
HOUSE BILL 2546

State of Washington

56th Legislature

2000 Regular Session

By Representatives Tokuda, D. Sommers, Rockefeller, Boldt, Voloria, Ballasiotes, Kenney, Radcliff, Lovick, Linville, Regala, Dickerson, McIntire, Grant, Santos, Carlson, Cody, Ogden, Anderson, Mitchell, Conway, Schual-Berke, Lantz, Edmonds, Ruderman, Wolfe, Keiser, Stensen, Haigh, Dunn, Wood, O'Brien, Kagi, Hurst and Kessler

Read first time 01/17/2000. Referred to Committee on Children & Family Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing performance measures and the
2 setting of goals for earnings gains, job retention, and access to
3 benefits that support work for the WorkFirst program; adding new
4 sections to chapter 74.08A RCW; and creating new sections.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** LEGISLATIVE INTENT AND FINDINGS. The
7 legislature finds that the implementation of the Washington WorkFirst
8 temporary assistance for needy families act has resulted in a
9 substantial reduction in single-parent and two-parent family caseloads.
10 The legislature also finds that many of the WorkFirst participants who
11 have found unsubsidized paid employment are working in jobs that result
12 in family incomes that are close to or below the federal poverty line.
13 The legislature also finds that families who are living at or close to
14 the federal poverty line have a higher risk of returning to public
15 assistance and face many challenges in helping their children succeed
16 in school and prepare for the jobs of the future. The legislature also
17 finds that many families who should be receiving supportive benefits
18 such as medicaid, child care, and food stamps are not receiving them.

1 It is the intent of the legislature to ensure that the WorkFirst
2 program leads to substantial increases in hourly wages and quarterly
3 earnings, and high levels of job retention. The legislature
4 acknowledges that receipt of food stamps, medicaid, and child care
5 benefits provide wage supports that can raise families' standard of
6 living and prevent families from returning to cash assistance because
7 they need health care, child care, or are hungry.

8 It is the intent of the legislature to adopt performance measures
9 and goals for increases in hourly wages, quarterly earnings, job
10 retention, and access to benefits that support work for WorkFirst
11 participants who have entered unsubsidized paid employment. It is also
12 the intent of the legislature to direct the department of social and
13 health services to establish and meet customer service measures and
14 goals for the WorkFirst program. These measures shall be used to
15 assess the effectiveness of the WorkFirst program in promoting a rising
16 standard of living, stable employment, and career advancement for
17 WorkFirst participants who enter unsubsidized paid employment. It is
18 the intent of the legislature that the program's performance in
19 achieving these goals shall be published and made available to the
20 legislature and the general public on a quarterly basis.

21 The legislature recognizes that many families who are working need
22 supportive services such as medicaid, child care, and food stamps, and
23 that the current structure of service delivery often requires families
24 to miss work in order to get those services. Because one of the goals
25 of the WorkFirst program is to support working families, the
26 legislature intends for changes to be made in customer service and
27 service delivery to ensure that working families can get services
28 without missing work or jeopardizing their employment.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** PROGRAM GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR
30 EARNINGS GAINS. (1) The legislature establishes the following median
31 earnings gains goals for all WorkFirst participants who find
32 unsubsidized paid employment:

- 33 (a) Five percent median earnings gain six months after employment;
34 (b) Ten percent median earnings gain one year after employment;
35 (c) Twenty percent median earnings gain two years after employment;
36 (d) Twenty-five percent median earnings gain three years after
37 employment;

1 (e) Ten percent median earnings gain between the first and second
2 year of employment; and

3 (f) Five percent median earnings gain between the second and third
4 years of employment.

5 (2) The goals under subsection (1) of this section shall include
6 both hourly wages and quarterly earnings and shall be measured and
7 reported in the following manner:

8 (a) All WorkFirst participants who have found unsubsidized paid
9 employment shall be included in the measurement of earnings gains. All
10 of the wages used in these measures shall be adjusted for inflation
11 using the federal consumer price index in order to ensure that the
12 state is accurately assessing the inflation adjusted wage and earnings
13 gains for former WorkFirst participants. The hours worked and
14 quarterly earnings used to measure earnings gains and job retention
15 shall be based on the wage files collected and maintained by the
16 employment security department.

17 (b)(i) The hourly wage rate at employment is defined as the
18 quarterly earnings for the first full calendar quarter after finding
19 unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours worked in
20 that quarter.

21 (ii) The hourly wage rate at six months after employment is defined
22 as the quarterly earnings in the third full calendar quarter after
23 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours
24 worked in that quarter.

