

RCW 74.08A.260 Work activity—Referral—Individual responsibility plan—Refusal to work.

(1) Each recipient shall be assessed after determination of program eligibility and before referral to job search. Assessments shall be based upon factors that are critical to obtaining employment, including but not limited to education, availability of child care, history of family violence, history of substance abuse, and other factors that affect the ability to obtain employment. Assessments may be performed by the department or by a contracted entity. The assessment shall be based on a uniform, consistent, transferable format that will be accepted by all agencies and organizations serving the recipient.

(2) Based on the assessment, an individual responsibility plan shall be prepared that: (a) Sets forth an employment goal and a plan for maximizing the recipient's success at meeting the employment goal; (b) considers WorkFirst educational and training programs from which the recipient could benefit; (c) contains the obligation of the recipient to participate in the program by complying with the plan; (d) moves the recipient into full-time WorkFirst activities as quickly as possible; and (e) describes the services available to the recipient either during or after WorkFirst to enable the recipient to obtain and keep employment and to advance in the workplace and increase the recipient's wage earning potential over time.

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

(4) If a recipient refuses to engage in work and work activities required by the department, after two months of continuous noncompliance, the family's grant shall be reduced by the recipient's share or by forty percent, whichever is greater, and must be terminated after twelve months of continuous noncompliance.

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

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

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

(8) Subsections (2) through (6) of this section are suspended for a recipient who is a parent or other relative personally providing care for a child under the age of two years. This suspension applies to both one and two parent families. However, both parents in a two-parent family cannot use the suspension during the same month. Nothing in this subsection shall prevent a recipient from participating in the WorkFirst program on a voluntary basis. [2020 c 338 s 1. Prior: 2018 c 126 s 5; 2018 c 58 s 8; 2017 3rd sp.s. c 21 s 1; 2011 1st sp.s. c 42 s 2; 2009 c 85 s 2; 2006 c 107 s 3; 2003 c 383 s 1; 1997 c 58 s 313.]

Effective date—2020 c 338: "This act takes effect July 1, 2021."
[2020 c 338 s 2.]

Application—2020 c 338: "This act applies prospectively only and not retroactively." [2020 c 338 s 3.]

Findings—Intent—2018 c 126: See note following RCW 74.08A.505.

Effective date—2018 c 58: See note following RCW 28A.655.080.

Findings—Intent—2011 1st sp.s. c 42: "The legislature finds that stable and sustainable employment is the key goal of the WorkFirst and temporary assistance for needy families programs. Achieving stable and sustainable employment is a developmental process that takes time, effort, and engagement. In times of fiscal challenge, temporary assistance for needy families and WorkFirst resources must be invested in program elements that produce the best results for low-income families and the state of Washington.

The legislature further finds that the core tenets that are the foundation of Washington state's WorkFirst program are: (1) Achieving stable and successful employment; (2) recognizing the critical role that participants play in their children's development, healthy growth, and promotion of family stability; (3) developing strategies founded on the principle that WorkFirst is a transitional, not long-term, program to assist families on the pathway to self-sufficiency while holding them accountable; and (4) leveraging resources outside the funding for temporary assistance for needy families is crucial to achieving WorkFirst goals. It is the intent of the legislature, using evidence-based and research-based practices, to develop a road map to self-sufficiency for WorkFirst participants and temporary assistance for needy families recipients.

The legislature further finds that parents are responsible for the support of their children and that they have up to sixty months of receipt of temporary assistance for needy families benefits, absent any applicable hardship extension, to achieve stable and sustainable employment or find other means to support their family. It is the intent of the legislature to apply a sixty-month time limit to the temporary assistance for needy families program, including households in which a parent is in the home and ineligible for temporary assistance for needy families. The legislature intends that hardship extensions be applied to families subject to time limits." [2011 1st sp.s. c 42 s 1.]

Effective date—2011 1st sp.s. c 42: "Except for section 6 of this act, this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect July 1, 2011." [2011 1st sp.s. c 42 s 28.]

Finding—2011 1st sp.s. c 42: See note following RCW 74.04.004.

Findings—Intent—Effective date—2006 c 107: See notes following RCW 74.08A.250.