

# **Temporary Assistance (TA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment Plan**

January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021

## **Niagara County**

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## **Section 1- Assurances**

As a condition of the receipt of federal and State funds the Niagara County Department of Social Services submits this Temporary Assistance (TA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment Plan (Plan) to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. The Plan outlines the administration of employment services for TA and SNAP applicants and recipients for the period January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021. As Commissioner of Niagara County Department of Social Services, I hereby affirm that employment services programs will be administered in accordance with all applicable federal and State policies, laws, regulations and provisions of this Plan.

/s/ AR XX/XX/2019

Anthony Restaino, Social Services Commissioner

, Date

Amendments to this Plan:

Date Approved OTDA	Section(s) Amended

(To be completed by OTDA)

## **Section 2 Administration**

### **Section 2.1 Administrative Structure**

This agency's organizational chart is attached. It identifies the units and staff within the agency that are involved in the operation of the district's employment program.

Following is a description of the office(s) in and/or outside of the Department of Social Services that are involved in the operation of the district's employment program. The responsibilities of each office are described below.

- 1) Human Resources Building. 301 Tenth Street Niagara Falls, 14301
- 2) Lockport DSS, 20 East Avenue, Lockport. 14094

Employment Units are located at each of the above sites. The Employment Unit obtains referrals from both the Intake and Undercare Units within the Department. Employment Case Managers conduct assessments and develop Employment Plans in consultation with the participant. These plans outline the steps needed for the participant to attain self-sufficiency. Employment Case Managers assign any non-exempt participants to appropriate work activities. Exempt individuals are required to attend activities such as, counseling, physical therapy, as appropriate, designed to assist in the restoration to self-sufficiency. Activity assignments are made in consultation with the participant. Employment Case Managers handle all the exempt individuals that have Substance Abuse issues. Participation in activities is monitored to determine successful completion. The failure to participate in assigned activities results in the implementation of conciliation/non-compliance process.

NCDSS current staff size is 431

### **Section 2.2 TA and SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) Provider Agencies**

#### **Table 1 - Contracts Associated with TA and SNAP Employment Programs and Services**

Table 1 lists the local contracts or agreements with agencies to provide employment services to TA and SNAP clients. These activities and services may include, but are not limited to: employability determinations; development of assessments and employment plans; conciliation and grievance activities; provision of work activities such as job readiness training; education and job skills training; monitoring and support for compliance with treatment plans for exempt individuals with the potential for restoration to self-sufficiency; job development; job placement and retention services; and other employment related activities.

Each contract listed in Table 1 contains an assurance that the activities are not otherwise available from that provider on a non-reimbursable basis, and, if not a performance-based contract, a statement regarding use of a cost allocation methodology that satisfies Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, as well as the requirements of U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122 for nonprofit organizations, A-21 for educational institutions, or A-87 for State and local governments. Districts must maintain oversight to ensure that contractors perform in accordance with the terms, conditions, and specifications of their contracts.

Provider	Total Contract Cost (per year)	Funding Source(s) (Check all that apply)	Categories of Clients Served (Check all that apply)	Programs, Services or Activities Provided
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	
	\$0	<input type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	

**Table 2 – Other Service Providers**

Table 2 includes agencies/providers that offer services to participants and to which the district expects to refer participants but which have no direct financial agreement with the district.

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Funding Source(s) (if known)</b>	<b>Categories of Clients Served (Check all that apply)</b>	<b>Programs, Services or Activities Provided</b>
Access VR		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Training and Educational Services for disabled adults
Niagara County Mental Health		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Mental Health diagnosis and treatment
Orleans Niagara BOCES		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Educational, Job Readiness Training and Job Placement Services
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Medical Evaluations and Functional Capacity Tests to determine medical limitations. Mental Health diagnosis and treatment
OTDA Jobs Program	OTDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Supervised Job Search, Tax Credit Evaluation
Niagara County Employment and Training		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Job Search, Tutition for Training, Wage Subsidy, Youth Employment Services
ATTAIN Lab	OTDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Vocational Education and Distance Learning
Northpointe Council		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Substance Abuse Assessments for applicants and recipients
		<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Family <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	

### Section 2.3 OTDA Jobs Staff Agreement

#### OTDA Jobs Program Services – Target Groups

("X" signifies those that apply in this district)

<b>Services</b>		<b>Target Groups</b>	
Assessment/Employment Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Supervised Job Search	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FA & SNA with children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Job Readiness Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	SNA without Children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Job Club	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SNAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Job Placement Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	TANF 200%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Grant Diversion	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Job Development (employer outreach)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
WOTC pre-certifications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

#### Other Services Requested

Described below are additional services/duties which will be requested of Jobs staff (e.g. WTWCMS data entry, case conferencing, job fairs)

Job Fairs, Case Conferencing

### Section 2.4 Access to Services at New York State Career Centers

In New York State, TANF is a required WIOA partner and must coordinate access to TANF services with the comprehensive Career Centers.

a. Below is a description of how the district provides access to its programs and services with Career Center partners. Check all that apply:

- The district has employee(s) physically present at a Career Center
- The district has contract staff physically present at a Career Center
- The district makes available direct access to its program staff via phone or technology at a Career Center
- The district makes available copies of the LDSS-2921 (Common Application) at a Career Center

Other:

b. Please provide a description of how the district coordinates with Career Center partners with providing services to the district's clients, including referral and information sharing mechanisms, or other collaboration such as participation on the local WIOA Business Services Team, etc.

The Employment Case Manager refers clients to the Career Center at Assessment. Information regarding the Career Center is also provided to clients at the Exempt and Non-exempt Orientations. The Job Developer also provides employable recipients with information regarding the services available at the Career Center. The Career Center sends to the Job Developer via E-mail a monthly calendar of activities and information regarding any career fairs or recruitments for specific employers. This information is then relayed from the Job Developer to the Employment Case Managers.



## Section 3 Engagement and Work Preparation

### Section 3.1 Federal “Engaged in Work” Requirement (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2 (f))

For purposes of satisfying the federal requirement which states that parents or caretakers must be engaged in work as soon as the district determines they are ready, but no later than within 24 months of receiving federally funded assistance, district’s definition of “Engaged in Work” is:

Compliance with assessment, employment planning, all activities included in the individual’s Employment/Self-Sufficiency plan including any need to attend treatment/rehabilitation programs, or any of the work activities listed in Section 3.4. Also included is pursuit of other forms of income such as SSI and SSDI.

Include any additional information regarding the district’s local “engaged in work” requirements:

### Section 3.2 Orientation (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.5)

Check one of the following:

- The district provides orientation in accordance with 18 NYCRR Section 385.5 and no additional information is provided at orientation.
- In addition to the requirements outlined in 18 NYCRR Section 385.5 of the regulations, the district’s orientation provides the following:

Described below is the manner in which the district completes the required orientation for all applicants and recipients of TA (e.g. in a group setting, individually, or a combination of both), including the orientation procedure for exempt individuals and non-exempt individuals, if different:

Niagara County holds two distinct group orientations. One orientation is geared toward exempt individuals. The other orientation is geared toward the non-exempt population.

