

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1566

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As of March 15, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to the definition of work activity for the purposes of the WorkFirst program.

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

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Pellicciotti, McDonald, Stambaugh, Gregerson, Ortiz-Self, Peterson, Riccelli, Stanford, Stonier, Kilduff, Holy, Ormsby, Haler, Bergquist and Dolan).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/06/17, 73-25.

**Committee Activity:** Human Services, Mental Health & Housing:

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the limit on vocational training for WorkFirst recipients from 12 months to 24 months.
- Requires the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to review the impact of this extension and provide a report of its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 2025.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

**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 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;

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- end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- 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 State's TANF program is called WorkFirst and is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Under the WorkFirst program, 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 education training, education, and other activities. Under current law, a WorkFirst participant's vocational education training may not exceed 12 months.

**Summary of Bill:** The amount of vocational training that a WorkFirst participant may receive is increased from 12 months to 24 months.

By December 1, 2025, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee is to review the impact of extending the amount of vocational training time that qualifies for work activity from 12 months to 24 months. The review is to include (1) an analysis of the increase of number of participants that qualify for TANF due to the extended training and (2) a comparison of employment and earnings outcomes for individuals that qualified due to the extended training time compared to the other TANF recipients.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** No public hearing was held.

**Persons Testifying:** N/A.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** N/A.