

ENGROSSED HOUSE  
BILL NO. 1917

By: Reese of the House

and

Laughlin of the Senate

An Act relating to poor persons; amending Section 27, Chapter 346, O.S.L. 1995, as renumbered by Section 32, Chapter 414, and as last amended by Section 16, Chapter 5, O.S.L. 1998 (56 O.S. Supp. 1999, Section 230.65), which relates to personal responsibility agreements; adding certain requirements; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY Section 27, Chapter 346, O.S.L. 1995, as renumbered by Section 32, Chapter 414, and as last amended by Section 16, Chapter 5, O.S.L. 1998 (56 O.S. Supp. 1999, Section 230.65), is amended to read as follows:

Section 230.65 A. 1. The Department of Human Services shall conduct an employability assessment of the education, training, skills, prior work experience and supportive service needs of individuals applying for and receiving assistance pursuant to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

2. The Department shall arrange for administration of a recognized literacy screening for individuals who have not obtained a high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree (GED) and have exhibited a lack of literacy skills. If, in the opinion of the Department, the applicant or recipient who has obtained a high school diploma or GED lacks reading skills to the extent that such insufficiency limits the applicant's or recipient's ability to become self-supporting, the Department shall refer the individual for a literacy assessment.

3. The Department shall utilize existing community resources, including, but not limited to, volunteer literacy groups and adult basic education programs, when arranging for literacy assessments and remediation of clients who lack sufficient reading skills.

B. The Department of Human Services shall require services to be provided to each applicant or recipient of benefits in any program according to a written personal responsibility agreement. The agreement shall reflect the education, training, skills, prior work experience and supportive service needs of the applicant or recipient and shall be:

1. Written in English, or translated into Spanish or other language, according to the applicant's or recipient's needs;
2. Signed by the applicant or recipient;
3. Signed by the parent of the applicant or recipient if the applicant or recipient is under eighteen (18) years of age;
4. Signed by the case manager; and
5. Reviewed by both the applicant or recipient and the case manager at least once a year. The agreement may be revised from time to time according to the needs of the recipient, the recipient's family and the program.

C. The personal responsibility agreement shall set forth the specific responsibilities of the recipient, at a minimum, to:

1. Develop a detailed plan for achieving self-sufficiency;
2. Participate in any educational or training program required by the Department pursuant to the results of the employability and literacy assessments;
3. Participate in life-skills training including, but not limited to, financial management classes, marriage or premarital counseling, successful parenting, conflict resolution training, and social skills development;

4. Be available for and actively seek and maintain employment, and accept any reasonable employment as soon as it becomes available as required by the TANF program;

5. Participate in a community service, public works or private sector job pursuant to the requirements of the Statewide Temporary Assistance Responsibility System and the results of the employability and literacy assessments;

6. Acknowledge that additional benefits pursuant to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program will be paid for a child born more than ten (10) months after the recipient qualifies for assistance only pursuant to a voucher system;

7. If the recipient is a minor parent, live in a supervised adult setting;

8. Accept responsibility for ensuring that the recipient's child complies with the attendance requirements of the local school district and attends school until the child of the recipient either:

- a. graduates from high school or attains a high school equivalency certificate, or
- b. becomes nineteen (19) years of age, whichever occurs first;

9. Accept responsibility for attending any classes required by a program at least ninety percent (90%) of the time;

10. Immunize the recipients' minor children pursuant to the State Department of Health's immunization schedule; and

11. a. Undergo a literacy skills assessment utilizing a testing instrument which measures whether such recipient is reading at a minimum of an eighth grade reading level, where the recipient has the capacity to read at such level or, regardless of reading level, which indicates that the recipient would benefit from compulsory participation in a literacy skills improvement program.

- b. Based on the results of the assessment, the recipient shall agree to enroll and actively participate in a literacy skills improvement program and provide documentation of substantial quantifiable literacy improvement. Any recipient who is reading at less than an eighth grade level shall be required to continue to substantially and quantifiably improve his or her reading skills until such recipient demonstrates a level of reading proficiency that is at least equal to an eighth grade reading level.
- c. On or before December 31 of each year, the Department of Human Services shall annually provide to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a written report outlining by age the number of recipients:
- (1) assessed for literacy skills,
  - (2) who failed to demonstrate eighth grade reading level proficiency,
  - (3) who agreed to enroll and participate in a literacy skills improvement program, and
  - (4) who either provided documentation of substantial quantifiable literacy skills improvement or whose case was closed prior to completion.

D. The Department may sanction or impose financial penalties on a recipient for failure to comply with the provisions of the personal responsibility agreement.

SECTION 2. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

Passed the House of Representatives the 6th day of March, 2000.

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Speaker of the House of  
Representatives

Passed the Senate the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2000.

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President of the Senate