

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 656

Introduced by Andersen, 49; Bosn, 25; Holdcroft, 36; Kauth, 31; Sanders,
45; Sorrentino, 39.

Read first time January 22, 2025

Committee: Health and Human Services

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to public assistance; to amend section
2 68-1017.02, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to change
3 requirements relating to the work requirements under the
4 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; to provide an operative
5 date; and to repeal the original section.

6 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 **Section 1.** Section 68-1017.02, Revised Statutes Cumulative
2 Supplement, 2024, is amended to read:

3 68-1017.02 (1)(a) The Department of Health and Human Services shall
4 apply for and utilize to the maximum extent possible, within limits
5 established by the Legislature, any and all appropriate options available
6 to the state under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
7 and regulations adopted under such program to maximize the number of
8 Nebraska residents being served under such program within such limits.
9 The department shall seek to maximize federal funding for such program
10 and minimize the utilization of General Funds for such program and shall
11 employ the personnel necessary to determine the options available to the
12 state and issue the report to the Legislature required by subdivision (b)
13 of this subsection.

14 (b) The department shall submit electronically an annual report to
15 the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature by December 1
16 on efforts by the department to carry out the provisions of this
17 subsection. Such report shall provide the committee with all necessary
18 and appropriate information to enable the committee to conduct a
19 meaningful evaluation of such efforts. Such information shall include,
20 but not be limited to, a clear description of various options available
21 to the state under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,
22 the department's evaluation of and any action taken by the department
23 with respect to such options, the number of persons being served under
24 such program, and any and all costs and expenditures associated with such
25 program.

26 (c) The Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature,
27 after receipt and evaluation of the report required in subdivision (b) of
28 this subsection, shall issue recommendations to the department on any
29 further action necessary by the department to meet the requirements of
30 this section.

31 (2)(a) The department shall develop a state outreach plan to promote

1 access by eligible persons to benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition
2 Assistance Program. The plan shall meet the criteria established by the
3 Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture
4 for approval of state outreach plans. The Department of Health and Human
5 Services may apply for and accept gifts, grants, and donations to develop
6 and implement the state outreach plan.

7 (b) For purposes of developing and implementing the state outreach
8 plan, the department shall partner with one or more counties or nonprofit
9 organizations. If the department enters into a contract with a nonprofit
10 organization relating to the state outreach plan, the contract may
11 specify that the nonprofit organization is responsible for seeking
12 sufficient gifts, grants, or donations necessary for the development and
13 implementation of the state outreach plan and may additionally specify
14 that any costs to the department associated with the award and management
15 of the contract or the implementation or administration of the state
16 outreach plan shall be paid out of private or federal funds received for
17 development and implementation of the state outreach plan.

18 (c) The department shall submit the state outreach plan to the Food
19 and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture for
20 approval on or before August 1, 2011, and shall request any federal
21 matching funds that may be available upon approval of the state outreach
22 plan. It is the intent of the Legislature that the State of Nebraska and
23 the Department of Health and Human Services use any additional public or
24 private funds to offset costs associated with increased caseload
25 resulting from the implementation of the state outreach plan.

26 (d) The department shall be exempt from implementing or
27 administering a state outreach plan under this subsection, but not from
28 developing such a plan, if it does not receive private or federal funds
29 sufficient to cover the department's costs associated with the
30 implementation and administration of the plan, including any costs
31 associated with increased caseload resulting from the implementation of

1 the plan.

2 (3)(a) It is the intent of the Legislature that:

3 (i) Hard work be rewarded and no disincentives to work exist for
4 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants;

5 (ii) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants be
6 enabled to advance in employment, through greater earnings or new,
7 better-paying employment;

8 (iii) Participants in employment and training pilot programs be able
9 to maintain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits while
10 seeking employment with higher wages that allow them to reduce or
11 terminate such program benefits; and

12 (iv) Nebraska better utilize options under the Supplemental
13 Nutrition Assistance Program that other states have implemented to
14 encourage work and employment.

15 (b)(i) The department shall create a TANF-funded program or policy
16 that, in compliance with federal law, establishes categorical eligibility
17 for federal food assistance benefits pursuant to the Supplemental
18 Nutrition Assistance Program to maximize the number of Nebraska residents
19 being served under such program in a manner that does not increase the
20 current gross income eligibility limit except as otherwise provided in
21 subdivision (3)(b)(ii) of this section.

22 (ii) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, such TANF-
23 funded program or policy shall increase the gross income eligibility
24 limit to one hundred sixty-five percent of the federal Office of
25 Management and Budget income poverty guidelines as allowed under federal
26 law and under 7 C.F.R. 273.2(j)(2), as such law and regulation existed on
27 April 1, 2021, but shall not increase the net income eligibility limit.
28 Beginning October 1, 2025, the gross income eligibility limit shall
29 return to the amount used prior to the increase required by this
30 subdivision. The department shall evaluate the TANF-funded program or
31 policy created pursuant to this subsection and provide a report

1 electronically to the Health and Human Services Committee of the
2 Legislature and the Legislative Fiscal Analyst on or before December 15
3 of each year regarding the gross income eligibility limit and whether it
4 maximizes the number of Nebraska residents being served under the program
5 or policy. The evaluation shall include an identification and
6 determination of additional administrative costs resulting from the
7 increase to the gross income eligibility limit, a recommendation
8 regarding the gross income eligibility limit, and a determination of the
9 availability of federal funds for the program or policy.

