

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Human Services to which was referred House Bill No. 790
3 entitled “An act relating to Reach Up eligibility” respectfully reports that it has
4 considered the same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out
5 all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

6 Sec. 1. 33 V.S.A. § 1103 is amended to read:

7 § 1103. ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFIT LEVELS

8 (a) Financial assistance shall be given for the benefit of a dependent child
9 to the relative or caretaker with whom the child is living unless otherwise
10 provided. The amount of financial assistance to which an eligible person is
11 entitled shall be determined with due regard to the income, resources, and
12 maintenance available to that person and, as far as funds are available, shall
13 provide that person a reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and
14 health. The Commissioner may fix by regulation maximum amounts of
15 financial assistance, and act to ~~insure~~ ensure that the expenditures for the
16 programs shall not exceed appropriations for them consistent with section 101
17 of this title. In no case may the Department expend State funds in excess of
18 the appropriations for the programs under this chapter.

19 * * *

1 (c) The Commissioner shall adopt rules for the determination of eligibility
2 for the Reach Up program and benefit levels for all participating families that
3 include the following provisions:

4 (1) No less than the first ~~\$200.00~~ \$300.00 per month of earnings from an
5 unsubsidized job and ~~25~~ 50 percent of the remaining unsubsidized earnings
6 shall be disregarded in determining the amount of the family's financial
7 assistance grant. The family shall receive the difference between countable
8 income and the Reach Up payment standard in a partial financial assistance
9 grant.

10 (2) No less than the first \$90.00 per month of earnings from a subsidized
11 job shall be disregarded in determining the amount of the family's financial
12 assistance grant. The family shall receive the difference between countable
13 income and the Reach Up payment standard in a partial financial assistance
14 grant. Earnings from subsidized jobs shall qualify for federal and State earned
15 income credit if the family is otherwise eligible for such credit.

16 (3) Each family development plan shall provide for an incentive
17 payment to be paid to the participating family for completing a required
18 activity or task.

19 (4) Education stipends, employment stipends, job training stipends, and
20 incentive payments, as determined by the Commissioner, shall be excluded in
21 calculating the financial assistance grant.

1 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. § 1107(a) is amended to read:

2 (a)(1) The Commissioner shall provide all Reach Up services to
3 participating families through a case management model informed by
4 knowledge of the family's home, community, employment, and available
5 resources. Services may be delivered in the district office, the family's home,
6 or community in a way that facilitates progress toward accomplishment of the
7 family development plan. Case management may be provided to other eligible
8 families. The case manager, with the full involvement of the family, shall
9 recommend, and the Commissioner shall modify as necessary a family
10 development plan established under the Reach First or Reach Up program for
11 each participating family, with a right of appeal as provided by section 1132 of
12 this title. A case manager shall be assigned to each participating family as
13 soon as the family begins to receive financial assistance. If administratively
14 feasible and appropriate, the case manager shall be the same case manager the
15 family was assigned in the Reach First program. The applicant for or recipient
16 of financial assistance, under this chapter, shall have the burden of
17 demonstrating the existence of his or her condition.

18 (2) In addition to the services provided pursuant to subsection (b) of this
19 section, the Commissioner shall provide for a mandatory case review for each
20 participating family with a program director or the program director's designee

1 when the family reaches 18 and 36 months of enrollment, respectively, in the
2 Reach Up program to assess whether the participating family:

3 (A) is in compliance with a family development plan or work
4 requirement;

5 (B) is properly claiming a deferment, if applicable; ~~and~~

6 (C) has any unaddressed barriers to self-sufficiency and, if so, how
7 those barriers may be better addressed by the Department for Children and
8 Families or other State programs; and

9 (D) has additional opportunities to achieve earned income through
10 the program without a corresponding loss of benefits.

11 (3) The case manager shall meet with each participating family
12 following any statutory or rule changes affecting the amount of the earned
13 income disregard, asset limitations, or other eligibility or benefit criteria in the
14 Reach Up program to inform the family of the changes and advise the family
15 about ways to maximize the opportunities to achieve earned income without a
16 corresponding loss of benefits.

17 Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. § 1204 is amended to read:

18 § 1204. FOOD ASSISTANCE

19 (a) An eligible family shall receive monthly food assistance equal to
20 ~~\$100.00~~ \$50.00 to be applied to the family's electronic benefit transfer (EBT)
21 food account ~~for the first six months after the family has become eligible for~~

1 ~~Reach Ahead. For the seventh through 12th months, the family shall receive a~~
2 ~~monthly food assistance of \$50.00 while the family is eligible for Reach~~
3 ~~Ahead.~~

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5 Sec. 4. RULEMAKING; OFFSET FOR EARNED INCOME DISREGARD

6 (a) In order to effect the increased earned income disregard established by
7 this act and to make its impact fiscally neutral, the Commissioner for Children
8 and Families shall amend the rules governing the Reach Up program pursuant
9 to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to authorize the Department to:

10 (1) calculate an annual adjustment to Reach Up grants, excluding
11 exempt grants, that accounts for the difference between an earned income
12 disregard of the first \$200.00 earned per month from an unsubsidized job in
13 addition to 25 percent of the remaining unsubsidized earnings and the first
14 \$300.00 earned per month from an unsubsidized job in addition to 50 percent
15 of the remaining unsubsidized earnings, which may be adjusted downward
16 based on appropriated resources and projected program costs; and

17 (2) apply the adjustment described in subdivision (1) of this subsection
18 to all Reach Up grants, excluding exempt grants, after need and benefit
19 determinations are calculated.

1 (b) As used in this section, “exempt grants” means grants to children in the
2 care of a person other than their parents and grants to participating families
3 when a single parent or both parents receive Supplemental Security Income.

4 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATES

5 (a) Except for Secs. 1 and 3, this act shall take effect on July 1, 2014.

6 (b) Except for Sec. 1(c)(1), Secs. 1 and 3 shall take effect on October 1,
7 2014.

8 (c) Sec. 1(c)(1) shall take effect on July 1, 2015.

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Representative Trieber

FOR THE COMMITTEE