
DIGEST

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Harris

HB No. 525

Abstract: Revises provisions relative to aid to needy families and employment services for TANF cash assistance recipients.

Present law provides for services of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program (successor to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program) to be coordinated at the state level by DCFS. Proposed law retains present law providing for the following:

- (1) TANF-funded cash assistance known as the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP)
- (2) Employment and job training services for FITAP recipients known as the Strategies to Empower People (STEP) program.
- (3) A contract between a FITAP recipient and DCFS known as a "Family Success Agreement" that sets forth responsibilities, expectations, activities, and goals designed to transition the recipient from welfare to self-sufficiency.

Present law designates the La. Workforce Investment Council as the state partner of DCFS for TANF employment and job training services. Proposed law revises present law to designate the La. Workforce Commission as the state partner of DCFS for such services.

Present law defines "dependent child", for purposes of present law, in part as a needy child who is living with his father, mother, or other relative, within fifth degree, in a place of residence maintained by one or more of such relatives as his or their own home. Proposed law adds a stepfather and a stepmother as relatives within this definition in conformance with federal law providing for the TANF program. Further, proposed law adds marriage as a condition under which persons may acquire a relationship to a child and be deemed as a "relative" for the purposes of proposed law and present law, which provides only adoption and birth as such conditions.

Proposed law deletes all of the following from present law:

- (1) Provisions for ongoing intensive case management by DCFS including a requirement that the department review the Family Success Agreement every six months.

- (2) Provisions requiring DCFS to implement a "Transition Assessment Plan" for recipients who are within six months of an expected cessation of FITAP cash assistance, for reasons other than noncompliance with program requirements, to assist in their transition from FITAP recience.
- (3) Provisions relative to evaluation, screening, and comprehensive employability assessments for FITAP applicants.
- (4) Provisions authorizing DCFS to establish procedures which allow FITAP participants to bring grievances and appeal decisions of the department concerning the program.
- (5) Provisions relative to the program known as "FIND Work" which was succeeded by the STEP program.
- (6) Provisions authorizing DCFS to promulgate rules requiring each housing authority of the state created by or pursuant to present law to establish councils or committees to implement programs for tenants to participate in work experience activities designed to provide maintenance and upkeep of housing units managed by the housing authority, contingent upon appropriation of funds for such purpose.
- (7) Provisions requiring DCFS, to the extent that appropriations are available, to coordinate supportive services for FITAP recipients and to inform those recipients of other available assistance including but not limited to the following:
 - (a) Medicaid.
 - (b) Food stamps (now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).
 - (c) Child care programs.
 - (d) Transportation services.
 - (e) La. Children's Health Insurance Program.
 - (f) Earned Income Tax Credit.
 - (g) TANF-funded initiatives to support self-sufficiency.

Proposed law revises present law relative to employment and job training services for FITAP recipients in the following manner:

- (1) Adds requirement that the La. Workforce Commission and DCFS shall report to the legislative committees on health and welfare on the progress of the plan within one year of the implementation of the plan.

- (2) Adds provision stipulating that employment and job training services be delivered pursuant to performance-based contracts between DCFS and the La. Workforce Commission, other government agencies, or any community partner.
- (3) Adds temporary and permanent job placements, subsidized employment services, and on-the-job training as employment services which may be offered by the STEP program.
- (4) Deletes requirement that the DCFS state partner for TANF employment and job training services coordinate service delivery, to the extent possible and when applicable, with the following entities:
 - (a) One-stop services centers of the La. Workforce Commission.
 - (b) La. Community and Technical College System.
 - (c) Adult literacy programs of DOE.
 - (d) Community-based organizations.
- (5) Adds provision authorizing the use of e-mail communication, when possible, as an acceptable method for providing required written notification of Family Success Agreement contractual obligations to FITAP recipients.
- (6) Deletes numerous detailed provisions relating to FITAP work requirements, client employability assessment, intermediate client monitoring, exceptions, and sanctions; adds a simplified provision stipulating that the FITAP recipient must comply with his Family Success Agreement and the work requirements of proposed law in order to continue receiving cash assistance.

Proposed law revises present law providing for a TANF-funded individual development account matched-savings program to stipulate that administration of such program is contingent upon availability of funding.

Proposed law deletes certain date-specific provisions of present law which have expired relative to federal waiver applications and promulgation of rules by the DCFS secretary.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 46:230.1(C), 231(4)(intro. para.) and (b), 231.2(A)(2), and 231.6(C); Adds R.S. 46:231.12 and 460.6(F); Repeals R.S. 46:231(13), 231.3, 231.6(D) and (E), 231.7-231.11, and 460.8(C))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Health and Welfare to the original bill.

1. In proposed law designating the La. Workforce Commission and community partners as entities with which DCFS may contract for employment services for the STEP program, added "other government agencies" as entities with which DCFS may contract for such services.
2. Changed a requirement that the STEP program include certain specified employment services to an authorization for the program to offer those specified services.

House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill.

1. Added requirement that the La. Workforce Commission and DCFS shall report to the legislative committees on health and welfare on the progress of the plan within one year of the implementation of the plan.
2. In provisions stipulating that certain persons, including fathers, mothers, stepfathers, and stepmothers, shall be deemed as "relatives" for the purposes of present law and proposed law whether their relationship to the child was acquired by adoption or birth, added marriage as a condition under which such persons may acquire a relationship to a child and be deemed as a relative.
3. Made technical change to relocate new Section of proposed law.