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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- THE RHODE ISLAND WORKS PROGRAM AND
THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ACT

Introduced By: Representative Anastasia P. Williams

Date Introduced: January 27, 2017

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 40-5.2-10 of the General Laws in Chapter 40-5.2 entitled "The
2 Rhode Island Works Program" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **40-5.2-10. Necessary requirements and conditions.**

4 The following requirements and conditions shall be necessary to establish eligibility for
5 the program.

6 (a) Citizenship, alienage and residency requirements.

7 (1) A person shall be a resident of the State of Rhode Island.

8 (2) Effective October 1, 2008 a person shall be a United States citizen, or shall meet the
9 alienage requirements established in § 402(b) of the Personal Responsibility and Work
10 Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, PRWORA, Public Laws No. 104-193 and as that section
11 may hereafter be amended [8 U.S.C. § 1612] a person who is not a United States citizen and does
12 not meet the alienage requirements established in PRWORA, as amended, is not eligible for cash
13 assistance in accordance with this chapter.

14 (b) The family/assistance unit must meet any other requirements established by the
15 department of human services by rules and regulations adopted pursuant to the Administrative
16 Procedures Act, as necessary to promote the purpose and goals of this chapter.

17 (c) Receipt of cash assistance is conditional upon compliance with all program
18 requirements including, but not limited to, attendance at a seminar relating to financial literacy.

1 [developed and conducted by the department of human services.](#)

2 (d) All individuals domiciled in this state shall be exempt from the application of
3 subdivision 115(d)(1)(A) of Public Law 104-193, the Personal Responsibility and Work
4 Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, PRWORA [21 U.S.C. § 862a] which makes any
5 individual ineligible for certain state and federal assistance if that individual has been convicted
6 under federal or state law of any offense which is classified as a felony by the law of the
7 jurisdiction and which has as an element the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled
8 substance as defined in § 102(6) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. § 802(6)).

9 (e) Individual employment plan as a condition of eligibility.

10 (1) Following receipt of an application, the department of human services shall assess the
11 financial conditions of the family, including the non-parent caretaker relative who is applying for
12 cash assistance for himself or herself as well as for the minor child(ren), in the context of an
13 eligibility determination. If a parent or non parent caretaker relative is unemployed or under-
14 employed, the department shall conduct an initial assessment, taking into account: (A) the
15 physical capacity, skills, education, work experience, health, safety, family responsibilities and
16 place of residence of the individual; and (B) the child care and supportive services required by the
17 applicant to avail himself or herself of employment opportunities and/or work readiness
18 programs.

19 (2) On the basis of such assessment, the department of human services and the
20 department of labor and training, as appropriate, in consultation with the applicant, shall develop
21 an individual employment plan for the family which requires the individual to participate in the
22 intensive employment services. Intensive employment services shall be defined as the work
23 requirement activities in subsections 40-5.2-12(g) and (i).

24 (3) The director, or his/her designee, may assign a case manager to an
25 applicant/participant, as appropriate.

26 (4) The department of labor and training and the department of human services in
27 conjunction with the participant shall develop a revised individual employment plan which shall
28 identify employment objectives, taking into consideration factors above, and shall include a
29 strategy for immediate employment and for preparing for, finding, and retaining employment
30 consistent, to the extent practicable, with the individual's career objectives.

31 (5) The individual employment plan must include the provision for the participant to
32 engage in work requirements as outlined in § 40-5.2-12 of this chapter.

33 (6) (A) The participant shall attend and participate immediately in intensive assessment
34 and employment services as the first step in the individual employment plan, unless temporarily

1 exempt from this requirement in accordance with this chapter. Intensive assessment and
2 employment services shall be defined as the work requirement activities in subsections 40-5.2-
3 12(g) and (i).

4 (B) Parents under age twenty (20) without a high school diploma or General Equivalency
5 Diploma (GED) shall be referred to special teen parent programs which will provide intensive
6 services designed to assist teen parent to complete high school education or GED, and to continue
7 approved work plan activities in accord with Works program requirements.

8 (7) The applicant shall become a participant in accordance with this chapter at the time
9 the individual employment plan is signed and entered into.

