

AB 2326 (Rubio)
CalWORKs Parents with Newborn
Option to Participate in CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Program

Bill Summary

This bill would provide that pregnant women and parents with children up to 24 months be exempt from the CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WtW) employment program and should instead be given the option to volunteer to participate in WtW activities.

Background

Anyone receiving CalWORKs cash aid must participate in the WtW program unless that person qualifies for an exemption.

Current law states that a parent can only be exempt if they have primary responsibility for a child six months of age or under; and based on criteria developed by the county, this period may be reduced to the first 12 weeks after the birth or adoption of the child, or increased to the first 12 months after the birth or adoption of the child.

However, should an individual have any subsequent children, they can only apply for another exemption that is limited to a period of 12 weeks (unless a county allows for an additional extension up to 6 months).

Problem

In order for a parent with a child under 2 years of age to be exempt from WtW activities the parent has to contact their county worker who will ultimately decide whether or not the parent spending quality time with their child is good cause to be exempt.

However, in most large counties CalWORKs beneficiaries have expressed extreme difficulties in trying to reach their county worker. Thus, CalWORKs beneficiaries are often unable to relay their request for an exemption in a timely manner which ultimately results in them being sanctioned. By being sanctioned CalWORKs beneficiaries then end up having their cash aid benefits significantly reduced.

Considering CalWORKs families are living on an average fixed income 34% below the federal poverty level, and California's children endure the highest supplemental poverty level in the nation, these sanctions only cause greater harm to these families.

Details of the Bill

In order to protect CalWORKs recipients and their children from these sanctions this bill will:

1. Provide that CalWORKs recipients who are pregnant or with a child up to the age of 24-months be automatically exempt from participation in a WtW activity.
2. Individuals exempted from the WtW program shall be issued a notice of action informing them that they are exempt from participation in the WtW program, but they are entitled to volunteer to participate in any WtW activity of his or her choice.
3. The notice of action shall include a volunteer WtW plan that the parent can complete and instructions on how to submit the plan to the county for voluntary participation in the WtW program.
4. The county shall act on the WtW plan within 30 days or otherwise the plan shall be automatically deemed acceptable to the county.

Support

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations

For More Information

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