

CHAPTER 43

[Senate Bill No. 6675]

FAMILY INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

AN ACT Relating to authorizing and modifying the evaluation plan of the family independence program with modifications to the family opportunity councils; amending RCW 74.21.020, 74.21.060, 74.21.140, and 74.21.904; adding a new section to chapter 74.21 RCW; and declaring an emergency.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. A new section is added to chapter 74.21 RCW to read as follows:

The family independence program implementation plan submitted to the legislature pursuant to RCW 74.21.140 and 74.21.200 is approved. The governor or the governor's designee is authorized to sign and complete all necessary agreements with the federal government, provided that nothing in the agreements is inconsistent with chapter 74.21 RCW.

Sec. 2. Section 2, chapter 434, Laws of 1987 and RCW 74.21.020 are each amended to read as follows:

The legislature hereby establishes as state policy the goal of economic independence for employable adults receiving public assistance, through employment, training, and education. The legislature finds that children living in families with incomes below the needs standard have reduced opportunities for physical and intellectual development. A family's economic future is frequently not improved by the current program.

Therefore, in order to break the cycle of poverty and dependence, a family independence program is established. Participating families are to receive benefits under this program at no less than they would otherwise have been entitled to receive.

The legislature finds that the state has a vital interest in ensuring that citizens who are in economic need are provided appropriate financial assistance. It is the intent of the legislature to maintain the existing partnership between state and federal government and that this program remain part of the federal welfare entitlement program. The legislature seeks federal authority for a five-year demonstration project and recognizes that waivers and congressional action may be required to achieve our purpose. The legislature does not seek a block grant approach to welfare.

The legislature recognizes that any program intended to assist new and current public assistance recipients will be more likely to succeed when the state, private sector, and recipients work together.

The legislature also recognizes the value of building on successful programs that utilize the development of networking and mentoring strategies to assist public assistance recipients to gain self-sufficiency. The legislature further encourages public-private cooperation in the areas of job readiness

training, education, job training, and work opportunities, including community-based organizations as service providers in these areas through contractual relationships.

The legislature finds that the goal of economic independence requires increased efforts to assist parents in exercising their children's right to economic support from absent parents.

The legislature recognizes the substantial participation in the workforce of women with preschool children, and the difficulty in reentering employment after long absences.

The legislature further recognizes that public assistance recipients can play a major role in setting their own goals.

The objectives of this chapter are to assure that: The maximum number of recipients of public assistance become independent and self-sufficient through employment, training, and education; caseloads be correspondingly reduced on a long-term basis; financial incentives be available to recipients participating in job readiness, education, training, and work programs; the number of children growing up in poverty be substantially reduced; and unemployable recipients be afforded a basic level of financial and medical assistance consistent with the state's financial capabilities.

Sec. 3. Section 6, chapter 434, Laws of 1987 and RCW 74.21.060 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The executive committee shall establish a family opportunity advisory council in each of the department's regions to make recommendations on the social services, procedures, and income maintenance operations used in the family independence program. The councils shall also assist in providing mentors, mutual self-help, and information on alternatives to welfare dependency. The councils shall include: (a) Individuals currently receiving assistance; (b) individuals who have received public assistance in the past but have subsequently achieved economic independence; and (c) persons who are board members or employees of nonprofit organizations providing services of the types offered to family independence program recipients, including those with experience in developing self-esteem and individual motivation. A regional advisory council may establish panels representing specific geographic areas within the region.

(2) Each advisory council shall nominate three persons from which the executive committee shall elect one person from each region to be a member of the advisory committee authorized by RCW 74.21.050. Appointments shall be for a term of two years. Terms may be renewed for one additional two-year term. Three regional appointments shall initially be for a term of one year. The regional representatives shall constitute the consumer and enrollee representatives required by 74.21.050.

(3) Recipients and former recipients may be paid a per diem rate established by the executive committee. Members may be reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060. Recipients

and former recipients may also be reimbursed for dependent care expenses required to permit their participation in the family opportunity advisory councils, the executive committee, and the family independence program advisory committee.

(4) The department may, within available funds, provide grants to each family opportunity council to assist and support their activities and to assist in the recruitment and training of volunteer mentors.

Sec. 4. Section 14, chapter 434, Laws of 1987 and RCW 74.21.140 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) By January 1, 1988, the executive committee shall submit to the legislature:

(a) A child-care plan, which may include creative solutions to assist enrollees in making child-care arrangements;

(b) In consultation with the superintendent of public instruction, a plan for assisting high school students who are parents or pregnant to remain in school or complete their high school education;

(c) A plan for motivating those who are discouraged to seek self-sufficiency through work, education, or training;

(d) An employment plan for enrollees; and

(e) A plan for phased-in implementation of the family independence program.

(2) By January 1, 1988, the legislative budget committee, after consultation with the executive committee, shall submit to the legislature:

(a) An evaluation plan satisfactory to the federal government, including a plan for analysis, within available funds, of:

(i) The costs and effectiveness of the family independence program;

(ii) The extent to which education and training opportunities have led to employment and economic independence;

(iii) The extent to which support services have been provided for such education and training opportunities;

(iv) The impact of support services, training opportunities, and employment on the well-being of the children and families of enrollees;

(v) ~~((The impact of the family independence program on the labor market opportunities available to nonenrollees;~~

~~(vi)))~~ The impact of the family independence program on the early childhood education assistance program;

~~((vii)))~~ (vi) A comparison of the family independence program enrollees with a sample of aid to families with dependent children recipients entering assistance between July 1, 1987, through June 30, 1988, to determine the characteristics of the caseloads of the family independence program and the aid to families with dependent children program, including demographic characteristics, employment, training, and educational histories, spells on assistance, and reasons for entry onto and exit from assistance;

~~((viii))~~ (vii) Such administrative and operational factors as may be requested by the executive committee;

~~((ix))~~ (viii) A longitudinal study over time of a sample of public assistance recipients or persons at risk of becoming eligible for assistance, to determine the causes of public dependency and the impact of changes in the economy or of public programs on dependency, work, or other relevant behaviors of the sample population.

(3) The legislative budget committee shall cause the evaluation plan to be implemented ~~((subject to legislative approval))~~ as approved by the legislative budget committee in a manner that will insure the independence of the evaluation through appropriate arrangements, which may include contracts, with objective evaluators. The evaluation plan and all evaluation products shall receive the review and comment of evaluation advisory groups to be convened by the Washington institute of public policy and which include representatives of the executive committee, appropriate legislative committee staffs, persons from the state's higher education institutions, staff members of the department and the employment security department, recipients, and former recipients. The reviews shall consider relevance to state policy and budget concerns, methodological procedure, implementation, and results.

(4) The first report of this evaluation shall be submitted to the legislature no later than ~~((November 16, 1988))~~ December 1, 1989, and annually thereafter, with a final report due no later than November 15, 1993.

Sec. 5. Section 25, chapter 434, Laws of 1987 and RCW 74.21.904 are each amended to read as follows:

This chapter shall expire on June 30, ~~((1989))~~ 1993, unless extended by law.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety, the support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect immediately.

Passed the Senate March 9, 1988.

Passed the House March 8, 1988.

Approved by the Governor March 15, 1988.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 15, 1988.

CHAPTER 44

[Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 6200]

UTILITY SERVICES—REDUCED RATES FOR LOW-INCOME DISABLED CITIZENS

AN ACT Relating to reduced utility rates; and amending RCW 74.38.070.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington: