



# Bulletin

**NUMBER**

#14-69-05

**DATE**

July 1, 2014

**OF INTEREST TO**

County Directors

Tribal Human Services  
Directors

Social Services Supervisors  
and Staff

Income Maintenance  
Supervisors and Staff

Employment Services  
Supervisors and Staff

Tribal Employment  
Services Supervisors and  
Staff

**ACTION/DUE DATE**

Please read information  
and prepare for  
implementation as specified  
in the bulletin

**EXPIRATION DATE**

June 30, 2016

## 2014 Legislative Changes for Economic Assistance Programs

**TOPIC**

Summary of changes from the 2014 legislative session to the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Work Benefit Program (WB), Diversionary Work Program (DWP), General Assistance (GA), Group Residential Housing (GRH), and Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA).

**PURPOSE**

Provide information and instructions on policy changes.

**CONTACT**

Submit questions on income maintenance and employment services issues to Policy Quest.

**SIGNED**

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Children and Family Services Administration

**TERMINOLOGY NOTICE**

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language

## **I. Background**

During the 2014 legislative session, the Minnesota Legislature enacted policy changes to the following programs:

Minnesota Family Investment Program, Work Benefit Program, Diversionary Work Program, General Assistance, Group Residential Housing, and Minnesota Supplemental Aid.

Some policy changes in this bulletin are for informational purposes, and others require agency action. Changes requiring action are noted below.

Changes are in [article 1 of 2014 Session Laws, Chapter 291](#) and [articles 25 and 28 of 2014 Session Laws, Chapter 312](#).

## **II. DWP/MFIP/WB Policy Changes Effective July 1, 2014**

### **A. Changes to MFIP education requirements.**

New policies change how education and training activities are to be treated as work activities in employment plans.

#### Required action

County and Employment Services should implement July 1, 2014. See bulletin #14-11-02 "Education and Training Changes" for further instructions.

### **B. New options for initial and recertification interviews.**

Counties must inform Minnesota Family Investment Program applicants that their initial intake interview can be conducted face-to-face in the county office, through internet telepresence (video conference), or at a location mutually agreed upon. If an applicant has received Minnesota Family Investment Program or Diversionary Work Program benefits in the last 12 months, counties must also offer the option of a phone interview. For annual recertification, counties must offer the options of interviews conducted by phone, internet telepresence, face-to-face in the county office, or in a location mutually agreed to regardless if they are working or not.

#### Required action

Counties should implement effective July 1, 2014.

### **C. Requiring the use of the N.A.D.A online guide for vehicle valuations.**

Counties must use the online car values and prices guide. Use the average trade-in value to determine a vehicle's value. If a participant disputes using the average trade-in value, she or he may obtain a written statement from a licensed motor vehicle dealer indicating the vehicle is in rough or clean condition.

Required action

Counties should implement effective July 1, 2014.

MAXIS Instructions

On STAT/CARS enter the vehicle's trade-in value in the "loan" value field.

**D. Personal statement allowed to verify that an applicant is ineligible.**

Counties may allow applicants to use a signed personal statement in place of documentation for verifying ineligibility due to excess income or assets.

Required action

Counties should implement effective July 1, 2014.

MAXIS Instructions

Use "other document" code on income and asset STAT panels and case note a signed statement was received.

**E. Confirming current practice for underpayment look back periods.**

When an underpayment is discovered, corrective payments are limited to 12 months prior to discovery. This policy is current practice.

Required action

No county action is required to implement this change.

**F. Technical changes to uncompensated work and community work experience program.**

This change updates the references in state law to reflect current terminology. Changes include changing references from "unpaid work", "volunteer work" and "community work" to "uncompensated work". Modifies references of "work experience programs" to "community work experience programs". It is recommended when "unpaid work", "volunteer work" or "community work" is used in any forms or documentation that it be changed to "uncompensated work".

Required action

No county action is required to implement this change

### **G. Screening for mental and chemical health and special learning needs.**

Employment services agencies should now screen for mental and chemical health and special learning needs three months after the development of the initial employment plan or earlier if there is a documented need. The previous policy had been to require screening participants unable to find suitable employment after six weeks of job search.

Required action

Counties should implement effective July 1, 2014.

### **H. 30 hours of job search allowed for first three months of employment plan.**

Effective July 1, 2014 at least 30 hours of job search must be conducted sometime during the first three months for individuals who are determined to possess sufficient skills to obtain unsubsidized employment.

Required action

County or employment services should implement July 1, 2014.

### **I. Participants completing education/training must accept any full-time suitable employment.**

Current policy requires that participants who complete approved education or training accept any full-time suitable employment after six weeks of job search. This change increases the time allowed for job search to three months.

Required action

County or employment services should implement July 1, 2014.

### **J. Work participation cash benefits effective the month following exit from MFIP and DWP.**

Work Benefit payments are effective the first of the month following someone's exit or termination from the Minnesota Family Investment Program and Diversionary Work Program. This is a technical statutory clarification that reflects current policy.

Required action

No county action required.

### **K. Expanding the use of MFIP innovation funds.**

The department may use MFIP innovation funds to reward high performing counties as to well as support promising practices or test innovative approaches. This provides greater flexibility for funding outcome based approaches.

Required action

No county action required.

## **L. Eliminating local cap on how many adults on MFIP can participate in education activities.**

The department will not limit vocational educational training and education activities when determining Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work participation rates for individual counties. See bulletin #14-11-02 "Education and Training Changes" under the heading "Lifting the education caps for the MFIP county caseload" for additional details.

Required action

No county action is required to implement this change.

