



Division of Safety and Permanence

DSP Informational Memo Series 2023-26i

December 20th, 2023

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
 DCF Area Administrators
 Child Placing Agency Directors
 Child Welfare Agency Directors
 County Departments of Community Programs Directors
 County Departments of Human Services Directors
 County Departments of Social Services Directors
 Group Home Providers
 Private Child Placing Agencies
 Residential Care Center Providers
 Shelter Care Providers
 Tribal Chairpersons

From: John Elliott
 Deputy Administrator

Re: **Check Status in eWISACWIS**

PURPOSE

A recent review of eWISACWIS indicates that there are a significant number of checks that are not being moved from In Process, Pending, and Pending Release status to Outstanding status. This results in lost title IV-E claiming.

BACKGROUND

Title IV-E is the federal reimbursement program for Child Welfare services, and the accurate and timely entry of financial data into the eWISACWIS system allows the State to claim the maximum amount of title IV-E funding to support the Children and Families Allocation (CFA) provided to counties.

Wisconsin’s title IV-E claiming structure relies on financial data entered into eWISACWIS. The accurate and timely submission of this county data assures that DCF can:

- Increase the amount of title IV-E reimbursement
- Increase the accuracy of federal claim submissions
- Reduce the amount of prior quarter adjustments
- Reduce the risk of LAB and Children’s Bureau audit findings

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Federal regulations require increasing prior quarter adjustments to be reported by DCF within 2 years (8 quarters) of the last day of the fiscal quarter in which the expenditure was made. There is no deadline for the submission of decreasing prior quarter adjustments.





Currently there are four focus areas:

- Pending Checks
 - Pending Check status is when the payment has been processed through the initial financial batch run and is scheduled for mailing. When a check is in this status, a county can cancel the payment and the mailing address can be updated.
- Pending Release
 - Checks are put in this status when the user uses the Release Function within eWisACWIS. This functionality gives the county greater control over their payment/check output. A check will not move through the different check stages until the county has manually indicated that it should. Counties have the ability to decide and set which types of checks should use the Release Function.
- In Process Checks
 - The 'Check Write' batch moves the check from Pending status to In Process status. Once a check has reached the In Process status, there is an expectation (for the purpose of title IV-E claiming) that the check amounts are accurate, and that check numbers and dates will be applied to the In Process check. Note: The check status will remain In Process until a check number and check date are applied to that check. Once a check number and date are recorded for that check, the status will move from In Process to Outstanding.
 - In Process is an interim status between Pending and Outstanding. There is an expectation (because of title IV-E claiming processes) that the check will have accurate amounts and that check numbers and dates will be applied to it. Every check must move from In Process to Outstanding status to be included in the title IV-E calculation and reimbursed when the Trust Account Draw Down batch runs.
 - There should be no checks held in the In Process status.
 - If a check needs to be cancelled or otherwise maintained, the check needs to be moved into the Outstanding status and handled appropriately from there.
- Outstanding
 - This is the status a check will remain in after check dates and numbers have been uploaded unless some other manual action is taken on the check. This status means the check/payment has been physically cut but does not necessarily mean that the check has cleared the bank or been cashed by the provider.
 - A check that is in an Outstanding status has check numbers and dates recorded. The check number and check date correspond with the actual check number and the date of the actual check processing. Note: Once a check has reached an Outstanding status it can be used for reimbursement in Trust Accounts and will ultimately be figured into the title IV-E claiming calculations.

Counties can review their quarterly financial metric numbers by using the following guide:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/financial/financial-metrics.pdf>



As part of the Department's Subrecipient Contract Monitoring efforts, DCF reviewed the portions of the State and County Contract that directly relate to the title IV-E Program. DCF recently held meetings with several counties across the State. Upon completion of these meetings, some common themes emerged. Below are these themes, along with suggestions on how to mitigate the issue.

1. Manual entry
 - a. Several counties are still processing checks through eWiSACWIS via manual entry. The most common reason stated was that they had switched vendors and the interface had not been developed or set up yet.
 - i. If your county is currently entering in checks via manual entry, it is advised to start the process of putting an interface into place as soon as possible.
2. Placements made in error
 - a. Many counties did not know that when a placement is made in error and corrected, eWiSACWIS generates a new payment line. This payment line must be maintained in eWiSACWIS. The county will need to look at each of these checks to determine the appropriate action for maintaining the check.
 - i. This is a preventable issue. County staff can maintain the check during the Pre-Payment stage or when the check is in Pending status, prior to the check moving into In Process status.
 1. The Pre-Payment stage encompasses the last three business days of the month. This stage should be utilized to review payments and ensure their accuracy prior to the payment batches running. If any payment amounts are incorrect, modifications can be made to the placement, rate setting, etc. to allow the payment to process correctly when the payment batches run.
3. Training
 - a. Some counties reported that the time that their number of In Process checks increased correlated with staff turnover and indicated a lack of training or understanding of the process.
 - i. Please see the resources outlined below and contact the eWiSACWIS help desk with any questions that arise.
 - b. Several out-of-state facilities are missing the FEIN which leaves the check in Pending status.
 - i. Counties will need to enter the FEIN into the Provider Maintenance area in eWiSACWIS.
 - c. Many counties reported a lack of training in general regarding their financial interface and county financial processes.
 - i. While DCF cannot provide training on an individual county's interface, below are resources to assist with understanding the requirements of eWiSACWIS regarding check maintenance.



At this time, we are asking that your county look at the following:

- Checks and Payments Maintenance page in eWiSACWIS
- Identify any checks with Pending, Pending Release, and In Process statuses
- Research why they are not already in Outstanding status, and move them to Outstanding
- Once in Outstanding status, take appropriate action to cancel checks identified as errors. The primary focus should be on checks dated 7/1/2021 –current.

Below are available resources to assist in staff training and correcting these issues:

- Financial videos: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/training/videos>
There is a section dedicated to financial processes:



- Financial manuals:
 - Checks and Payments Maintenance: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/quick-reference-guides/financial/checks-and-payments-maintenance.pdf>
 - Pending Checks: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/financial/pending-checks.pdf>
 - Pending Release Checks: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/financial/pending-release-checks.pdf>
 - In Process Checks: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/financial/in-process-checks.pdf>
 - Includes information on the two methods for moving a check to outstanding status
 - Includes a list of helpful reports
 - Outstanding Overpayments: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/financial/overpayments.pdf>
 - Includes information on how to rectify overpayments
 - Includes a list of helpful reports
 - Trust Accounts: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/financial/trust-accounts.pdf>
 - Includes general information on trust account maintenance
 - Includes a list of helpful reports



DCF staff are available to answer questions or provide technical assistance, though counties that continue to not meet parameters set as part of this process will be contacted directly and may be required to submit a corrective action plan.

Please send any questions you may have or specific items you would like assistance with to the following email: dcfiv-eprogram@wisconsin.gov

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Amy Vietze, Title IV-E Program Coordinator
Bureau of Compliance, Research and Analytics
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MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>