



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2003-13
April 24, 2003

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From: *cb* Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: Random Moment Sampling (RMS)

Background

RMS was implemented to comply with TANF federal regulations regarding state cost allocation plans. RMS is a technique for scientifically determining the amount of effort spent by a group of employees on various activities. The results of the sampling yield the proper allocation of administrative costs to the appropriate benefiting programs. The process involves the RMS Coordinator at Central Office calling TAO AU Managers and asking questions about the activity they were engaged in prior to receiving the call. Each day, 40 observation forms are randomly selected, 20 observations to be completed each morning and 20 observations to be completed each afternoon. Through the cooperative efforts of the AU Managers and the RMS Coordinators, observation forms are completed both accurately and in a timely manner.

RMS Requirement

Federal regulations require the Department to determine administrative expenses for federal and state programs. This is achieved through the Random Moment Sampling process. The RMS process requires completing observation forms on AU Managers who provide direct services to recipients. The sample does not include managerial staff, supervisory staff who do not have direct service responsibility or clerical staff. AU Managers responsible only for FS AUs are excluded because their administrative costs are automatically charged to the Food Stamp Program.

**RMS
Requirement
(continued)**

RMS can be done through several methods, including face-to-face observations and/or telephone observations. The Department chose telephone observations as the method to comply with the federal requirement because it is the least disruptive method to AU Managers. This is an ongoing process and will continue unless the federal government deems the results to be inaccurate or mandates a different method of determining the administrative expenses.

If telephone observations are deemed inaccurate, the federal government may require the Department to implement a less desirable method of RMS such as face-to-face observations, or to implement 100 percent time-keeping. One hundred percent time-keeping would require every AU Manager to record his or her activities every fifteen minutes, beginning at the start of every workday and ending at the end of every workday. This would be intrusive and time consuming for AU Managers and as such would be administratively burdensome.

RMS Objective

The RMS Coordinators' objective is to complete the observations timely and accurately, not to measure work performance or attendance. This objective can only be met through the cooperative efforts of the AU Managers and the RMS Coordinators.

RMS Process

RMS must be conducted throughout each work day, without regard to news events, weather conditions, approaching holidays, or any other factor.

The selection of who will be called and at what time is computer-generated and is completely random. Consequently, it is possible that one AU Manager may be called more often than another but everyone is subject to the same probability of selection. An AU Manager can be called only once a week. Once the AU Manager has been selected, the name can not be selected again until at least five days have elapsed.

AU Managers will be asked questions about what they were working on in the minute just prior to receiving the call. It is important that all of the RMS Coordinator's questions be answered. No confidentiality rules are broken by cooperating with this process. If the AU Manager is working on a specific AU, the AU's SSN must also be provided to the RMS Coordinator.

To ensure the accuracy of the RMS process, it is important that the telephone calls be completed as close to the "random moment" as possible. If an AU Manager does not answer the telephone when called, the RMS Coordinator will leave a message on his or her voice-mail requesting that the call be returned as soon as possible. If the call is not returned within one day, the RMS Supervisor may call or e-mail the TAO Director or Assistant Director seeking help completing the interview.

**RMS Process
(continued)**

The Random Moment Sampling Unit telephone number is 617-348-5025.

If an AU Manager is not in the TAO at the time he or she is selected to participate in RMS, the RMS Coordinator requires a reason for the absence, such as illness, vacation, jury duty, lunch, training, flextime schedule, etc. The reason is necessary to monitor the integrity of the sampling process. For example, if a large number of observations occur during lunch breaks or during “flex” hours, it may be necessary to alter the hours of the RMS process or to increase the sample size to ensure the sample is statistically valid. If the AU Manager’s voice-mail indicates the reason he or she is out of the office on the date he or she is selected to participate, the RMS Coordinator can complete the observation accordingly. It is not necessary to provide a specific reason for the absence, such as dental appointment, flu, family crisis, etc.

**Random
Moment
Sampling Staff**

The Central Office Random Moment Sampling staff are:

Rita (Terry) Ribbin, Coordinator
Maryann Prokos, Alternate Coordinator
Lai Yee (Tammy) Chan, Alternate Coordinator
Joanne Valente, Alternate Coordinator

Telephone observations can only be successful with the cooperation of every AU Manager. The Random Moment Sampling staff appreciate your continued cooperation in the RMS process.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.
