Overview

This bill changes the levels of sanctions to which an MFIP participant who is not complying with program requirements is subject. The bill also adds to the accepted reasons that a person may have for failing to comply with MFIP employment and training requirements, and it extends some of the time periods for giving notice of sanctions and requesting a conciliation conference.

1 Sanctions for participants not complying with program requirements. (Amends § 256J.46, subd. 1) Changes the provisions governing sanctions for noncompliant Minnesota family investment program (MFIP) participants as follows:

For the first occurrence of noncompliance, requires the participant to meet with a job counselor to discuss the participant's barriers to program compliance, and to work together to solve the problem.

For the second occurrence of noncompliance, reduces the assistance unit's grant by 5 percent of the applicable MFIP standard. Requires the 5 percent reduction to be in effect for at least one month, to be removed in the month after the participant returns to compliance.

For the third occurrence of noncompliance, requires the unit's shelter costs, and utility costs at county option, to be vendor paid up to the amount of the cash portion of the MFIP grant, until six months after the participant returns to compliance. Reduces the remainder of the grant, if any, by 10 percent of the applicable minimum standard.

Also prohibits the food portion of an MFIP grant from being sanctioned.

(Under current law, the sanction for a first occurrence of noncompliance is a reduction in the grant amount by 10 percent of the applicable standard. For a second or subsequent occurrence, the sanction is to vendor pay shelter costs, and utilities at county option, until six months after the participant returns to compliance, and a reduction in the remainder of the grant by 30 percent of the applicable standard.)
2  **Dual sanctions.** (Amends § 256J.46, subd. 2a) Makes technical changes in the internal references to section 1 of the bill, so that the three proposed sanction levels of discussion, 5 percent and 10 percent also apply in the case of dual sanctions for child support noncooperation and noncompliance with other MFIP requirements.

3  **Good cause for failure to comply.** (Amends § 256J.57, subd. 1) Adds to the list of accepted reasons for failing to comply with the employment and training requirements of MFIP, and prohibits a county from imposing a sanction when, the scheduling of a mandatory MFIP meeting conflicts with the time of a judicial proceeding, a meeting related to a juvenile court matter, or the participant's work schedule.

   Requires the job counselor to work with the participant to reschedule mandatory MFIP meetings for a participant who has one of the eight accepted reasons for failing to comply with employment and training requirements that is not an employment-related reason.

4  **Notice of intent to sanction.** (Amends § 256J.57, subd. 2) Extends the amount of time a participant who has received a notice of intent to sanction has to request a conciliation conference, from ten to 15 days. Also extends the amount of time a county agency has to receive a request for a conciliation conference, from ten days to 20 days.

5  **Repealer.** Repeals Minnesota Statutes, section 256J.46, subdivision 1a, which is a now-obsolete provision specifying how sanctions apply during the transition to the statewide implementation of MFIP in 1998.