OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES AND TRAINING

HRA Policy Bulletin #2023-034
Date: July 13, 2023 **DISTRIBUTION:** ***ALL STAFF***

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY, EMPLOYMENT, ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SEAMS)

(This HRA Policy Bulletin Replaces PB#19-45-EMP)

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy bulletin is to inform Career Services Providers and staff, and Family Independence Administration (FIA) staff of the implementation of the new case management system, the Self-Sufficiency, Employment, Assessment & Management System (SEAMS).

Effective June 16, 2023, SEAMS replaced the New York City, Work, Accountability and You (NYCWAY) system as the primary system of record for HRA's employment services.

This policy bulletin is informational for all other staff.

■ ENGAGEMENT

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) is transitioning to client engagement after a several-year hiatus necessitated to ensure the health and safety of staff and clients related to the COVID-19 pandemic. During that period, engagement opportunities were offered on a voluntary basis, and were provided primarily through virtual or remote options.

Hybrid Appointment and Engagement Options

HRA has updated its means of providing services to applicants/participants to incorporate these client-friendly remote options. Going forward, the agency, including Career Services (CS) and FIA will integrate a hybrid approach for providing services. For most of their mandatory appointments and/or activities, applicants/participants will have a choice to attend either in-person at the Benefits Access Centers (BAC), Training Assessment Group (TAG) and provider sites, or remotely/virtually by using telephone, or where available, a computer or other electronic device.

CS providers, HRA staff, and TAG staff will contact applicants/participants via telephone calls to inform them that services can be provided in-person or remotely.

Remote and Virtual Services

Providers will offer and provide remote / virtual, and in-person services. If virtual or remote work activities are offered, the provider will confirm that the applicant/participant has:

- the computer skills needed to complete the assignment virtually.
- dependable access to a computer and the internet.
- a place at home to do job searches.
- available phone minutes to call employers, child care, etc.

The provider may suggest resources such as the library, or distribute loaner laptops to participate in remote activities, if available. Refer to HRA-PB-2021-045 for information on the laptop loaner program.

In-Person Services

In-person services must be provided for applicants/participants who walk into a BAC or provider site with a referral from HRA.

Providers cannot deny in-person services to clients who have a referral from HRA, and may offer applicants/participants staggered office hours to provide technological needs and grant them access to PCs at their facilities to engage in on-line/virtual services.

■ EMPLOYABILITY ASSESSMENT (EA) / EMPLOYMENT PLAN (EP)

Applicants/Participants in receipt of CA must have the EA/EP completed and participate in approved work activities (once mandatory engagement resumes), if not otherwise exempt, as a condition of eligibility for CA. The EA/EP is used by HRA to gather relevant information about a CA applicant's/participant's strengths, barriers to obtaining employment, and to help the individual or family become economically secure. The EA/EP assesses the CA applicant's/participant's progress towards the goal of finding and sustaining employment as the foundation towards self-sufficiency.

The Job Opportunity Specialist (JOS)/ Worker must initiate an EA/EP for all CA household members 18 years of age and older, including emancipated minors 16-17 years old, as well as dependent minors who are 16-17 years old but who are not attending secondary school (high school) or its equivalent, and for participants, if an EA/EP was not previously initiated.

Note: For detailed policy eligibility and engagement requirements for individuals aged 19 through 24, refer to PB#17-30-EMP.

Staff will interview applicants/participants either in-person at the site or over the telephone to complete the EA/EP.

The EA/EP, accessed through the new Self-Sufficiency Employment and Assessment Management System (SEAMS), gathers the following information:

- family circumstances, including the special needs of a child
- child care or other supportive services needed
- educational level, including literacy and English language proficiency
- skills and prior work experience
- basic skills and proficiency skills
- training and vocational preferences

A CA applicant/participant may be exempt from work activities when an EA/EP is completed, and barriers are identified. Below are examples of some barriers.

- Special Assessment
- Needed at Home
- Over 60 years of age
- Caretaker of child under 3 months of age
- Pregnant – 8 months or more
- Refugee exemption
- In receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

■ SELF-SUFFICIENCY EMPLOYMENT AND ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Self-Sufficiency Employment and Assessment Management System (SEAMS) is a consolidated case management system to manage employability for HRA applicants/participants. SEAMS is a single source system that interfaces with a number of HRA's systems, such as NYCWAY, Imaging, the HRA One Viewer, the Automated Child Care Information System (ACCIS), and other systems and provides support to HRA/FIA programs eliminating the need to log-in to multiple systems. SEAMS will share data with these systems and function as the primary system of record for HRA's employment services.

SEAMS provides agency and vendor staff with one system for:

- case management
- employment services
- management functions
- audit processing
- monitoring capabilities
- reports

SEAMS Sign-In

Staff can access SEAMS by clicking on "**Web Apps**" on the DSS intranet home page, and then select "**HRA Web Apps**".

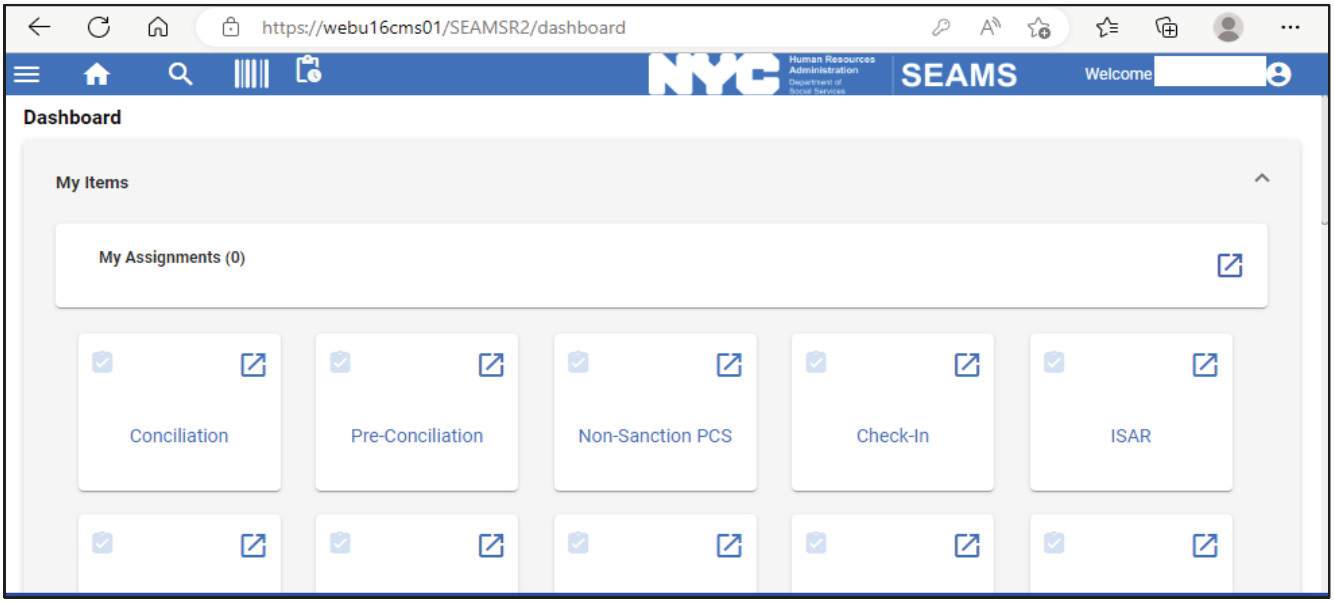
This will take them to the “**Web-based Applications**” page where they will select **“Self-Sufficiency Employment Assessment Management” (SEAMS)**.

At the sign-in screen, the user will enter their username and password and click on Login.

If nothing happens, the user should click on Reset and re-enter their username and password.

