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H.790

Representative Trieber of Rockingham moves that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

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

§ 1103. ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFIT LEVELS

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 (5) ~~The~~ Up to \$5,000.00 of the value of assets accumulated from the
20 earnings of adults and children in participating families and ~~from~~ the value of
21 any federal or Vermont earned income tax credit shall be excluded for

1 purposes of determining continuing eligibility for the Reach Up program. ~~The~~
2 ~~asset limitation shall be increased from \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00 for~~
3 ~~participating families for the purposes of determining continuing eligibility for~~
4 ~~the Reach Up program.~~

5 (6) Transitional medical assistance of up to 36 months shall be provided
6 to families with a working adult who becomes ineligible for financial
7 assistance due to increased earnings, unless family income exceeds 185 percent
8 of the federal poverty level, and provided that federal financial participation is
9 available for such transitional medical assistance.

10 (7) The equity value of one operable motor vehicle in a family with a
11 single parent or caretaker and of two operable motor vehicles in a two-parent
12 family shall be excluded for purposes of determining eligibility for the Reach
13 Up program. The Commissioner shall take all steps necessary to retain current
14 resource protections under the Food Stamps program so that the rules under the
15 Food Stamps program and the Reach Up program are compatible.

16 (8) An individual domiciled in Vermont shall be exempt from the
17 disqualification provided for in 21 U.S.C. § 862a.

18 * * *

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 soon
13 as the family begins to receive financial assistance. If administratively feasible
14 and appropriate, the case manager shall be the same case manager the family
15 was assigned in the Reach First program. The applicant for or recipient of
16 financial assistance, under this chapter, shall have the burden of demonstrating
17 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 while the family is eligible for Reach Ahead ~~for the first six~~

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

4 * * *

5 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

6 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2014.