At the exempt orientation (held weekly on Monday in Lockport and Wednesday in Niagara Falls), individuals are informed of their responsibility to involve themselves in activities designed to restore them to self-sufficiency. Activities include physical therapy, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment and any other treatment recommendations made by their healthcare provider. The SSI/SSD process is discussed along with the individual's need to apply or appeal any denial if mandated by NCDSS to do so. Area treatment programs and available resources (i.e. legal aid assistance) are discussed at this orientation. The importance of participation in assigned treatment-related activities is stressed along with the possible consequences of failure to participate.

Niagara County's other orientation is for the non-exempt population. This orientation is held weekly on Tuesday in Lockport and Wednesday in Niagara Falls. Work supports and the use of comparison budgets demonstrate the benefits of being employed. The importance of participation in assigned work activities is discussed along with the possible consequences of non-compliance. When available a Jobs staff person attends this orientation to discuss job placement services. Also, staff from Niagara County Employment and Training office participate

in the program. The various support services available including transportation and child care services are discussed. Literature for various job training/job placement services along with information regarding supportive services are made available to individuals at every orientation (both exempt and non-exempt). At recertification, orientation information is discussed individually with the recipient. Individuals are referred to the Employment Unit for assistance with any job-related issues.

### **Section 3.3 Assessment and Employment Planning**

#### **TA Assessment**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.6 and 385.7)

Check one of the following:

a. The district conducts assessments as required by 18 NYCRR 385.6(a) and 385.7(a):

- The district enters assessments directly into WTCMS
- The district uses the LDSS 4980 (New York State Assessment) and later enters information into WTCMS.
- The district conducts assessments using a local equivalent tool, and later enters information into WTCMS. Attached is the local equivalent.
- The local equivalent does not contain additional elements other than what is required.
- The local equivalent does contain additional elements beyond what is required, listed below:

b. Describe the district procedure for the completion of an employment assessment:

All applicants and recipients in households with dependent children (regardless of exempt status) receive a staff-assisted assessment within 90 days of their eligibility for assistance. Households without dependent children receive a staff assisted assessment within a year of application. All applicants are required to complete a four-page self-assessment at their Employment Orientation. Once their case opens, they are then scheduled for a face-to-face assessment with an Employment Case Manager. At this interview, the Employment Case Manager will review the self-assessment form with the individual and complete the assessment. They will then develop with the client an Employment Plan. This plan will address the assignment of appropriate work activities and any necessary supportive services. Client preferences will be considered when the work activity assignments are made. Non-exempt individuals will also undergo TABE testing. Test results will be used to help develop the Employment Plan. Exempt individuals with medical issues will, when appropriate be required to participate in activities (counseling, physical therapy, etc.) designed to restore them to self-sufficiency. Both the assessment information and the Employment Plan are entered into WTCMS.

c. The district administrative unit or contractor responsible for conducting assessments is:

NCDSS Employment Case Manager - Employment Assessment

Orleans/Niagara BOCES - TABE

- d. The qualifications of the employees conducting the assessment are at minimum: [Refer to requirements listed in 18 NYCRR 385.6(c) and 385.7(c)]

Required: Graduation from a regionally accredited four-year college or university or one accredited by the New York State Board of Regents to grant degrees with a Bachelor's Degree in business, education, behavioral science, human services, or related field and one ( 1) year of experience in a counseling field such as employment, teaching, guidance, social services or related field, OR graduation from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the New York State Board of Regents to grant degrees with an Associate's Degree in business, education, behavioral science, human services, or related field and one ( 1) year of experience in a counseling field such as employment, teaching, guidance, social services or related field.

- e. Applicants in households **with** dependent children are required to participate in completion of an assessment:

Yes       No

- f. Applicants in households **without** dependent children are required to participate in completion of an assessment:

Yes       No

- g. **Exempt** adults in households **without** dependent children are required to participate in the completion of an assessment:

Yes       No

- h. How often and under what circumstances is the assessment updated?

The assessment is updated yearly, unless there is a change in the individual's employability status.

**Temporary Assistance Employment Plan**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.6 and 385.7)

- a. Check one of the following:

The district develops individual employment plans as required by 18 NYCRR 385.6(a) and 385.7(a):

The district enters employment plans directly into WTCMS.

The district uses the LDSS 4978 (New York State Employment Plan) and later enters information into WTCMS.

The district develops individual employment plans using a local equivalent tool and later enters information into WTCMS. Attached is the local equivalent.

The local equivalent **does not** contain additional elements other than what is required.

The local equivalent **does** contain additional elements beyond what is required, listed below:

b. Check one of the following:

The same administrative unit or contractor that conducts employment assessments also develops employment plans.

A different district administrative unit or contractor develops employment plans, and their qualifications include

c. Describe the district procedure for the completion of an individual's employment plan.

After the Employment Case Manager completes the assessment with the individual they will then address the assignment of appropriate activities and any necessary supportive services.

d. How often and under what circumstances is the employment plan updated?

The employment plan is updated yearly, unless there is a change in the individual's employability status.

**Section 3.4 Participation Rates and Work Activities (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.8 and 385.9)**

a. Describe below how the district plans to meet federal and State TA participation rate requirements. Included is the weekly hours standard participation requirement for individuals in the different case and household types, along with the typical time period it takes for nonexempt individuals to be engaged in activities for both newly opened cases and individuals who status changed from exempt to nonexempt. Information regarding engaging exempt individuals is entered in Section 6:

The typical time period it takes to engage non-exempt individuals in activities for both newly opened and individuals whose status changes from exempt to non-exempt is between two and four weeks. The development of an Employability Plan and the assignment to a work activity such as Supervised Job Search can be accomplished more quickly than can the assignment to another activity (i.e. work experience) where the assignment may involve additional factors (a suitable worksite, more extensive supportive services). The importance of the monitoring of participation rate performance along with the tracking of individuals engaged in activities cannot be overstated. The local district's Sr. Employment Case Manager makes extensive use of State provided management reports available through Cognos. Niagara County's weekly standard participation requirement varies. First and foremost, individuals are assigned to at least the minimum number of hours needed for their respective case to count in the participation rate. Individuals assigned to the Work Experience Program will usually be assigned to the maximum number of hours that the TA grant and SNAP benefits will allow (not to exceed 40 hours per week). Individuals with a child under six will be expected to participate for a minimum of 20 hours per week. They often participate for additional hours. Those engaged in literacy as part of their job readiness continue literacy in addition to their WEP assignment. BOCES administers the literacy classes

around their WEP assignments. Participants are required to share their work schedule with the literacy instructor. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis and is incorporated into the individual's employability plan. The goal for these individuals is financial self-sufficiency.

- b. Estimate the number of individuals expected to receive employment services:

	<b>Households with Dependent Children Average Monthly</b>	<b>Households without Dependent Children Average Monthly</b>
Individuals	500	500

- c. Describe below how the district uses work participation management reports available through COGNOS or other reports and activities to monitor district progress toward meeting work participation requirements and ensuring full engagement by adults in work or work preparation activities:

Niagara County relies heavily upon Cognos reports to meet work participation rate requirements. Both current and monthly reports are reviewed with staff on a regular (usually monthly) basis. Current reports that are most often used are, Not Countable Participating Cases, Non-participating Cases, and Cases in Sanction status. Monthly reports most commonly used include, TANF Engagement Reports, SN MOE Engagement Reports, TANF and SN Moe Detail Reports. The recently added "TANF and SN MOE Worker Participation/Engagement Summary Reports" is used (and shared with NCDSS Employment Case Managers) to monitor possible trouble spots and to focus attention/resources on these areas.

