

Draft Summary Report of the First Quarter 2012 Advisory Group Meeting Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS)

Convened by conference call on March 22, 2012 (2:00 p.m. EDT), 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 Fourth Quarter 2011 meeting was adopted
- The written comment period for proposed changes to the Labor Exchange Reporting System (LERS). If approved by OMB, the proposed changes are expected to be implemented beginning in July 2012.

FERPA Regulations: Status

- Mr. Baron Rodriguez, Director, Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), U.S. Department of Education, reviewed the amended FERPA regulations, effective January 3, 2012.
- There are no immediate or direct implications to WRIS, or WRIS2, as a result of the new regulations.
- A FERPA training session is scheduled for early April, details to be announced.
- The Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) has numerous resources available including guidance for written agreements. A data sharing checklist as well as a list of best practices will be available within the next few weeks at: www.ed.gov/fpc. Information regarding FERPA is available from the Privacy Technical Assistance Center at: www.ed.gov/ptac.

WRIS2 Implementation Plan

- Testing with the SUIAs in WRIS2 states is underway.
- Ms. Staha requested that Advisory Group members send an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov if they are aware of specific statutory disclosure prohibitions within their state related to unemployment insurance information.

Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI)

- The Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) for the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grants was issued on February 21 and closes April 19, 2012.
- Questions on the SGA should be e-mailed to Gerald Tate, Grants Management Specialist: Tate.Lonnie@dol.gov.
- The SGA is available only to states that are not current WDQI grantees.

WRIS PACIA and SUIA Training

- WRIS Town Halls are scheduled for April and July; dates will be e-mailed
- A Confidentiality Compliance Review and Incident Response WebEx will be offered in early June.
- States interested in scheduling WRIS training for their state's staff should contact WRIS@dol.gov. Training can be tailored to a state's specific needs.

Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

- Third quarter 2011 DDBI data is currently available online.
- The DDBI schedule was included in the quarterly Technical Operations Review, distributed by e-mail
- States are encouraged to increase their "need-by" reporting dates to at least six business days to allow adequate processing time and lessen the impact on SUIAs.
- PACIAs are encouraged to eliminate duplicate social security numbers in an individual file and to group social security numbers with similar reporting requirements in one submittal.

Additional Business

- June 12, 2012 (2:00 p.m. EDT) was proposed for the next First Quarter Advisory Group Meeting.

Draft Summary Report of the WRIS Advisory Group First Quarter 2012 Meeting

The First Quarter 2012 meeting of the Advisory Group of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) was convened by conference call on March 22, 2012 (2:00 p.m. EDT) 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 First Quarter 2012 conference call meeting and briefly discussed the agenda.

Ms. Staha announced that the formal written comment period had closed on March 19 for proposed changes to the Labor Exchange Reporting System (LERS) for the Wagner-Peyser Act funded public employment service activities and the Jobs for Veterans' State grants' activities. Included were the ETA 9002 reports and the Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) 200 reports. The proposed changes incorporate reporting modifications that were specified in the VOW To Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which was passed last November. A new section of the 9002 series, Part F, will collect information on the implementation of priority of service to veterans and on employment services provided to "post 9/11 era" veterans. Several comments were received related to the proposed changes to system. Ms. Staha indicated that these comments will be addressed soon, and a revised package will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance and approval. If approved, the proposed changes are expected to be implemented beginning in July 2012.

Ms. Staha also indicated she recently participated in discussions with ETA senior leadership regarding interest from community colleges in WRIS2 participation levels and functionality. Ms. Staha mentioned that although there has been some discussion of states' reluctance to participate in WRIS2, all states are known to be participating in the Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics (LED) system involving wage record information. Ms. Staha highlighted the increasing interest in the use of aggregate wage record information to help strengthen evaluations of programs and different service strategies.

II. Adoption of Summary Report for Fourth Quarter 2011 Meeting

Ms. Staha briefly reviewed the Draft Summary Report of the Fourth Quarter Advisory Group conference call meeting on December 1, 2011. The Summary Report had been distributed to the Advisory Group for comment on December 15, 2011; no revisions were received. Jo Doyal (Alabama) made the motion to approve the Draft Summary Report, and Marilyn Boyle (Massachusetts) seconded. The Fourth Quarter 2011 Summary Report was adopted unanimously.

III. FERPA Regulations: Status

Kate Louton, OPDR, introduced Baron Rodriguez, Director, Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), U.S. Department of Education. In December 2011, the Department of Education released amended regulations for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), to be effective January 3, 2012. The revisions to the FERPA regulations were made to improve access to data which will result in states having increased ability to evaluate programs, ensure resources are invested effectively, and increase accountability and transparency. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the new FERPA regulations do not have immediate, direct implications to WRIS or WRIS2. Ms. Louton indicated that a separate WebEx on FERPA is scheduled for early April; further details will be e-mailed to the Advisory Group. Mr. Rodriguez noted that the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office has made a number of resources available, including guidance for reasonable methods and written agreements. A data sharing checklist, as well as a list of best practices, will become available within the next few weeks on the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) Web site: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/index.html> or www.ed.gov/fpc. Additional information regarding FERPA is available online at www.ed.gov/ptac or <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/index.html>.