Dashboard (Home) Screen

After signing into SEAMS, the Dashboard is the first screen that users will see.

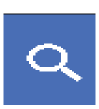


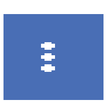
The title bar at the top of the page is accessible on every screen in the system.

Icons found on the title bar and throughout the application:

 The SEAMS “Hamburger” icon – Contains a menu of worklists and reports.

 The Home icon – Returns user to the Dashboard.

 The Search icon – Performs client and general searches.

 The Action/View Ellipsis icon – Opens to a list of available action/view functions.

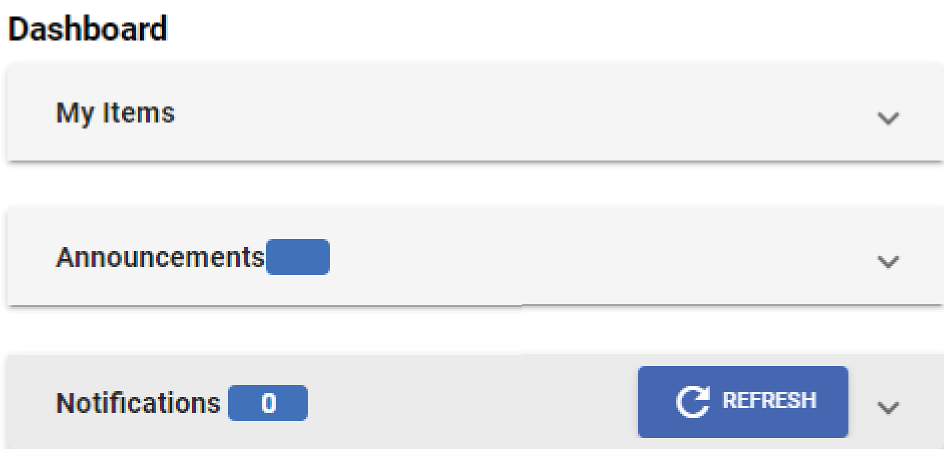
 The Expand View icon – Opens the folder on which it’s located. Allows access to log out, perform administrative functions, and switch user roles.

Dashboard Menu

The Dashboard Menu consists of three main items:

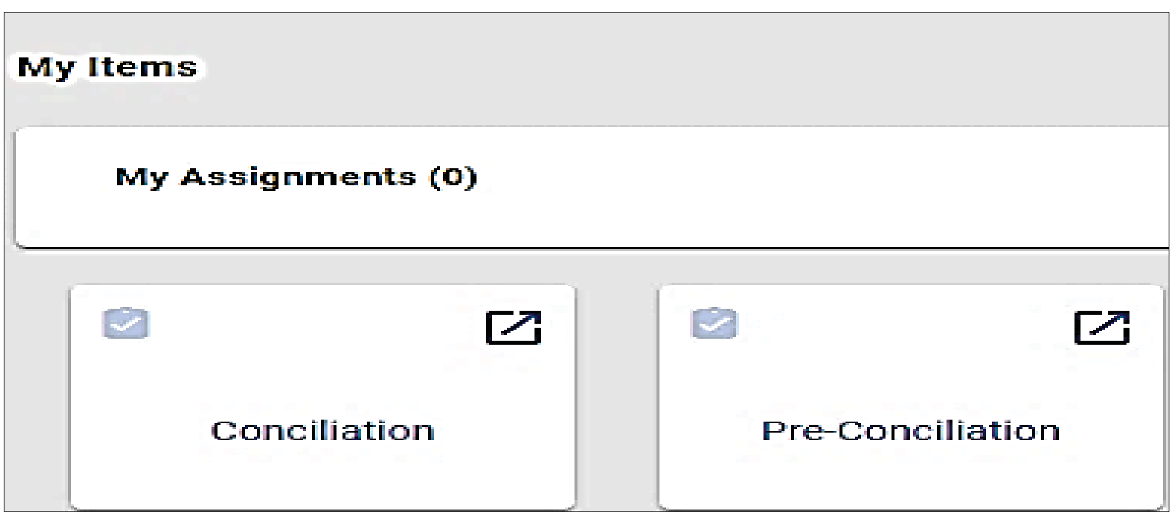
- **My Items** - contains worklists specific to user
- **Announcements** - announcements currently available
- **Notification** - notifications currently available

Clicking on the down arrows on the right will display information for each module.



Selecting **My Items** will display:

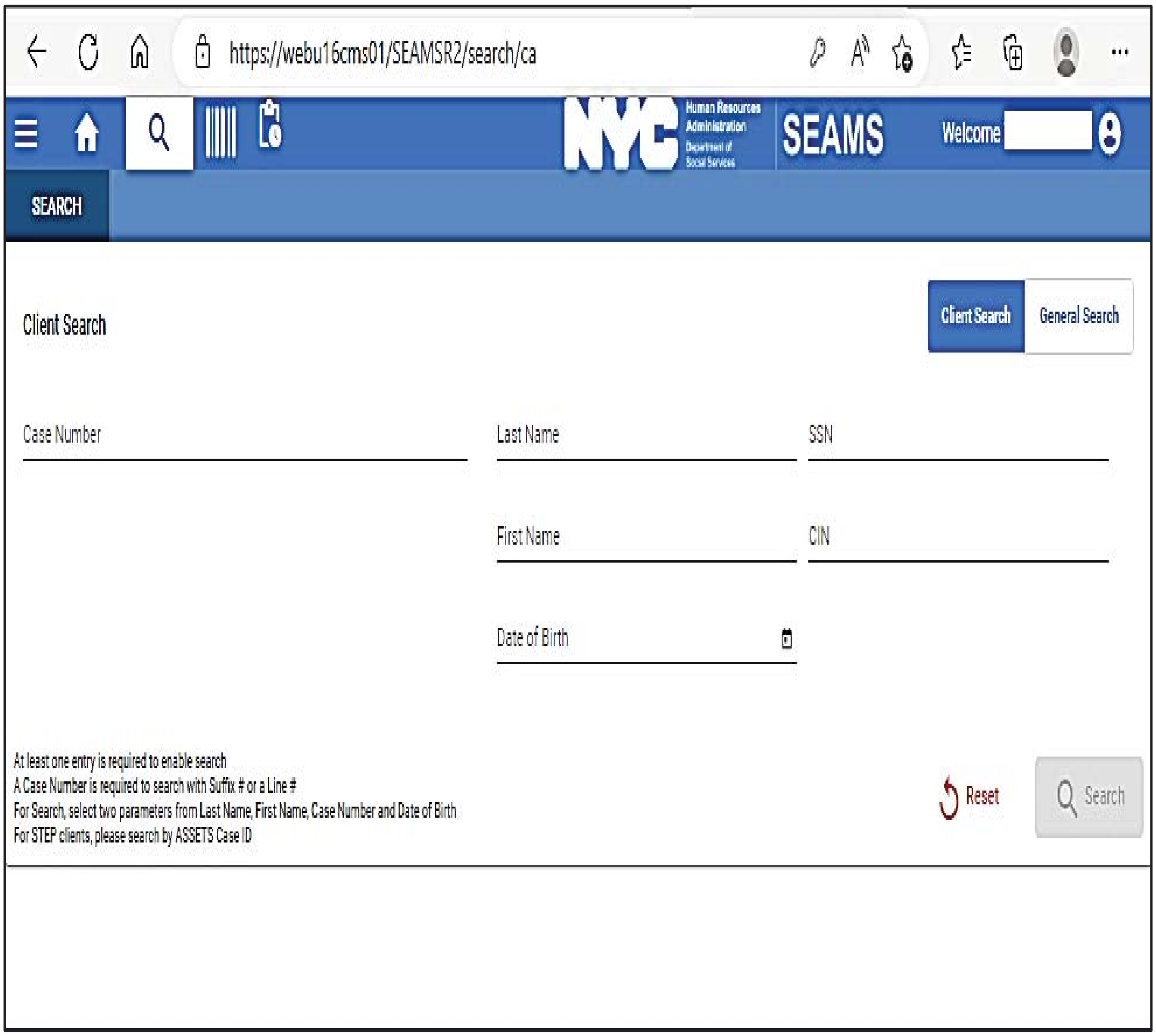
- **My Assignments** - indicates the number of cases assigned to the user.
- **Worklist** - a series of squares with specific worklists the user can open by clicking on the upper right-hand corner of each square.



