
HOUSE BILL 2071

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61st Legislature

2009 Regular Session

By Representatives Green, Kagi, Miloscia, Pettigrew, Nelson, Haler, Priest, Goodman, Conway, Ormsby, Santos, and Kenney

Read first time 02/09/09. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services.

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) Considers all educational and training programs
17 that could benefit the recipient; (b) sets forth an employment goal and
18 a plan for moving the recipient (~~((immediately into employment))~~) into
19 educational or training programs to maximize the recipient's success in
20 meeting the employment goal; (~~((b))~~) (c) contains the obligation of the
21 recipient to (~~((become and remain))~~) participate in the program either by
22 enrolling in qualified educational or training programs or by becoming
23 and remaining employed; (~~((c))~~) (d) moves the recipient into whatever
24 employment or educational or training program the recipient is capable
25 of handling as quickly as possible; and (~~((d))~~) (e) describes (~~((the))~~)
26 all services available to the recipient to enable the recipient (~~((to~~
27 ~~obtain and keep employment))~~) to advance in the workplace and increase
28 the recipient's wage earning potential over time.

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

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

36 (4) The department may waive the penalties required under

1 subsection (3) of this section, subject to a finding that the recipient
2 refused to engage in work for good cause provided in RCW 74.08A.270.

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

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

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

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

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

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