
**Early Learning & Children's Services
Committee**

HB 1233

Brief Description: Concerning temporary assistance for needy families.

Sponsors: Representatives Hinkle, Kretz, McCune, Herrera, Klippert, Roach, Ross, Short and Warnick.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires a process for periodic urinalysis drug testing be included in the individual responsibility plan for a recipient of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) when chemical dependence is the reason for the the recipient's reliance on public assistance.
- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to assign a protective payee if a TANF recipient refuses to engage in needed treatment for chemical dependency.

Hearing Date: 1/27/09

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120)

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services administers the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) federal block grant. Washington's TANF program is called WorkFirst. Under WorkFirst, recipients receive a comprehensive evaluation prior to referral to job search activities. The evaluation is facilitated by a WorkFirst specialist and covers a broad range of topics, including questions to identify possible chemical dependency (CD) issues. Information obtained through the evaluation process is used to develop an individual responsibility plan (IRP) for the recipient. The IRP includes an employment goal, a plan for obtaining employment as quickly as possible, and a description of services to remove barriers to employment and to enable the recipient to obtain and keep employment.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In cases where the comprehensive evaluation indicates potential CD issues, recipients are referred to a WorkFirst social worker for a focused assessment designed to determine the need for a referral to a contracted CD treatment provider. Recipients who are referred to a CD treatment provider undergo a more specialized assessment, after which the treatment provider develops specific recommendations for appropriate treatment. Those treatment requirements are then included in the recipient's IRP. The CD treatment provider sends monthly reports regarding the recipient's participation and progress in treatment to the WorkFirst case worker. Monthly reports list the actual hours the recipient participated in treatment and include a determination about whether the recipient is making satisfactory progress in the treatment program. WorkFirst case workers initiate the good cause/sanction process when recipients do not participate or do not make progress in treatment as required under the IRP. The good cause/sanction process includes certain rights to administrative hearings.

The CD treatment providers determine whether and how frequently urinalysis testing will be part of their treatment programs. In general, most inpatient treatment programs do not utilize urinalysis testing. Many outpatient treatment programs do incorporate urinalysis testing, but the frequency may vary from program to program.

Summary of Bill:

When the assessment of a WorkFirst recipient indicates a likelihood the recipient's need for public assistance is linked to chemical dependence or substance abuse, the recipient's IRP must include a process for periodic urinalysis drug testing. Testing can be accomplished via a treatment program, routine employer screening, or other lawful means. Recipients who are required to undergo testing must sign a release allowing the results to be sent to the WorkFirst case worker. A recipient who produces a positive test must be required to engage in a treatment program that includes a urinalysis test at the conclusion of the program, if not already engaged in such a program. If a recipient refuses to submit to testing, sign a release, or engage in treatment, the WorkFirst caseworker must assign a protective payee for the recipient's benefits under the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.