

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SSB 6016

C 289 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning good cause reasons for failure to participate in WorkFirst program components.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Regala and Kohl-Welles).

Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: As a condition of receiving federal funds for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (TANF), states are required to meet work participation rates for those families receiving TANF funds. Work participation rates are determined by dividing the number of families receiving TANF that are engaged in work activities by the total number of families receiving TANF.

The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) did not change the work participation rates, but made significant modifications to how the rate is calculated. First, a credit to the caseload was previously allowed for the reduction in the total caseload since the creation of the TANF block grant. This credit now only applies to reductions in caseloads since 2005. In short, the total caseload (denominator) of the equation is now much larger. Second, qualifying work activities are defined much more narrowly under the DRA, making the numerator much smaller using existing activities.

Federal regulation specifically allows states to exclude families in which a single custodial parent is caring for a child less than one year old from the work participation rate calculation. States may apply this exclusion on a case-by-case basis for families with a work-eligible individual up to a maximum of 12 months for the individual's lifetime.

Under Washington law, a "good cause" reason for a TANF recipient's failure to participate in Workfirst program components include cases in which the recipient is a parent with a child under the age of one year, except that when the child reaches the age of three months, the recipient must participate in one of the following activities for up to 20 hours per week:

- 1) instruction or training which has the purpose of improving parenting skills or child well being;
- 2) pre-employment or job readiness training;
- 3) course study leading to a high school diploma or GED; or
- 4) community service volunteer activity.

Summary: A parent with a child under the age of one year who is a TANF recipient has a good cause reason for the failure to participate in a Workfirst program. The Department of

Social and Health Services (DSHS) may require any recipient with a child under the age of one year whose comprehensive evaluation indicates a need for mental health, alcohol, or drug treatment; domestic violence services; or parenting education or skills to participate in those services or treatment as appropriate, up to 20 hours per week. A recipient may participate in the Work First program on a voluntary basis.

DSHS must provide information regarding the availability of home visitation programs to TANF caseworkers who will inform TANF clients with children under the age of one year of the availability of such services. If desired by the parent, TANF caseworkers will facilitate appropriate referrals to home visitation service providers.

The good cause exemption for a parent with a child under the age of one year is limited to a maximum of 12 months over the parent's lifetime.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	29	18	
House	66	31	(House amended)
Senate	30	18	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2007