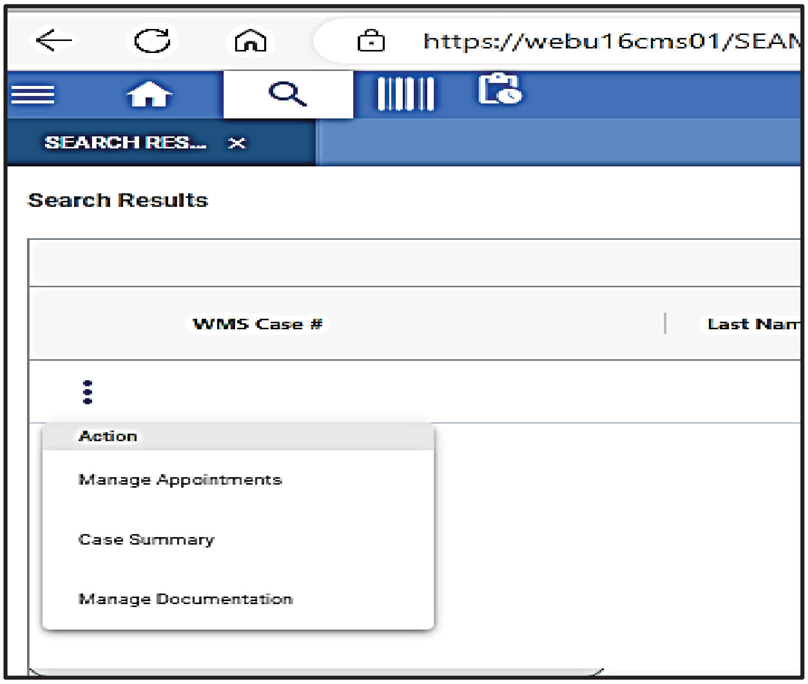
Search Function

Users can click on the Search icon to search for client by case number, first and last name, social security number (SSN), Client Identification Number (CIN), and date of birth (DOB).

Note: The Search icon on lower right corner will become enabled when sufficient data is entered.



Search Results



After entering search criteria, the results will display in the **Search Results** window. From the Action / View Ellipsis icon, the following actions can be performed:

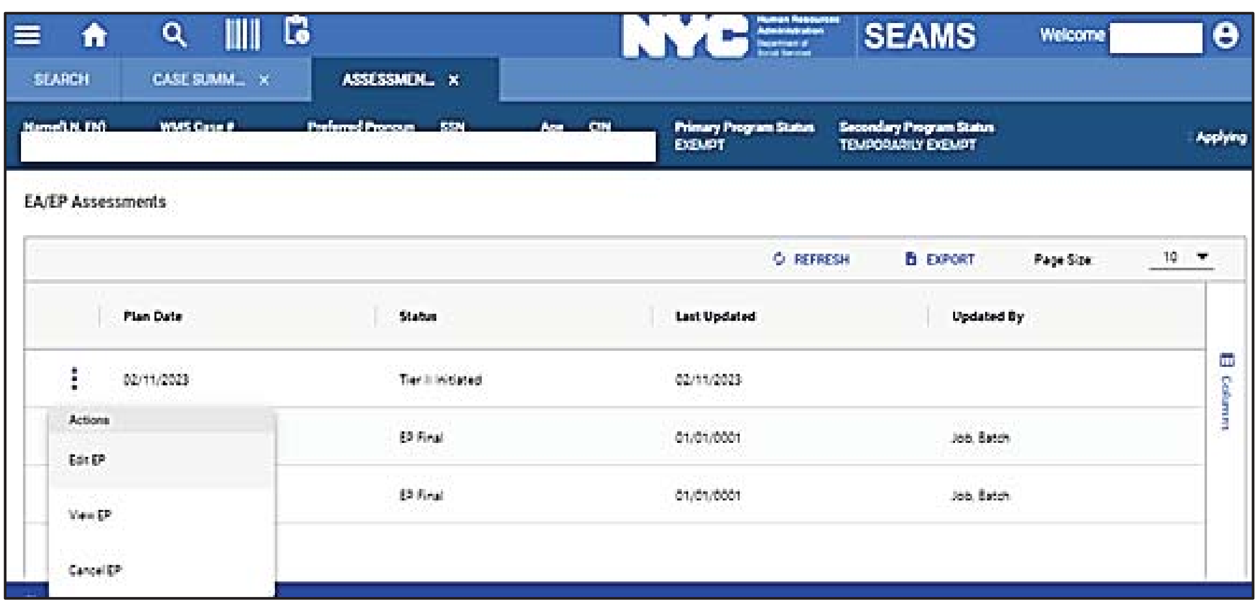
- Manage Appointments
- Case Summary
- Manage Documentation

Staff working with clients (JOS/Case managers/Case workers, etc.) are responsible for reviewing the client's case summary screen in SEAMS before meeting with a client.

EA/EP Assessments

To access the EA/EP Assessments, staff will navigate to the **Case Summary** screen and scroll down to **Assessments** on the right side. Click on **EA/EP** for the client.

Selecting **EA/EP** will display all the client's assessments, including the status, last updated, and the staff member that updated it. Staff can edit, view, or cancel an EA/EP by selecting the action from the Action/View menu.



Tier I Evaluation

HRA utilizes a 3-tier process for assessment. Tier 1 includes voluntary questions that will be answered on ACCESS HRA (AHRA). The Tier 1 Assessment includes tools to identify individuals who may need reasonable accommodations to comply with program requirements.

Tier II Evaluation

Clients in receipt of CA must have the EA/EP completed and participate in approved work activities, if not otherwise exempt, as a condition of eligibility for CA. The EA/EP is used by HRA to gather relevant information about a CA client's strengths, barriers to obtaining employment, and to help the family become economically secure. The EA/EP assesses the CA client's progress toward the goal of finding and sustaining employment as the foundation towards self-sufficiency.

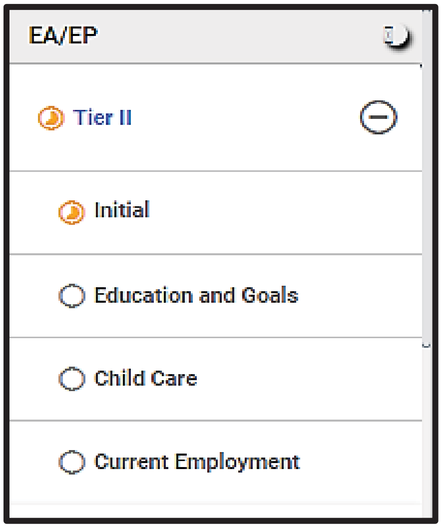
Staff must initiate an EA/EP for all CA household members 18 years of age and older, including emancipated minors 16-17 years old, and for participants, if an EA/EP was not previously initiated. Homebound individuals still do not need to have the EA/EP completed.

The EA/EP gathers the following information:

- family circumstances, including the special needs of a child;
- child care or other supportive services needed;
- educational level, including literacy and English language proficiency;
- skills and prior work experience;
- basic skills and proficiency skills;
- training and vocational preferences.

A CA client may be exempt from work activities when an EA/EP is completed, and barriers are selected. Refer to page 3 for examples of some barriers.

