
Early Learning & Human Services Committee

HB 1342

Brief Description: Concerning the definition of work activity for the purposes of the WorkFirst program.

Sponsors: Representatives Walsh, Kagi, Johnson, Goodman, Sawyer, Orwall, Farrell, Roberts, Freeman, Appleton, Jinkins, Maxwell, Santos and Moscoso.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extends the period of time that a WorkFirst participant may receive vocational training from 12 months to 24 months.
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Hearing Date: 2/7/13

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant established under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The TANF program replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which had provided grants to poor families with children since the 1930s.

States use TANF block grants to operate their own programs. State programs differ, but operate in accordance with the following purposes set forth in federal law:

- to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;

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- prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

In addition to money received from the federal government, states are required to spend their own funds on programs for needy families or face financial penalties; this is referred to as the Maintenance of Effort (or MOE) requirement.

WorkFirst

Washington's TANF program is called WorkFirst, and is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Under WorkFirst, eligible adults receive various forms of assistance while they participate in activities that will help them connect to the workforce. The federal statutes require a certain "participation" rate for adults receiving TANF benefits, and states may be penalized if they fail to meet the required participation rate.

Federal statute defines both the activity as well as the length of time that a WorkFirst participant may spend on that activity. These definitions are also codified in state law. A work activity includes unsubsidized and subsidized paid employment, internships, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness assistance, vocational educational training, education, and other activities.

Under current law, a WorkFirst participant's vocational educational training may not exceed 12 months.

Summary of Bill:

Under state statute, a WorkFirst participant may receive up to 24 months of vocational training. The federal statutory limitation of 12 months remains unchanged.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 2013.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.