

# STATE OF NEW YORK

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2698

2017-2018 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 17, 2017

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Introduced by Sen. PARKER -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Social Services

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to access to a college education by public assistance recipients who are subject to work participation requirements

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Section 336-a of the social services law, as amended by  
2 section 148 of part B of chapter 436 of the laws of 1997, subdivision 1  
3 as amended by section 4 of part J of chapter 58 of the laws of 2014, is  
4 amended to read as follows:

5 § 336-a. Educational activities. 1. Social services districts shall  
6 make available vocational educational training and educational activ-  
7 ities. Such activities may include but need not be limited to, high  
8 school education or education designed to prepare a participant for a  
9 high school equivalency certificate, basic and remedial education,  
10 education in English proficiency and no more than a total of four years  
11 of post-secondary education (or the part-time equivalent). Educational  
12 activities pursuant to this section may be offered with any of the  
13 following providers which meet the performance or assessment standards  
14 established in regulations by the commissioner for such providers: a  
15 community college, licensed trade school, registered business school, or  
16 a two-year or four-year college; provided, however, that such post-sec-  
17 ondary education must be necessary to the attainment of the partic-  
18 ipant's individual employment goal as set forth in the employability  
19 plan and such goal must relate directly to obtaining useful employment  
20 in a recognized occupation. When making any assignment to any educa-  
21 tional activity pursuant to this subdivision, such assignment shall be  
22 permitted only to the extent that such assignment is consistent with the  
23 individual's assessment and employment plan goals in accordance with  
24 sections three hundred thirty-five and three hundred thirty-five-a of

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

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1 this title and shall require that the individual maintains satisfactory  
2 academic progress and hourly participation is documented consistent with  
3 federal and state requirements. For purposes of this provision "satis-  
4 factory academic progress" shall mean having a cumulative C average, or  
5 its equivalent, as determined by the academic institution. The require-  
6 ment to maintain satisfactory academic progress may be waived if done so  
7 by the academic institution and the social services district based on  
8 undue hardship caused by an event such as a personal injury or illness  
9 of the student, the death of a relative of the student or other exten-  
10 uating circumstances. Any enrollment in post-secondary education beyond  
11 a twelve month period must be combined with no less than twenty hours of  
12 participation averaged weekly in paid employment or work activities or  
13 community service when paid employment is not available.

14 2. When a district contracts with a proprietary vocational school to  
15 provide vocational educational training to participants, not more than  
16 ~~[twenty-five]~~ fifty percent of the approved duration of the program  
17 shall be devoted to preparation for a high school equivalency diploma or  
18 instruction in English for students with limited proficiency in English.  
19 Participants needing instruction in basic literacy shall be referred to  
20 basic education programs. Instructors employed by proprietary schools to  
21 prepare a participant for a high school equivalency certificate or for  
22 education in English proficiency shall meet experience requirements  
23 established by the regulations of the commissioner of education.

24 3. When a participant is assigned to an appropriate vocational educa-  
25 tional or educational activity and such activity is available at no cost  
26 to the social services district through the school district or board of  
27 cooperative educational services in which the participant resides or  
28 through another agency or organization providing educational services  
29 which meet such minimum standards as the commissioner of education shall  
30 establish, the social services district shall refer the participant to  
31 such district, board, agency or organization.

32 4. To the extent provided in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this subdi-  
33 vision and if resources permit, each social services official shall  
34 assign to appropriate educational activities any participant who has not  
35 obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent:

36 (a) In accordance with the provisions of this chapter, any such  
37 participant who is under age eighteen shall be required to attend educa-  
38 tional activities designed to prepare the individual for a high school  
39 degree or equivalency certificate. Participants who are not subject to  
40 compulsory school attendance requirements may be exempted from the  
41 requirements of this paragraph under criteria established by the depart-  
42 ment in consultation with the state education department and consistent  
43 with federal law and regulations.

