

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

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**Authors:** Allen and others

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**Analyst:** Danyell A. Punelli

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### Overview

This bill modifies requirements related to approval of education and training programs as work activities under the MFIP program. The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is a jointly funded, federal-state program designed to provide income assistance for eligible low-income families. MFIP replaces the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which was repealed by Congress in 1996.

MFIP provides cash and food assistance, employment and training services, and related support services and transitional services to eligible low-income Minnesota families.

In MFIP, a work activity is “any activity in a participant’s approved employment plan that leads to employment” (Minn. Stat. § 256J.49, subd. 13). The statute also specifies that this includes activities that meet the definition of work activity under the participation requirements of TANF.

Generally, MFIP is designed to give the job counselor a great deal of discretion in approving activities for inclusion in a participant’s job search support plan or employment plan. However, the 2003 Legislature limited that discretion by providing that adult basic education is an approved work activity only for participants who are proficient in reading or math below a ninth grade level, with the exception of classes related to obtaining a GED. The 2003 Legislature also provided that English as a second language classes are an approved work activity only for participants who are below a specified level on a nationally recognized test (Minn. Stat. § 256J.531, subs. 1 and 2).

## Section

Postsecondary education, included under item six on the list of work activities, is not routinely available to MFIP participants. In order for a postsecondary education program to be an approved activity in an employment plan, the participant must meet the minimum hours required to meet the federal work participation rate and the education program must meet criteria specified in the law. These criteria include documentation about: the value of the program in obtaining significantly higher paying employment; the availability of suitable employment that requires the training or education provided by the program; and the participant's ability to meet the admission requirements and complete the program.

- 1 Work activity.** Amends § 256J.49, subd. 13. Modifies the list of items included in the definition of “work activity” under MFIP by removing certain cross-references and adding Minnesota adult diploma and postsecondary education to the list.
- 2 Length of program.** Amends § 256J.53, subd. 1. Increases the length of time a postsecondary education or training program can last, from 24 months to four years, in order to be counted as a work activity under MFIP. Requires participants with a high school diploma, GED, or Minnesota adult diploma to be informed of the opportunity to participate in postsecondary education or training while in MFIP.
- 3 Requirements after postsecondary education or training.** Amends § 256J.53, subd. 5. Increases the length of time a person has to job search after completion of a postsecondary education or training program from six weeks to 12 weeks before the participant must accept any offer of full-time suitable employment.
- 4 Basic education; English as a second language.** Amends § 256J.531.
  - Subd. 1. Approval of adult basic education.** Expands eligibility for MFIP participants to pursue a GED credential or Minnesota adult diploma as an approved work activity under the MFIP program. Requires participants eligible to pursue a GED credential or Minnesota adult diploma to be informed of the opportunity to participate while in MFIP.
  - Subd. 2. Approval of English as a second language.** Removes certain limitations of approval of English as a second language classes as a work activity under MFIP.
- 5 Repealer.** Repeals Minnesota Statutes, section 256J.53, subdivision 2 (approval of postsecondary education or training).