

**§ 108A-27.9. State Plan.**

(a) The Department shall prepare and submit to the Director of the Budget a biennial State Plan that proposes the goals and requirements for the State and the terms of the Work First Program for each fiscal year. Prior to submitting a State Plan to the General Assembly, the Department shall:

- (1) Consult with local government and private sector organizations regarding the design of the State Plan and allow 45 days to receive comments from those organizations; and
- (2) Upon complying with subdivision (1) of this subsection, submit the State Plan to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services and the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services for review.

(b) The State Plan shall consist of generally applicable provisions and two separate sections, one proposing the terms of the Work First Program in Electing Counties, and the other proposing the terms for the Standard Work First Program.

(c) The State Plan shall include the following generally applicable provisions:

- (1) Provisions to ensure that recipients who are sanctioned are provided a clear explanation of the sanction and that all recipients, including those under sanction or termination for rules infractions, are fully informed of their right to legal counsel and any other representatives they choose at their own cost;
- (1a) Provisions to ensure that no Work First Program recipients, required to participate in work activities, shall be employed or assigned when:
  - a. Any regular employee is on layoff from the same or substantially equivalent job;
  - b. An employer terminates any regular employee or otherwise causes an involuntary reduction in the employer's workforce in order to hire Work First recipients; or
  - c. An employer otherwise causes the displacement of any currently employed worker or positions, including partial displacements such as reductions in hours of nonovertime work, wages, or employment benefits, in order to hire Work First recipients;
- (1b) Reserved for future codification purposes.
- (1c) Provisions to ensure that all work eligible parents and all parents with a child under 12 months of age are subject to pay for performance requirements. Pay for performance requirements means that the family will receive Work First benefits in the month following a month that they comply with their Mutual Responsibility Agreement. Failure to comply with the Mutual Responsibility Agreement without good cause will result in no Work First benefits in the following month.
- (2) Provisions to ensure the establishment and maintenance of grievance procedures to resolve complaints by regular employees who allege that the employment or assignment of a Work First Program recipient is in violation of subdivision (1a) of this subsection, and grievance procedures to resolve complaints by Work First Participants made pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection;
- (3) Provisions to ensure that Work First Program participants, required to participate in work activities, shall be subject to and have the Work First Program employees in similarly situated work activities, including, but not limited to, wage and hour laws, health and safety standards, and

nondiscrimination laws, provided that nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prohibit Work First Program participants from receiving additional State or county services designed to assist Work First Program participants achieve job stability and self-sufficiency;

- (4) A description of eligible federal and State work activities. For up to twenty percent (20%) of Work First recipients, authorized State work activities shall include at least part-time enrollment in a postsecondary education program. In Standard Counties, recipients enrolled on at least a part-time basis in a postsecondary education program and maintaining a 2.5 grade point average or its equivalent shall have their two-year time limit suspended for up to three years.
- (5) Requirements for assignment of child support income and compliance with child support activities;
- (6) Incentives for high-performing counties, contingency plans for counties unable to meet financial commitments during the term of the State Plan, and sanctions against counties failing to meet performance expectations, including allocation of any federal penalties that may be assessed against the State as a result of a county's failure to perform; and
- (7) Anything else required by federal or State law, rule, or regulation to be included in the State Plan.

(d) The section of the State Plan proposing the terms of the Work First Program in Electing Counties shall be based upon the aggregate of the Electing County Plans and shall include federal eligibility requirements and a description of the eligibility requirements and benefit calculation in each Electing County.

The Department may modify the section in the State Plan regarding Electing Counties once a biennium or except as necessary to reflect any modifications made by an Electing County. Any changes to the section of the State Plan regarding Electing Counties shall be reported to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, and the Fiscal Research Division within one month following the changes.

(e) The section of the State Plan describing the Standard Work First Program shall include:

- (1) Benefit levels, limitations, and payments and the method for calculating benefit levels and payments;
- (2) Eligibility criteria, including asset and income standards;
- (3) Any exceptions or exemptions proposed to work requirements;
- (4) Provisions for when extensions may be granted to a person or family who reaches the time limit for receipt of benefits;
- (5) Provisions for exceptions and exemptions to criteria, time limits, and standards;
- (6) Provisions for sanctions for recipient failure to comply with program requirements; and
- (7) through (10) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-489, s. 7, effective August 26, 2009.
- (11) A description of the Department's consultation with local governments and private sector organizations and a summary of any comments received during the 45-day public comment period.

(f) In addition to those items required to be included pursuant to subsection (e) of this section, the State Plan may include proposals to establish the following as part of the Standard Work First Program:

- (1) Demonstration projects in one or more counties to assess the value of any proposed changes in State policy or to test ways to improve programs; and
- (2) Requirement that recipients shall be required to enter into and comply with Mutual Responsibility Agreements as a condition of receiving benefits. If provided for in the State Plan, the terms and conditions of Mutual Responsibility Agreements shall be consistent with program purposes, federal law, and availability of funds.

(g) The State Plan may provide for automatic Medicaid eligibility for all Work First Program recipients.

(h) The State Plan may provide that in cases where benefits are paid only for a child, the case is considered a family case. (1997-443, s. 12.6; 1997-456, s. 55.10; 1998-212, s. 12.27A(b), (b1); 1999-359, ss. 1.2(b), 2(c); 2001-424, s. 21.13(c), (e); 2007-323, s. 10.35A(a); 2009-489, s. 10.)