
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 192

AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES ASSESSMENT INTERVIEWS AND SANCTIONS FOR TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE BENEFICIARIES WHO FAIL TO COMPLY WITH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REQUIREMENTS.

SUMMARY

By law, Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) applicants who are subject to work requirements through the employment services program must (1) attend an assessment interview with the Labor Department and (2) participate in developing an employment plan before the Department of Social Services (DSS) may grant them cash assistance under TFA. This bill starts the 10-day time frame for DSS to schedule an assessment interview on the day DSS completes an application interview, rather than on the day the application is made. It also changes the way DSS calculates penalties for a TFA participant's failure to comply with work requirements.

The bill also eliminates provisions under current law requiring DSS to terminate TFA benefits awarded to a family under certain circumstances. Specifically, the department must terminate these benefits when a family member who is not exempt from the program's 21-month time limit fails, without good cause, to do either of the following:

1. attend any scheduled assessment appointment or interview related to establishing an employment services plan, unless he or she attends a subsequently scheduled appointment or interview within 30 days of receiving DSS's notice that benefits are terminated, or
2. comply with a work requirement during a six-month extension of benefits.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022

APPLICATION PROCESS AND INTERVIEWS

The bill requires DSS to promptly conduct an application interview with a TFA applicant to determine whether he or she is exempt from work requirements under the Labor Department's employment services program. Under the bill, if DSS determines the applicant is not exempt, the department must schedule the initial employment services interview with the Labor Department within 10 business days after the application interview. If DSS fails to do so within that timeframe, the bill prohibits DSS from delaying TFA benefits to an applicant who is otherwise eligible.

Additionally, the bill eliminates a provision prohibiting DSS from delaying TFA benefits to an applicant when the department schedules the initial employment services assessment interview more than 10 business days after the applicant submits the application.

Existing law also prohibits DSS from delaying benefits when the Labor Department does not complete the applicant's employment services plan within 10 business days of the applicant's employment services assessment interview.

PENALTY CALCULATIONS

Under current law, DSS must reduce TFA benefits awarded to a family when a member of that family fails to comply with a work requirement without good cause, as follows:

1. for the first instance, a 25% reduction in benefits for three consecutive months;
2. for the second instance, a 35% reduction in benefits for three consecutive months; and
3. for third and subsequent instances, termination of benefits for three consecutive months.

The bill instead requires DSS to reduce benefits for failure to comply

with work requirements by excluding the noncompliant family member from the household when calculating the family's monthly benefit. (TFA benefits are based, in part, on household size. Generally, reducing the number of people in the household reduces the household's benefit amount.) Under the bill, DSS must exclude the noncompliant family member until he or she (1) begins to comply with work requirements, (2) becomes exempt from work requirements, or (3) demonstrates good cause for failing to comply.

In cases where only one member of a family is eligible for TFA and he or she fails to comply with a work requirement, current law requires DSS to terminate the family's benefits for three consecutive months. Under the bill, DSS must instead reduce the family's benefit by 25% for each month the person fails to comply, and only if the failure to comply is without good cause.

**COMMITTEE ACTION **

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/17/2022)