AN ACT Relating to bolstering economic recovery by providing public assistance to households in need; amending RCW 74.04.660 and 74.04.770; adding a new section to chapter 74.04 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an effective date.

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

Sec. 1. RCW 74.04.660 and 2008 c 181 s 301 are each amended to read as follows:

The department shall establish a consolidated emergency assistance program for families with children. Assistance may be provided in accordance with this section.

(1) Benefits provided under this program shall be limited to one period of time, as determined by the department, within any consecutive twelve-month period.

(2) Benefits under this program shall be provided to alleviate emergent conditions resulting from insufficient income and resources to provide for: Food, shelter, clothing, medical care, or other necessary items, as defined by the department. Benefits may also be provided for family reconciliation services, family preservation services, home-based services, short-term substitute care in a licensed agency as defined in RCW 74.15.020, crisis nurseries, therapeutic child care, or other necessary services as defined by the
department. Benefits shall be provided only in an amount sufficient
to cover the cost of the specific need, subject to the limitations
established in this section.

(3)(a) The department shall, by rule, establish assistance
standards and eligibility criteria for this program in accordance
with this section.

(b) Eligibility for benefits or services under this section does
not automatically entitle a recipient to medical assistance.

(4) The department shall seek federal emergency assistance funds
to supplement the state funds appropriated for the operation of this
program as long as other departmental programs are not adversely
affected by the receipt of federal funds.

(5) If state funds appropriated for the consolidated emergency
assistance program are exhausted, the department may discontinue the
program.

(6) During a state of emergency and pursuant to an order from the
governor under this subsection, benefits under this program may be
extended to individuals and families without children and may be
provided for more than one period of time within any consecutive 12-
month period, as established in an order from the governor.

Adjustments to the program under this subsection remain in effect
until either the state of emergency ceases, the order expires, or the
governor issues an order terminating these adjustments, whichever
occurs first.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 74.04
RCW to read as follows:

(1) To assist with family-related expenses, households with
children receiving food benefits under this title, who are not
simultaneously receiving temporary assistance for needy families, are
eligible to receive a one-time cash benefit in the final month of
eligibility when the household's food benefits terminate due to
exceeding the gross income limit or when the household requests
voluntary closure.

(2) For households receiving a cash benefit under subsection (1)
of this section, the department shall provide transitional food
assistance for a period of five months when eligibility for food
benefits ceases due to exceeding the gross income limit or when the
household requests voluntary closure.
(3) If necessary, the department shall extend the household's food benefit certification until the end of the transition period.

(4) The amount of the cash benefit issued by the department under subsection (1) of this section must be set in accordance with available funds appropriated for this purpose.

Sec. 3. RCW 74.04.770 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 36 s 26 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department shall establish consolidated standards of need each fiscal year which may vary by geographical areas, program, and family size, for temporary assistance for needy families, refugee assistance, supplemental security income, and benefits under RCW 74.62.030.

(2)(a) Standards of need for temporary assistance for needy families, refugee assistance, and benefits under RCW 74.62.030 shall be based on studies of actual living costs and generally recognized inflation indices and shall include reasonable allowances for basic household needs including shelter, fuel, food, transportation, clothing, household maintenance and operations, personal maintenance, (and) necessary incidentals(−), cell phone and internet, and out-of-pocket costs for child care and health care.

(b) By July 1, 2022, to ensure the standards of need reflect the current goods and services households need, the department must use an existing, broadly used national standard that meets the requirements of (a) of this subsection as the base for annual updating in subsection (1) of this section.

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

The department is authorized to establish rateable reductions and grant maximums consistent with federal law.

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

((The department may establish a separate standard for shelter provided at no cost.))
NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. If specific funding for the purposes of section 2 of this act, referencing section 2 of this act by bill or chapter number, is not provided by June 30, 2021, in the omnibus appropriations act, section 2 of this act is null and void.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. Section 2 of this act takes effect July 1, 2022.

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