- d. Describe the extent to which the district requires Non-Temporary Assistance Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NTA SNAP) recipients to participate in SNAP E&T work activities. If the district is offering Supervised Job Search as an E&T activity component, the district must describe how the job search activity will be supervised and tracked, including the frequency of monitoring the participant's job search efforts. (Please note: Case management services must be provided to all participants enrolled in an E&T activity):

Niagara County will require Non-Temporary Assistance Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (NTA SNAP) recipients to participate in SNAP E&T work activities. Employable NTA SNAP individuals will be called in for an assessment at certification and recertification and assigned to Job Search. At minimum 20 hours per week (approx. 10 contacts per week) are assigned. This can include time spent identifying, applying, interviewing and follow-up. These contacts may be monitored on a weekly/monthly basis by OTDA Jobs Staff, NCDSS Employment Case Managers, NCDSS Job Developer for hours and reasonableness. If an individual is not successful at finding a job, then an assignment to another work activity, such as Work Experience may be made.

NTA SNAP work registrants are informed at application and recertification of services available. If the client has any questions regarding job search services, the Employment Case Manager will address them. The Case Manager will also assist with other activities

including referrals to WorkSourceOne, the OTDA Job Specialist, NCDSS Job Developer, and Work Experience if slots are available.

If the district is not mandating SNAP E&T work activity assignments, please describe how NTA SNAP work registrants are informed of the services available, upon request, for assistance with job search activities. (Please note: At a minimum, districts are required to make available job search as a SNAP E&T activity to NTA SNAP applicants and recipients):

- e. Describe the district procedure for Job Search, including the required number of job search contacts and hours per week assigned. Also include a description of how often individuals are generally required to report job search outcomes and if activities other than job search are routinely expected:

1. The district assigns TA **applicants** to Job Search.  Yes  No

If yes, the process for engaging TA **applicants** is:

Non-exempt TA applicants are assigned to Job Search in the following manner. At minimum 20 hours per week (approx. 10 contacts per week) are assigned to the applicant. This can include time spent identifying, applying, interviewing and follow-up. These contacts may be monitored on a weekly/monthly basis by OTDA Jobs Staff, NCDSS Employment Case Managers, NCDSS Job Developer or BOCES staff for hours and reasonableness.

Applicant Job Search	Minimum Number of Contacts	Minimum Number of Hours	Additional Information
TANF and SNA MOE	10/week	20	
SNA Individuals	10/week	20	

2. The district assigns TA **recipients** to Job Search.  Yes  No

If yes, the process for engaging TA **recipients** is:

Non-exempt TA recipients are required to conduct an active Job Search. Often this Job Search is conducted while the recipient is assigned to additional work activities such as Work Experience. At minimum 20 hours per week (approx. 10 contacts per week) are assigned to the recipient. This can include time spent identifying, applying, interviewing and follow-up. These contacts may be monitored on a weekly/monthly basis by OTDA Jobs Staff, NCDSS Employment Case Manager, NCDSS Job Developer or BOCES staff for hours and reasonableness.

- f. Describe the district’s process and policy, including the guidelines workers follow, when determining whether participation in self-employment is approved as part of an individual’s required work activities. If the district always approves self-employment as part of an individual’s required work activities, please note this policy below.

At Assessment the Employment Case Manager will review the reported income to determine if the client is earning minimum wage. If the client is not earning minimum wage, they will be advised they have 90 days from the date of assessment to be earning minimum wage or higher in addition to working the minimum number of hours per week to meet participation requirements. If they are not meeting these requirements at the end of 90 days, they will be assigned to work activities.

- g. The allowable work activities that are available in the social services district are listed and defined in the table on the next two pages. An “X” in the appropriate check box indicates the activity is available for individuals receiving Family Assistance (FA), Safety Net Assistance for households with children (SNA Fam), Safety Net Assistance for households without children (SNA IND), and/or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. A blank check box indicates the activity is not available for that case type.

<b>Activity and Definition</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Unsubsidized Employment</b> - Full time or part time employment in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program (excluding employer tax credits). Unsubsidized employment includes self-employment and/or paid internships.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Subsidized Private Sector Employment</b> - Employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds (excluding tax credits) to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing and training a recipient in accordance with New York State Social Services Law 336-f. Subsidized private sector employment will include positions subsidized through grant diversion/Transitional Employment Advancement Program (TEAP), supported employment programs, and paid college work study programs at private institutions. Individuals participating in subsidized private sector employment are paid wages and receive the same benefits as unsubsidized employees who perform similar work. An employment situation will be subsidized for up to the full amount of wages/benefits provided to the program participant and will be subsidized for the length of time as determined appropriate by the State or social services district.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Subsidized Public Sector Employment</b> - Employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds (excluding tax credits) to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing and training a recipient in accordance with New York State Social Services Law 336-e. Subsidized public sector employment will include positions subsidized through grant diversion/TEAP, supported employment programs, and paid college work study programs at public institutions. Individuals participating in subsidized public sector employment, and work study unless otherwise permitted under a federal work study program, are paid wages and receive the same benefits as unsubsidized employees who perform similar work. An employment situation will be subsidized for up to the full amount of wages/benefits provided to the program participant and will be subsidized for the length of time as determined appropriate by the State or social services district.</p>

<b>Activity and Definition</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Work Experience</b> - Unpaid work performed at a public or not-for-profit organization to enable a participant who has not obtained unsubsidized employment to improve his or her employability. Work experience provides participants with an opportunity to acquire training, knowledge, work habits, and work references necessary to obtain and retain employment. Participation in work experience includes training required for the participant to complete the work experience assignment. For example, an individual who is expected to provide clerical support in a government agency may be provided training to develop or refine filing and data entry skills as needed to perform the tasks required as part of the work activity assignment.</p> <p>In addition to those components noted above, work experience will include unpaid internships that are part of any non-graduate student’s education curriculum. (Note: Paid internships are to be reported as employment.)</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>On-the-Job Training (OJT)</b> - Training in a public or private sector employment setting during which the participant receives work-essential paid training while he or she is engaged in productive work that provides the knowledge and skills essential to attain full and adequate performance of the job.</p> <p>OJT will be unsubsidized (for which the employer does not receive a subsidy) or subsidized using TANF funds or other funds to offset the cost of the training provided to the participant. A subsidized OJT will be subsidized for up to the full cost of providing such training and wages/benefits provided to the program participant. Positions will be subsidized for the length of time determined appropriate by the State or social services district. OJT is distinct from subsidized employment since the individual must participate in workplace training to attain full and adequate job performance and the subsidy provided is intended to offset the cost of such training.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Community Service</b> - A structured program in which participants perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. Community service placements must be projects that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social services, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, public recreation, public facilities, public safety, and childcare. Community service programs are designed to improve the employability of participants not otherwise able to obtain unsubsidized employment. Participation in community service may include training that is directly required for the participant to complete the community service assignment. For example, an individual who is expected to provide clerical support to a food pantry may be provided training to develop or refine filing and data entry skills.</p> <p>Community service assignments will primarily be voluntary in nature including participation in VISTA, AmeriCorps, and unpaid volunteer activities at a school, Head Start programs, religious or faith-based institutions, community organizations or a nonprofit or public agency but will also include such mandated participation when court ordered. Participation in activities to support these organizations is deemed to provide a service to the community. In those instances, where the participation could meet the federal definition of work experience or community service and the district or program provider would like to have another recipient provide childcare for the community service individual, such hours of work may be reported as participation in community service.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Job Search</b> - The act of seeking or obtaining employment or preparing to seek or obtain employment and will include: looking for suitable job openings in a group or individual setting; making contact with potential employers; learning appropriate workplace expectations and behaviors in preparation for submitting job applications and interviewing; preparing and applying for, and/or interviewing for jobs and related activities.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>SNAP E&amp;T Supervised Job Search</b>- The act of seeking or obtaining employment through a job search that is directly supervised and may include: case management services, career exploration, interview preparation, job application assistance, learning appropriate workplace expectations and behaviors in preparation for submitting job applications and interviewing, job leads, and direct job referrals.</p>



