

Annual Foster Care Social Services Time Study General Instructions for Finance Office

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is required to conduct an annual time study of social services workers to address the reimbursement requirements of the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). To assure that the State, the local departments of social services and, most importantly, the children in care continue to receive the appropriate amount of federal funds, each child care agency is required to conduct an annual time study of staff assigned to the social services function. The purpose of the time study is to identify the amount of time that social services workers use for specific activities. The functions and definitions used in the time study are substantially similar to those used by the State in determining the amount of time local district workers spend on federally fundable activities.

The results of the time study are relevant to programs that have a Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR) per diem set by OCFS. **Results will be used only to allocate activities to Federal programs.** An annual time study is not a review of worker or program performance. The outcome of this time study does not affect the rates that are established by OCFS for the foster care programs operated by voluntary agencies.

The documents listed below for conducting the Time Study can be accessed through the Internet at the following OCFS website:

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/Rates/FosterCare/TimeStudy>

- General Instructions for Finance Office (this document)
- Executive Director Letter
- Instructions for Workers
- Activities Example
- Worker Activity Forms

Selecting workers who are required to complete the time study

Workers who are required to complete the Time Study Reports are those reported in the Social Services salary sections of the annual Statewide Standards of Payment (SSOP) filing by the agency. This includes workers who have their salary amounts reported in Account 01B of the OCFS-FC-2652, Report of Actual Expenditures and in the Social Services expense category of OCFS-FC-2668, Employee Distribution, for a residential or family-based foster care program funded through the MSAR per diem.

- Social services workers assigned **both** to regular foster care activities and to activities paid for with special initiative funding outside of the foster care MSAR per diem **are required to complete the MSAR Time Study**. Code 51, explained below, **is** applicable for these social services workers. Finance officers should review completed time studies to assure that the coding is correct.

- Social services workers assigned **only** to regular foster care activities paid for with foster care funds through the program MSAR, and not paid for with any special initiative funding that is not part of the regular foster care funds subject to the State’s MSAR process, **are required to complete the MSAR Time Study**. Code 51, explained below, **is not** applicable for these workers and should not be used at all by these workers.
- Social services workers assigned **only** to perform activities paid for with special initiative funding that is not part of the foster care MSAR per diem **should be advised NOT to complete the MSAR Time Study**.
- Employees in **non-social services functions** (e.g., child care, child support, medical, maintenance, or administrative staff) **should be advised NOT to complete the MSAR Time Study**.
- Directors or Assistant Directors of Social Services, although reported in the Social Services salary sections, **are not required** to participate in the time study.
- Social services supervisors, whose primary function is supervision of social services employees, **are not required** to participate in the time study.

Each agency must maintain documentation regarding social services employees included or excluded as participants in the time study and must provide OCFS with this documentation upon request.

Use of Time Study Code 51 for non-MSAR funded activities

- Social services workers engaged in case-related activities that are funded through a special initiative or other program could include such activities paid for as preventive, aftercare, post-adoption, independent living, or medical services, which have reimbursement mechanisms that are separate and distinct from the foster care MSAR per diem.
- As an example, a voluntary foster care agency may receive a separate allocation from a department of social services to fund pre- and /or post-discharge activities for children. (**Note:** In such instances, such activities must be reported in a program cost center that is separate and distinct from the foster care program’s Maximum State Aid Rate.)
- Any and all foster care pre-discharge activities **paid for with foster care funds** (i.e., paid via the MSAR per diem), should be coded in the same manner as any other activity of a social services worker. For example, “37” or “41” would be used for case planning or case supervision related to pre-discharge, and the codes for “42” or “48” would be used when pre-discharge services are being provided, and so on.
- Activities occurring during a trial-discharge period of less than six months (or longer if approved in a court order), for a child who remains in the legal

custody of a public official (commissioner or designee) during that period, may be funded either as part of regular foster care or through special initiative funding. If funded as regular foster care, the appropriate code (based on the nature of the activity) should be entered. If funded with other than foster care funds through a special initiative, any activity should be coded as “51.”

- Title IV-E foster care funds may not be used for activities subsequent to final discharge from care. Any such activity must be coded as provision of services to individuals “42N.”

Reviewing reports prior to entry in SSOP

Review the activity status of the participating workers:

- Advise social service workers who are assigned only to activities paid for with special initiative funding outside of foster care funds subject to the State’s MSAR process that they **should not** complete the MSAR Time Study. Provide documentation to OCFS that briefly describes the special initiative payment arrangement for these workers.
- Advise social services workers who are assigned to both regular foster care activities and activities paid for with special initiative funding outside of foster care funds subject to the State’s MSAR process to complete the MSAR Time Study and to use Code 51 for activities that are funded by means other than the MSAR per diem. Review the use of Code 51 by these workers, and provide documentation that briefly describes the allocation method and sources of funding for Code 51 activities.

Review each participating worker’s completed Time Study Report to confirm that:

- The worker’s name, signature and other information have been completely filled in on both pages.
- Boxes with starting and ending times have been completed for each day and are in 15- minute increments.
- Boxes with starting and ending times match the starting and ending times recorded in the activity boxes for each day, as follows:
 - If the worker’s starting time is 8:30 AM, the first box completed should be “8:30-8:45 AM” **not** “8:15-8:30 AM.”
 - If the worker’s ending time is 5:00 PM, the last box completed should be “4:45-5:00 PM” **not** “5:00-5:15 PM.”

- The “Total Boxes Completed” box is filled in and matches the number of activity boxes completed for each day.
- The “Total Boxes Completed” box equals the total hours worked, based on worker reported starting and ending times and including any authorized meal break or leave time, multiplied by four.
- The total number of activity codes in the Time Study Activity Summary (pg. 2) matches the number of codes reported for each day.

Entering and submitting the time study results in SSOP

- The Time Study Summary Report must be submitted online through the Statewide Standards of Payment (SSOP) system. Excel or PDF files will no longer be accepted as complete submissions.
- An agency finance employee with an existing active SSOP user account is expected to enter the Time Study Summary Report data. OCFS **will not** issue additional logins for the time study **unless** an employee with an existing SSOP user account has left the agency and the new user account is requested for that employee’s replacement.
- Although agency finance employees with SSOP user account may enter the Time Study Summary Report data into SSOP, the final submission must be submitted by the Executive Director. **SSOP is programmed to prevent any user other than the Executive Director from submitting the final Time Study Summary Report to OCFS.**

Further information and assistance

If you require further information or assistance with any aspect of the time study process, please contact the OCFS Bureau of Budget Management, State Aid Rates Unit at (518) 474-1361.