25 (iii) The hourly wage rate at one year after employment is defined
26 as the quarterly earnings in the fifth full calendar quarter after
27 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours
28 worked in that quarter.

29 (iv) The hourly wage rate at two years after employment is defined
30 as the quarterly earnings in the ninth full calendar quarter after
31 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours
32 worked in that quarter.

33 (v) The hourly wage rate at three years after employment is defined
34 as the quarterly earnings in the thirteenth full calendar quarter after
35 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours
36 worked in that quarter.

37 (c)(i) The quarterly earnings at employment are defined as the
38 quarterly earnings in the first full calendar quarter after finding
39 unsubsidized paid employment.

1 (ii) The quarterly earnings six months after employment are defined
2 as the quarterly earnings in the third full calendar quarter after
3 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

4 (iii) The quarterly earnings one year after employment are defined
5 as the quarterly earnings in the fifth full calendar quarter after
6 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

7 (iv) The quarterly earnings two years after employment are defined
8 as the quarterly earnings in the ninth full calendar quarter after
9 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

10 (v) The quarterly earnings three years after finding unsubsidized
11 paid employment are defined as the quarterly earnings in the thirteenth
12 full calendar quarter after finding unsubsidized paid employment.

13 (d) The percentage hourly wage gains or losses shall be calculated
14 by dividing the:

15 (i) Hourly wage rate six months after employment by the hourly wage
16 rate at employment;

17 (ii) Hourly wage rate one year after employment by the hourly wage
18 rate at employment;

19 (iii) Hourly wage rate two years after employment by the hourly
20 wage rate at employment;

21 (iv) Hourly wage rate three years after employment by the hourly
22 wage rate at employment;

23 (v) Hourly wage rate two years after employment by the hourly wage
24 rate at one year after employment; and

25 (vi) Hourly wage rate at three years after employment by the hourly
26 wage rate two years after employment.

27 (e) The percentage quarterly wage gains or losses shall be
28 calculated by dividing the:

29 (i) Quarterly earnings six months after employment by the quarterly
30 earnings at employment;

31 (ii) Quarterly earnings one year after employment by the quarterly
32 earnings at employment;

33 (iii) Quarterly earnings two years after employment by the
34 quarterly earnings at employment;

35 (iv) Quarterly earnings three years after employment by the
36 quarterly earnings at employment;

37 (v) Quarterly earnings two years after employment by the quarterly
38 earnings at one year after employment; and

1 (vi) Quarterly earnings three years after employment by the
2 quarterly earnings two years after employment.

3 (f) The median earnings gains for all hourly wages and quarterly
4 earnings measures are defined as the midpoint of the distribution of
5 the percentage earnings gains for all WorkFirst participants who found
6 unsubsidized paid employment. This definition applies to both hourly
7 wages and quarterly earnings gains.

8 (g) Participants for whom no earnings are reported in the third,
9 fifth, ninth, or thirteenth quarters shall be excluded from the measure
10 for that particular quarter. For example, if a participant has
11 earnings in the first quarter but none in the fifth quarter, they will
12 be excluded from the measure for the fifth quarter. The participant
13 would still be included in the measures for subsequent quarters, the
14 ninth or thirteenth during which they report earnings.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** PROGRAM GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR
16 JOB RETENTION. (1) The legislature establishes the following full-time
17 and half-time employment and job retention goals for all WorkFirst
18 participants who find unsubsidized paid employment:

19 (a) Sixty percent are working full-time one year after finding
20 unsubsidized paid employment;

21 (b) Sixty-five percent are working full-time two years after
22 finding unsubsidized paid employment;

23 (c) Seventy percent are working full-time three years after finding
24 unsubsidized paid employment;

25 (d) Seventy percent are working at least half-time one year after
26 finding unsubsidized paid employment;

27 (e) Seventy-five percent are working at least half-time two years
28 after finding unsubsidized paid employment; and

29 (f) Eighty percent are working at least half-time three years after
30 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

31 (2) It is the intent of the legislature that the reports mandated
32 in this act shall include all WorkFirst participants who have entered
33 unsubsidized paid employment since the start of the WorkFirst program
34 in July 1997.

35 (a) The employment security department shall publish on a quarterly
36 basis a report that details the performance of the WorkFirst program in
37 meeting the program goals of wage progression and job retention. These
38 reports shall be submitted to the appropriate legislative committees

1 and made available to the public each quarter. Given the legislature's
2 goal of encouraging substantial increases in earnings and job
3 retention, the department shall develop reports that track the
4 performance of participants back to the start of the program in July
5 1997. These quarterly reports shall document the performance of each
6 group of WorkFirst participants who enter unsubsidized paid employment
7 based on the first quarter that they found unsubsidized paid employment
8 after entering the WorkFirst program. For example, the WorkFirst
9 participants who found employment in the third quarter of 1997 shall
10 have their performance tracked over a three-year period. Each
11 subsequent group of participants who found employment in the following
12 quarters shall be tracked separately. Each quarterly report shall
13 report separately on each group of participants who found unsubsidized
14 paid employment in separate quarters.

