Operations Memo 2013-33
July 19, 2013

To:	**Department of Transitional Assistance Staff**
From:	**Lydia Conley, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Program Policy and External Relations**
Re:	**TAFDC, EAEDC, and SNAP: Statewide Implementation of the Work Number Employment Verification Service**

Overview

As of July 22, 2013 the Department will implement Equifax Workforce Solutions' subscription employment verification service called "The Work Number" statewide.

The Work Number (www.theworknumber.com) is a fee-for-service Internet-based resource for verification of employment-related information. This website offers employment, earnings and other information services to social service agencies, other verifiers, and employees of businesses.

Employment information for over 2500 employers, currently 30% of U.S. Employers, is available through The Work Number website. Many employers, particularly large employers, now refer requests for employment information directly to The Work Number that offers three levels of service: Real-Time Look-up, Express Service and Batch Service.

Overview (continued)

Real Time Look-up: The Department will utilize The Work Number's Real Time Look-Up Service to obtain employment records instantaneously for any applications (including Web applications), recertifications, or case maintenance activities that are processed in the TAOs on a daily basis.

Express Service: Supervisors and managers have been given access to the Work Number's Express Service, which is an individual look up service (see Access to Express Service section of this memo).

Batch Service: an overnight check of caseloads will be utilized by the Fraud Investigations and Data Match Unit (FIDM).

Note: The information supplied by the Work Number is considered to be from a trusted source and can be used in eligibility determinations.

Purpose of Memo

The purpose of this memo is to:

- explain the Work Number Real Time Look-Up Process;

- explain case managers' responsibilities in processing the employment information obtained;

- describe how and when supervisors or managers can access The Work Number Express Service;

- list the steps to request and receive information from The Work Number Express Service; and

- introduce the new "Work Number Job Aid".

Real Time Look-up Process and Case Manager Responsibilities

All TAOs will utilize the Work Number Real-Time Look-Up Service to obtain available employment information for applications, recertifications and other case maintenance activities for all household members age 16 and older. The last 10 pay periods of all current and past employment (within the past 90 days) from the Work Number database will display on the External Agency-Earned Income page. For many households, whose employer participates in the Work Number service, the eligibility determination process will be expedited because employment and wage information is verified automatically.

Real Time Look-up Process and Case Manager Responsibilities (continued)
External Agency-Earned Income Page

Important: The Work Number database does not include all employers. Case managers should be aware that if a match is not found, it does not indicate that the client is not employed.

The BEACON External Agency-Earned Income page has been created to display the employment results from a search of the Work Number database. This is an interactive page that will allow the case manager to copy a client's current employment (may be more than one employment) information directly to the Earned Income page.

Case managers will be able to obtain real time information about a household member's employment by searching the Work Number database from the:

- Earned Income page: The page will be set to re-edit if employment information from the Work Number exists and will display an External Agency Data (Ext Data) button that when clicked will launch the External Agency-Earned Income page. Clicking the Ext Data button will cause a real-time query of the Work Number database while in the case maintenance workflow. Once the Ext. Data button is clicked, that information will be saved to BEACON.

- Accounts Receivable (AR) referral page: The BEACON AR Referral page will allow a search of the Work Number database. The Employer Tab was changed to allow the case manager to indicate that the employment or wage data was provided by an employment /wage verification subscription service i.e. the Work Number ;

- Has Employment Indicator: A new indicator *Has Employment* was added to Pending Applications/Reinstatement, Pending TAFDC Extensions, Reevaluations Due, Reevaluations Due-Interim Report and Monthly Reporting Status views, when Work Number data exists but has not been dispositioned.

A real-time search of the Work Number's database for all household members age 16 and older will occur whenever a case manager enters any of the following BEACON workflows:

- RFA for application or reapplication;

- Extension request;

- Monthly reporting;

- Reevaluation including Interim Reports;

Real Time Look-up Process and Case Manager Responsibilities
External Agency-Earned Income Page (continued)

- Reinstatements;

- Web Applications; and

- When adding a member to the household.

By the time the case manager enters the Income and Expense Q&A Navigator, a search of the Work Number database will be completed. If a match is found, the following message will display upon entering the page:

"Employment data was found through the Work Number process. Please click on the Ext Data button to view the information."

To review the information the new button Ext Data that will launch the External Agency-Earned Income page has been added next to the Earned Income question on the Q&A Navigator. The case manager will not be allowed to save the Navigator page until the Ext Data button is clicked. The same message will be displayed if the case manager tries to exit the page without viewing the External Agency-Earned Income page.

On the External Agency-Earned Income page, the case manager must select employment information received from the Work Number, which will be used in the benefit calculation.

The page identifies the information as obtained from the Work Number. It also displays the employed client's:

- name;

- date of birth (DOB);

- social security number;

- employer name;

- employer phone number; and

- employer Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN).