<b>Activity and Definition</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Job Readiness Training (JRT) Activities</b> - Participation in programs that include seeking and preparing for work. JRT includes two types of activities: (1) traditional activities of resume preparation, training in interviewing skills, and instruction in workplace expectations, training in effective job seeking, including life skills training; and (2) activities that improve an individual's employability, such as substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities in which a qualified medical or mental health professional has certified that such treatment is necessary.</p> <p>Traditional JRT activities will include: resume preparation, training in interview skills, instruction in workplace expectations, training in effective job seeking, life skills essential to workplace success, time management, goal setting, budgeting, basic math and literacy skills, household management, interpersonal skills, decision making skills, anger management, parenting skills when it has been determined that such training could help reduce unplanned work leave or apprehension toward entering employment.</p> <p>For TANF and SNA MOE funded families, JRT also includes substance abuse and other treatment and rehabilitative services that are required for individuals who are unable to work or individuals whose employability and employment retention requires such services. Such services, which should be reported on WTWCMS as such, will be deemed within WRTS participation rate logic to be JRT for recipients of TANF and SNA MOE funding but will be deemed to be Community Service for recipients of SNA non-MOE, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical health treatment and rehabilitation services including attending necessary physical therapy, and doctor appointments. Such treatment will include medical, behavioral and other treatment necessary for individuals suffering from substance abuse (current and former users) with such required treatment ranging from detoxification services to after care/abstinence maintenance.</li> <li>• Mental health services including therapy, counseling, and other services to address mental or emotional disorders that can interfere with an individual's daily life functions, ability to work, looking for work or the ability to retain employment.</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Vocational Education</b> - Vocational education is defined as an organized educational program that directly relates to the preparation of individuals for current or emerging occupations that require training up to a four-year degree. Vocational education does not generally include basic or remedial education or English as a Second Language (ESL) but may include work focused general education and language instruction that is a regular or integral part of a vocational education program. Social services districts are responsible for ensuring that any such remedial education or ESL is a regular part of the program for participants with similar skill sets as the TANF/SNA MOE client, is determined necessary by the program provider, and is limited in hours to less than one half of program participation. Vocational education programs include the completion of activities that provide individuals the knowledge and skills to perform a specific trade, occupation or vocation. Vocational education must be provided by an education or training organization.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Job Skills Training</b> - Training or education in job skills to improve a participant's employability, to ensure clients have the basic skills competencies required by employers to support job entry and/or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace. Where identified as needed, such training may include the development of basic workplace skills including professional workplace behaviors and decision-making skills. Job skills training may include customized or technical training designed to provide participants with additional workplace skills, post-secondary education courses leading to a bachelor's or other advanced degree, or other training included under the definition of vocational education training. Job skills training may include literacy instruction, English language instruction, or other basic education for an individual who has already obtained a high school diploma or equivalency when determined from a client's assessment that such instruction is needed to improve the participant's employability.</p>

<b>Activity and Definition</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Education Training</b> - Education directly related to employment for a recipient who has not received a high school diploma or equivalency must be related to a specific occupation, job or job offer or otherwise determined based on a client assessment as necessary to improve the participant's employability to support job entry, retention or advancement. Education directly related to employment may include courses designed to provide the knowledge and skills for general or specific occupations or work settings to ensure clients have the basic skills competencies required by employers and may also include adult basic education, ESL instruction and education leading to a high school equivalency diploma as determined as necessary to improve the participant's job opportunities in potential occupations. Where identified as needed such training may include the development of basic workplace skills including professional workplace behaviors and decision-making skills.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Secondary School</b> - Regular attendance in accordance with the requirements of the secondary school or a course of study at a secondary school or other State accredited institution leading to a high school equivalence (HSE) diploma, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school or received a certificate of general equivalence. Secondary school participation may include general adult basic education or ESL if it is linked to attending secondary school or leading to a HSE diploma as determined necessary by the educational institution. Secondary School or HSE programs that routinely include ESL, career training, alternative school, tutoring, dropout prevention, teen pregnancy or parenting programs as a requirement of program participation as determined by the educational institution will also be permitted.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Provision of Childcare for Individual Participating in Community Service</b> - Providing unpaid childcare to enable another TA (TANF/SNA MOE funded) recipient to participate in a community service program.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Fam <input type="checkbox"/> SNA Ind <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Other</b> - Any work activity that does not meet the criteria of any of the above countable activities constitutes participation that is not countable toward federal and State participation rates.</p>

### Section 3.5 Job Development

The district conducts or accesses job development services to expand job opportunities for TA and SNAP participants.  Yes  No

If yes, the district participates in job development activities in the following manner:

District staff contacts employers to solicit jobs for TA and SNAP participants.

Below is the description of how this is done, including number of staff, frequency of contacts, etc.:

NCDSS has a Job Developer working within the Employment Unit. He is a member of the Niagara County Workforce Development Group which meets on a monthly basis at the local One-Stop Center. The Job Developer participates in the planning of area Job Fairs that are held twice per year in Niagara Falls and once a year in Lockport and North Tonawanda. Job leads are shared among the Workforce Group participants with a "Hot Jobs Listing" mailed out on a weekly basis. The Job Developer will engage with clients both in the office and at WEP sites to go over the clients Job Searches and to offer new leads. When appropriate, the Job Developer also writes OJT/TEAP contracts with area employers.

District contracts or has an agreement with another agency to contact employers and solicit jobs for TA and/or SNAP participants. Below is the description of how this is done, including number of staff, frequency of contacts.

OTDA Jobs Program staff are charged with job development as indicated in section 2.3. Additional information, if any, is described below:

### Section 3.6 Training Approval and Activity Enrollment Policies (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.9)

a. Describe how the district identifies appropriate education program providers for services of Adult Basic Education, High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma preparation, and English Language Instruction that are available to clients whose assessment indicates such services would be an appropriate work activity assignment:

Niagara County identifies appropriate education and English language provider through local interaction with the Niagara County WIB.

b. Describe how the district identifies appropriate program providers of Vocational Education and Job Skills Training programs that are available to clients whose assessment indicates such services would be an appropriate work activity assignment:

Niagara County DSS has a partnership with Niagara County Employment and Training. NC E&T as part of its mandate provides funding for tuition for Vocational Education. As part of that process NC E&T works with employers and training providers to make sure that programs being offered match the skills the employers are looking for. They will not provide funding for training programs that fail to meet that standard. The NCDSS Job

Developer participates in meetings with other agencies to determine what the needs of local employers are in order to determine training needs of recipients.

