Overview

This bill makes changes to the at-home infant child care program by decoupling eligibility for the program from current or future participation in the basic sliding fee program and expanding assistance to 24 months for families with children under the age of two who are and continue to be income eligible for the basic sliding fee child care program. The bill also limits the availability of the program to two-parent families in which one parent cares for the eligible child and any other children in the family and requires the department of children, families and learning to develop and distribute information on the program to assist parents in making informed child care decisions.

The at-home infant child care program was enacted in 1997 and implemented July, 1998. It provides a subsidy to eligible parents to stay home and care for their own children who are under the age of one. A eligible parent must be participating in the basic sliding fee program. The subsidy is equal to 75 percent of the market rate for infant care in licensed family child care. The amount of the subsidy is reduced by the amount of the parent co-payment under the basic sliding fee program.

1 At-home infant child care program. Makes eligibility and assistance changes to the program that provides assistance to parents during the time they stay home to care for their very young children.

Subd. 1. Establishment. Makes clarifying changes to the establishment of the at-home infant care program, specifying that the parent receives a subsidy in lieu of assistance if the family is income eligible for the basic sliding fee program. Provides that the set-aside from the appropriation for the basic sliding fee is subject to federal match and maintenance of effort requirements for the child care and development fund, and that unspent funds may be carried forward for the basic sliding fee program in the subsequent fiscal year.

Subd. 2. Eligible families. Changes the eligibility requirements by extending the age eligibility of children from under age one to under the age of two, and eliminating the requirement that families be a participant in the basic sliding fee program.
**Subd. 3. Eligible parent.** Limits eligibility to two parent families with one parent providing care for the eligible child and all other children who could receive child care assistance. Defines parent as birth, adopted or step parent.

**Subd. 4. Assistance.** Increases the total amount of assistance through the program to 24 months. Eliminates the requirement that a participating family is considered to have continuing eligibility for the basic sliding fee program. Clarifies that the amount of time a family participates in the at-home program is deducted from any subsequent one year exemption from work requirements for MFIP families with infants. Provides that participation in the at-home infant program does not establish an employer-employee relationship with a county or the state.

**Subd. 5. Implementation.** Requires the program to be administered through counties that administer the basic sliding fee program. Requires the department of children, families and learning to develop and distribute information on the program to assist parents in making informed child care decisions.

**Appropriation.** Provides $1.5 million each year of the general fund appropriation for the basic sliding fee program for the at-home infant program subject to the match and maintenance of effort requirements of section 1.