§ 331. Policies and purposes. 1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the state that there be programs under which individuals receiving public assistance will be furnished work activities and employment opportunities, and necessary services in order to secure unsubsidized employment that will assist participants to achieve economic independence. Such programs shall be established and operated in accordance with the provisions of this title and in compliance with federal and state law and regulations.

2. A social services district may contract or establish agreements with entities which comply with the standards to be established in regulations by the commissioner to provide work activities, including but not limited to, job training partnership act agencies, state agencies, school districts, boards of cooperative educational services, not-for-profit community based organizations, licensed trade schools or registered business schools, libraries, post-secondary educational institutions consistent with this title, and educational opportunity centers and local employers. A district shall, to the extent practicable and permitted under federal requirements, develop performance based contracts or agreements with such entities. Such standards shall include an evaluation procedure to ensure that services offered by a provider are sufficient to enhance substantially a participant's opportunity to secure unsubsidized employment or, when coupled with or provided in conjunction with other activities, represent part of a comprehensive approach to enabling a participant to secure unsubsidized employment. Notwithstanding the provisions of section one hundred fifty-three of this article, expenditures pursuant to contracts or agreements with providers who do not meet the standards for approval of providers as defined in regulations will not be eligible for reimbursement by the department.

3. No social services district shall, in the exercising of the powers and duties established in this title, permit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion or handicap, in the selection of participants, their assignment or reassignment to work activities and duties, and the separate use of facilities or other treatment of participants.