- c. Describe the process and guideline workers follow to ensure that individuals who have not attained a basic literacy level and/or have not attained a high school diploma are offered the opportunity to participate in an educational activity:

As stated in Section 3.2 all applicants are TABE tested to determine their literacy needs. Applicants who haven't reached a basic literacy level (scoring at or beneath a 9th grade level) are assigned to a Job Readiness Class. This class includes a literacy component. Once their case opens, they are called in for an Employment Assessment. Using the assessment tools available and the client's interest and ability the client may be assigned to educational activities for hours above their required core hours. Individuals who have not attained a high school diploma are highly encouraged to pursue educational activities. They may be required to do so in addition to enrollment in another work activity, but every effort will be made to accommodate the schedule of the educational activity.

- d. Describe the district's process and policy, including the guideline workers follow, when determining whether participation in educational activities is approved for individuals who have not attained a high school diploma who are interested in participating in an educational activity. Include in this section instances when the agency would deny participation in educational activities:

As stated in Section 3.2 all applicants are TABE tested to determine their literacy needs. Any applicant who hasn't achieved either a high school diploma or a High School Equivalency (HSE) is assigned to a Job Readiness Training Program. The JRT includes a literacy component. Once the case opens the individual is required to attend an Employment Assessment interview with a Employment Case Manager. Considering the results of the assessment tools along with the client's interests and abilities, the client may be assigned to educational activities for hours above the required core hours. A client may be denied the opportunity to participate in an educational activity when the scheduled educational activity's dates/times directly conflict with the client's scheduled countable work activity assignment (i.e. work experience).

- e. Describe the district's process and policy for determining whether a participant is approved/assigned to participate in job skills or vocational education activities:

They must not have exceeded their vocational education limit and the desired training must be for something that could result in job placement, for example: does an area employer seek the skills that will result from the education/training. We will also look at their history to see if they have followed through on previous plans which were made with the department.

- f. Describe the highest level of post-secondary level education that the district will approve as a work activity, up to a four-year college program:

NCDSS will allow up to a four-year college program as an activity provided that the program leads directly to employment. The assessment of the program is based on criteria NCDSS gets from Niagara County Employment and Training as stated in 3.6 (b).

- g. Describe how the district will ensure that enrollments in post-secondary education beyond the 12-month lifetime limit are combined with a weekly average of at least 20 hours in paid employment activities which may include work study, work experience or community service:

The 12 months are tracked through a combination of the yearly assessment and alerts that are generated through the enrollment and scheduling process in WTWCMS. Prior to the 12-month limit being reached the participant is called in and a new Employment Plan is developed. The participant is then scheduled for core activities in addition to educational activity. Participation is tracked monthly.

- h. Education and training providers are evaluated by the following standards:

New York State Education Standards

- i. The district procedure for advising participants of approved training providers is:

In conjunction with Niagara County Employment and Training we establish a list of program areas and providers. This list is made available at orientations and at client contact. It is also posted near our client reception area.

- j. The district procedure for notifying participants of approval for training or enrollment in a work activity is:

Participants are notified either in person, or by phone with a notation to the case narrative.

- k. In accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.9(b), regardless of whether the college program is approved for the participant as an employment work activity, the district will approve as a work activity a work-study, internship, externship or other work placement that is part of a non-graduate student's curriculum unless one or more of the following conditions applies as checked below:

It has been determined that the student voluntarily quit a job or reduced earnings to qualify for initial or increased TA.

A job or on-the-job training position that is comparable to the work-study, internship, externship or other work placement cannot reasonably be expected to exist in the private, public or not-for-profit sector.

The student is not maintaining a cumulative C average (or the equivalent). The district may disregard this provision if the student documents an undue hardship.

- The institution or student fails to monitor and report information regarding the student's attendance and performance as required.
- The student fails to progress toward the completion of a course of study without good cause, as determined by the district.
- The student has previously enrolled in work-study, internship, or other work placement and failed to complete the work placement without good cause as determined by the district.
- Additional reasons as stated below:

- l. To verify continued exempt status, the district will monitor the high school attendance of 16-18 year old students in the following manner:

The Social Services Worker in the TA unit obtains verification of school attendance/enrollment at application and recertification. If it is determined that a 16 – 18-year-old is not in school, they are required to complete an employment assessment form. The employment assessment form is then forwarded to an Employment Case Manager for review. The individual will then be required to attend an assessment interview with an Employment Case Manager.

- m. The district's procedure for ensuring that an individual's health related limitations are accommodated when assigning the individual to a work activity is:

When a health-related limitation is identified, the district will make all accommodations to comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including assigning said individual to a worksite which will accommodate the work limitation. All providers and worksites are notified in writing of an individual's work limitations. The district may make unscheduled visits to worksites to monitor compliance with our notification of client work limitations to ensure the worksites are complying. We will also confer with the clients regarding their work assignments.

### **Section 3.7 Work Verification**

Consistent with New York State's approved Work Verification Plan (WVP), and in accordance with the requirements established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, districts must develop a quality assurance plan to ensure that the data reported, from which their work participation rates are derived, are accurate. The plan must include the district's procedure for monitoring reported scheduled and actual attendance in paid employment and unpaid work activities and the controls in place to ensure that reported exemption statuses resulting in federal exclusions from the work participation rate calculation are accurately made, work eligible individuals are correctly identified, hours of attendance reported are accurate and documented, data entry is accurate and that the district and its providers adhere to the approved work activity definitions and the determination of countable excused absences and holiday reporting within federal limits. Each district must maintain the documentation to verify what is being reported to NYS OTDA.

Each district must describe how it will conduct periodic self audits to determine that system entries are consistent with documentation in case files. The district must also explain how it will choose the sample size, select sample cases and establish the review period (no less frequently than semi-annually). The plan must indicate the district will maintain documentation on all pertinent findings produced through its self audit process and that case records for all reviewed cases will be available for State and other auditors in their review of the local work verification system for the standard 6 year period associated with such reviews.

The district will sample cases from each month within the (6 month) semi-annual period. The October to March review will be due by May 20th. The April to September review will be due by November 20th. The results of these audits will enable the district to identify policies, processes or cases that may need corrective action.

After each self audit is completed, the district must submit a summary of findings to OTDA A&QI at [AQI.WV.SelfAudits@otda.ny.gov](mailto:AQI.WV.SelfAudits@otda.ny.gov) for State review including specific information on each of the errors identified. In addition, when monitoring reveals substantial problems, the district must describe the corrective action it will take.