To disposition the match, and resolve the requires re-edit, the case manager will be prompted to complete the Requested Action field by selecting one of the values from the following drop down list:

Real Time Look-up Process and Case Manager Responsibilities
External Agency-Earned Income Page (continued)

- Add a new employment;

- Update an existing employment; and

- Ignore employment data.

If the information will be used in a benefit calculation, the remaining fields and dropdown lists are used to transfer the information to the Earned Income page :

- Include checkbox: The case manager must click on the Include checkbox to add a new employment or update an existing employment, in addition to clicking the Save button. The following rules apply to the Include checkbox:

  1. If no job already exists on the Earned Income page the "Included" Employment will be copied to the Earned Income page as a new employment.

  2. If a job already exists with a Type and no Employer Name on the Earned Income page, the "Included" Employment data from the Work Number will be copied to the Earned Income page as a new employment.

  3. If a job already exists with only the Employer's Name on the Earned Income page, only the "Included" Employment's income data will be copied to update the existing job. No employer data will be copied.

  4. If a job already exists with an Employer Name on the Earned Income page, and the frequency of the "Included" employment is not the same as the frequency of the existing job, a hard edit will display informing the case manager that no data will be copied. The frequency of pay must match what is on the Earned Income page. If a conflict occurs the case manager should visit the Earned Income page to resolve the conflicting information.

- Type: This field will always default to Wages;

- Start: The start date of the employment;

- Frequency: This field is enabled when the Include checkbox is selected. Select the frequency of the pay from the drop-down list (weekly, bi-weekly etc.) The case manager must select a value based on the earnings data displayed;

- The hourly wage;

Real Time Look-up Process and Case Manager Responsibilities (continued)
External Agency - Earned Income Page

- Average hours;

- Position title: The job title listed with the Work Number will display. This data will not be copied in BEACON because the job title values may be different than those listed in BEACON;

- Employee phone number; and

- Employer code.

The Earnings section of the page will be used to select the employment data to be used in the eligibility calculation. The case manager must select the information to be used, using the Include checkbox, from the following period fields:

- Earnings period;

- Gross Income;

- Hours; and

- BEACON Period: earnings information for the period to be used in the calculation of grant. A dropdown list will display the last 10 pay periods, for all current and past employment, that are closest to the pay date based on the frequency selected by the case manager. If more pay periods are required, the case manager can use the Show All Periods button at the bottom of the page (see below).

    Example: Pay fluctuates monthly and 3 months of pay information is required to average the income.

The buttons at the bottom of the page can be used as follows:

- Save: can be used to transfer new employment data or to update earnings for an existing employment, to the earned income page in BEACON;

- Query agency: can be used to perform another search of the Work Number database or update the BEACON record if data is old;

- Show all periods: can be used to obtain all current pay periods for the selected employment;

- Print: can be used to print a hard copy of the employment information; and

Real Time Look-up Process and Case Manager Responsibilities
External Agency - Earned Income Page
(continued)

- Expand all & Collapse all: can be used to expand or collapse sections of the page.

Since the Work Number is considered a trusted source of earned income information, any countable income reported must be used in calculating cash and SNAP benefits (see 106 CMR 363.220 Countable Income or 106 CMR 363.230 Excluded Income). Case managers must use the most current information when transferring the wages in BEACON by clicking the Save button on the Eternal Agency-Earned Income page. Inactive employments will only appear if termination occurred within the last 90 days.

Important: Case managers must follow SNAP and /or cash policy regarding the income of youth when determining if the earned income is countable. For SNAP, the earned income of a household member who is age18 or older and in high school is countable. See SNAP policy at 106 CMR363.230 (H) *Earnings of Elementary or Secondary School Students.* For TAFDC, the earnings of a household member age16 to18, who attends high school, is disregarded for the first six months of the employment. See TAFDC policy at 106 CMR 204.*260 Income Test of Eligibility*.

If the Earned Income page is saved with all data fields completed, employment data from the Work Number will automatically be verified as "Electronically verified by Work Number" on the verification page. This action is extremely important as this selection will generate the following Fair Credit Report Act (FCRA) language on the EBC notices and notices of overpayment :

> The Department's decision about your benefit eligibility was based on wage information from Equifax Workforce Solutions, a consumer reporting agency. Equifax Workforce Solutions did not make the decision and cannot tell you about the Department's decision. You have the right to a free copy of your report if you ask for it from Equifax Workforce Solutions within 60 days of the date of this letter. You have the right to question Equifax Workforce Solutions about your report. Contact Equifax Workforce Solutions directly at: Equifax Workforce Solutions, 11432 Lackland Road, St. Louis, MO63146-3516 Tel# 1-800-996-7566 (toll free).