10 (8) Applicants and participants of the Rhode Island Work Program shall agree to comply
11 with the terms of the individual employment plan, and shall cooperate fully with the steps
12 established in the individual employment plan, including the work requirements.

13 (9) The department of human services has the authority under the chapter to require
14 attendance by the applicant/participant, either at the department of human services or at the
15 department of labor and training, at appointments deemed necessary for the purpose of having the
16 applicant enter into and become eligible for assistance through the Rhode Island Work Program.
17 Said appointments include, but are not limited to, the initial interview, orientation and
18 assessment; job readiness and job search. Attendance is required as a condition of eligibility for
19 cash assistance in accordance with rules and regulations established by the department.

20 (10) As a condition of eligibility for assistance pursuant to this chapter, the
21 applicant/participant shall be obligated to keep appointments, attend orientation meetings at the
22 department of human services and/or the Rhode Island department of labor and training,
23 participate in any initial assessments or appraisals and comply with all the terms of the individual
24 employment plan in accordance with department of human service rules and regulations
25 [including, but not limited to, the seminar relating to financial literacy, as set forth in subsection](#)
26 [\(c\) of this section.](#)

27 (11) A participant, including a parent or non-parent caretaker relative included in the cash
28 assistance payment, shall not voluntarily quit a job or refuse a job unless there is good cause as
29 defined in this chapter or the department's rules and regulations.

30 (12) A participant who voluntarily quits or refuses a job without good cause, as defined in
31 subsection 40-5.2-12(l), while receiving cash assistance in accordance with this chapter, shall be
32 sanctioned in accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the department.

33 (f) Resources.

34 (1) The Family or assistance unit's countable resources shall be less than the allowable

1 resource limit established by the department in accordance with this chapter.

2 (2) No family or assistance unit shall be eligible for assistance payments if the combined
3 value of its available resources (reduced by any obligations or debts with respect to such
4 resources) exceeds one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

5 (3) For purposes of this subsection, the following shall not be counted as resources of the
6 family/assistance unit in the determination of eligibility for the works program:

7 (A) The home owned and occupied by a child, parent, relative or other individual;

8 (B) Real property owned by a husband and wife as tenants by the entirety, if the property
9 is not the home of the family and if the spouse of the applicant refuses to sell his or her interest in
10 the property;

11 (C) Real property which the family is making a good faith effort to dispose of, however,
12 any cash assistance payable to the family for any such period shall be conditioned upon such
13 disposal of the real property within six (6) months of the date of application and any payments of
14 assistance for that period shall (at the time of disposal) be considered overpayments to the extent
15 that they would not have occurred at the beginning of the period for which the payments were
16 made. All overpayments are debts subject to recovery in accordance with the provisions of the
17 chapter;

18 (D) Income producing property other than real estate including, but not limited to,
19 equipment such as farm tools, carpenter's tools and vehicles used in the production of goods or
20 Services which the department determines are necessary for the family to earn a living;

21 (E) One vehicle for each adult household member, but not to exceed two (2) vehicles per
22 household, and in addition, a vehicle used primarily for income producing purposes such as, but
23 not limited to, a taxi, truck or fishing boat; a vehicle used as a family's home; a vehicle which
24 annually produces income consistent with its fair market value, even if only used on a seasonal
25 basis; a vehicle necessary to transport a family member with a disability where the vehicle is
26 specially equipped to meet the specific needs of the person with a disability or if the vehicle is a
27 special type of vehicle that makes it possible to transport the person with a disability;

28 (F) Household furnishings and appliances, clothing, personal effects and keepsakes of
29 limited value;

30 (G) Burial plots (one for each child, relative, and other individual in the assistance unit),
31 and funeral arrangements;

32 (H) For the month of receipt and the following month, any refund of federal income taxes
33 made to the family by reason of § 32 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 32
34 (relating to earned income tax credit), and any payment made to the family by an employer under

1 § 3507 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 3507 (relating to advance payment of
2 such earned income credit);

3 (I) The resources of any family member receiving supplementary security income
4 assistance under the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 301 et seq.

5 (g) Income.

6 (1) Except as otherwise provided for herein, in determining eligibility for and the amount
7 of cash assistance to which a family is entitled under this chapter, the income of a family includes
8 all of the money, goods, and services received or actually available to any member of the family.