**The Quality Assurance (QA) plan must include the following elements:**

- Ensure that documentation of wages and actual hours of employment is verified and accurately projected/reported and present in the case file, is actual and is projected correctly;
- Ensure that the documentation for actual hours, supervision/attendance, excused absences, and holidays in other activities is present in the case file;
- Assess whether participation in the work activities reported for work eligible individuals meets the approved federal definition for the activity;
- Assess that the data entered into either WTWCMS, NYCWAY or other automated systems used for reporting work activities is accurate, including actual hours, excused absences and holidays; and is based on documentation in the case record; and
- Ensure that documentation necessary to determine an individual to be exempt due to being the parent caretaker of a disabled household member (Employability Code 38 or 48), and/or parent or caretaker relative of a child in the household under 12 months of age, (Employability code 31), is present in the case file and that individuals meet the exempt status based on the required documentation.

**The District's Quality Assurance Process is as follows:**

The district will perform a random sample of (15) cases semi-annually for **paid work activities** to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. Both the TA and employment case files will be reviewed. Hours of employment will be verified through receipt of pay stubs, employer verification forms or collateral contact with the employer. The review will ensure the hours of employment on the ABEL budget are consistent with the hours reported on WTWCMS and documentation is in the file to support hours reported on WTWCMS and that the scheduled hours on WTWCMS is consistent with the documentation.

The district will perform a random sample of (15) cases semi-annually for participation in **unpaid work activities** to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. The employment case files will be reviewed. Actual hours of attendance will be documented by attendance sheets showing actual hours of attendance, any excused absences during the month, any unexcused absences during the month, and holiday time. The review will ensure the actual hours of attendance reported on the monthly attendance sheets has been correctly reported on WTCMS, excused absences and holiday time are documented in the case file and correctly reported on WTCMS in accordance with federal limitations, and documentation of actual hours of attendance is accurate and matches the hours of participation reported on WTCMS by district or provider staff.

The district will perform a random sample of (5) cases semi-annually in which a case member is reported as an employability code **38-needed in the home fulltime or employability code 48-time limit exemption** to care for a disabled household member to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. The TA case file will be reviewed to ensure there is presence of medical documentation to support the exemption and that the documentation has a timeframe for the exemption and that the individual is the appropriate caretaker.

The district will perform a random sample of (5) cases semi-annually in which a case member is reported as an employability **code 31-caretaker of a child under the age of 12 months** to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. The TA case file will be reviewed to ensure there is documentation from hospital, birth certificate or social security card present to verify the child under the age of one. TA records will also be reviewed to ensure that the household composition is in fact a one parent case and that the individual has not exceeded the 12-month lifetime limit.

The district will review district worker or approved provider/vendor collected documentation and data entry of the above listed elements. The district will assess and verify that participation in the reported work activities listed above meet the State approved definition for the activity.

#### **Use of Outside Providers/Vendors**

Does the district utilize outside providers/vendors to collect documentation and enter data directly into WTCMS?

Yes       No

If Yes, does the district's provider/vendor collected documentation, data entry and management of WTCMS follow the same process that would be used by the district worker?

Yes       No

If No, please describe the process used below:

#### **Section 3.8 Strategies/Procedures for Accommodating Individuals with Limited English Proficiency**

Following is a description of how the district accommodates the needs of Non-English-speaking participants in accessing employment activities and services:



When an applicant is identified as non-English speaking Niagara County uses the Language Line when interviewing the individual. For assessment purposes they are referred to Orleans/Niagara BOCES for testing (Best Test). Based on the results of the Best Test the applicant is enrolled in ESL classes. The client's progress is monitored to determine when they will be ready to engage in other activities. The Job Developer works with employers who are willing to hire non-English speaking applicants.

### **Section 3.9 Strategies/Procedures for Increasing Program Attendance**

Describe district policies and/or procedures in place to reduce the amount of time participants fail to participate in work activities, including absences that are with good cause:

Applicants and recipients that are deemed work eligible are scheduled to attend a three-hour orientation. During the orientation there is a discussion as to why it is important to comply with work requirements as it relates not only to their on-going eligibility but also their ability to achieve self-sufficiency. It is stressed that with any activity they need to have reliable transportation and day care plus back up for both. We discuss supportive services the district can provide in those areas and for day care we provide a referral to those who need assistance finding a provider. The orientation also covers work supports available (EITC, etc.) and budget comparisons to show the value of working. These discussions are reinforced at every contact with employment unit personnel. Non-exempt individuals are encouraged to participate in workshops when offered by our community partners that deal with finding, keeping and succeeding in a job.

### **Section 3.10 Strategies/Procedures for Engaging Sanctioned TA Participants**

District attempts to engage sanctioned participants as soon as they are sanctioned using the following strategies:

District attempts to engage sanctioned participants when the durational period of the sanction is completed using the following strategies:

Sanctioned clients are scheduled to report to a maximum of one meeting per month, Project Source, where they must report how they are supporting themselves while on a sanction. During this meeting clients are given listing of Hot Jobs openings in the area, an income comparison worksheet, and shown a Work Pays video. Failure to attend a Project Source meeting constitutes a failure to comply with an eligibility requirement and results in the TA case being discontinued. Per 08-INF-12 local districts have the authority to meet with recipients as often as necessary to monitor ongoing eligibility for TA (18 NYCRR 351.1, 351.2, 351.21, 351.22).

District attempts to engage sanctioned participants during different times in the sanction period using the following strategies.

### **Section 3.11 Strategies for reducing the need for TA**

District's strategies for reducing the need for TA are described below:

Niagara County provides supportive services to divert applicants from needing Temporary Assistance. These supportive services are provided on a case-by-case basis and are only

approved for individuals who are either already employed or have a promise of employment. Verification of employment (current pay stub) or a statement on the company's letterhead indicating a promise of employment (with an expected start date) is required for the individual to be considered for these services. The OTDA JOBS Program staff person is available to provide job search/job placement services to applicants to divert applicants from needing Temporary Assistance.

## **Section 4 Support Services**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.4)

### **Section 4.1 TA and Non-TA SNAP Applicants and Recipients in Work Activities Approved by the District**

- a. The social services district will provide childcare in accordance with the childcare section of the district's Child and Family County Services Plan. The district will also provide for participants the following expenses which the district deems necessary for the individual to participate in orientation, assessment, employment planning, approved work activities and activities to restore self-sufficiency:
  - I. Transportation-public transportation, mileage re-imbusement, motor vehicle repair, registration, and insurance.  
All Motor Vehicle Expenses:
    - a) requires participant to have a valid driver's license
    - b) vehicle must be titled and registered to a member of the applicant's householdRepair:
    - c) requires two estimates of cost from licensed auto repair shops including a statement of the necessity of the repairs to keep the vehicle working and road legal
    - d) requires the cost of the repairs to be in line with the value of the vehicleInsurance:
    - e) NCDSS will pay up to three months auto insurance per year
  - II. Work-related expenses (including uniforms, tools, licenses, test fees)
    - a) uniforms-up to \$100.00
    - b) tools-up to \$500.00
    - c) license and fees-considered on a case by case basis
  - III. Tuition-upon prior approval for training when no other funding source is available and:
    - a) determination that the training will lead to an offer of employment. This is based on criteria established by Niagara County Employment and Training
    - b) an evaluation determines if the participant has enough background to reasonably determine success in the program
    - c) case by case evaluation of any program lasting more than 12 months
    - d) all tuition must be approved by a Manager. Any amount over \$1,000.00 must also be approved by the Director of Eligibility

- b. The district will use the following approach to assist those participants who need transportation to and from an approved work activity site, including any applicable mileage reimbursement rate, and the method used by the district to arrive at that reimbursement rate. OTDA policy establishes a mileage reimbursement rate of no less than the IRS established rate for medical/moving purposes. In all instances, should the actual cost of transportation needed to participate in an assigned work activity exceed the reimbursement rate determined by the district, the district will reimburse for the actual costs based on reasonable documentation submitted by the work activity participant.