44 (b) Any such participant who is age eighteen or nineteen shall be  
45 assigned to educational activities, except that the district shall  
46 assign such participant to employment and/or other activities under this  
47 title if the district has determined that such alternative activities  
48 are consistent with the participant's employability plan and, pursuant  
49 to ~~[department]~~ office regulations, there has been a determination by  
50 the district based on such plan that educational activities are not  
51 ~~[appropriate]~~ required for such participant to obtain the knowledge and  
52 skills needed to be employed in the occupation chosen by the participant  
53 as his or her employment goal in such plan because he or she has clearly  
54 and affirmatively demonstrated that he or she already possesses such  
55 knowledge and skills or that the participant has failed to ~~[make-good~~  
56 ~~progress]~~ maintain a cumulative C average or its equivalent in such

1 educational activities, except where undue hardship resulting from the  
2 death of a relative of the student, the personal injury or illness of  
3 the student, or other extenuating circumstances, is responsible for such  
4 failure to maintain a cumulative C average or its equivalent.

5 (c) Any such participant who is an adult in a two-parent family and is  
6 under age twenty-five may be required to participate in educational  
7 activities consistent with his or her employment goals set forth in the  
8 employability plan.

9 (d) The social services official shall not assign a participant  
10 described in this subdivision to any activities which interfere with the  
11 educational activities assigned pursuant to such participant's employa-  
12 bility plan and described in this subdivision.

13 5. Any applicant for or recipient of public assistance pursuing voca-  
14 tional education or educational activities described in this [~~subdivi-~~  
15 ~~sion~~] section shall not be assigned to any other activity prior to  
16 conducting an assessment and developing an employability plan as  
17 prescribed in section three hundred thirty-five or three hundred thir-  
18 ty-five-a of this title and may be assigned to such other activity only  
19 if such individual's assessment and such individual's employability plan  
20 warrant the assignment to such other activity. Local social services  
21 districts may periodically reevaluate a participant's employment plan  
22 and make assignments to other work activities [~~in order to meet partici-~~  
23 ~~ipation rates~~] not inconsistent with the requirements of this section,  
24 giving due consideration to the participant's progress in the current,  
25 and if applicable, prior program.

26 6. Nothing required in this section shall be construed to supersede  
27 the eligibility requirements of teen parents as set forth in this chap-  
28 ter.

29 7. (a) In any social services district in which the applicable federal  
30 or state work activity participation rates were met for the previous  
31 year or are projected will be met for the current year, participants  
32 shall be permitted to pursue post-secondary education, including partici-  
33 ipation in a four year program, in satisfaction of the work activity  
34 requirements of this title.

35 (b) When a participant engages in educational activity pursuant to  
36 this section in full or partial satisfaction of his or her work require-  
37 ment, the local district shall count each hour of classroom partici-  
38 ipation as work activity and shall also count the time reasonably neces-  
39 sary for study and class preparation as work activity. For each hour of  
40 classroom participation, the time reasonably necessary for study and  
41 class preparation shall be deemed to be the number of supplementary  
42 assignment hours required by state education department regulations for  
43 each credit hour in a course of professional or higher education;  
44 provided that a district may count a larger number of hours if a partici-  
45 ipant demonstrates that his or her educational activity requires a larg-  
46 er number of hours for study, preparation or other supplemental activ-  
47 ity.

48 (c) A district social services official shall not assign a participant  
49 described in this subdivision to any activities which interfere with the  
50 educational activities described in this subdivision. The district shall  
51 not assign any additional activities to a participant described in this  
52 subdivision who is enrolled at least half-time in a post-secondary  
53 program and has at least a cumulative C average or its equivalent. The  
54 district may waive the requirement that the student have at least a  
55 cumulative C average or its equivalent for undue hardship based on (i)

1 the death of a relative of the student; (ii) the personal illness or  
2 injury of the student; or (iii) other extenuating circumstances.

3 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after  
4 it shall have become a law, provided, however, that effective immediate-  
5 ly, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rules or regulations  
6 necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this act on its  
7 effective date is authorized and directed to be made and completed on or  
8 before such effective date.