or questions, Ms. Staha thanked members for their participation in the Second Quarter Advisory Group meeting and invited them to e-mail any follow-up questions to WRIS@dol.gov or the WRIS administration contractor address, WRIS@cds2.com.