Please check all that apply:

- Bus pass/token
- Gas card/voucher
- Mileage reimbursement at IRS Business rate, (effective 1/1/19 is 58 cents/mi)
- Mileage reimbursement at IRS Medical/Moving rate, (effective 1/1/19 is 20 cents/mi)
- Other mileage rate, (please explain methodology used to establish reimbursement rate): Whenever possible public transportation will be used to help those individuals who need transportation to and from their approved work activity site. The department provides monthly bus passes or day passes depending on the individual's needs. For those participants who live where public transportation isn't available and have their own vehicle or the offer of a ride the department issues a mileage allowance. The allowance is \$4.00/day for a distance up to 8 miles (one way). Distances over 8 miles will be calculated at the IRS medical/moving rate per mile.

- c. OTDA policy establishes a distance not to exceed 2 miles as the maximum distance that the district can require a participant to walk to a work activity assignment or to access public transportation. The district's policy states that an individual may be required to walk up to the distance described below each way to a work activity or to access public transportation:

The maximum distance the district may require a participant to walk to a work activity assignment or to access public transportation is not to exceed 2 miles.

- d. The district will provide the following services to assist individuals at risk of needing TA to improve their opportunities for employment or to maintain their employment:

Niagara County provides supportive services to divert applicants from needing Temporary Assistance. The services provided will vary depending if the household is an individual or a family. Each situation is evaluated on a case by case basis and are only approved for individuals who are either already employed or have a promise of employment. Verification of employment (current pay stub) or a statement on Company letterhead indicating a promise of a job, including start date is required for the individual to be considered for services. The anticipated wages would need to be high enough to project the household as being ineligible for Temporary Assistance. All diversion services need a manager's approval. Any cost exceeding \$1000.00 also needs the approval of the Director of Eligibility.

Additional criteria are as follows -

- I. Transportation-all motor vehicle expenses
  - a) requires participant to have a valid driver's license
  - b) vehicle must be titled and registered to a member of the applicant householdRepair:
  - c) requires two estimates of cost from licensed auto repair shops including a statement of the necessity of the repairs to keep the vehicle working and road legal
  - d) requires that the cost of the repairs be in line with the value of the vehicleInsurance:
  - e) NCDSS will pay up to three months auto insurance per year
- II. Work-related expenses (including uniforms, tools, license and test fees)
  - a) uniforms-up to \$100.00
  - b) tools-up to \$500.00
  - c) license and fees-considered on a case by case basis
- III. Job Development:

The OTDA JOBS Program staff person is available to provide job search/job placement services to applicants to divert applicants from needing Temporary Assistance

## **Section 4.2 Transitional Support Services**

The district will provide the following supports and strategies to support job retention:

Transportation- District will provide assistance for up to three months for TANF eligible households and one month for non-TANF households after case closing for transportation costs. This can be in the form of a bus pass or mileage expenses at the IRS Medical/Moving rate.

The district will provide the following support services, for up to 90 days after case closing, to individuals whose TA cases have closed due to employment:

Transportation- District will provide assistance for up to three months for TANF eligible households and one month for non-TANF households after case closing for transportation costs. This can be in the form of a bus pass or mileage expenses at the IRS Medical/Moving rate.

## **Section 4.3 Extended Support Services**

As long as funding is available (through FFFS, etc.), the district will provide the following supportive services for individuals who are eligible under the TANF Services 200% of poverty eligibility guidelines:

None

## Section 5 Conciliation, Sanction and Dispute Resolution Procedures

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.11 and 385.12)

### Section 5.1 Conciliation

The district's conciliation process for TA applicants and recipients is in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11(a). Conciliations are conducted (check all that apply and describe the procedure.):

- in person
- by phone
- by mail

When a failure to comply occurs, the Employment Unit worker will issue a Conciliation Notice. The recipient must respond within 10 days. The conciliation process will last no longer than thirty (30) days for TANF participants and no longer than fourteen (14) days for Safety Net participants unless both the Department and the participant agree that the timeframe should be extended. The conciliation process provides the individual with the opportunity to inform the local district of the reason(s) for the failure to comply.

The Temporary Assistance good cause/willfulness determination is made by:

- client's employment worker
- a supervisor
- separate entity:

The Employment Unit worker will attempt to determine whether the participant's failure to comply was willful and without good cause. This determination can be made in person, by phone or by mail. The participant will be informed as to what in his/her situation constitutes "willfulness and good cause" and what documentation (if any) will be needed to uphold the willfulness/good cause claim. The Employment Unit worker will evaluate any documentation that the participant presents to support his/her claim of willfulness/ good cause. The local district will notify the participant as to the results of the conciliation. This notification will be either through by mail, in person, or by phone. Data entry into WTCMS will performed as appropriate.

The district's conciliation process for SNAP recipients is in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11. Conciliations are conducted (check all that apply and describe the procedure.):

- in person
- by phone
- by mail

When a failure to comply occurs, the Employment Unit worker will issue a Conciliation Notice. The recipient must respond within the required timeframe for the case type. The conciliation process will last no longer than thirty (30) days unless both the Department and the participant agree that the timeframe should be extended. The conciliation process provides the individual with the opportunity to inform the local district of the reason(s) for the failure to comply. During this time frame the individual would also be given the opportunity to provide documentation supporting a claim of exemption from SNAP work activities.

The SNAP E&T good cause/willfulness determination is made by:

- client's employment worker
- a supervisor
- separate entity:

The Employment Unit worker will attempt to determine whether the participant's failure to comply was willful and without good cause. This determination can be made in person, by phone or by mail. The participant will be informed as to what in his/her situation constitutes "willfulness and good cause" and what documentation (if any) will be needed to uphold the willfulness/good cause claim. The Employment Unit worker will evaluate any documentation that the participant presents to support his/her claim of willfulness/ good cause. The local district will notify the participant as to the results of the conciliation. This notification will be either through by mail, in person, or by phone. Data entry into WTWCMS will performed as appropriate.

The district's procedure for engaging SNAP recipients in a work activity to demonstrate compliance to avoid a SNAP E&T related sanction is:

If a SNAP recipient contacts the agency to engage in a work activity to demonstrate compliance, we attempt to schedule them to the activity they were originally assigned to. If that's not possible then the agency will determine what activities are available and assign the SNAP recipient to one of them. Attendance in the activity is then tracked to ensure compliance.