All EBC notices must contain this language if the earnings data used in the Interview wrap-up is derived from the Work Number. If the client decides to appeal any closing, denial or change in benefit level, caused by the Work Number information, the language informs him or her of the right to obtain the information that was used by the Department.

Real Time Look-up Process and Case Manager Responsibilities
External Agency - Earned Income Page
(continued)

Note: Clients are entitled to the information contained in their case record. If clients request a copy of the information obtained from the Work Number database, the case manager can provide the client with a copy of the information if it is available.

The case manager must then process the case by completing the application, recertification or case maintenance activities and wrapping-up the case for authorization according to established procedures. A hard edit has also been added to the Interview Wrap-up page that prevents a case manager from wrapping-up a case record if an earned income match has not been dispositioned.

External Agency Data Disposition Override

TAO directors and assistant directors will be given the user capability of an External Agency Data Disposition Override that allows them to override the Interview Wrap up edit that prevents the Interview Wrap up due to an undispositioned Work Number match. This function can be used if the Work Number returns discrepant data, the issue cannot be resolved in a timely manner and the household's benefits cannot be withheld as in the case of an expedited issuance.

Overpayment Referrals

If the match information provided by the Work Number indicates a client failed to report earned income or incorrectly reported income and a benefit overpayment resulted, an overpayment referral **must** be completed.

When updating the BEACON AR Referral Employer tab, the case manager must indicate that the employment and/or wage data used to calculate the overpayment was provided by an employment/wage verification subscription service to generate the FCRA language on the overpayment notice.

Access to The Work Number Express Service
for Supervisors and Managers

Supervisors and managers will be given access to the Work Number Express Service look-up. Express service provides employment information directly to the user's desktop and can be downloaded and printed. The Work Number no longer faxes verifications. The Department has registered supervisors and managers with the Work Number and a user name and password for access to the Work Number. This information will come in an email from VerifierID@theworknumber.com or Equifax Verification Services. Supervisors and manager will need to access the Work Number at least once every 90 days or the password will become inactive. Express Service must be used only to clarify or to obtain missing employment information to complete the eligibility process or if information is needed to create an overpayment referral.

Access to The Work Number Express Service for Supervisors and Managers (continued)

Note: Express Service is authorized for use by supervisors and managers only. Real time Look-up service will be available in all TAOs.

The information from Express Service is limited to employment start date, gross pay, number of hours worked and termination date. Garnishments and employee deductions such as child support, transportation and uniform expenses are usually not provided.

Requesting Employment Information

Supervisors and managers will only need the client's SSN once these step-by-step instructions are completed to obtain employment information:

1. Access the Work Number website on the Internet at www.theworknumber.com.

2. On the home page, click Login.

3. On the Login page, enter the username and password, and click the Go radio button.

    Note: When entering a username and password the first time, the user will be prompted to change the password on the Password Change Page. The password selected must have 12 characters. Once a password has been selected, click the Continue radio button.

4. On the next page, Select Your Permissible Purpose, the user must select the purpose for the inquiry. Select the radio button "Employee's eligibility for a benefit granted by a government agency…." From the dropdown list, and click on the Continue prompt.

    Reminder: Employees of the Department are privy to certain information of a personal, private, and confidential nature. Department policy prohibits all staff from **accessing** or **disclosing** such information, including client information, unless you are authorized to do so. (See Legal Memorandum *Confidentiality of Personal Information* issued April 25, 2013, on DTA Online under Administrative Memos, for more information).

5. The user will now be on the New Verification Order page where the client's SSN must be entered.

Access to The Work Number Express Service for Supervisors and Managers Requesting Employment Information (continued)

Note: The Assessed Person Identification Number (APID) can be used as a tracking tool by entering the APID in the tracking box provided (this is not a required entry, just another way to obtain a record rather than using the client's SSN). Once entered, click on the Continue radio button.

6. Once the request is submitted, the user will be taken to the Employment Summary page which will display all records of employment for the selected household member. The page will display the employer name and code, the employment status of active or inactive, and Get Verification where the user can select the record they wish to view by clicking on the box provided for each employment record. Also provided are fields to Check All employment records or Clear All to deselect a record. Once the employment record(s) have been selected, click Continue. No record will appear if the applicant/client is not known to the system.

7. The Confirm Verification Order page displays the SSN of the household member, employer name, the tracking number (if applicable) and the permissible purpose. If the information provided is correct, the user will then click on confirm order.

8. The Social Service Verification page will display the basic employment record. The information will include:

   - the name and address of the employer;

   - the employee name, address and birth date;

   - the employment status, the most recent start date and original hire date;

   - the rate of pay; and

   - the historical pay period summary

9. Information not provided by the employer is shown as "Data Not provided."

The verification must be printed and placed in the physical case record.

