
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6241

State of Washington

56th Legislature

2000 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on Labor & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Brown, Shin, Kline, Fraser, Prentice, McAuliffe, Patterson, Eide, Rasmussen and Costa)

Read first time 02/04/00.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing performance measures and the
2 setting of goals for earnings gains, job retention, access to benefits
3 that support work and customer service for the WorkFirst program;
4 adding new 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.** REPORTS, AND PROGRAM GOALS AND PERFORMANCE
30 MEASURES FOR EARNINGS GAINS. (1) The department of social and health
31 services shall report the starting wages of all WorkFirst participants
32 who have found unsubsidized paid employment on a quarterly basis.

33 (2) The legislature establishes the following median earnings gains
34 goals for all WorkFirst participants who find unsubsidized paid
35 employment:

- 36 (a) Five percent median earnings gain six months after employment;
- 37 (b) Fifteen percent median earnings gain one year after employment;
- 38 (c) Twenty percent median earnings gain two years after employment;

1 (d) Twenty-five percent median earnings gain three years after
2 employment;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (c)(i) The quarterly earnings at employment are defined as the
2 quarterly earnings in the first full calendar quarter after finding
3 unsubsidized paid employment.

4 (ii) The quarterly earnings six months after employment are defined
5 as the quarterly earnings in the third full calendar quarter after
6 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

7 (iii) The quarterly earnings one year after employment are defined
8 as the quarterly earnings in the fifth full calendar quarter after
9 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

10 (iv) The quarterly earnings two years after employment are defined
11 as the quarterly earnings in the ninth full calendar quarter after
12 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

13 (v) The quarterly earnings three years after finding unsubsidized
14 paid employment are defined as the quarterly earnings in the thirteenth
15 full calendar quarter after finding unsubsidized paid employment.

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

18 (i) Hourly wage rate six months after employment by the hourly wage
19 rate at employment;

20 (ii) Hourly wage rate one year after employment by the hourly wage
21 rate at employment;

22 (iii) Hourly wage rate two years after employment by the hourly
23 wage rate at employment;

24 (iv) Hourly wage rate three years after employment by the hourly
25 wage rate at employment;

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

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

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

32 (i) Quarterly earnings six months after employment by the quarterly
33 earnings at employment;

34 (ii) Quarterly earnings one year after employment by the quarterly
35 earnings at employment;

36 (iii) Quarterly earnings two years after employment by the
37 quarterly earnings at employment;

38 (iv) Quarterly earnings three years after employment by the
39 quarterly earnings at employment;

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

3 (vi) Quarterly earnings three years after employment by the
4 quarterly earnings two years after employment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

37 (a) The employment security department shall publish on a quarterly
38 basis a report that details the performance of the WorkFirst program in

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

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

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

27 (3) Definitions of full-time and half-time work are as follows:

28 (a) Working full time is defined as unsubsidized paid employment at
29 least thirty-five hours per week and shall be determined by dividing
30 the number of hours worked in the relevant calendar quarter by thirteen
31 weeks. Working full time is also defined as attending school for nine
32 or more credit hours or attending school for three or more credit hours
33 and working part time.

34 (b) For the purposes of this section, working half time is defined
35 as unsubsidized paid employment and/or job training at least twenty
36 hours per week, or attending school for three or more credit hours, and
37 shall be determined by dividing the number of hours worked in the
38 relevant calendar quarter by thirteen weeks.

1 (c) Working full time or half time and working one, two, or three
2 years after finding unsubsidized paid employment shall be measured in
3 the fifth, ninth, and thirteenth full calendar quarters, respectively,
4 after the WorkFirst participant entered unsubsidized paid employment.

5 (d) Attending school is defined only as participating in education
6 and training provided by state-funded community and technical colleges.
7 Student attendance data will be provided to the employment security
8 department from the state board for community and technical colleges.

9 (e) All WorkFirst participants who enter unsubsidized paid
10 employment shall be counted in the measures of working full time and
11 working half time.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** ACCESS TO BENEFITS THAT SUPPORT WORK. (1)
13 For the purposes of this section, the term "access to benefits ratio"
14 means the number of families who leave the temporary assistance for
15 needy families program or participate in the temporary assistance for
16 needy families cash diversion program in a given quarter who, at the
17 end of the following quarter, are enrolled, have declined in writing,
18 or are ineligible for a substantive reason for each of the work support
19 benefits identified in subsection (3) of this section divided by the
20 total number of people who leave temporary assistance for needy
21 families or participate in the temporary assistance for needy families
22 cash diversion program in the given quarter.

23 (2) The legislature establishes the goal of a ninety-five percent
24 access to benefits ratio.

25 (3) Work support benefits are defined as: Food stamps; medicaid
26 for all family members; medicaid or state children's health insurance
27 program for children; and child care assistance.

28 (4) Substantive reasons are required for determining families
29 ineligible, and families must be notified of the reason for their
30 ineligibility. Case files must contain documented evidence of
31 ineligible status or written documentation that the client has declined
32 the benefit. The termination reason code of other is not a substantive
33 reason for determining families ineligible.

34 (5) Families who do not want to receive one of the benefits must
35 decline it in writing after being educated about the differences
36 between cash assistance and work support benefits, and must be told
37 that the benefits are designed to support their employment.

1 (6) This measure is prospective. The department is not expected to
2 measure the access to benefits ratio for those families who have left
3 temporary assistance for needy families prior to the effective date of
4 this act.

5 (7) The department shall report to the legislature on a quarterly
6 basis and make available to the public the access to benefits ratio for
7 each work support benefit. For each reason code, the number of
8 families determined ineligible shall be listed. The first report shall
9 be submitted to the legislature and made available to the general
10 public by February 1, 2001.

11 (8) The access to benefits ratio for temporary assistance for needy
12 families or temporary assistance for needy families cash diversion
13 program participants in a given quarter shall be measured at the end of
14 the quarter following the quarter during which the participants left
15 temporary assistance for needy families or participated in the
16 temporary assistance for needy families cash diversion program.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** In order to assess the degree to which
18 eligible families continue to access work support benefits more than
19 six months after leaving temporary assistance for needy families, the
20 office of financial management shall update and expand the Washington
21 population survey to obtain information about former temporary
22 assistance for needy families recipients and other low-income families
23 and their use of state subsidized health insurance, food stamps, child
24 care subsidies, and the earned income tax credit. The office of
25 financial management shall prepare a report every two years for the
26 legislature and general public using information about family size and
27 income that compares the number of families predicted to be eligible
28 based on gross family income for each of these four benefits to the
29 number of families actually using each of the four benefits. The
30 report shall also identify factors affecting use of benefits such as
31 racial categories, geographic regions, citizen status, and immigration
32 history.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** CUSTOMER SERVICE PERFORMANCE MEASURES. The
34 department shall convene a working group that includes stakeholders and
35 recipients of public assistance to establish basic customer service
36 performance measures and goals. The customer service measures and
37 goals will seek to make support for working families a priority.

1 Customer service measures shall include, but are not limited to: Hours
2 of operation that allow working families to get services without
3 missing work; streamlining requirements to make it easier for working
4 families to begin and continue using supportive benefits; wait times;
5 access to benefits that support work; access to job training and
6 education; access to apprenticeships and preapprenticeship training
7 programs; access to postemployment and job retention services; access
8 to information about the earned income tax credit; and access to
9 services for families with limited literacy or English skills, and
10 families with special needs.

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

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Captions used in this act are not any part
18 of the law.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Sections 2 through 6 of this act are each
20 added to chapter 74.08A RCW.

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