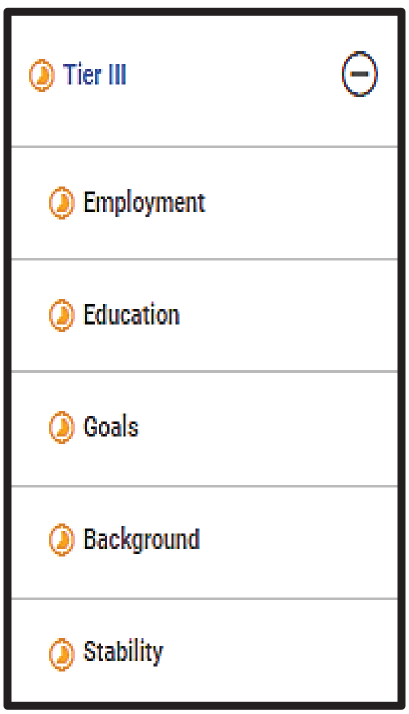
Staff will finalize an Exempted EP when minors are present in the household in the event child care services are needed. Staff will identify barriers, complete the Tier II and Tier III evaluation, make referrals, and conduct child care appointments and outreach.



The Tier II evaluation consists of:

- Initial: language preference and barriers
- Education and Goals: education history and career goals
- Child Care: Details on child care needs (if any)
- Current Employment: Employment status and if carfare is needed

Tier III Evaluation



The Tier III evaluation consists of:

- Employment: employment assessment, FIA3A history and updates (if needed)
- Education: Education history, testing and licenses/certificates
- Goals: skills and preferences
- Background: military, criminal, Administration for Children's Services (ACS), if any
- Stability: housing stability, financial counseling, safety information, community resource

FIA3A

An Earned Income FIA3A is completed for:

- Applicants applying for ongoing assistance who are reporting earned income.
- Participants who are reporting earned income between recertifications.
- Participants with an employment sanction who are providing verification that they are currently employed.

Note: If a case switches from a one-time emergency grant (ex: one-shot deal) to ongoing assistance and the individual is employed, an Earned Income FIA3A must be completed.

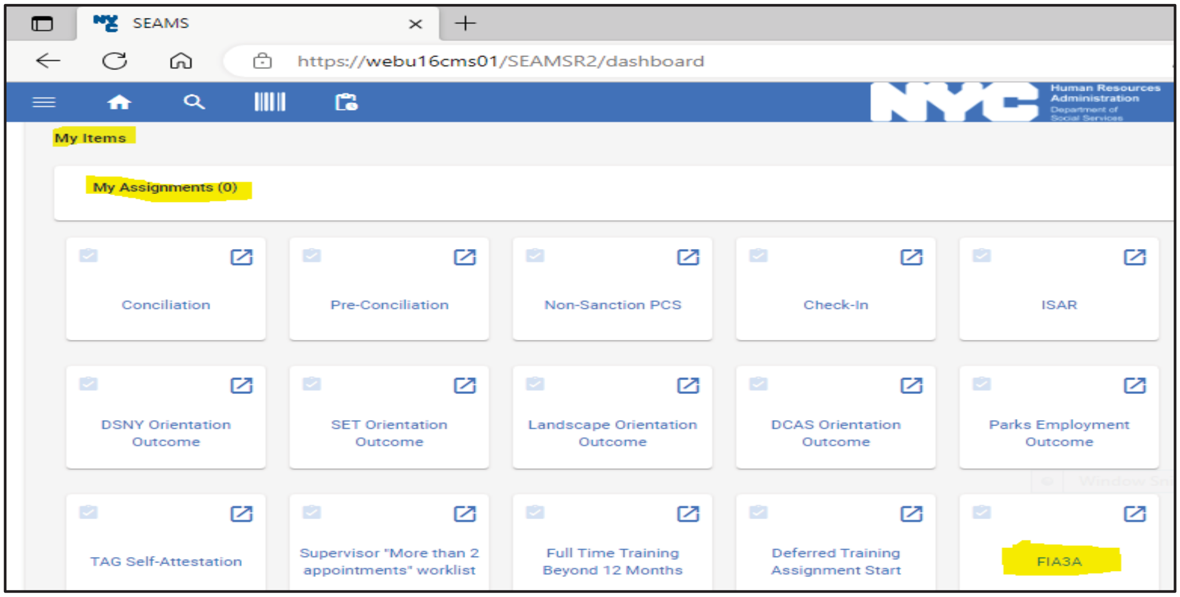
A Documentation Only FIA3A is completed for:

- Applicants:
  - non-citizen multi-suffix cases.

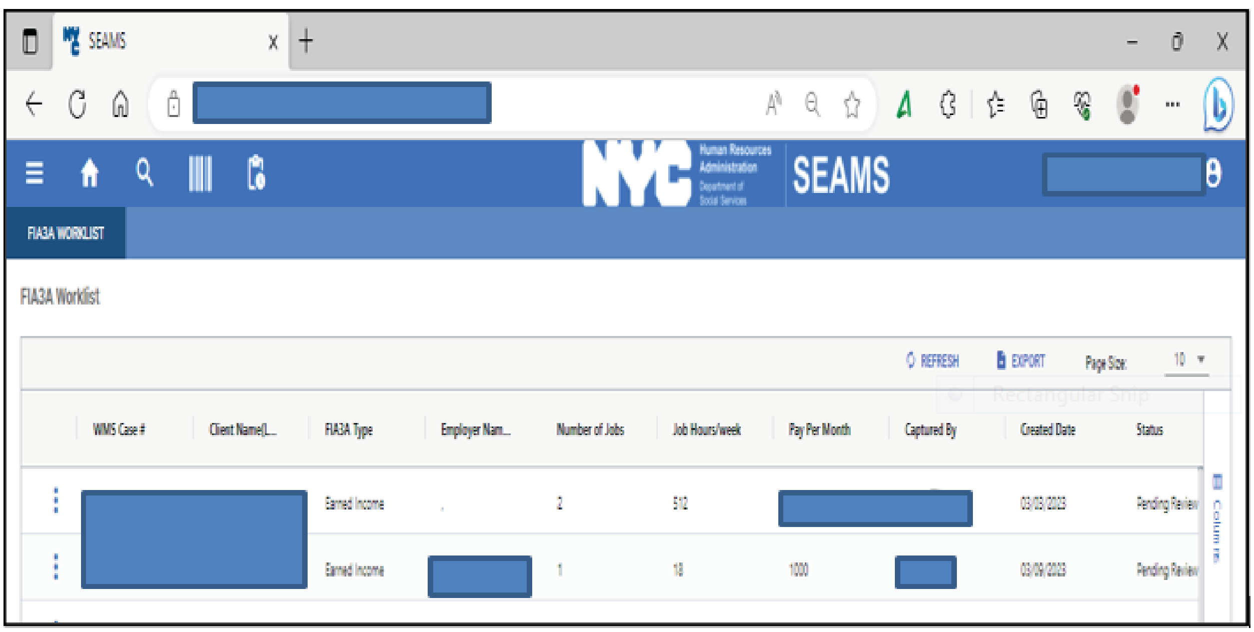
- Participants:
  - reporting income at a recertification interview.
  - who are employed students under the age of 21.
  - updating information where earned income is already budgeted and there is no change in income amount, but there are changes in the job details.
  - in a program such as Parks Opportunity Program (POP) or other programs administered though Business Link.
  - non-citizen multi-suffix cases.

Staff will sign into SEAMS, click on “My Items” and then select “My Assignments”.