Work Number Job Aid

The attached job aid (Attachment A) can assist workers in navigating the External Agency-Earned Income page. The job aid can also be found at DTA Online by clicking on the Training link and then selecting "The Work Number Job Aid" under Job Aid/ Desk Guides" link.

Obsolete Memo

This Operations Memo obsoletes Operations memo 2013-22: TAFDC, EAEDC, and SNAP: The Work Number Test Project.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

THE WORK NUMBER JOB AID

THE EARNED INCOME WINDOW - CREATING A *NEW* EARNED INCOME LINE

1 If **The Work Number** has employment information, the **Earned Income** window will be set to re-edit (Earned Income).

2 The **Ext Data** (External Agency Data) button will be highlighted.

3 Click the **Ext Data** button to open the **External Agency-Earned Income** window.

Believing you can.

<table>
<tr><td>i</td><td>The information supplied by *The Work Number* is considered to be from a **trusted source** and can be used in eligibility determinations.</td></tr>
</table>

- Any income reported **must be used** in calculating cash and SNAP benefits.

- Employment entries that have an [Active] indicator can be considered verification of employment. Employment entries that have an [Inactive] indicator can be considered verification of termination of employment.

EXTERNAL AGENCY-EARNED INCOME WINDOW

4 Select **Add a new employment** in the **Requested Actions** box.

5 Click the plus + button to open and view entries with the [Active] indicator.

The [Active] indicator means they are employed at that job. The [Inactive] indicator means they have been terminated from that job. There may be multiple entries with the [Active] indicator when the client is working multiple jobs.

6   If the data looks old, click **Query Agency** to pull new data from *The Work Number* and update the page.

7   Check the **Include ☑** box next to employment entries that have an **[Active]** indicator.

8   Select the correct **Frequency** based on *The Work Number* data. In this example, John Smith is paid **weekly**.

9   Select the checkboxes ✅ in the **Include** column. Checking the box means you want to import that line of data into BEACON.

Select one month's worth of pay periods:

If the pay frequency is **weekly**, select the last **four** pay periods
If the pay frequency is **bi-weekly**, select the last **two** pay periods
If the pay frequency is **monthly**, select the last **one** pay period

10   If *The Work Number* pay periods don't match up with BEACON pay periods, select the BEACON pay periods that are the closest to *The Work Number* pay periods.

11   Click the **Save** button to insert *The Work Number* data into BEACON.

12   Process the **Earned Income** window with the new data included from *The Work Number*.

Believing you can.

THE EARNED INCOME WINDOW - IMPORTING INTO AN *EXISTING* EARNED INCOME *LINE*

1   Select the existing earned income line by checking the checkbox ☑.

2   Note the frequency of the pay period. In this example, it is **weekly**. If the frequency here does not match the pay period provided by *The Work Number* in **step 8**, you **cannot import** into the existing earned income line. You must [End...] the existing line and import *The Work Number* data into a **new line**. Instructions for how to do this are on **Page 1** of this Job Aid.

3   Click the **Ext Data** button.

4   Select [Update an existing employment ▼] in the **Requested action** box.

5   Click the plus [+] button to open and view entries with the [Active] indicator.

The [Active] indicator means they are employed at that job. The [Inactive] indicator means they have been terminated from that job. There may be multiple entries with the [Active] indicator when the client is working multiple jobs.

6   If the data looks old, click [Query Agency] to pull new data from *The Work Number* and update the page.

7   Check the [Include ☑] box next to employment entries that have an [Active] indicator.

8   Select the correct **Frequency** based on *The Work Number* data. In this example, John Smith is paid **weekly**.

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11 Click the **Save** button to insert *The Work Number* data into BEACON.

12 Process the **Earned Income** window with the new data included from *The Work Number*:

Attachment A

⚠️ **!**

The Work Number database **does not include all employers**.
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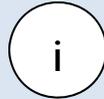
ⓘ

If the **Earned Income** page is saved with all data fields completed, employment data from *The Work Number* will automatically be verified as **"Electronically verified by Work Number"** on the **verification page**.

When **"Electronically verified by Work Number"** is selected on the **verification page**, BEACON will generate a message on the EBC notices and notices of overpayment:

> The Department's decision about your benefit eligibility was based on wage information from Equifax Workforce Solutions, a consumer reporting agency. Equifax Workforce Solutions did not make the decision and cannot tell you about the Department's decision. You have the right to a free copy of your report if you ask for it from Equifax Workforce Solutions within 60 days of the date of this letter. You have the right to question Equifax Workforce Solutions about your report. Contact Equifax Workforce Solutions directly at: Equifax Workforce Solutions, 11432 Lackland Road, St. Louis, MO63146-3516 Tel# 1-800-996-7566 (toll free)."

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Refer to Operations Memo 2013-22 for any additional procedures.