10 (iii) To the extent federal funds are available to the Department of
11 Labor for the SNAP Next Step Program, until September 30, 2023, any
12 recipient of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits whose
13 household income is between one hundred thirty-one and one hundred sixty-
14 five percent of the federal Office of Management and Budget income
15 poverty guidelines and who is not exempt from work participation
16 requirements shall be encouraged to participate in the SNAP Next Step
17 Program administered by the Department of Labor if the recipient is
18 eligible to participate in the program and the program's services are
19 available in the county in which such household is located. It is the
20 intent of the Legislature that no General Funds be utilized by the
21 Department of Labor for the processes outlined in this subdivision (iii).
22 For purposes of this section, SNAP Next Step Program means a partnership
23 program between the Department of Health and Human Services and the
24 Department of Labor to assist under-employed and unemployed recipients of
25 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in finding self-
26 sufficient employment.

27 (iv) Such TANF-funded program or policy shall eliminate all asset
28 limits for eligibility for federal food assistance benefits, except that
29 the total of liquid assets which includes cash on hand and funds in
30 personal checking and savings accounts, money market accounts, and share
31 accounts shall not exceed twenty-five thousand dollars pursuant to the

1 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, as allowed under federal law
2 and under 7 C.F.R. 273.2(j)(2).

3 (v) This subsection becomes effective only if the department
4 receives funds pursuant to federal participation that may be used to
5 implement this subsection.

6 (c) For purposes of this subsection:

7 (i) Federal law means the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, 7
8 U.S.C. 2011 et seq., and regulations adopted under the act; and

9 (ii) TANF means the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
10 program established in 42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.

11 (4)(a) Within the limits specified in this subsection, the State of
12 Nebraska opts out of the provision of the federal Personal Responsibility
13 and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, as such act existed on
14 January 1, 2009, that eliminates eligibility for the Supplemental
15 Nutrition Assistance Program for any person convicted of a felony
16 involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance.

17 (b) A person shall be ineligible for Supplemental Nutrition
18 Assistance Program benefits under this subsection if he or she (i) has
19 had three or more felony convictions for the possession or use of a
20 controlled substance or (ii) has been convicted of a felony involving the
21 sale or distribution of a controlled substance or the intent to sell or
22 distribute a controlled substance. A person with one or two felony
23 convictions for the possession or use of a controlled substance shall
24 only be eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
25 benefits under this subsection if he or she is participating in or has
26 completed a state-licensed or nationally accredited substance abuse
27 treatment program since the date of conviction. The determination of such
28 participation or completion shall be made by the treatment provider
29 administering the program.

30 (5)(a) Unless expressly required by federal law, the department
31 shall not seek, apply for, accept, or renew a waiver of any work

1 requirement established by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
2 under 7 U.S.C. 2015(o), as such section existed on January 1, 2025.

3 (b) The department shall not exercise the state's option to provide
4 an exemption from the work requirement under 7 U.S.C. 2015(o)(6)(E), as
5 such section existed on January 1, 2025.

6 (6) Under the authority given to a state agency to operate the
7 general work requirement pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 2015(d), as such section
8 existed on January 1, 2025, the department shall assign all individuals
9 who are over sixteen years of age and younger than sixty years of age to
10 an employment and training program as defined in 7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4), as
11 such section existed on January 1, 2025, unless the individual is:

12 (a) Currently subject to, and complying with, a work registration
13 requirement under Title IV of the federal Social Security Act or the
14 federal or state unemployment compensation system, in which case failure
15 by such person to comply with a work requirement shall be the same as
16 failure to comply with the general work requirement;

17 (b) A parent or other member of a household with responsibility for
18 the care of (i) a dependent child under six years of age or (ii) an
19 incapacitated person;

20 (c) A student enrolled at least half time in any recognized school,
21 training program, or institution of higher education except a person
22 enrolled in an institution of higher education who is ineligible to
23 participate under 7 U.S.C. 2015(d), as such section existed on January 1,
24 2025;

25 (d) An inpatient participant in a drug addiction or alcoholic
26 treatment and rehabilitation program;

27 (e) Employed a minimum of thirty hours per week or receiving weekly
28 earnings equivalent to the minimum hourly rate under the federal Fair
29 Labor Standards Act of 1938, multiplied by thirty hours; or

30 (f) A person who is at least sixteen years of age and younger than
31 eighteen years of age who is not a head of a household or who is

1 attending school or enrolled in an employment training program on at
2 least a half-time basis.

3 **Sec. 2.** This act becomes operative on January 1, 2026.

4 **Sec. 3.** Original section 68-1017.02, Revised Statutes Cumulative
5 Supplement, 2024, is repealed.