

Bulletin

June 26, 2008

Minnesota Department of Human Services -- P.O. Box 64941 -- St. Paul, MN 55164-0941

OF INTEREST TO

- County Directors
- Income Maintenance supervisors & Staff
- Employment Services Providers & Staff
- Tribal Representatives
- Social Services Supervisors and Staff

ACTION/DUE DATE

August 1, 2008 unless
otherwise stated

EXPIRATION DATE

August 1, 2010

2008 Legislative Changes Affecting MFIP, DWP and Food Support

TOPIC

This bulletin summarizes changes to the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the Diversionary Work Program (DWP) and Food Support (FS).

PURPOSE

To provide information and instructions on policy changes to county, tribal human services and employment services staff.

CONTACT

Submit questions on income maintenance programs or employment services policy through PolicyQuest.

SIGNED

CHARLES E. JOHNSON
Assistant Commissioner
Children and Family Services Administration

I. Background

During the 2008 legislative session the Legislature enacted a small number of policy changes and adopted language that clarified or supported current policy for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and the Diversionary Work Program (DWP). These changes and clarifications are summarized below.

Note: 2008 legislative changes to the Child Care Assistance Program will be contained in a separate child care bulletin (series 08-68).

II. DWP and MFIP

A. Work Bonus Changes

The legislature made three changes to the Work Participation Bonus legislation that was originally passed during the 2007 legislative session. The goal of the Work Participation Bonus program is to improve the TANF Work Participation Rate by capturing additional participation hours for working families who exit DWP and MFIP.

The first change moved the implementation date from February 2009 to October 1, 2009. This later date will provide additional time for the state to fully automate this new program on the MAXIS system.

The second change is when families can receive the bonus. Families will be eligible to receive \$75 in cash when they exit DWP or the MFIP cash and food portion, instead of the MFIP cash portion as previously stated in statute. This change simplifies policy for workers and families and still provides an opportunity to increase our work participation rate. The department will issue a separate bulletin at a later date to provide more detailed information about this program for families exiting DWP and MFIP.

The third change is to the name of the bonus. Statute changed the name to the “Work Participation Cash Benefit” program.

B. Policy Changes

- **35W Bridge Catastrophic Survivor Compensation**

Effective May 8, 2008, compensation settlements or payments made to victims of the 35W bridge collapse will be excluded as income and assets when determining eligibility for DWP and MFIP. The Department is issuing a separate bulletin which will provide detailed instructions on how to process DWP/MFIP applications for families who are awarded these compensation settlements or payments.

- **Unpaid work**

There were two changes to unpaid work provisions which are effective August 1, 2008.

1. Prior to placing participants in unpaid work counties are required to inform a participant that the participant will be notified if a paid work experience or supported work position becomes available.

2. When a participant **does not consent in writing** to participate in an unpaid work experience, the employment plan may only include unpaid work experience if including the unpaid work experience will

(a) provide the participant with specific skills or experience that cannot be obtained through other work activity options where the participant resides or is willing to reside; and

(b) skills or experience gained through the unpaid work experience will result in higher wages for the participant than the participant could earn without the unpaid work experience.

The statute previously did not require written consent.

- **County Residency**

Effective August 1, 2008, county agencies are prohibited from imposing a county residency requirement in addition to the 30 day state residency requirement when determining eligibility for emergency funding under the consolidated fund. Counties that currently have a county residency requirement must remove this provision from their biennial service agreement by August 1, 2008.

C. Funding Changes

- **Performance Based Funds**

Effective August 1, 2008, the additional 2.5% in bonus funds that were available to counties and tribes that performed above their expected self-support index range will no longer be available. In addition, the TANF participation rate will be averaged across 12 consecutive months (instead of averaged across four quarters) for the most recent year for which measurements are available.

- **Supported Work**

Legislation authorized \$7.1 million for SFY 2009 and \$7.1 million for SFY 2010 for supported work. These funds are to be allocated to counties and tribes. The legislation also authorized the carry over of unexpended supported work funds from SFY 2008. Additional information about the appropriate usage of these funds will be provided at a later date.

III. Food Support Changes

Counties were informed via email about the delayed implementation (March 1, 2009) of the six month Food Support reporting project. The department will provide more information about this change in a future bulletin.

IV. Special Needs

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by contacting Aaron Coonce at (651) 431-4049 (voice) or toll free at 1(888) 234-1138. TDD users can call the Minnesota Relay at 711 or (800) 627-3529. For the Speech-to-Speech Relay, call (877) 627-3848.