## **III. Housing**

### **A. Group Residential Housing**

Effective July 1, 2014, a new community residential license is an allowable license for Group Residential Housing eligibility. This change complements a 2013 change that required certain settings with an adult foster care license to convert to a community residential setting license.

Required action

No county action is required to implement this change.

MAXIS Instructions

No county action is required to implement this change.

### **B. Minnesota Supplemental Aid – Housing Assistance**

Effective July 1, 2014, Minnesota Supplemental Aid Housing Assistance (formerly shelter need allowance) may be provided to individuals who reside in provider-controlled housing, in a multi-family building of more than four units regardless of how many other individuals in the setting receive Minnesota Supplemental Aid Housing Assistance. Effective July 1, 2014 people will be eligible for Minnesota Supplemental Aid Housing Assistance if they reside in provider-controlled housing, in a multi-family building of more than four units where. People can also live in other community settings of their choice and receive Minnesota Supplemental Aid Housing Assistance.

Required action

No county action is required to implement this change.

MAXIS Instructions

No county action is required to implement this change.

## **C. Long Term Homeless Supportive Services**

Effective July 1, 2014. Tribes are added to those whom priority will be given to Long-Term Homeless Supportive Services proposals submitted on behalf of multicounty partnerships. Counties and tribes will be eligible for funding under this section.

Required action

No action required at this time. Request for proposals will be issued spring of 2015

MAXIS Instructions

This funding is not tracked on MAXIS.

## **IV. Program Uniformity and Simplification**

The 2014 Minnesota Legislature passed changes to General Assistance, Minnesota Supplemental Aid, Group Residential Housing, Diversionary Work Program, and the Minnesota Family Investment Program in an effort to provide greater uniformity among these economic assistance programs and to provide greater simplicity in delivering services at the local level. The following changes include different effective dates which are noted. There is no required action at this time in implementing these changes. MAXIS changes will be made to support these changes as implementation is made. Greater detail will be provided with supplemental bulletins, notices, and Surveillance and Integrity Review postings as policy changes become effective.

### **A. Repeal of MFIP Shared Household Standard**

Effective January 1, 2015, the MFIP Shared Household Standard will be repealed. DWP and MFIP households regardless of composition will use the family wage level or the transitional standard when determining household grants.

### **B. 30-day reinstatements.**

Effective February 1, 2015. A 30-day reinstatement period will be allowed. If a case is closed due to not completing the recertification process, the case may be reinstated if recertification requirements are met within 30 days of the termination of benefits. Benefits are retroactive for the full benefit month.

### **C. Documentation and Verification:**

Effective February 1, 2015. All programs will also use the same requirements and procedures for verification of information, documentation, items subject to verification, recertification, participant's responsibilities for submitting household report forms, and addressing inconsistent information that is known to the agency.

### **D. Simplified self-employment income calculations.**

Effective February 1, 2015, programs with the exception of Group Residential Housing with a Supplemental Security Income basis of eligibility will use a simplified process for determining income from self-employment earnings. Households with self-employment earnings will have two options for determining their self-employment earnings. 1) Count 50% of gross earnings; or  
2) Count the taxable income as determined from an IRS tax form that has been filed within the last year.

Households that choose to use taxable income for determining their income must use this method until recertification unless there is an unforeseen significant change. A 12-month rolling average using taxable income will be used for determining monthly income.

For Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, The department will request a state option waiver to align with the simplified self-employment calculation.

### **E. Uniform earned income disregard.**

Effective October 1, 2015, a single earned income disregard will be used across programs. The earned income disregard will be the first \$65 of earned income and 50% of any remaining income thereafter.

### **F. Uniform asset limit and asset categories.**

Effective June 1, 2016, a single asset limit of \$10,000 will be used across programs. Assets subject to the asset limit are limited to bank accounts, cash, non-exempted vehicles, and liquid stocks and bonds that can be accessed without a financial penalty.

### **G. Vehicles excluded from asset calculations.**

Effective June 1, 2016, one vehicle per assistance unit member 16 years old or older will be excluded when calculating assets. Any remaining vehicles that are not exempted will be applied to the assistance unit's asset calculation.

## **V. Items passed by the 2013 Legislature yet to be implemented.**

The following items were included in bulletin [#13-68-05](#). Due to the fact that several of these items had later effective dates, the below items are reproduced from bulletin #13-68-05 as a reminder to counties and providers of upcoming policy changes. There is no required action at this time in implementing these changes. MAXIS changes will be made to support these changes as implementation is made. Additional guidance, postings and/or bulletins may be provided upon implementation.

### **A. Earned income disregard**

Effective October 1, 2014, or upon approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, whichever is later, the income disregard for MFIP participants will be set in statute at 50 percent.

### **B. Change to initial income test**

Effective October 1, 2014, the family wage level will be used for the initial income test for MFIP families rather than the Transitional Standard when determining initial eligibility.

### **C. Work Benefit Program suspended**

Effective December 1, 2014, the Work Benefit Program is suspended to reduce administrative complexity for county agencies. The commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services will have the authority to reinstate the Work Benefit Program upon receiving notice from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services of a penalty to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant.

### **D. Family cap**

Effective January 1, 2015, the prohibition on an increase in a family's cash support when a child is born 10 months after a family begins receiving assistance under MFIP is repealed.

### **E. Housing assistance grant**

Effective July 1, 2015, a housing assistance grant of \$110 per month will be provided to MFIP participants who do not already receive a federal housing subsidy, or who are not “child-only” cases. The housing assistance grant is excluded income.

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory**

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4049 (voice) or toll free at (800) 234-1138 or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency’s ADA coordinator.