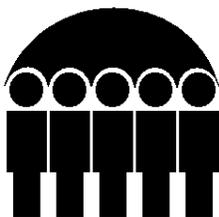


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Employees' Manual
Title 7
Chapter M

FOOD ASSISTANCE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM



Iowa
Department
of
Human Services

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Program Overview

Legal reference: 441 IAC 65.28(7) and (8)

The Iowa Food Assistance Employment and Training Program provides job-seeking skills training and employment assistance to Food Assistance recipients. The program is designed to assist Food Assistance recipients:

- ◆ Who have lost jobs or are underemployed and who need new skills in order to reenter the workplace because there are no jobs available for which the persons are trained.
- ◆ Who have been out of the workforce for a period of time to regain licensure or certification in an area in which they are already trained.
- ◆ Who wish to upgrade their employment for better wages and benefits.

EXCEPTION: Federal law prohibits recipients of Family Investment Program (FIP) benefits from participating in any Food Assistance employment and training service.

The policies in this chapter are informational only. The Iowa Workforce Development Department (IWD) is the state's service provider for employment and training. Participation is voluntary. Volunteers may be enrolled as a result of:

- ◆ IWD screening customers who contact them for training or employment assistance.
- ◆ IWD contacting Food Assistance recipients identified through referrals from the Automated Benefit Calculation system.
- ◆ Recruitment through mailings of brochures.
- ◆ Food Assistance recipients self-referring to IWD for services.

Services are offered only to the extent that funding is available. Employment and training services are currently offered in Linn and Polk Counties only.

The state's share of employment and training funding is based on the work registration status of **all** Food Assistance recipients as entered in the Automated Benefit Calculation system on the TD03 screen FSET field.

Employment and Training Components

Legal reference: 441 IAC 65.28(8)

The Employment and Training Program offers a range of services from basic skills to advanced training in order to accommodate persons with various levels of need and abilities, subject to the availability of sufficient funding to cover program costs.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) is responsible for ensuring the policies applicable to the employment and training components are appropriately applied. IWD may require a volunteer to engage in vocational testing activities when deemed necessary to determine if a component is appropriate for improving the volunteer's opportunity for employment.

- ◆ **Job club** is a job-seeking skills training component operated by IWD. Job club consists of job-seeking skills training in a classroom setting followed by a structured employment search. IWD provides job club participants an orientation to the program.
- ◆ **Individual job search** is a component operated by IWD. Individual job search participants are required to contact employers face to face to apply for jobs and arrange for interviews. IWD provides job search participants an orientation to the program.
- ◆ **Basic educational services** are general education development, adult basic education, and English as a second language.
- ◆ **Expanded educational services** are vocational training and education up to completion of a two-year Associate of Arts degree. Already possessing a degree does not preclude a person from participating in employment and training.

Educational services are provided by an area community college under contract to IWD.

Participation Allowances

Legal reference: 441 IAC 65.28(7)

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) is the agency responsible for determining if a participant is eligible for participation allowances for transportation or dependent care. IWD issues the allowances subject to the availability of funding.

Dependent care costs that are incurred so the person can participate in an employment and training component may be reimbursed. IWD decides if dependent care costs will be reimbursed and if the amount is within the allowable reimbursement amount according to rules of the PROMISE JOBS program.

EXCEPTION: Employment and training may pay dependent care costs while a participant retakes a class when necessary to meet the person's employment and training goals, which PROMISE JOBS does not allow.

Substitution of FIP Work Rules

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.25

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service gives states the option to operate a mini-simplified food stamp program. This option allows the state to replace Food Assistance work rules with Family Investment Program (FIP) work rules for some households.

Iowa has chosen to operate a mini-simplified food stamp program for FIP households in which the parent is exempt from Food Assistance mandatory work registration due to caring for a child under age six. Because FIP parents included in the program are exempt from work registration, they are not subject to Food Assistance disqualification for failure to comply with work requirements. Inclusion of a household in the program has no effect on how Food Assistance eligibility and benefits are determined.

Under the mini-simplified food stamp program, the monthly Food Assistance and FIP benefits are combined to determine the maximum number of hours the parent may participate in an unpaid work activity subject to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act under FIP.

Maximum hours for a month are determined by dividing the total amount of benefits by the state or federal minimum wage (whichever is higher). If the FIP parent works the maximum number of hours and still falls short of the hours needed to meet the FIP work obligation, the FIP parent is deemed to meet the FIP work obligation.

Including the Food Assistance benefit amount in determining the maximum number of work hours provides the parent an opportunity to increase job skills and improve employability. It also helps Iowa meet FIP work participation rate requirements.