## Section 5.2 Sanctions

- a. The district's procedure for determining compliance for those TA recipients who wish to end their employment sanction (18 NYCRR 385.12, 385.13), including the time period established for demonstrating compliance to the satisfaction of the district is:

Niagara County has the individual sign a willingness to comply form that provides an opportunity to remind the individual of the importance of compliance and participation requirements. The sanctioned individual will then be assigned to an activity. Once the individual has participated for ten days they will be considered "in compliance". An individual is also considered "in compliance" when they obtain employment that meets their participation requirement. At that point, a referral is sent to the client's eligibility worker to end the sanction at the end of the durational sanction period if any. Temporary Assistance benefits will be restored retroactive to the date the individual indicated a willingness to comply, (but no earlier than the minimum duration period) in accordance with 09-ADM-20.

- b. The district's procedure for determining compliance for those SNAP recipients who wish to end their employment sanction (18 NYCRR 385.12, 385.13), including the time period established for demonstrating compliance to the satisfaction of the district is:

When a sanctioned individual reapplies for SNAP benefits or asks to be added to an existing SNAP case Niagara County has the individual sign a willingness to comply form that provides an opportunity to remind the individual of the importance of compliance and participation requirements.

### **Section 5.3 Dispute Resolution**

The district's procedure for individuals who wish to dispute their work activity assignments, including individuals who dispute the district's response to their request for health-related accommodations is conducted in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11.

The grievance is mediated by:

- An agreement with an independent entity
- Supervisory staff who are trained in mediation and who have no direct responsibility for the individual's case
- Designated supervisory staff who have no direct responsibility for the individual's case and who are not trained in mediation

### **Section 6 Disability Determinations, Documentation and Requirements of Exempt Individuals**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2)

#### **Section 6.1 Disability Determination Process and Tools**

The district's process for determining an individual's disabilities and/or work limitations is in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.2(d). Check **all** that apply, and describe the process:

- District participates in the OTDA managed contract for independent medical evaluations.
- District contracts directly with a physician to provide independent medical evaluations.
- District accepts physician's statement provided by participant.
- District accepts physician's statement provided by participant but refers for an independent evaluation when deemed necessary.
- Other process (please describe):

Niagara County will adhere to the disability program requirements set forth in 18 NYCRR 385.2(d). The disability procedure will be followed whenever the applicant/recipient claims an inability to work, a work limitation or whenever the district worker suspects that an inability to work or a work limitation might exist. If the applicant/recipient has his/her own health care provider, he/she will be provided ten (10) calendar days to submit evidence in support of the claim to be unable to work or work-limited. In instances where it is not possible for the documentation to be provided within ten (10) calendar days, an extension may be granted at the discretion of the local district. Niagara County may wish to refer the individual to its own health care practitioner. This will be done when the individual does not currently have a primary care physician, or in instances where the medical documentation submitted is either incomplete or directly conflicts with medical documentation already on file. The local district's health care practitioner will be certified by the ODD. It is understood that an individual's health care provider may not be a physician or certified psychologist. However, the District reserves the right to require additional documentation from the individual when the documentation on file is insufficient for the District to make a determination on exempt/non-exempt status. NCDSS staff will review any documentation submitted by the individual to support his/her claim for exemption from work program requirements. The individual's past medical history, work limitations, prior work history and the availability of "light duty" worksites will be factors in determining the

individual's exempt/nonexempt status. Niagara County will utilize the LDSS 4005 to notify individuals of the District's determination regarding whether the individual is exempt, work-limited, or non-exempt. The individual retains the right to request a fair hearing should the issue not be resolved to his/her satisfaction.

The local process for reviewing the medical documentation to determine if the individual is exempt, nonexempt, or work limited is as follows:

- District directs the contracted physician or individual's physician to determine status.
- District review team reviews and determines status (described below).
- Specialized disability/medical staff or unit reviews and determines status (described below)
- Other:

Medical documentation is submitted by applicants to the TA worker. The TA worker makes the initial determination regarding exempt/non-exempt or work-limited status of the individual (often in consultation with the Employment Case Manager). The medical information is attached to the Employment Unit referral. The Employment Case Manager reviews the documentation and any subsequent status redetermination is made by the Employment Case Manager. All exempt/nonexempt or work-limited determination of recipients is solely made by the NCDSS Employment Case Manager assigned to the case.

## Section 6.2 Mental Health Screening and Assessment

The district is administering a screening tool for TA participants to help determine whether a referral for a mental health evaluation is warranted, in addition to screening for a disability that occurs as part of the application or disability determination process

- Yes       No *(If No, section 6.2 is complete)*

If yes: Describe the district's policy for determining when a program participant is offered a mental health screen.

If yes: Does the district use the LDSS 5009 - Mental Health Screening Tool and/or the computer assisted version of the Modified Mini Screening tool (MMS)?

- Yes       No

If using the MMS, indicate the district's cutoff score (7, 8 or 9) for referral to a mental health evaluation:

If using a screening tool other than the MMS, indicate the screening tool used:

Describe the district procedure for referring a participant for a mental health evaluation, when warranted by the screening result:



### **Section 6.3 Requirements for Exempt TA Participants (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2 (e))**

An exempt individual who has the potential to be restored to self-sufficiency through rehabilitation may be required to accept medical care to assist the individual in recovering from a mental or physical impairment, accept referral to and enrollment in a program of vocational rehabilitation, training, and/or other essential rehabilitation, and provide requested evidence that he/she is participating in the assigned program.

- a. Following is the district's procedure for determining if an individual who is unable to work due to mental or physical impairment has the potential through treatment or other rehabilitative activities to improve the ability to work. This determination is different from the determination of the individual's disability exemption as covered in Section 6.1 of this plan. Included here is who (e.g., medical practitioner, employment worker, TA worker, local review team, etc.) makes or assists in this determination that an individual can restore or improve employability through treatment or other rehabilitative activities. Also included is the source and type of information used to make the determination (e.g., information from individual's medical practitioner, district contracted provider, specialist evaluation obtained as result of district referral, etc.):

When an individual has indicated that they are unable to engage in activities due to a physical or mental health issue the agency will request that the individual's Health Care Practitioner complete an LDSS-4526. On this form the Health Care Practitioner will indicate the individual's condition, current treatment programs the individual is engaged in, limitations to work activities and how long they are expected to last and if the Health Care Practitioner feels a referral to a rehabilitation program is appropriate. This information is used by the Employment Case Manager to determine if rehab should be part of an Employment Plan.

- b. Following is the district's procedure for developing a treatment plan and for referring the participant to appropriate treatment, etc. Please be specific:

All exempt individuals are called in to do Employment Plans. An individual who can improve their ability to engage in work activities through rehab will develop an Employment Plan along with their Employment Case Manager that spells out the steps the individual is to take. This would include actions such as contacting their primary care physician for appropriate referrals and time frames in which the action needs to be accomplished.

- c. Following is the district's procedure for tracking the participant's compliance with the treatment plan, including who in the district is responsible for monitoring compliance. Include elements such as monthly confirmation of attendance at rehabilitation or other factors to judge participation and progress, along with how often the treatment plan is updated:

District staff will monitor attendance at rehabilitation programs monthly. We will require the individual to bring in proof of attendance at the end of every month. Employment

Plans which spell out the treatment plan requirements are updated yearly or when a change in treatment is indicated whichever is earlier. District staff will monitor attendance at rehabilitation programs monthly. We will require the individual to bring in proof of attendance at the end of every month. Employment Plans which spell out the treatment plan requirements are updated yearly or when a change in treatment is indicated whichever is earlier.