

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 3141

PARTIAL VETO C 273 L 10 Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regarding delivery of temporary assistance to needy families.

Sponsors: House Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Kenney and Ormsby).

House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services
House Committee on Ways & Means
Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is administered with federal block grant funding, appropriated to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) by the state. Federal law permits the use of TANF funding for the following purposes:

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

Washington's TANF program is called WorkFirst. Under WorkFirst, recipients receive a comprehensive evaluation prior to referral to job search activities. The evaluation is facilitated by a WorkFirst specialist and covers a broad range of topics. Information obtained through the evaluation process is used to develop an individual responsibility plan (IRP) for the recipient. The IRP includes an employment goal, a plan for obtaining employment as quickly as possible, and a description of services to remove barriers to employment and to enable the recipient to obtain and keep employment. Federal law requires states to include a job search component in their TANF programs. Washington's job search component typically calls for 12 weeks of job.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Working Connections Child Care Program.

The Working Connections Child Care program (WCCC) provides child care subsidies for working families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition to low-income working families, WCCC subsidies also may be paid on behalf of:

- families receiving TANF who are enrolled in approved activities; and
- parents under age 22, not on TANF, who are enrolled in high school or a General Education Development (GED) program.

The Economic Services Administration (ESA) within the DSHS has responsibility for verifying families' eligibility to receive WCCC subsidies. Under policies adopted by the Department of Early Learning (DEL), eligibility determinations for WCCC subsidies are effective for a period of up to six months, after which a reauthorization process is conducted to determine continued eligibility.

Changes that can result in a family becoming ineligible for subsidies include:

- an increase in income;
- the loss of a job or a temporary lay-off;
- not keeping current with the obligation to make the monthly co-payment to the provider;
- not providing notice of changes in the family's circumstances within the time frames required; or
- not providing all documentation requested at the time of the reauthorization.

When a family loses eligibility for a WCCC subsidy, it may result in the child experiencing a change in caregiver and environment if, when eligibility is reinstated, the child's enrollment slot with the caregiver has already been filled by another child.

Summary:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

The primary goal of the TANF program is economic self-sufficiency for families through unsubsidized employment. The WorkFirst job search requirements are modified to require consideration of the applicant's marketable job skills, attachment to the labor force, and level of education or training when determining the length of time job search is required. The TANF wage subsidy program is named the Community Jobs Program.

The WorkFirst subcabinet will collaborate with the Governor and reevaluate the WorkFirst program in the context of legislative intent regarding the focus of the WorkFirst program. The reevaluation also will reflect consideration of research relating to family economic self-sufficiency and completion of adequate training and education programs. The subcabinet will develop a proposal for the Legislature to redesign the state's use of the TANF funding in a manner that makes optimum use of all funds available to promote more families moving out of poverty to sustainable self-sufficiency. The proposal is due December 1, 2010, and must include:

1. a process for reassessing persons who are unable to achieve sustainable self-sufficiency through employment after a prolonged period;

2. a plan for referring persons who have been unsuccessful in finding sustainable employment to the Community Jobs Program program; and
3. a schedule for developing and implementing three pathways to family self-sufficiency that will be used to guide case management and engage parents early in developing a comprehensive plan to achieve self-sufficiency while addressing families' current basic needs. The pathways must address the needs of:
 - persons with no barriers to employment who have work experience, education, or attachment to the job force;
 - persons who have barriers to employment, no work experience, or little education or skills; and
 - persons who are disabled or caring for a disabled child or family member.

The WorkFirst subcabinet is required to adopt the goal of increasing the percentage of TANF recipients who eventually are able to increase household earnings to a level that is at or above 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The proposal for redesigning delivery of TANF-funded programs also must delineate specific strategies to achieve the goal.

Beginning December 1, 2010, and annually thereafter, the OFM, in consultation with other state agencies, must report to the Governor and the Legislature with estimates of:

- the percentage of Washington residents with income at or above 200 percent FPL; and
- the percentage of WorkFirst clients who have achieved earning at or above 200 percent FPL.

Working Connections Child Care Program.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2011, for families with children enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP), Head Start, or Early Head Start, the WCCC subsidy authorization will be valid for 12 months unless a change in circumstances requires a reauthorization sooner. The DEL will report to the Legislature by September 1, 2011, with:

- an analysis of the impact of the twelve-month authorization period on the stability of child care, program costs, and administrative savings; and
- recommendations to expand the application of the twelve-month authorization period to additional populations of children in care.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	51	43	
Senate	27	20	(Senate amended)
House	57	38	(House concurred)

Effective: June 10, 2010

Partial Veto Summary: Vetoes section 1, making legislative findings pertinent to the families seeking assistance through the WorkFirst program, section 3, directing a reevaluation and a proposal for redesigning the WorkFirst program, and section 4, requiring that job search requirements in the individual's case plan be developed with consideration of the individual's marketable job skills, attachment to the labor force, and level of education or training.