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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2071**

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**State of Washington**

**61st Legislature**

**2009 Regular Session**

**By** House Early Learning & Children's Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Green, Kagi, Miloscia, Pettigrew, Nelson, Haler, Priest, Goodman, Conway, Ormsby, Santos, and Kenney)

READ FIRST TIME 02/23/09.

1       AN ACT Relating to increasing the earning potential of parents of  
2 needy families; amending RCW 74.08A.260; adding a new section to  
3 chapter 74.08A RCW; and creating a new section.

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

5       NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that nearly half of  
6 all recipients in the state's temporary assistance for needy families  
7 program return to the program more than once, seeking financial  
8 assistance. The legislature also finds that the inability of those  
9 recipients to attain a living wage job and to exit the program  
10 permanently remains a concern. The legislature finds that ample  
11 evidence demonstrates the connection between educational attainment and  
12 increased earnings over time. The legislature also finds that policies  
13 to encourage more recipients in the temporary assistance for needy  
14 families program to pursue the educational and training opportunities  
15 available to them can move more recipients into living wage jobs so  
16 they can exit public financial assistance programs permanently.  
17 Therefore, the legislature intends to direct the WorkFirst program to  
18 develop appropriate strategies to increase participation in educational

1 and training programs available to recipients in order to promote  
2 higher rates of postprogram employment in living wage jobs and to  
3 reduce the rate of reentry into the program.

4 **Sec. 2.** RCW 74.08A.260 and 2006 c 107 s 3 are each amended to read  
5 as follows:

6 (1) Each recipient shall be assessed after determination of program  
7 eligibility and before referral to job search. Assessments shall be  
8 based upon factors that are critical to obtaining employment, including  
9 but not limited to education, availability of child care, history of  
10 family violence, history of substance abuse, and other factors that  
11 affect the ability to obtain employment. Assessments may be performed  
12 by the department or by a contracted entity. The assessment shall be  
13 based on a uniform, consistent, transferable format that will be  
14 accepted by all agencies and organizations serving the recipient.  
15 Based on the assessment, an individual responsibility plan shall be  
16 prepared that: (a) Sets forth an employment goal and a plan for  
17 ~~((moving the recipient immediately into))~~ maximizing the recipient's  
18 success at meeting the employment goal; (b) considers WorkFirst  
19 educational and training programs from which the recipient could  
20 benefit; (c) contains the obligation of the recipient to ~~((become and~~  
21 ~~remain employed))~~ participate in the program by complying with the  
22 plan; ~~((+e+))~~ (d) moves the recipient into ~~((whatever employment the~~  
23 ~~recipient is capable of handling))~~ full-time WorkFirst activities as  
24 quickly as possible; and ~~((+d+))~~ (e) describes the services available  
25 to the recipient either during or after WorkFirst to enable the  
26 recipient to obtain and keep employment and to advance in the workplace  
27 and increase the recipient's wage earning potential over time.

28 (2) Recipients who are not engaged in work and work activities, and  
29 do not qualify for a good cause exemption under RCW 74.08A.270, shall  
30 engage in self-directed service as provided in RCW 74.08A.330.

31 (3) If a recipient refuses to engage in work and work activities  
32 required by the department, the family's grant shall be reduced by the  
33 recipient's share, and may, if the department determines it  
34 appropriate, be terminated.

35 (4) The department may waive the penalties required under  
36 subsection (3) of this section, subject to a finding that the recipient  
37 refused to engage in work for good cause provided in RCW 74.08A.270.

1 (5) In implementing this section, the department shall assign the  
2 highest priority to the most employable clients, including adults in  
3 two-parent families and parents in single-parent families that include  
4 older preschool or school-age children to be engaged in work  
5 activities.

6 (6) In consultation with the recipient, the department or  
7 contractor shall place the recipient into a work activity that is  
8 available in the local area where the recipient resides.

9 (7) Assessments conducted under this section shall include a  
10 consideration of the potential benefit to the recipient of engaging in  
11 financial literacy activities. The department shall consider the  
12 options for financial literacy activities available in the community,  
13 including information and resources available through the financial  
14 literacy public-private partnership created under RCW 28A.300.450. The  
15 department may authorize up to ten hours of financial literacy  
16 activities as a core activity or an optional activity under WorkFirst.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 74.08A RCW  
18 to read as follows:

19 The department shall continue to implement WorkFirst program  
20 improvements that are designed to achieve progress against outcome  
21 measures specified in RCW 74.08A.410. Outcome data regarding job  
22 retention and wage progression shall be reported quarterly to  
23 appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the legislature for  
24 families who leave assistance, measured after twelve months, twenty-  
25 four months, and thirty-six months. The department shall also report  
26 the percentage of families who have returned to temporary assistance  
27 for needy families after twelve months, twenty-four months, and thirty-  
28 six months. The department shall make every effort to maximize  
29 vocational training, as allowed by federal and state requirements.

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