9 (2) In determining the eligibility for and the amount of cash assistance to which a
10 family/assistance unit is entitled under this chapter, income in any month shall not include the
11 first one hundred seventy dollars (\$170) of gross earnings plus fifty percent (50%) of the gross
12 earnings of the family in excess of one hundred seventy dollars (\$170) earned during the month.

13 (3) The income of a family shall not include:

14 (A) The first fifty dollars (\$50.00) in child support received in any month from each non-
15 custodial parent of a child plus any arrearages in child support (to the extent of the first fifty
16 dollars (\$50.00) per month multiplied by the number of months in which the support has been in
17 arrears) which are paid in any month by a non-custodial parent of a child;

18 (B) Earned income of any child;

19 (C) Income received by a family member who is receiving supplemental security income
20 (SSI) assistance under Title XVI of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1381 et seq.;

21 (D) The value of assistance provided by state or federal government or private agencies
22 to meet nutritional needs, including: value of USDA donated foods; value of supplemental food
23 assistance received under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended and the special food
24 service program for children under Title VII, nutrition program for the elderly, of the Older
25 Americans Act of 1965 as amended, and the value of food stamps;

26 (E) Value of certain assistance provided to undergraduate students, including any grant or
27 loan for an undergraduate student for educational purposes made or insured under any loan
28 program administered by the U.S. Commissioner of Education (or the Rhode Island board of
29 governors for higher education or the Rhode Island higher educational assistance authority);

30 (F) Foster Care Payments;

31 (G) Home energy assistance funded by state or federal government or by a nonprofit
32 organization;

33 (H) Payments for supportive services or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses made
34 to foster grandparents, senior health aides or senior companions and to persons serving in SCORE

1 and ACE and any other program under Title II and Title III of the Domestic Volunteer Service
2 Act of 1973, 42 U.S.C. § 5000 et seq.;

3 (I) Payments to volunteers under AmeriCorps VISTA as defined in the department's rules
4 and regulations;

5 (J) Certain payments to native Americans; payments distributed per capita to, or held in
6 trust for, members of any Indian Tribe under P.L. 92-254, 25 U.S.C. § 1261 et seq., P.L. 93-134,
7 25 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq., or P.L. 94-540; receipts distributed to members of certain Indian tribes
8 which are referred to in § 5 of P.L. 94-114, 25 U.S.C. § 459d, that became effective October 17,
9 1975;

10 (K) Refund from the federal and state earned income tax credit;

11 (L) The value of any state, local, or federal government rent or housing subsidy, provided
12 that this exclusion shall not limit the reduction in benefits provided for in the payment standard
13 section of this chapter.

14 (4) The receipt of a lump sum of income shall affect participants for cash assistance in
15 accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the department.

16 (h) Time limit on the receipt of cash assistance.

17 (1) No cash assistance shall be provided, pursuant to this chapter, to a family or
18 assistance unit which includes an adult member who has received cash assistance, either for
19 him/herself or on behalf of his/her children, for a total of twenty-four (24) months, (whether or
20 not consecutive) within any sixty (60) continuous months after July 1, 2008 to include any time
21 receiving any type of cash assistance in any other state or territory of the United States of
22 America as defined herein. Provided further, in no circumstances other than provided for in
23 section (3) below with respect to certain minor children, shall cash assistance be provided
24 pursuant to this chapter to a family or assistance unit which includes an adult member who has
25 received cash assistance for a total of a lifetime limit of forty-eight (48) months.

26 (2) Cash benefits received by a minor dependent child shall not be counted toward their
27 lifetime time limit for receiving benefits under this chapter should that minor child apply for cash
28 benefits as an adult.

29 (3) Certain minor children not subject to time limit. This section regarding the lifetime
30 time limit for the receipt of cash assistance, shall not apply only in the instances of a minor
31 child(ren) living with a parent who receives SSI benefits and a minor child(ren) living with a
32 responsible adult non-parent caretaker relative who is not in the case assistance payment.

33 (4) Receipt of family cash assistance in any other state or territory of the United States of
34 America shall be determined by the department of human services and shall include family cash

1 assistance funded in whole or in part by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds
2 [Title IV-A of the Federal Social Security Act 42 U.S.C. § 601 et seq.] and/or family cash
3 assistance provided under a program similar to the Rhode Island Families Work and Opportunity
4 Program or the federal TANF program.

