

HB 343 -- Public Assistance Benefits

Sponsor: Guernsey

This bill changes the laws regarding public assistance benefits. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Requires the Division of Family Services within the Department of Social Services, when determining eligibility and the amount of public assistance benefits to be granted pursuant to federal aided programs, to take into account the income and resources of all relatives, members of the household, and any other individuals who are 18 years of age or older and living in the home;

(2) Requires retail establishments accepting electronic benefit cards for payment to verify that the photograph on the card matches the identity of the person presenting the card;

(3) Requires all recipients of temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) benefits to provide proof that all dependent children who are eligible for enrollment in a public school are enrolled and attending school regularly;

(4) Requires the department to seek a waiver from the federal government to require the use of photo identification for continued eligibility in the food stamp program. One year after approval from the federal government, the department must issue a photo identification card to each eligible household member who is sixteen years of age or older. The photo identification must be presented when exchanging benefits for eligible food;

(5) The department must establish rules and regulations that ensure compliance with federal law and take into account individuals and households with special needs as well as ensuring that all appropriate household members or authorized representatives are able to access benefits from the account as necessary;

(6) Specifies that any person who knowingly and intentionally commits fraud in obtaining public assistance benefits must lose eligibility for the benefits permanently;

(7) Specifies the requirements a public assistance benefits fraud investigation must meet to be sufficient;

(8) Authorizes the department to terminate the employment of any fraud investigator who fails to comply with the requirements of a public assistance benefits fraud investigation;

(9) Requires the department to establish and implement a welfare-to-work program that requires all recipients of TANF benefits to make at least 20 job contacts per week. Recipients must be allowed to work as unpaid interns for a governmental entity, and those working as interns are only required to make 10 job contacts per week. Any county, city or other political subdivision must be allowed to submit available intern positions to the department for the placement of TANF recipients;

(10) Requires all recipients of TANF, food stamps, child care assistance, supplemental nutrition assistance, or any other similar governmental assistance program who are 18 years of age or older to possess a high school diploma or graduate equivalency diploma; and

(11) Requires the department to establish and implement policies and procedures that will allow recipients of supplemental nutrition assistance programs to only purchase food items that are included on the approved food list for the women, infants and children program.