

STATE OF NEW YORK

5286

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 1, 2021

Introduced by Sens. PARKER, SEPULVEDA -- 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 Assem-
bly, 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 chapter 275 of the laws of 2017, is amended to read as
4 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, education or a course of instruction
11 in financial literacy and personal finance that includes instruction on
12 household cash management techniques, career advice to obtain a well
13 paying and secure job, using checking and savings accounts, obtaining
14 and utilizing short and long term credit, securing a loan or other long
15 term financing arrangement for high cost items, participation in a high-
16 er education course of instruction or trade school, and no more than a
17 total of four years of post-secondary education (or the part-time equiv-
18 alent). Educational activities pursuant to this section may be offered
19 with any of the following providers which meet the performance or
20 assessment standards established in regulations by the commissioner for
21 such providers: a community college, licensed trade school, registered
22 business school, or a two-year or four-year college; provided, however,
23 that such post-secondary education must be necessary to the attainment
24 of the participant's individual employment goal as set forth in the

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

LBD05382-01-1

1 employability plan and such goal must relate directly to obtaining
2 useful employment in a recognized occupation. When making any assignment
3 to any educational activity pursuant to this subdivision, such assign-
4 ment shall be permitted only to the extent that such assignment is
5 consistent with the individual's assessment and employment plan goals in
6 accordance with sections three hundred thirty-five and three hundred
7 thirty-five-a of this title and shall require that the individual main-
8 tains satisfactory academic progress and hourly participation is docu-
9 mented consistent with federal and state requirements. For purposes of
10 this provision "satisfactory academic progress" shall mean having a
11 cumulative C average, or its equivalent, as determined by the academic
12 institution. The requirement to maintain satisfactory academic progress
13 may be waived if done so by the academic institution and the social
14 services district based on undue hardship caused by an event such as a
15 personal injury or illness of the student, the death of a relative of
16 the student or other extenuating circumstances. Any enrollment in post-
17 secondary education beyond a twelve month period must be combined with
18 no less than twenty hours of participation averaged weekly in paid
19 employment or work activities or community service when paid employment
20 is not available.

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

31 3. When a participant is assigned to an appropriate vocational educa-
32 tional or educational activity and such activity is available at no cost
33 to the social services district through the school district or board of
34 cooperative educational services in which the participant resides or
35 through another agency or organization providing educational services
36 which meet such minimum standards as the commissioner of education shall
37 establish, the social services district shall refer the participant to
38 such district, board, agency or organization.

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

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

51 (b) Any such participant who is age eighteen or nineteen shall be
52 assigned to educational activities, except that the district shall
53 assign such participant to employment and/or other activities under this
54 title if the district has determined that such alternative activities
55 are consistent with the participant's employability plan and, pursuant
56 to [~~department~~] office regulations, there has been a determination by

1 the district based on such plan that educational activities are not
2 [~~appropriate~~] required for such participant to obtain the knowledge and
3 skills needed to be employed in the occupation chosen by the participant
4 as his or her employment goal in such plan because he or she has clearly
5 and affirmatively demonstrated that he or she already possesses such
6 knowledge and skills or that the participant has failed to [~~make—good~~
7 ~~progress~~] maintain a cumulative C average or its equivalent in such
8 educational activities, except where undue hardship resulting from the
9 death of a relative of the student, the personal injury or illness of
10 the student, or other extenuating circumstances, is responsible for such
11 failure to maintain a cumulative C average or its equivalent.

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

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

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

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

36 7. (a) In any social services district in which the applicable federal
37 or state work activity participation rates were met for the previous
38 year or are projected will be met for the current year, participants
39 shall be permitted to pursue post-secondary education, including partic-
40 ipation in a four year program, in satisfaction of the work activity
41 requirements of this title.

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

55 (c) A district social services official shall not assign a participant
56 described in this subdivision to any activities which interfere with the

1 educational activities described in this subdivision. The district shall
2 not assign any additional activities to a participant described in this
3 subdivision who is enrolled at least half-time in a post-secondary
4 program and has at least a cumulative C average or its equivalent. The
5 district may waive the requirement that the student have at least a
6 cumulative C average or its equivalent for undue hardship based on (i)
7 the death of a relative of the student; (ii) the personal illness or
8 injury of the student; or (iii) other extenuating circumstances.

9 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after
10 it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amend-
11 ment and/or repeal of any rules or regulations necessary for the imple-
12 mentation of the provisions of this act on its effective date are
13 authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.