15 (b) The employment security department shall submit its first
16 report to the legislature by September 2, 2000. This initial report
17 shall include earnings and job retention information on all WorkFirst
18 participants who found unsubsidized paid employment since the start of
19 the program in July 1997 through December 31, 1999.

20 (c) The department shall submit additional reports to the
21 legislature on a quarterly basis on October 1st, January 1st, April
22 1st, and July 1st of each year using the methodology outlined in this
23 act. Each report shall add new groups of WorkFirst participants who
24 find unsubsidized paid employment in subsequent quarters.

25 (d) Working full-time is defined as unsubsidized paid employment at
26 least thirty-five hours per week and shall be determined by dividing
27 the number of hours worked in the relevant calendar quarter by thirteen
28 weeks. Working full-time is also defined as attending school full-time
29 or attending school part-time and working part-time.

30 (e) For the purposes of this section, working half-time is defined
31 as unsubsidized paid employment and/or enrollment in education or job
32 training at least twenty hours per week and shall be determined by
33 dividing the number of hours worked in the relevant calendar quarter by
34 thirteen weeks.

35 (f) Working full-time or half-time and working one, two, or three
36 years after finding unsubsidized paid employment shall be measured in
37 the fifth, ninth, and thirteenth full calendar quarters, respectively,
38 after the WorkFirst participant entered unsubsidized paid employment.

1 (g) Attending school is defined only as participating in education
2 and training provided by state-funded community and technical colleges.
3 Student attendance data will be provided to the employment security
4 department from the state board for community and technical colleges.

5 (h) All WorkFirst participants who enter unsubsidized paid
6 employment shall be counted in the measures of working full-time and
7 working half-time.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** ACCESS TO BENEFITS THAT SUPPORT WORK. (1)

9 The legislature establishes the following goals for access to benefits
10 that support work for all WorkFirst participants who leave the
11 temporary assistance for needy families program or participate in the
12 temporary assistance for needy families cash diversion program.

13 (a) Ninety percent of families are enrolled, have declined in
14 writing, or are ineligible for a substantive reason for each of the
15 work support benefits within six months of the effective date of this
16 act. This is intended to allow for a phase-in period.

17 (b) Ninety-five percent of families are enrolled, have declined in
18 writing, or are ineligible for a substantive reason for each of the
19 work support benefits thereafter.

20 (2) Work support benefits are defined as: Food stamps; medicaid
21 for all family members, children and adults; and child care assistance.

22 (3) Substantive reasons are required for determining families
23 ineligible, and families must be notified of the reason for their
24 ineligibility. Case files must contain documented evidence of
25 ineligible status or written documentation that the client has declined
26 the benefit. The termination reason code of other is not a substantive
27 reason for determining families ineligible.

28 (4) Families who do not want to receive one of the benefits must
29 decline it in writing after being educated about the differences
30 between cash assistance and work support benefits, and must be told
31 that the benefits are designed to support their employment.

32 (5) This measure is prospective. The department is not expected to
33 measure access to benefits for those families who have left temporary
34 assistance for needy families prior to the effective date of this act.

35 (6) The department shall report to the legislature on a quarterly
36 basis and make available to the public the percentage of families who
37 have work support benefits, have declined them in writing, or are

1 ineligible for a substantive reason as defined in subsection (2) of
2 this section for each of the work support benefits.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS. The department
4 shall convene a working group that includes stakeholders and recipients
5 of public assistance to establish basic customer service performance
6 measures and goals. The customer service measures and goals will seek
7 to make support for working families a priority. Customer service
8 measures may include, but are not limited to: Hours of operation that
9 allow working families to get services without missing work;
10 streamlining requirements to make it easier for working families to
11 begin and continue using supportive benefits; wait times; access to
12 benefits that support work; access to job training and education; and
13 access to services for families with limited literacy or English
14 skills, and families with special needs.

15 The department shall report to the legislature by January 2001 and
16 make available to the public the establishment of customer service
17 measures and goals, the process for agreeing on those measures and
18 goals, and departmental action to assure the goals are being met. The
19 department shall make a written report to the legislature on the
20 ongoing attainment of customer service goals twice per year.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Captions used in this act are not any part
22 of the law.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 2 through 5 of this act are each
24 added to chapter 74.08A RCW.

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