
ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5898

State of Washington 65th Legislature 2017 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senator Braun)

READ FIRST TIME 03/23/17.

1 AN ACT Relating to eligibility for public assistance programs;
2 and amending RCW 74.08A.260 and 74.08A.270.

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

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 74.08A.260 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 42 s 2 are each
5 amended to read as follows:

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

16 (2) Based on the assessment, an individual responsibility plan
17 shall be prepared that: (a) Sets forth an employment goal and a plan
18 for maximizing the recipient's success at meeting the employment
19 goal; (b) considers WorkFirst educational and training programs from
20 which the recipient could benefit; (c) contains the obligation of the
21 recipient to participate in the program by complying with the plan;

1 (d) moves the recipient into full-time WorkFirst activities as
2 quickly as possible; and (e) describes the services available to the
3 recipient either during or after WorkFirst to enable the recipient to
4 obtain and keep employment and to advance in the workplace and
5 increase the recipient's wage earning potential over time.

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

9 (4) If a recipient refuses to engage in work and work activities
10 required by the department, the family's grant shall be reduced by
11 the recipient's share, and may, if the department determines it
12 appropriate, be terminated.

13 (5) The department may waive the penalties required under
14 subsection (4) of this section, subject to a finding that the
15 recipient refused to engage in work for good cause provided in RCW
16 74.08A.270.

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

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

29 (8)(a) (~~((From July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012,))~~) Subsections
30 (2) through (6) of this section are suspended for a recipient who is
31 a parent or other relative personally providing care for ~~((one))~~ a
32 child under the age of two years ~~((, or two or more children under the~~
33 ~~age of six years))~~. This suspension applies to both one and two
34 parent families. However, both parents in a two-parent family cannot
35 use the suspension during the same month. ~~((Beginning July 1, 2012,~~
36 ~~the department shall phase in the work activity requirements that~~
37 ~~were suspended, beginning with those recipients closest to reaching~~
38 ~~the sixty-month limit of receiving temporary assistance for needy~~
39 ~~families under RCW 74.08A.010(1). The phase in shall be accomplished~~
40 ~~so that a fairly equal number of recipients required to participate~~

1 ~~in work activities are returned to those activities each month until~~
2 ~~the total number required to participate is participating by June 30,~~
3 ~~2013-))~~ Nothing in this subsection shall prevent a recipient from
4 participating in the WorkFirst program on a voluntary basis.
5 ~~((Recipients who participate in the WorkFirst program on a voluntary~~
6 ~~basis shall be provided an option to participate in the program on a~~
7 ~~part-time basis, consisting of sixteen or fewer hours of activities~~
8 ~~per week. Recipients also may participate voluntarily on a full-time~~
9 ~~basis-))~~

10 (b)(i) The period of suspension of work activities under this
11 subsection provides an opportunity for the legislative and executive
12 branches to oversee redesign of the WorkFirst program. To realize
13 this opportunity, both during the period of suspension and following
14 reinstatement of work activity requirements as redesign is being
15 implemented, a legislative-executive WorkFirst oversight task force
16 is established, with members as provided in this subsection (8)(b).

17 (ii) The president of the senate shall appoint two members from
18 each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

19 (iii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint
20 two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of
21 representatives.

22 (iv) The governor shall appoint members representing the
23 department of social and health services, the department of early
24 learning, the department of commerce, the employment security
25 department, the office of financial management, and the state board
26 for community and technical colleges.

27 (v) The task force shall choose cochairs, one from among the
28 legislative members and one from among the executive branch members.
29 The legislative members shall convene the initial meeting of the task
30 force.

31 (c) The task force shall:

32 (i) Oversee the partner agencies' implementation of the redesign
33 of the WorkFirst program and operation of the temporary assistance
34 for needy families program to ensure that the programs are achieving
35 desired outcomes for their clients;

36 (ii) Determine evidence-based outcome measures for the WorkFirst
37 program, including measures related to equitably serving the needs of
38 historically underrepresented populations, such as English language
39 learners, immigrants, refugees, and other diverse communities;

1 (iii) Develop accountability measures for WorkFirst recipients
2 and the state agencies responsible for their progress toward self-
3 sufficiency;

4 (iv) Make recommendations to the governor and the legislature
5 regarding:

6 (A) Policies to improve the effectiveness of the WorkFirst
7 program over time;

8 (B) Early identification of those recipients most likely to
9 experience long stays on the program and strategies to improve their
10 ability to achieve progress toward self-sufficiency; and

11 (C) Necessary changes to the program, including taking into
12 account federal changes to the temporary assistance for needy
13 families program.

14 (d) The partner agencies must provide the task force with regular
15 reports on:

16 (i) The partner agencies' progress toward meeting the outcome and
17 performance measures established under (c) of this subsection;

18 (ii) Caseload trends and program expenditures, and the impact of
19 those trends and expenditures on client services, including services
20 to historically underrepresented populations; and

21 (iii) The characteristics of families who have been unsuccessful
22 on the program and have lost their benefits either through sanction
23 or the sixty-month time limit.

24 (e) Staff support for the task force must be provided by senate
25 committee services, the house of representatives office of program
26 research, and the state agency members of the task force.

27 (f) The task force shall meet on a quarterly basis beginning
28 September 2011, or as determined necessary by the task force
29 cochairs.

30 (g) During its tenure, the state agency members of the task force
31 shall respond in a timely manner to data requests from the cochairs.

32 **Sec. 2.** RCW 74.08A.270 and 2007 c 289 s 1 are each amended to
33 read as follows:

34 (1) Good cause reasons for failure to participate in WorkFirst
35 program components include: (a) Situations where the recipient is a
36 parent or other relative personally providing care for a child under
37 the age of six years, and formal or informal child care, or day care
38 for an incapacitated individual living in the same home as a
39 dependent child, is necessary for an individual to participate or

1 continue participation in the program or accept employment, and such
2 care is not available, and the department fails to provide such care;
3 or (b) the recipient is a parent with a child under the age of
4 ~~((one))~~ two years.

5 (2) A parent claiming a good cause exemption from WorkFirst
6 participation under subsection (1)(b) of this section may be required
7 to participate in one or more of the following, up to a maximum total
8 of twenty hours per week, if such treatment, services, or training is
9 indicated by the comprehensive evaluation or other assessment:

- 10 (a) Mental health treatment;
- 11 (b) Alcohol or drug treatment;
- 12 (c) Domestic violence services; or
- 13 (d) Parenting education or parenting skills training, if
14 available.

15 (3) The department shall: (a) Work with a parent claiming a good
16 cause exemption under subsection (1)(b) of this section to identify
17 and access programs and services designed to improve parenting skills
18 and promote child well-being, including but not limited to home
19 visitation programs and services; and (b) provide information on the
20 availability of home visitation services to temporary assistance for
21 needy families caseworkers, who shall inform clients of the
22 availability of the services. If desired by the client, the
23 caseworker shall facilitate appropriate referrals to providers of
24 home visitation services.

25 (4) Nothing in this section shall prevent a recipient from
26 participating in the WorkFirst program on a voluntary basis.

27 (5) A parent is eligible for a good cause exemption under
28 subsection (1)(b) of this section for a maximum total of ~~((twelve))~~
29 twenty-four months over the parent's lifetime.

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