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I N   A S S E M B L Y

May 16, 2016

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Introduced by M. of A. WRIGHT -- read once and referred to the Committee  
on Social Services

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to conciliation and  
non-compliance with public assistance employment; and to repeal  
certain provisions of such law relating thereto

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEM-  
BLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1     Section 1. Section 341 of the social services law is REPEALED.  
2     S 2. Section 341-a of the social services law, as added by chapter 562  
3 of the laws of 2015, is amended to read as follows:  
4     S [341-a] 341.    Re-engagement; conciliation; refusal to participate.  
5     1. [The provisions of this section shall apply to persons who are resi-  
6 dents of a city having a population of one million or more people.  
7     2.] (a) Consistent with federal law and regulations and this title, if  
8 a participant has failed or refused to comply with the requirements of  
9 this title and the district has determined that he or she is not exempt  
10 from such requirements and has verified that appropriate child care,  
11 transportation, and accommodations for disability were in place at the  
12 time of such failure or refusal, the social services district shall  
13 issue a re-engagement notice in plain language indicating that such  
14 failure or refusal has taken place and of the right of such participant  
15 to avoid a pro-rata reduction in public assistance benefits through the  
16 re-engagement process. "Re-engagement process" shall mean the process  
17 through which a participant may avoid a pro-rata reduction in public  
18 assistance benefits by agreeing to comply with the requirements of this  
19 title consistent with any medical condition which may limit the individ-  
20 ual's ability to participate in work activities, by notifying the  
21 district that he or she has become exempt from the requirements of this  
22 title, or by resolving the reasons for such failure or refusal at a  
23 conciliation conference. The notice shall indicate that the participant  
24 has ten days to request re-engagement with the district. The notice  
25 shall indicate the specific instance or instances of willful refusal or  
26 failure to comply without good cause with the requirements of this title  
27 and the necessary actions that must be taken to avoid a pro-rata

EXPLANATION--Matter in ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[ ] is old law to be omitted.

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1 reduction in public assistance benefits and the district has verified  
2 that appropriate child care, transportation and accommodations for disa-  
3 bility were in place at the time of such failure or refusal.

4 (1) If a participant chooses to avoid a pro-rata reduction in public  
5 assistance benefits through a conciliation conference, it will be the  
6 responsibility of the participant to give reasons for such failure or  
7 refusal. The re-engagement notice shall also include an explanation in  
8 plain language of what would constitute good cause for non-compliance  
9 and examples of acceptable forms of evidence that may warrant an  
10 exemption from work activities, including evidence of domestic violence,  
11 and physical or mental health limitations that may be provided at the  
12 conciliation conference to demonstrate such good cause for failure to  
13 comply with the requirements of this title. Unless as part of the re-en-  
14 gagement process the participant does not agree to comply, has not  
15 become exempt or the district determines as a result of the conciliation  
16 conference that such failure or refusal was willful and without good  
17 cause, no further action shall be taken.

18 (2) If the participant does not contact the district within ten days  
19 of the re-engagement notice, the district shall make a finding of wheth-  
20 er the alleged failure or refusal to comply was willful and without good  
21 cause and shall consider any evidence in the possession of the district  
22 indicating that the participant has good cause and if the participant is  
23 otherwise participating in work activities, there shall be no finding of  
24 willfulness without good cause based on a single appointment or infrac-  
25 tion.

26 (b) If the district determines that such failure or refusal was will-  
27 ful and without good cause, and that the individual is not exempt from  
28 the requirements of this title, the district shall notify such partic-  
29 ipant in writing, in plain language and in a manner distinct from any  
30 previous notice, by issuing ten days notice of its intent to discontinue  
31 or reduce assistance. Such notice shall include the reasons for such  
32 determination, the specific instance or instances of willful refusal or  
33 failure to comply without good cause with the requirements of this  
34 title, shall verify that appropriate child care, transportation and  
35 accommodations for disability were in place at the time of such failure  
36 or refusal, and specify the necessary actions that must be taken to  
37 avoid a pro-rata reduction in public assistance benefits, including  
38 agreeing to comply with the requirements of this title consistent with  
39 any medical condition which may limit the individual's ability to  
40 participate in work activities or notifying the district that he or she  
41 has become exempt from the requirements of this title and the right to a  
42 fair hearing relating to such discontinuance or reduction.

43 [3.] 2. (a) The department shall establish in regulation a concil-  
44 iation procedure for the resolution of disputes related to an individ-  
45 ual's participation in programs pursuant to this title.

46 (b) The district shall contract with an independent entity, approved  
47 by the department, or shall use designated trained staff at the supervi-  
48 sory level who have no direct responsibility for the participant's case  
49 to mediate disputes in the conciliation conference.

50 (c) If a participant's dispute cannot be resolved through such concil-  
51 iation procedure, an opportunity for a fair hearing shall be provided.  
52 No sanction relating to the subject dispute may be imposed during the  
53 re-engagement process.

54 [4.] 3. When any participant required to participate in work activ-  
55 ities fails to comply with the provisions of this title, the social

1 services district shall take such actions as prescribed by appropriate  
2 federal law and regulation and this title.

3 [5.] 4. Consistent with federal law and this title, a social services  
4 district shall provide to those participants whose failure to comply has  
5 continued for thirty days or longer a written reminder of the option to  
6 end a sanction by terminating the failure to comply as specified in  
7 subdivision [two] ONE of this section. Such notice shall advise that the  
8 participant may immediately terminate the sanction by either agreeing to  
9 comply with the requirements of this title consistent with any medical  
10 condition which may limit the individual's ability to participate in  
11 work activities or notifying the district that he or she has become  
12 exempt from the requirements of this title.

13 [6.] 5. Consistent with federal law and regulation and this title, no  
14 notice shall be issued as specified in subdivision [two] ONE of this  
15 section unless it has been determined that the individual is not exempt  
16 from the requirements of this title and has determined that appropriate  
17 child care, transportation and accommodations for disability were in  
18 place at the time of such failure or refusal to comply with the require-  
19 ments of this title and no action shall be taken pursuant to this  
20 section for failure to participate in the program or refusal to accept  
21 employment if:

22 (a) child care for a child under age thirteen (or day care for any  
23 incapacitated individual living in the same home as a dependent child)  
24 is necessary for an individual to participate or continue participation  
25 in activities pursuant to this title or accept employment and such care  
26 is not available and the social services district fails to provide such  
27 care;

28 (b) (1) the employment would result in the family of the participant  
29 experiencing a net loss of cash income; provided, however, a participant  
30 may not claim good cause under this paragraph if the social services  
31 district assures that the family will not experience a net loss of cash  
32 income by making a supplemental payment;

33 (2) net loss of cash income results if the family's gross income less  
34 necessary work-related expenses is less than the cash assistance the  
35 participant was receiving at the time the offer of employment is made;  
36 or

37 (c) the participant meets other grounds for good cause set forth by  
38 the department in its implementation plan for this title which, at a  
39 minimum, must describe what circumstances beyond the household's control  
40 will constitute "good cause".

41 S 3. Section 342 of the social services law is REPEALED.

42 S 4. Section 342-a of the social services law is renumbered section  
43 342.

44 S 5. This act shall take effect on the first of April next succeeding  
45 the date on which it shall have become a law.