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**SENATE BILL 5311**

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**State of Washington                      69th Legislature                      2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Braun, Boehnke, Christian, Gildon, Schoesler, and Warnick

Read first time 01/16/25. Referred to Committee on Human Services.

1            AN ACT Relating to increasing work participation rates for able-  
2 bodied working-age adults receiving cash and food assistance;  
3 amending RCW 74.08.025, 74.08A.260, and 74.08A.120; and providing an  
4 effective date.

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

6            **Sec. 1.** RCW 74.08.025 and 2019 c 343 s 1 are each amended to  
7 read as follows:

8            (1) Public assistance may be awarded to any applicant:

9            (a) Who is in need and otherwise meets the eligibility  
10 requirements of department assistance programs; and

11            (b) Who has not made a voluntary assignment of property or cash  
12 for the purpose of qualifying for an assistance grant; and

13            (c) Who is not an inmate of a public institution except as a  
14 patient in a medical institution or except as an inmate in a public  
15 institution who could qualify for federal aid assistance: PROVIDED,  
16 That the assistance paid by the department to recipients in nursing  
17 homes, or receiving nursing home care, may cover the cost of clothing  
18 and incidentals and general maintenance exclusive of medical care and  
19 health services. The department may pay a grant to cover the cost of  
20 clothing and personal incidentals in public or private medical  
21 institutions and institutions for tuberculosis. The department shall

1 allow recipients in nursing homes to retain, in addition to the grant  
2 to cover the cost of clothing and incidentals, wages received for  
3 work as a part of a training or rehabilitative program designed to  
4 prepare the recipient for less restrictive placement to the extent  
5 permitted under Title XIX of the federal social security act.

6 (2) Any person otherwise qualified for temporary assistance for  
7 needy families who is assessed through the state alcohol and  
8 substance abuse program as drug or alcohol-dependent and requiring  
9 treatment to become employable shall be required by the department to  
10 participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program as a condition of  
11 benefit receipt.

12 (3) Pursuant to 21 U.S.C. 862a(d)(1), the department shall exempt  
13 individuals from the eligibility restrictions of 21 U.S.C. 862a(a)(1)  
14 and (2) to ensure eligibility for temporary assistance for needy  
15 families benefits and federal food assistance.

16 (4) The department shall implement a permanent disqualification  
17 for adults who have been terminated due to WorkFirst noncompliance  
18 sanctions three or more times since March 1, 2007 and whose latest  
19 termination occurs after the effective date of this section. A  
20 household that includes an adult who has been permanently  
21 disqualified from receiving temporary assistance for needy families  
22 shall be ineligible for further temporary assistance for needy  
23 families assistance.

24 **Sec. 2.** RCW 74.08A.260 and 2020 c 338 s 1 are each amended to  
25 read as follows:

26 (1) Each recipient shall be assessed after determination of  
27 program eligibility and before referral to job search. Assessments  
28 shall be based upon factors that are critical to obtaining  
29 employment, including but not limited to education, availability of  
30 child care, history of family violence, history of substance abuse,  
31 and other factors that affect the ability to obtain employment.  
32 Assessments may be performed by the department or by a contracted  
33 entity. The assessment shall be based on a uniform, consistent,  
34 transferable format that will be accepted by all agencies and  
35 organizations serving the recipient.

36 (2) Based on the assessment, an individual responsibility plan  
37 shall be prepared that: (a) Sets forth an employment goal and a plan  
38 for maximizing the recipient's success at meeting the employment  
39 goal; (b) considers WorkFirst educational and training programs from

1 which the recipient could benefit; (c) contains the obligation of the  
2 recipient to participate in the program by complying with the plan;  
3 (d) moves the recipient into full-time WorkFirst activities as  
4 quickly as possible; and (e) describes the services available to the  
5 recipient either during or after WorkFirst to enable the recipient to  
6 obtain and keep employment and to advance in the workplace and  
7 increase the recipient's wage earning potential over time.

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

11 (4) If a recipient refuses to engage in work and work activities  
12 required by the department, (~~after two months of continuous~~  
13 ~~noncompliance,~~) the family's grant shall be reduced by the  
14 recipient's share (~~or by forty percent, whichever is greater, and~~  
15 ~~must be terminated after twelve~~) and the department shall notify the  
16 recipient that the grant will be terminated if the case is not  
17 brought back into compliance within two months. The grant shall be  
18 terminated after two months of continuous noncompliance.

19 (5) The department (~~shall~~) may waive the penalties required  
20 under subsection (4) of this section, subject to a finding that the  
21 recipient refused to engage in work for good cause provided in RCW  
22 74.08A.270.

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

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

35 (8) Subsections (2) through (6) of this section are suspended for  
36 a recipient who is a parent or other relative personally providing  
37 care for a child under the age of two years. This suspension applies  
38 to both one and two parent families. However, both parents in a two-  
39 parent family cannot use the suspension during the same month.

1 Nothing in this subsection shall prevent a recipient from  
2 participating in the WorkFirst program on a voluntary basis.

3 **Sec. 3.** RCW 74.08A.120 and 2020 c 136 s 2 are each amended to  
4 read as follows:

5 (1) The department may establish a food assistance program for  
6 legal immigrants and victims of human trafficking as defined in RCW  
7 74.04.005 who are ineligible for the federal food stamp program.

8 (2) The rules for the state food assistance program shall follow  
9 (~~exactly~~) the rules of the federal food stamp program except for  
10 the provisions pertaining to (~~immigrant status~~):

11 (a) Immigrant status; and

12 (b) Any suspension of work requirements.

13 (3) The benefit under the state food assistance program shall be  
14 established by the legislature in the biennial operating budget.

15 (4) The department may enter into a contract with the United  
16 States department of agriculture to use the existing federal food  
17 stamp program coupon system for the purposes of administering the  
18 state food assistance program.

19 (5) In the event the department is unable to enter into a  
20 contract with the United States department of agriculture, the  
21 department may issue vouchers to eligible households for the purchase  
22 of eligible foods at participating retailers.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act takes effect February 1, 2026.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** If any provision of this act or its  
25 application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the  
26 remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other  
27 persons or circumstances is not affected.

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