IV. WRIS2 Implementation

John Glen, chairman of the WRIS2 Work Group, and Ms. Louton, OPDR, provided a brief update on the status of WRIS2 implementation and the technical plan. The WRIS2 basically extends the WRIS model to include education programs and other programs not under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Department of Labor. Mr. Glen expressed that WRIS2 is on an opt-in basis and completely voluntary.

Mr. Glen confirmed that WRIS2 permits the PACIA to provide aggregate statistical reports and analyses to meet reporting and performance requirements of the Federal or state training and education programs designated under the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement. The operation of WRIS2 will mirror WRIS, and the individual confidential data from WRIS2 will remain with current authorized PACIAs, which serve each state as a central resource for producing employment outcomes performance measures. Mr. Glen reminded the Advisory Group that WRIS2 will have a separate secure portal for submitting wage requests. Confidential, individual, wage data received from other states will not be shared with any new entities. Designated staff from current PACIAs will receive the wage data and produce reports only with aggregate data for the Third Party Entities (TPEs) requesting out-of-state data for performance purposes. Mr. Glen and Ms. Louton reported that currently 21 PACIAs and SUIAs have signed the DSA, and testing with the SUIAs is underway.

Ms. Staha requested that Advisory Group members send an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov if they are aware of specific disclosure prohibitions related to unemployment insurance information within the statutes of their respective state. In response to a question from Howard Simmons (South Carolina) regarding publication of a list of states prohibited by statute from expanded data exchanges, Ms. Staha said the information would be used strictly for outreach purposes.

V. Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI)

Ms. Staha announced that the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) for Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grants was issued in late February. ETA plans to award approximately twelve grants of up to \$1 million. The grant application is available only to states that do not already hold a round one WDQI grant. The posted closing date for applications is April, 19, 2012. Questions regarding the WDQI solicitation should be directed to Gerald Tate, Grants Management Specialist at the Division of Federal Assistance. Ms. Staha advised that Mr. Tate's e-mail address is tate.lonnie@dol.gov; and, his telephone number is 202.693.3703. The full SGA is posted on the ETA Web site at: <http://www.doleta.gov/grants>. Currently, 13 states hold WDQI grants: Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Information regarding their grants is posted at: <http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/workforcedatagrant09.cfm>.

VI. WRIS PACIA and SUIA Training

Ms. Louton provided an overview of upcoming opportunities for WRIS training and discussions. WRIS Town Halls are planned for late April and for mid-July; the dates and times will be provided by e-mail. WRIS2 Implementation and Technical Town Halls were held in December 2011 and March 2012.

A Confidentiality Compliance Review and Incident Response WebEx will be offered again in early June for staff unable to participate in February. For the February Confidentiality Compliance WebEx, 57 staff members from 34 states logged-in. Ms. Louton suggested that states interested in scheduling a state-specific orientation or training for their staff contact ETA through an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov. ETA can adjust the offered training to meet specific state needs, particularly if a state has a high turnover rate or new staff. During 2011, orientation training was provided to newer staff members in Maine, Wyoming, and Maryland. Ms. Louton reminded the Advisory Group that if there are any staff changes within a state, Access Acknowledgement signatures must be submitted to reflect the staff changes. Additionally, Ms. Louton asked participating WRIS2 states to submit the required WRIS2 Access Acknowledgment signatures as soon as possible. The WRIS signature document is posted on ETA's WRIS Web site in the Quick Links box: <http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/wris.cfm>

VII. Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

Amanda Gohl of ACS, the WRIS operations contractor, discussed the quarterly Technical Operations Review, previously e-mailed to the Advisory Group members. Ms. Gohl noted that 49 states and the District of Columbia had submitted data for the Distributed Data Base Index (DDBI) in the Fourth Quarter. Hawaii continues to test its SUIA-IT programming and hopes to participate in the next DDBI cycle. Although Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are not current members of WRIS, both are eligible. Ms. Gohl reported that the Third Quarter 2011 DDBI data has been online since January 9, 2012, and the Fourth Quarter 2011 DDBI data will be available in April.

Ms. Gohl addressed issues regarding duplicate wage data, request and response volumes, as well as methods to reduce processing pressures on SUIAs. Ms. Gohl encouraged PACIAs to increase their “need-by” reporting date to at least six business days to allow adequate response time. Ms. Gohl also emphasized the importance of eliminating duplicate numbers in an individual file and reminded the group that numbers with similar reporting requirements should be grouped in one single submittal. In response to a request from David Walter (Washington) for additional information regarding elimination of duplicate records, Ms. Louton advised that a presentation made by New Hampshire during a 2011 Town Hall could be made available to any interested state.

VIII. Additional Business

Ms. Staha proposed June 12, 2012, for the Second Quarter Advisory Group conference call. Ms. Staha also thanked the states that have signed the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement and expressed her continuing interest in the new data sharing initiative.

IX. Adjournment

Ms. Staha thanked the Advisory Group for participating in the First Quarter 2012 conference call meeting and invited the members to e-mail any follow-up questions to WRIS@dol.gov. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m. EDT.