

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5636

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As of February 17, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to victims of family violence among applicants and recipients of temporary assistance for needy families.

**Brief Description:** Exempting victims of family violence from certain temporary assistance for needy families' requirements.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hargrove, Winsley, McAuliffe, Regala, Sheahan, Stevens, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Keiser and B. Sheldon.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Children & Family Services & Corrections: 2/18/03.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Staff:** Edith Rice (786-7444)

**Background:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients are eligible to receive services for a cumulative lifetime total of 60 months or five years. Recipients requiring specialized assistance are referred to Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) programs or crime victims' programs through the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development. DSHS can exempt a recipient and family from the 60-month time limit if it would cause a hardship, or the recipient is a victim of family violence.

WorkFirst is a component of the TANF program which requires recipients to participate in some kind of work related activity. Work activities can be any of a number of activities related to work or preparation for full time paid employment such as: training, job search, education, or paid employment. There are "good cause" or acceptable reasons for failing to participate in WorkFirst activities.

Before a recipient is referred to the job search component of WorkFirst, he or she is subject to an employability screening. If it is determined that he or she is not employable, the recipient is referred for an assessment, and an individual responsibility plan is prepared. The individual responsibility plan sets forth an employment goal, acknowledges the obligation that the recipient has to become employed and describes services available to the recipient to enable him or her to work.

Under WAC 388-61-001 DSHS is required to screen and identify TANF recipients for a history of family violence, and family violence is defined as:

- (a) Physical acts that resulted in, or threatened to result in, physical injury;
- (b) Sexual abuse;
- (c) Sexual activity involving a dependent child;

- (d) Being forced as the caretaker relative of a dependent child to engage in nonconsensual sexual acts or activities;
- (e) Threats of or attempts at, physical sexual abuse;
- (f) Mental abuse;
- (g) Neglect or deprivation of medical care; or
- (h) Stalking.

Domestic violence advocates believe that victims of family violence may be unfairly penalized by the WorkFirst work activity requirements.

**Summary of Bill:** The Department of Social and Health Services must exempt recipients from the 60-month cumulative time limit on services if they are victims of family violence. Family violence is added to the list of "good cause" reasons not to participate in WorkFirst work activity requirements. In addition to being screened for employability, each recipient is now screened for family violence.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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