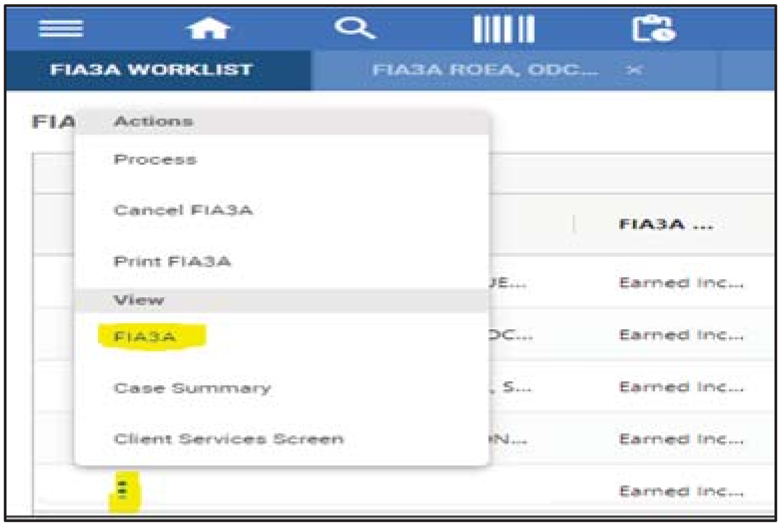
Click on **FIA3A.**



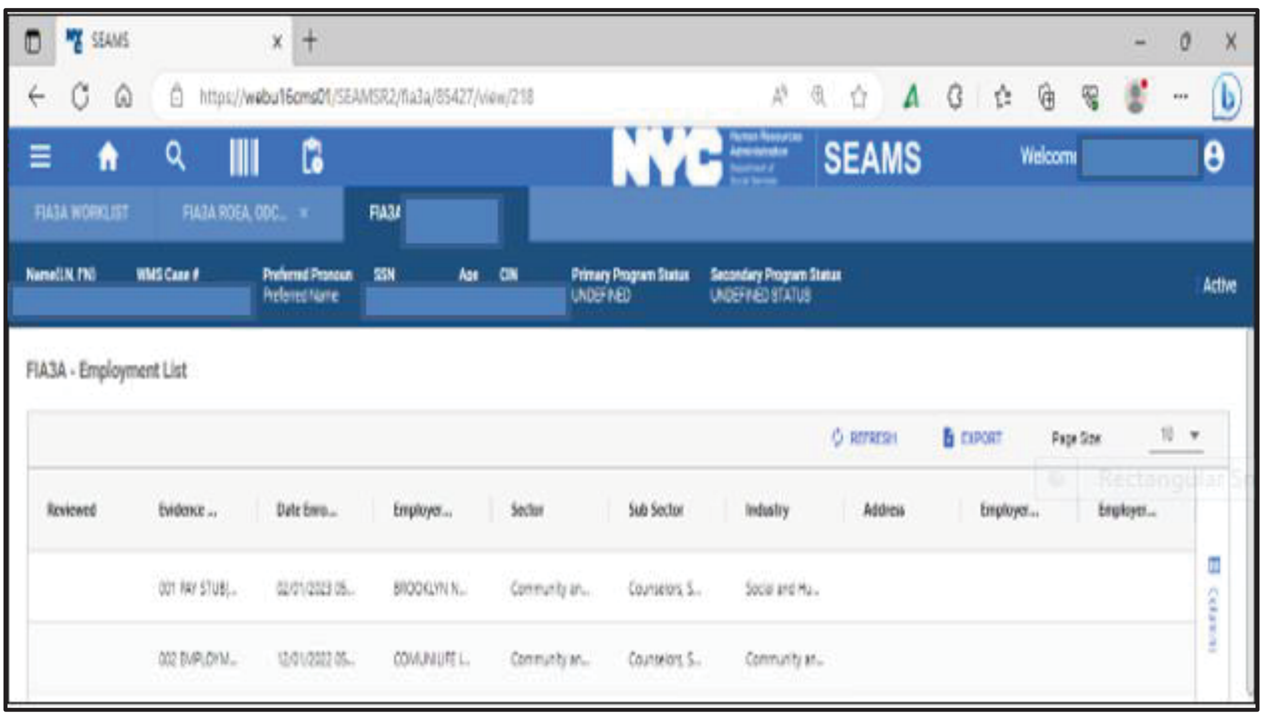
The **FIA3A** will list clients assigned to staff. It will also show the WMS case number, client name, FIA3A type, employer's name, number of jobs (up to 5 can be listed), hours worked per week, pay per month, who entered information, etc.



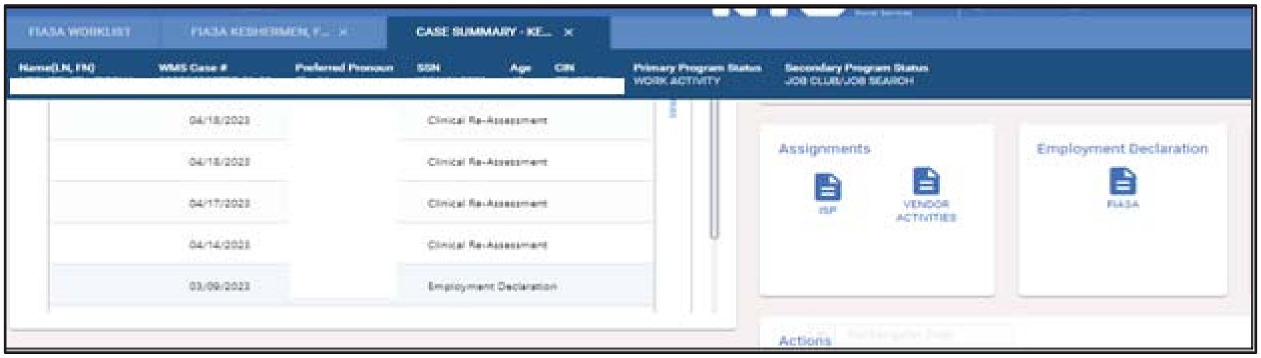
Staff can click on the Action/View Ellipsis icon to display a list of available action/view functions for each case.

