



## Benchmark 282 – Family Maintenance Worker

It is a legislative requirement that income assistance clients seek maintenance income if they are entitled to it. Income assistance clients are not required to go to the Family Maintenance Workers (FMW) for assistance in receiving maintenance, they may go to legal aid or retain their own legal counsel.

The FMW program is organized in two ways – all FMW's for an area are in one office with a dedicated supervisor, or individual FMW's positions are located in district offices and report to an Income Assistance Supervisor. The benchmark position is in a specialized FMW office.

The FMW will try to get voluntary consent orders from respondents by negotiation. If this is unsuccessful they will prepare the necessary documents to initiate court action. FMW's have some guidelines in determining the amount of support they should be negotiating for (e.g., federal child support guidelines and amounts normally awarded by the courts) but there is still some judgement in determining a respondent's financial status and ability to pay.

It is often difficult to determine maintenance issue because clients may have many children, by different fathers, or may not know for sure who the father is. They may also already have some consent orders.

An important part of the job is counselling clients on violence issues and ensuring clients have safety measures in place. If there are any concerns about possible violence to clients as a result of pursuing maintenance, the file is closed by the FMW.

This position is equivalent to Benchmark #58 – Financial Assistance Worker, except in Factor 5 – Work Assignments. The topic position is stronger in Work Assignments (E vs. D) because of the latitude and flexibility in negotiating with respondents, in closing files, and in initiating court action or paternity testing.

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