Overview

H.F. 3150 creates the Dakota county MFIP diversionary assistance pilot project. This pilot project is intended to encourage rapid entry into the work force. It will provide a flexible array of assistance and support services for a 90-day period to project participants. The project will serve a subset of families who are eligible for or receiving assistance under the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). The project is funded through an in-blank appropriation of state general funds, which will be given to Dakota county as a block grant.

1 Dakota county MFIP Diversionary Assistance pilot project.

Subd. 1. Establishment and purpose. Requires the commissioner of human services to establish an MFIP Diversionary Assistance pilot project in Dakota county to encourage rapid entrance into the work force. Specifies that the purpose of the project is to improve employability and self-sufficiency, minimize the number of families reaching their 60-month lifetime limit on receiving assistance, and reduce the number of families who need ongoing MFIP benefits.

Subd. 2. Mandatory participation. Beginning January 1, 2001, requires the following Dakota county residents to be enrolled in the pilot project:

1. families who apply or reapply for MFIP and meet eligibility requirements; and
2. families currently enrolled in MFIP who are under a 30 percent sanction for noncompliance, and who have been assessed as being capable of participating in a preemployment or employment activity but who are not participating in the activity.

Subd. 3. Pilot project design and services. In paragraph (a), makes the pilot project available for 90 days. Specifies that the following support services are available to project participants, if the county agency has determined that the family is eligible or has documented the need for the service:

- child care subsidies for work or approved employment-related activities
funding for basic needs
other employment-focused supports identified in a needs assessment
approved training programs
approved employment activities
Food Stamp benefits
Medical Assistance (MA) or MinnesotaCare benefits
enhanced employment services
Emergency Assistance (EA)

In paragraph (b), provides that payments for basic needs are determined by a county eligibility worker. Prohibits these total monthly payments from exceeding the amount of the ongoing MFIP monthly cash grant standard for which the pilot project participant would otherwise have been eligible. Requires a participant to cooperate with the employment plan in order to receive payments under the pilot project.

In paragraph (c), provides that noncooperation with the employment plan without good cause results in a 100 percent sanction for the remainder of the 90-day participation period. Specifies that no standard exemptions from employment services are permitted during the pilot project.

**Subd. 4. Transition services.** In paragraph (a), makes pilot project participants who are gainfully employed after being in the project for 90 days and who are no longer in need of ongoing assistance for basic needs eligible for transition year child care assistance and, for families who were eligible for MA while in the project, extended MA coverage.

In paragraph (b), gives three options to pilot project participants who have not attained an income level that would make them ineligible for MFIP:

1. participants who were not on regular MFIP before being in the pilot project may apply for that program;
2. participants who were on regular MFIP before being in the pilot project may revert to participation in MFIP; or
3. participants who were under sanction during the pilot project may reapply for MFIP.

**Subd. 5. Evaluation and report.** Requires the pilot project to be evaluated based on outcome evaluation criteria negotiated with the commissioner before the project is implemented. Requires the department of human services to prepare and submit a report to the legislature on the project's results and recommendations for program changes if the pilot project is implemented on a permanent basis.

**Subd. 6. Funding.** Requires the commissioner to transfer funding to be allocated for the basic needs payments to project participants to Dakota county as a block grant.

**Subd. 7. County agency duties.** In paragraph (a), requires the county agency to develop guidelines in three areas for before implementing the project: payments made to vendors and payments made directly to families; good cause exemptions for noncooperation with the employment plan; and evaluating income when determining payments for basic needs.

In paragraph (b), requires the county to monitor the well-being of children in a family that has had a 100 percent sanction imposed. Also requires the county to provide the services or resources necessary to protect the children's welfare.

In paragraph (c), requires the county to make quarterly reports on the number of families that have received a 100 percent sanction to the commissioner of human services and to the legislative committees with responsibility for human services policy issues.
Subd. 8. Federal waivers. Requires the commissioner to apply for any federal waiver that may be required in order to implement this pilot project.

2 Appropriation. Makes an in-blank general fund appropriation for a grant to Dakota county for the Diversionary Assistance pilot project in section 1.