5 (5) (A) The department of human service shall mail a notice to each assistance unit when
6 the assistance unit has six (6) months of cash assistance remaining and each month thereafter
7 until the time limit has expired. The notice must be developed by the department of human
8 services and must contain information about the lifetime time limit, the number of months the
9 participant has remaining, the hardship extension policy, the availability of a post-employment-
10 and-closure bonus, and any other information pertinent to a family or an assistance unit nearing
11 either the twenty-four (24) month or forty-eight (48) month lifetime time limit.

12 (B) For applicants who have less than six (6) months remaining in either the twenty-four
13 (24) month or forty-eight (48) month lifetime time limit because the family or assistance unit
14 previously received cash assistance in Rhode Island or in another state, the department shall
15 notify the applicant of the number of months remaining when the application is approved and
16 begin the process required in paragraph (A) above.

17 (6) If a cash assistance recipient family closed pursuant to Rhode Island's Temporary
18 Assistance for Needy Families Program, (federal TANF described in Title IV A of the Federal
19 Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) formerly entitled the Rhode Island Family
20 Independence Program, more specifically under subdivision 40-5.1-9(2)(c), due to sanction
21 because of failure to comply with the cash assistance program requirements; and that recipients
22 family received forty-eight (48) months of cash benefits in accordance with the Family
23 Independence Program, than that recipient family is not able to receive further cash assistance for
24 his/her family, under this chapter, except under hardship exceptions.

25 (7) The months of state or federally funded cash assistance received by a recipient family
26 since May 1, 1997 under Rhode Island's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program,
27 (federal TANF described in Title IV A of the Federal Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 601 et
28 seq.) formerly entitled the Rhode Island Family Independence Program, shall be countable toward
29 the time limited cash assistance described in this chapter.

30 (i) Time limit on the receipt of cash assistance.

31 (1) (A) No cash assistance shall be provided, pursuant to this chapter, to a family
32 assistance unit in which an adult member has received cash assistance for a total of sixty (60)
33 months (whether or not consecutive) to include any time receiving any type of cash assistance in
34 any other state or territory of the United States as defined herein effective August 1, 2008.

1 Provided further, that no cash assistance shall be provided to a family in which an adult member
2 has received assistance for twenty-four (24) consecutive months unless the adult member has a
3 rehabilitation employment plan as provided in subsection 40-5.2-12(g)(5).

4 (B) Effective August 1, 2008 no cash assistance shall be provided pursuant to this chapter
5 to a family in which a child has received cash assistance for a total of sixty (60) months (whether
6 or not consecutive) if the parent is ineligible for assistance under this chapter pursuant to
7 subdivision 40-5.2(a) (2) to include any time received any type of cash assistance in any other
8 state or territory of the United States as defined herein.

9 (j) Hardship Exceptions.

10 (1) The department may extend an assistance unit's or family's cash assistance beyond the
11 time limit, by reason of hardship; provided, however, that the number of such families to be
12 exempted by the department with respect to their time limit under this subsection shall not exceed
13 twenty percent (20%) of the average monthly number of families to which assistance is provided
14 for under this chapter in a fiscal year; provided, however, that to the extent now or hereafter
15 permitted by federal law, any waiver granted under § 40-5.2-35, for domestic violence, shall not
16 be counted in determining the twenty percent (20%) maximum under this section.

17 (2) Parents who receive extensions to the time limit due to hardship must have and
18 comply with employment plans designed to remove or ameliorate the conditions that warranted
19 the extension.

20 (k) Parents under eighteen (18) years of age.

21 (1) A family consisting of a parent who is under the age of eighteen (18), and who has
22 never been married, and who has a child; or a family which consists of a woman under the age of
23 eighteen (18) who is at least six (6) months pregnant, shall be eligible for cash assistance only if
24 such family resides in the home of an adult parent, legal guardian or other adult relative. Such
25 assistance shall be provided to the adult parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative on behalf of
26 the individual and child unless otherwise authorized by the department.

