
SENATE BILL 6478

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Senators Nguyen, Darneille, Stanford, Saldaña, Dhingra, Das, and Hasegawa

Read first time 01/17/20. Referred to Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation.

1 AN ACT Relating to revising economic assistance programs by
2 updating standards of need, revising outcome measures and data
3 collected, and reducing barriers to participation; amending RCW
4 74.04.770 and 74.08A.010; reenacting and amending RCW 74.08A.260;
5 adding a new section to chapter 74.08A RCW; creating new sections;
6 and providing an effective date.

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

8 **Sec. 1.** RCW 74.04.770 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 36 s 26 are each
9 amended to read as follows:

10 (1)(a) The department shall establish consolidated standards of
11 need each fiscal year which may vary by geographical areas, program,
12 and family size, for temporary assistance for needy families, refugee
13 assistance, ~~((supplemental security income, and benefits under RCW~~
14 ~~74.62.030)) the pregnant women assistance program, and state family~~
15 ~~assistance.~~

16 (b)(i) Standards for temporary assistance for needy families,
17 refugee assistance, ~~((and benefits under RCW 74.62.030)) the pregnant~~
18 ~~women assistance program, and state family assistance~~ shall be based
19 on studies of actual living costs and generally recognized inflation
20 indices and shall include reasonable allowances for household budget
21 items including shelter, fuel, food, transportation, clothing,

1 household maintenance and operations, personal maintenance, ~~((and))~~
2 necessary incidentals, and out-of-pocket costs a recipient may incur
3 for child care and health care.

4 (ii) By September 1, 2020, the department must submit to the
5 office of financial management, the legislative-executive WorkFirst
6 poverty reduction oversight task force, and the legislature, a
7 revised comprehensive study of living costs. The comprehensive study
8 must include recommendations for temporary assistance for needy
9 families grant standards as a percentage of need. Living costs must
10 be updated annually according to recognized inflation indices. By
11 September 1, 2022, and every four years thereafter, the department
12 must adjust the estimated base costs to a consumer for household
13 budget items used in the study, in addition to annual adjustments for
14 inflation.

15 (iii) By September 1, 2029, and every ten years thereafter, the
16 department must submit a redesigned and updated comprehensive study
17 to the office of financial management, the legislative-executive
18 WorkFirst poverty reduction oversight task force, and the
19 legislature. When completing each ten-year redesign, the department
20 must adjust study parameters, including cost categories and
21 geographic boundaries, as necessary.

22 (c) The standard of need may take into account the economies of
23 joint living arrangements, but unless explicitly required by federal
24 statute, there shall not be proration of any portion of assistance
25 grants unless the amount of the grant standard is equal to the
26 standard of need.

27 (2)(a) The department is authorized to establish rateable
28 reductions and grant maximums consistent with federal law.

29 (b) Payment level will be equal to need or a lesser amount if
30 rateable reductions or grant maximums are imposed. In no case shall a
31 recipient of supplemental security income receive a state supplement
32 less than the minimum required by federal law.

33 (3) The department may establish a separate standard for shelter
34 provided at no cost.

35 **Sec. 2.** RCW 74.08A.010 and 2019 c 343 s 2 are each amended to
36 read as follows:

37 (1) A family that includes an adult who has received temporary
38 assistance for needy families for sixty months after July 27, 1997,

1 shall be ineligible for further temporary assistance for needy
2 families assistance.

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

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

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

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

22 (i) ~~((By reason of hardship, including if))~~ If the recipient is a
23 homeless person as described in RCW 43.185C.010; ~~((or))~~

24 (ii) By reason of hardship, including if the recipient:

25 (A) Is participating satisfactorily in the program;

26 (B) Is temporarily prevented from working or looking for
27 employment;

28 (C) Is in need of mental health or substance use disorder
29 treatment; or

30 (D) Demonstrates another basis by which the time limit pursuant
31 to subsection (1) of this section would cause undue hardship to the
32 recipient or the recipient's family; or

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

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

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

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

11 **Sec. 3.** RCW 74.08A.260 and 2018 c 126 s 5 and 2018 c 58 s 8 are
12 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

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

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

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

37 (4) (a) If a recipient refuses to engage in work and work
38 activities required by the department, the department must review the
39 recipient's case to ensure the department has taken into

1 consideration any barriers to work activities and made any necessary
2 revisions to the recipient's individual responsibility plan. As part
3 of the review, the department must consider: (i) Whether the
4 recipient was provided with adequate notice and opportunity to remedy
5 his or her noncompliance with program requirements; and (ii) if the
6 department considered good cause reasons for failure to participate
7 pursuant to RCW 74.08A.270 before imposing sanctions.

8 (b) After four months of continuous noncompliance, the family's
9 grant ((shall)) may be reduced by the recipient's share(, and may,
10 if the department determines it appropriate, be terminated)) or by
11 forty percent, whichever is greater.

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

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

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

28 (8) Subsections (2) through (6) of this section are suspended for
29 a recipient who is a parent or other relative personally providing
30 care for a child under the age of two years. This suspension applies
31 to both one and two parent families. However, both parents in a two-
32 parent family cannot use the suspension during the same month.
33 Nothing in this subsection shall prevent a recipient from
34 participating in the WorkFirst program on a voluntary basis.

35 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 74.08A
36 RCW to read as follows:

37 The department may not require applicants for temporary
38 assistance for needy families to attend a WorkFirst orientation as a
39 condition of eligibility. The department may incorporate orientation

1 information into the recipient assessment conducted pursuant to RCW
2 74.08A.260.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Except for section 1 of this act, this act
4 takes effect May 1, 2021.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** This act applies prospectively only and
6 not retroactively.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** If specific funding for the purposes of
8 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
9 provided by June 30, 2020, in the supplemental omnibus appropriations
10 act, this act is null and void.

--- END ---