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**SENATE BILL 5214**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Nguyen, Dhingra, Darneille, Das, Frockt, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Nobles, Robinson, Stanford, and Wilson, C.

AN ACT Relating to economic assistance programs; amending RCW 74.08A.010, 74.08A.260, and 74.08A.230; adding a new section to chapter 74.08A RCW; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 74.08A.010 and 2020 c 320 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A family that includes an adult who has received temporary assistance for needy families for sixty months after July 27, 1997, shall be ineligible for further temporary assistance for needy families assistance.

(2) For the purposes of applying the rules of this section, the department shall count any month in which an adult family member received a temporary assistance for needy families cash assistance grant unless the assistance was provided when the adult family member was a minor child and not the head of the household or married to the head of the household.

(3) The department shall adopt regulations to apply the sixty-month time limit to households in which a parent is in the home and ineligible for temporary assistance for needy families. Any regulations shall be consistent with federal funding requirements.

(4) The department shall refer recipients who require specialized assistance to appropriate department programs, crime victims' programs through the department of commerce, or the crime victims' compensation program of the department of labor and industries.

(5)(a) The department shall add to adopted rules related to temporary assistance for needy families time limit extensions, the following criteria by which the department shall exempt a recipient and the recipient's family from the application of subsection (1) of this section:

(i) By reason of hardship, including when the recipient's family includes a child or youth who is without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as described in the federal McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act (Title 42 U.S.C., chapter 119, subchapter VI, part B) as it existed on January 1, 2020; ((~~or~~))

(ii) The recipient is participating satisfactorily in the program;

(iii) The recipient is temporarily prevented from working or looking for a job;

(iv) The recipient is in need of mental health or substance use disorder treatment; or

(v) If the family includes an individual who meets the family violence options of section 402(A)(7) of Title IVA of the federal social security act as amended by P.L. 104-193.

(b) Policies related to circumstances under which a recipient will be exempted from the application of subsection (1) or (3) of this section shall treat adults receiving benefits on their own behalf, and parents receiving benefits on behalf of their child similarly, unless required otherwise under federal law.

(6) The department shall not exempt a recipient and his or her family from the application of subsection (1) or (3) of this section until after the recipient has received fifty-two months of assistance under this chapter.

(7) The department shall provide transitional food assistance for a period of five months to a household that ceases to receive temporary assistance for needy families assistance and is not in sanction status. If necessary, the department shall extend the household's basic food certification until the end of the transition period.

**Sec.**  RCW 74.08A.260 and 2020 c 338 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(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.

**Sec.**  RCW 74.08A.230 and 1997 c 58 s 308 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) In addition to their monthly benefit payment, a family may earn and keep ((~~one-half~~)) all of its earnings during every month it is eligible to receive assistance under this section.

(2) In no event may a family be eligible for temporary assistance for needy families if its monthly gross earned income exceeds the maximum earned income level as set by the department. In calculating a household's gross earnings, the department shall disregard the earnings of a minor child who is:

(a) A full-time student; or

(b) A part-time student carrying at least half the normal school load and working fewer than thirty-five hours per week.

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

The department may not require applicants for temporary assistance for needy families to attend a WorkFirst orientation in person as a condition of eligibility. However, the department may conduct a WorkFirst orientation by phone. The department may incorporate orientation information into the recipient assessment conducted pursuant to RCW 74.08A.260.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  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, 2021.

**--- END ---**