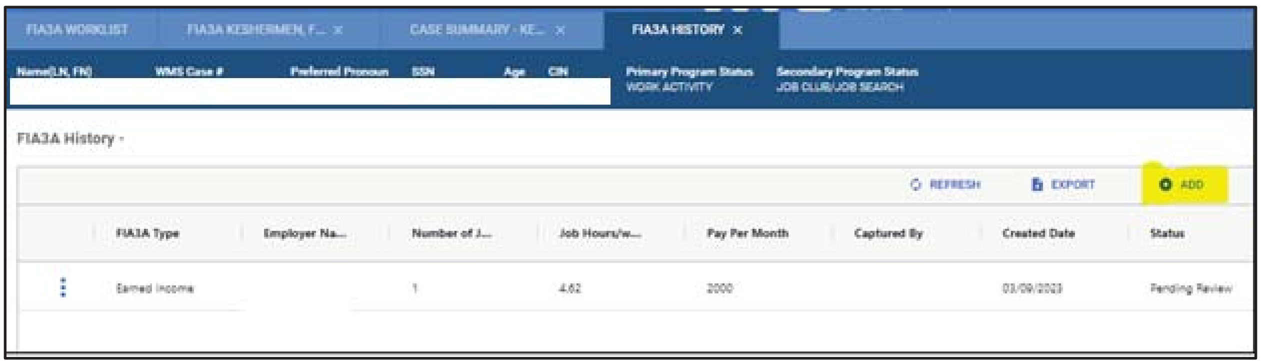


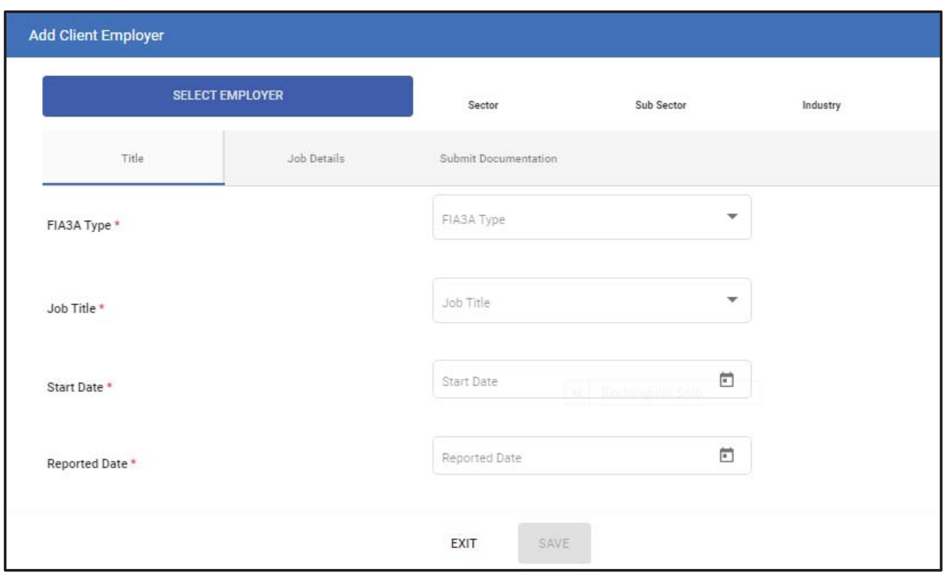
Select **FIA3A** to review the details for a selected case.



Selecting “Case Summary” in the Action/View Ellipsis allows staff to add a new approved employer under “Employment Declaration”.



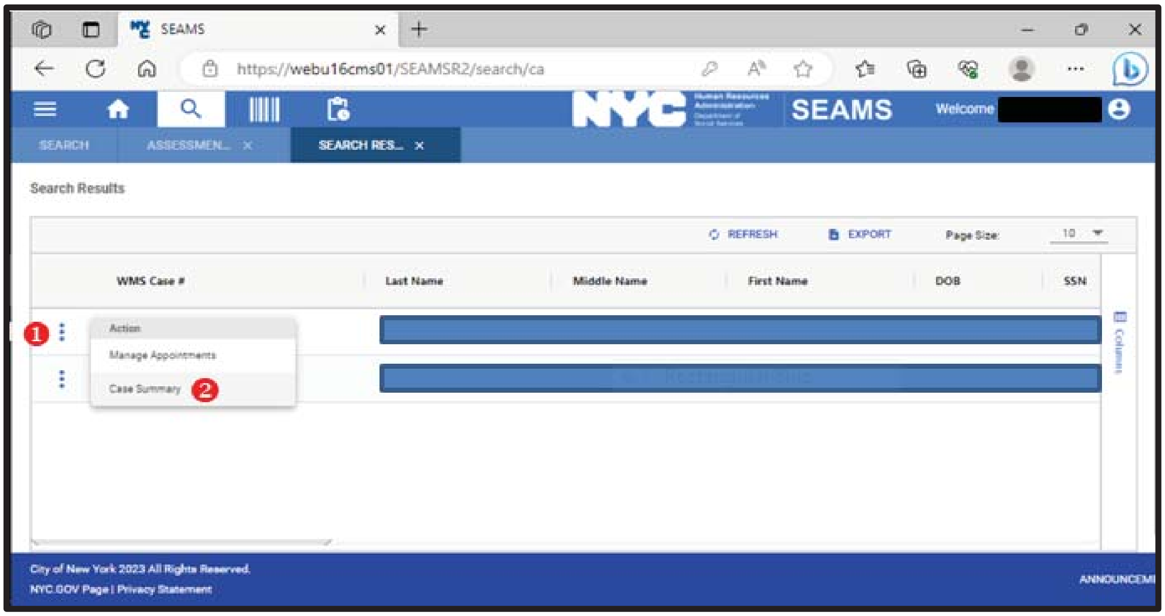




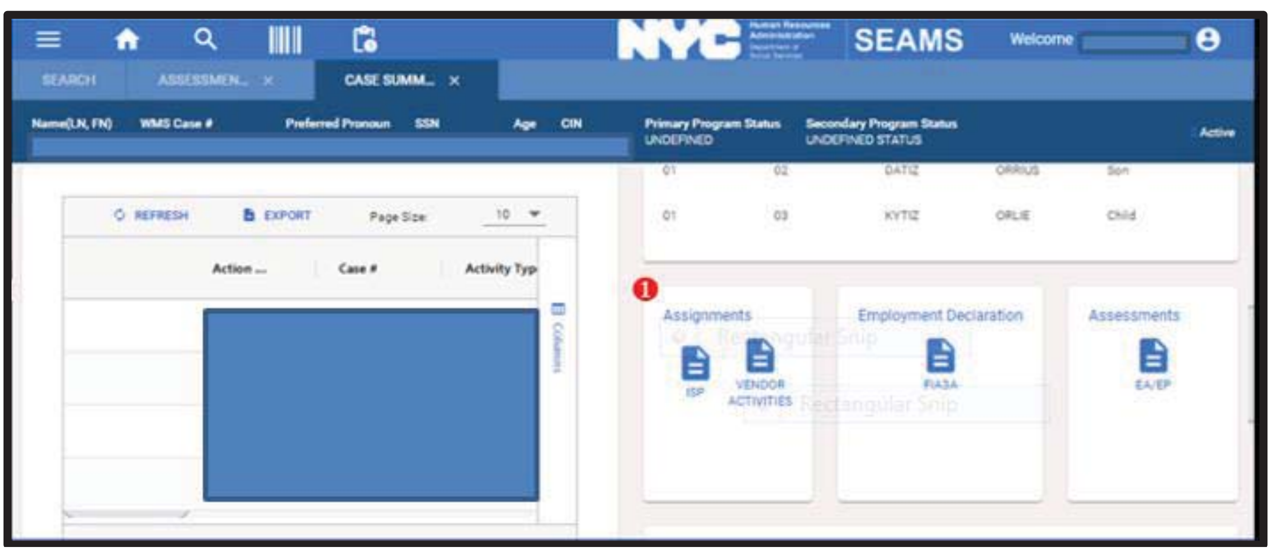
Individual Service Plan (ISP)

The HRA Individual Service Plan (ISP) includes the activities and services based on the client's unique goals and needs. The activities may include referrals to or enrollment in other services. Referrals, assignments, and next steps are found in the ISP.

