

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5213

C 174 L 05

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Supporting the long-term success of families with children by removing barriers to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the WorkFirst programs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Brandland, Hargrove, Esser, Regala, McAuliffe, Thibaudeau, Stevens, Kohl-Welles and Shin).

Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Children & Family Services

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Current state law permits eligible families to receive cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program if they are in need, otherwise eligible, and not an inmate at a public institution. They may be required to participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program in order to receive benefits if they have been assessed as drug or alcohol dependent and in need of treatment to become employable.

Washington State administers TANF benefits through its WorkFirst program. The WorkFirst program emphasizes the importance of gaining employment and staying employed. WorkFirst participants are assessed for employment barriers which may include mental health, medical or substance abuse issues which must be addressed before an applicant can become fully employable.

Current state law requires that in order to be eligible for this assistance, an applicant with a drug-related felony conviction after August 21, 1996 must have been assessed as chemically dependent and be participating in, or have completed, rehabilitation which includes chemical dependency and vocational components. It also requires that they have not been convicted of a drug-related felony in the three years prior to the most current conviction. States can choose to opt out of such restrictions.

Summary: The eligibility requirements that a TANF applicant with a drug-related felony conviction after August 21, 1996 be assessed as chemically dependent, participate in or complete rehabilitation with chemical dependency and vocational components are removed. The requirement that they have not been convicted of a drug-related felony in the three years prior to the most current conviction is also removed.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	2
House	77	17

Effective: September 1, 2005