27 (2) This subsection shall not apply if the minor parent or pregnant minor has no parent,
28 legal guardian or other adult relative who is living and/or whose whereabouts are unknown; or the
29 department determines that the physical or emotional health or safety of the minor parent, or his
30 or her child, or the pregnant minor, would be jeopardized if he or she was required to live in the
31 same residence as his or her parent, legal guardian or other adult relative (refusal of a parent,
32 legal guardian or other adult relative to allow the minor parent or his or her child, or a pregnant
33 minor, to live in his or her home shall constitute a presumption that the health or safety would be
34 so jeopardized); or the minor parent or pregnant minor has lived apart from his or her own parent

1 or legal guardian for a period of at least one year before either the birth of any child to a minor
2 parent or the onset of the pregnant minor's pregnancy; or there is good cause, under departmental
3 regulations, for waiving the subsection; and the individual resides in supervised supportive living
4 arrangement to the extent available.

5 (3) For purposes of this section "supervised supportive living arrangement" means an
6 arrangement which requires minor parents to enroll and make satisfactory progress in a program
7 leading to a high school diploma or a general education development certificate, and requires
8 minor parents to participate in the adolescent parenting program designated by the department, to
9 the extent the program is available; and provides rules and regulations which ensure regular adult
10 supervision.

11 (1) Assignment and Cooperation. As a condition of eligibility for cash and medical
12 assistance under this chapter, each adult member, parent or caretaker relative of the
13 family/assistance unit must:

14 (1) Assign to the state any rights to support for children within the family from any
15 person which the family member has at the time the assignment is executed or may have while
16 receiving assistance under this chapter;

17 (2) Consent to and cooperate with the state in establishing the paternity and in
18 establishing and/or enforcing child support and medical support orders for all children in the
19 family or assistance unit in accordance with Title 15 of the general laws, as amended, unless the
20 parent or caretaker relative is found to have good cause for refusing to comply with the
21 requirements of this subsection.

22 (3) Absent good cause, as defined by the department of human services through the rule
23 making process, for refusing to comply with the requirements of (1) and (2) above, cash
24 assistance to the family shall be reduced by twenty-five percent (25%) until the adult member of
25 the family who has refused to comply with the requirements of this subsection consents to and
26 cooperates with the state in accordance with the requirements of this subsection.

27 (4) As a condition of eligibility for cash and medical assistance under this chapter, each
28 adult member, parent or caretaker relative of the family/assistance unit must consent to and
29 cooperate with the state in identifying and providing information to assist the state in pursuing
30 any third-party who may be liable to pay for care and services under Title XIX of the Social
31 Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1396 et seq.

32 SECTION 2. Section 40-6-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 40-6 entitled "Public
33 Assistance Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

34 **40-6-6. Authorization to pay assistance.**

1 (a) Authorization to pay all forms of assistance specified in this chapter shall be made by
2 representatives of the department, and the state controller is hereby authorized and directed to
3 draw his or her orders upon the general treasurer for payments upon receipt by him or her of
4 proper vouchers approved by the department.

5 (b) Within forty-five (45) days of the date of receipt of assistance benefits, the recipient
6 shall attend a seminar relating to financial literacy developed and conducted by the department to
7 educate the recipient in financial management.

8 (c) All persons currently receiving assistance/benefits shall, as a requirement of any
9 request for extension, hardship or recertification, attend a seminar relating to financial literacy
10 developed and conducted by the department to educate the recipient in financial management
11 within forty-five (45) days of the date of any such request. In the event the recipient does not
12 attend and complete this seminar, the recipient shall have any assistance/benefits awarded as a
13 result of any extension, hardship and/or recertification reduced at the rate of ten percent (10%)
14 after the forty-five (45) days until the completion of the seminar.

15 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2018, and shall apply to those
16 individuals seeking financial assistance on or after January 1, 2018.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- THE RHODE ISLAND WORKS PROGRAM AND
THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ACT

1 This act would require that individuals receiving or seeking financial assistance under the
2 "Rhode Island Works Program" and/or the "Public Assistance Act" attend and complete a seminar
3 relating to financial literacy developed and conducted by the department of human services
4 within forty-five (45) days of receipt of said assistance and/or any extension, hardship or
5 recertification.

6 This act would take effect on January 1, 2018, and would apply to those individuals
7 receiving or seeking financial assistance on or after January 1, 2018.

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