Staff should click on the Action/View Ellipsis, ❶ then select Case Summary. ❷



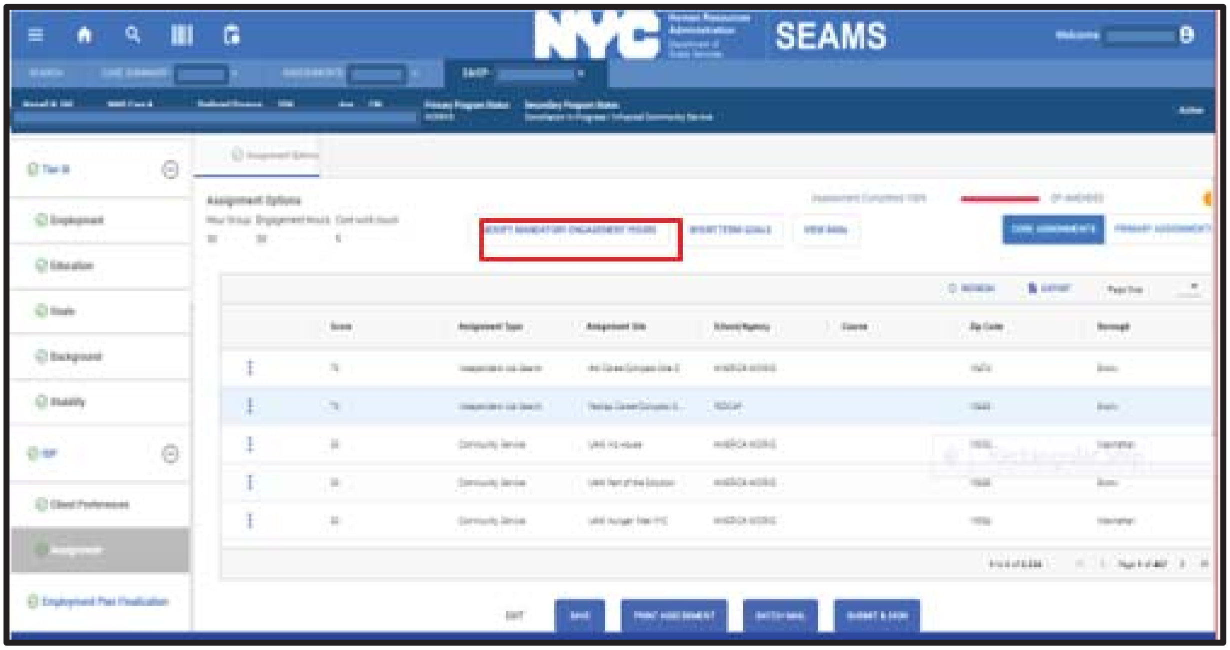
In the Case Summary screen, select "ISP" in the Assignments module ❶.



This screen displays all the assignments that the client is eligible to participate in. This information is based on the answers from the "Client Preferences" screen that the client filled out.

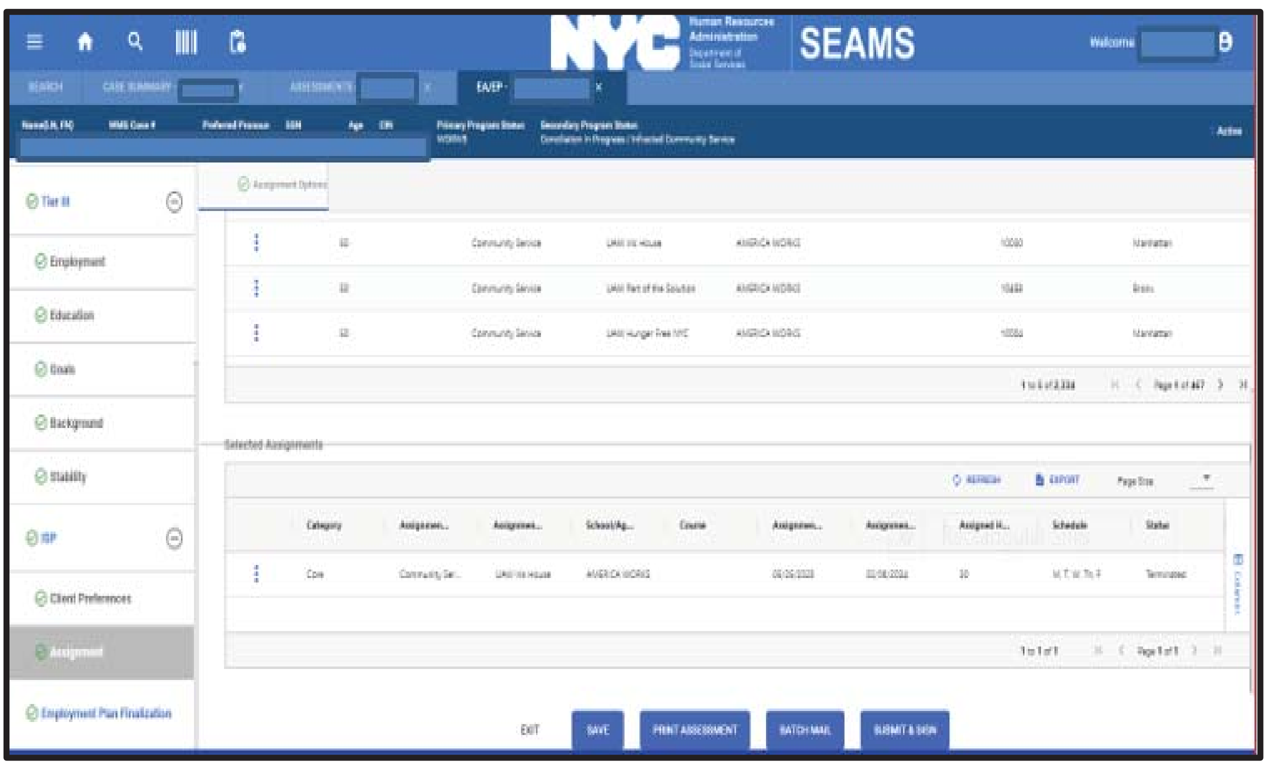
Client Preferences Screen

Staff can click on “Modify Mandatory Engagement Hours” to make any relevant updates.



After selecting “Modify Mandatory Engagement Hours”, staff will need to answer two questions.

This screen shows a selected assignment for the client.

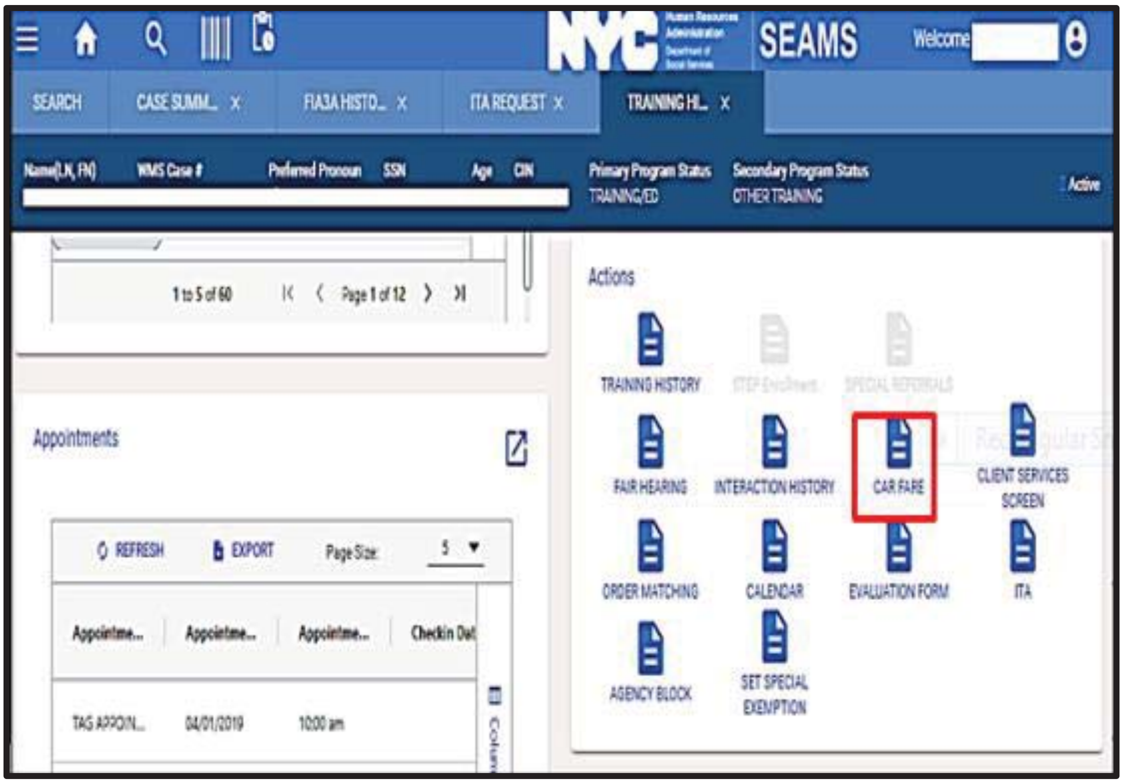


Carfare

All applicants/participants with an active assignment will get a MetroCard. They will receive a MetroCard at the initial appointment and then the vendor will provide the rest.

