

Broadwater (HB 464)**Act No. 622**

New law creates and provides for a workforce training and education pilot initiative within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) administered by DCFS. Provides that the pilot initiative shall be located in a parish with a population of between 100,000 and 150,000 and in which is located the main campus of a public four-year college or university.

New law provides that the goals of the pilot initiative are:

- (1) To provide incentives that are demonstrably effective in helping SNAP beneficiaries achieve financial self-sufficiency.
- (2) To connect employers to job candidates who possess requisite skills such that workforce needs, especially in demand occupations, are readily met.
- (3) To provide supports to SNAP recipients who choose to further their education.
- (4) To yield a model for incentivizing training and education for public assistance recipients that can be replicated throughout the state.

New law provides that participants in the pilot initiative shall include nonworking, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), as defined in federal regulation, who reside in the parish in which the initiative is established and who are not exempted by any federal or state policy from the limitation on duration of SNAP benefit recipience established pursuant to 7 CFR 273.24.

As a precondition for implementing the pilot initiative, new law requires DCFS to ensure that the limitation on duration of SNAP benefit recipience by nonexempt ABAWDs provided in 7 CFR 273.24 (three months in any three-year period) is in effect in the parish in which the initiative is established, and not lifted through any statewide or parish-level waiver.

New law provides that the essential function of the pilot initiative is to provide to each participant, at the time of benefits eligibility redetermination, a six-month extension of SNAP benefits conditioned upon the following:

- (1) The participant meets one or more of the following criteria relative to educational advancement:
 - (a) In the previous six months, the participant satisfied requirements established by DCFS in rule relative to enrollment in an accredited postsecondary educational institution that grants associate or baccalaureate degrees.
 - (b) In the previous six months, the participant satisfied requirements established by DCFS in rule relative to enrollment in a program designed to lead to a high school diploma.
 - (c) In the previous six months, the participant satisfied requirements established by DCFS in rule relative to enrollment in a general education development test preparation course.
 - (d) The participant earned a high school diploma or a general education development diploma.
- (2) The participant meets criteria relative to workforce readiness as required by DCFS in rule including but not limited to the following:
 - (a) Participating for a specified minimum number of hours in an approved job training program.
 - (b) Applying for a specified minimum number of jobs.

New law requires DCFS to conduct SNAP eligibility redetermination for participants in the pilot initiative no less frequently than once every six months.

New law requires participants in the pilot initiative to provide to DCFS all requested documentation of participation in a workforce training or education program at the time of SNAP eligibility redetermination, and to comply with all other SNAP eligibility requirements as set forth by DCFS.

New law requires that prior to commencement of the pilot initiative, DCFS shall transmit notice in writing to each prospective participant indicating that continuation of benefits beyond the three-month limit will be conditioned upon engagement by the participant in acceptable workforce training or education activities. Authorizes DCFS to take any other actions it deems necessary to provide ABAWDs with adequate notification of the changes in SNAP benefits eligibility to be instituted through the pilot initiative. Further, requires DCFS to do all of the following relative to participant notification:

- (1) Within two weeks of commencement of the pilot initiative, transmit to each prospective participant a form that provides a clear description of requirements for continuation of benefits eligibility, and a space in which the participant may affirmatively acknowledge that he understands these requirements.
- (2) During the operation of the pilot initiative, promptly notify each participant of any decision concerning his eligibility for SNAP benefits made pursuant to the redetermination process provided for in new law.

New law requires DCFS to promulgate all rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the provisions of new law.

New law requires DCFS, prior to commencement of the pilot initiative, to transmit to the members of the legislative committees on health and welfare a notice addressing the purpose and function of the initiative and its commencement date. Provides that such notice may be transmitted via electronic mail.

New law requires that no later than 12 months after commencement of the pilot initiative, and at least annually thereafter, DCFS shall submit a report on outcomes of the pilot initiative to the legislative committees on health and welfare.

New law provides that implementation of the pilot initiative is contingent upon federal approval.

New law provides that DCFS may terminate the pilot initiative by emergency rule if it determines that workforce participation outcomes or educational attainment have not improved to a satisfactory degree as a result of the initiative. Authorizes and directs the DCFS secretary to collaborate with the executive director of LWC in workforce participation outcomes evaluation prior to issuing any emergency rule to terminate the pilot initiative.

New law authorizes and directs DCFS to submit to the federal agency that administers SNAP on or before Jan. 1, 2015, applications for any waiver, exemption, or other formal authorization and any state plan amendment as may be necessary to implement the provisions of new law.

Effective Aug. 1, 2014.

(Adds R.S. 46:311-318)