Staff can select “CARFARE” in SEAMS, from the worklist as well as when appointments and/or assignments are created.

Note: Carfare is handled outside of SEAMS. Refer to PB#19-21-OPE for more information.

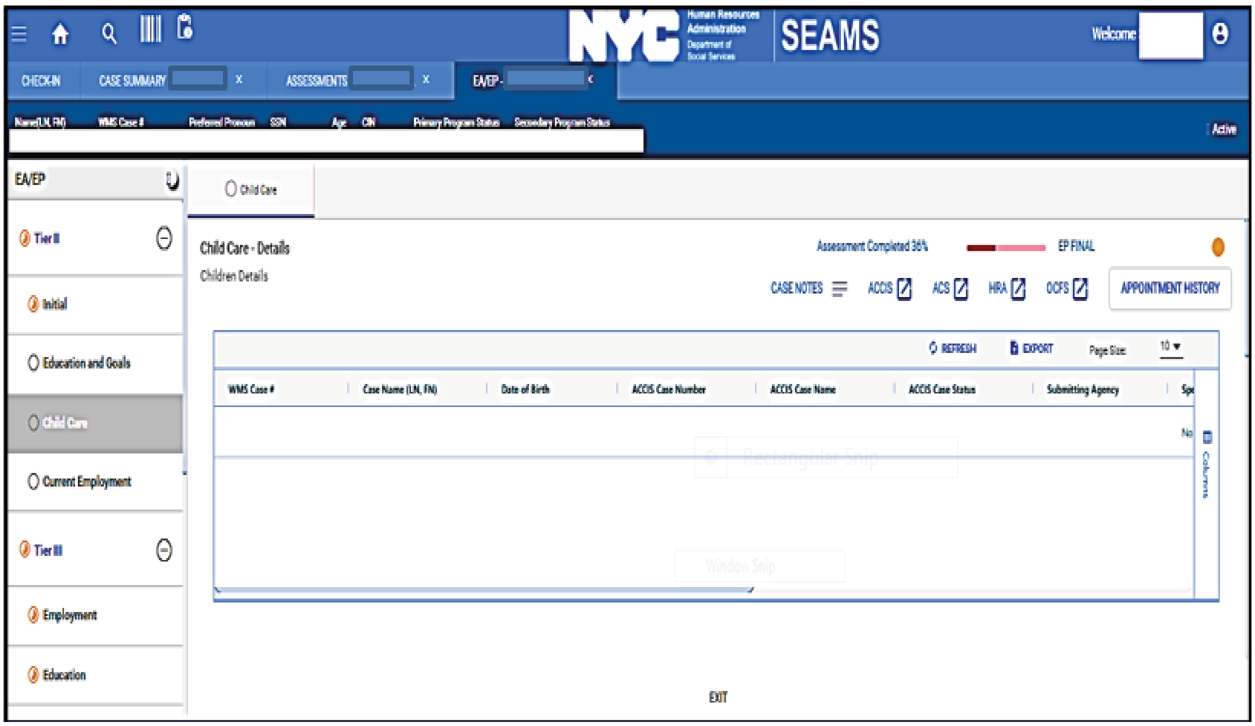


Child Care

To submit a Child Care request, select “Yes” in response to the question “Does the client indicate they need Child Care to complete or participate in an assignment/activity?”.

If the case does not have any children listed, you can still proceed with a Child Care Request. Provide details regarding the child care request in the Justification box.

Click on the History button to review the child care history.



■ CHILD CARE APPOINTMENTS AND OUTREACH

Staff will complete the Child Care screen in the EA/EP module in SEAMS.

Staff will input the appropriate appointment type:

- Child Care Appointment
- Child Care Return Appointment
- Extended Child Care Return Appointment

A new child care outreach worklist for the Child Care Review Team (CCRT) and child care liaisons will be created.

The applicant/participant is considered exempt for 90 days if all of these are true:

- Applicant/Participant has completed their Child Care Return Appointment.
- Applicant/Participant previously was provided at least two (2) licensed care provider referrals.
- Staff selects “Child Care Not Found” as Child Care type.
- Staff indicated in system that the applicant/participant submitted the required documents.

Note: After 90 days, the applicant/participant is called back to the BAC or the Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE) site for a re-evaluation.

■ COMPLIANCE PROCESS

The steps below outline the compliance process:

1. Applicant/Participant is Non-Compliant
2. Outreach Worklist (Career Services Providers and TAG)
3. Pre-Conciliation
4. Conciliation
5. Pre-NOI (WeCARE)
6. Conference

Compliance: Outreach Worklist

The applicant’s/participant’s case is added to the Outreach worklist if the applicant/participant is non-compliant with any Career Services and TAG appointment/assignment. Career Services providers conduct outreach to the applicant/participant before putting the case in the Pre-Conciliation worklist. The case moves to the Pre-Conciliation worklist if it is an active case or Income Support Application Rejection (ISAR) worklist if it is an application case.

The SEAMS system automatically removes the case from the Outreach worklist when:

- Applicant’s/Participant’s hours are entered in the timesheet.
- Assignment is cancelled or closed.
- Case moves to the Pre-Conciliation worklist if it is an active case or Income Support Application Rejection (ISAR) worklist if it is an application case.

Pre-Conciliation

The Pre-Conciliation process includes a manual case review of an employment infraction to determine whether a case should proceed to Conciliation. The JOS/Worker must review the seven (7) criteria listed below from the date of the Pre-Conciliation review before infracting the participant and starting the Conciliation process.

As a reminder, the JOS/Worker must ensure Pre-Conciliation reviews are completed timely.

Staff conducting the Pre-Conciliation review should use **only** the seven (7) criteria below to determine whether an infraction should be "Approved" or "Excused":

1. Was the mailing address correct, or was returned mail indicated in the system?
2. Were any known Reasonable Accommodations (RA) honored?
   - For example, the appointment was scheduled for a Tuesday, even though the participant had a RA for no appointments on Tuesdays.
3. Was child care in place, if needed?
4. Was carfare in place for work assignment infractions?
5. Is the participant exempt or pending a determination on a claim of exemption?
   - For example, is the case pending a Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE) or Domestic Violence (DV) referral.
6. Was there a conflicting appointment with the assigned appointment date and time?
7. Was the notice in the participant's preferred written language?

Selecting "Approved" means the case should proceed to Conciliation. Selecting "Excused" means that at least one listed criteria was not met, or the participant is exempt or pending an exemption determination, and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) cannot continue pursuing a sanction for that infraction.

When selecting "Excused", staff must identify which of the seven (7) criteria is applicable, and submit a case note entry.

Compliance: Re-Engagement/Conciliation Process

Participant can now request good cause through a telephone call or email prior to their appointment or in-person. The Conciliation notice will include information for the participant on their options on how to complete their conciliation. Dedicated email addresses for Fair Hearing, TAG, and Career Service providers will be listed on the Re-Engagement and Conciliation Notice (**LDSS-5087**) for participants to request good cause and/or provide documentation. For participants that choose to call, Infoline staff will document the request and forward the request for conciliation, along with the best times for the participant to be reached to:

- Fair Hearing (WeCARE and BAC engagement appointments)
- Training Assessment Group (TAG)
- Out-stationed workers at Career Services Provider sites

For detailed information on the Re-Engagement/Conciliation Process, refer to PD #19-04-EMP.

Effective Immediately

RELATED ITEMS:

DSS-PB-2023-005
HRA-PB-2021-045
PB#19-21-OPE
PB#17-30-EMP
PD #19-04-EMP