Diversionary Work Program: Emphasizing employment

Families with children who apply for cash benefits and have not received cash assistance in the previous 12 months enter the Diversionary Work Program and receive intensive services focused on immediate employment. An average of 1,980 families a month receive assistance from the Diversionary Work Program.

Short term

- Families can participate in the program for only four consecutive months within a 12-month period.
- After four months on the program, if the crisis has not been resolved, families may be eligible for the Minnesota Family Investment Program.
- Time in the Diversionary Work Program does not count toward the Minnesota Family Investment Program’s 60-month lifetime limit on receiving cash assistance.
- An analysis performed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services revealed that:
  - More than half of families do not receive Minnesota Family Investment Program assistance in the month after finishing the Diversionary Work Program.
  - Approximately 75% of families received no cash assistance one year after enrolling in the Diversionary Work Program.

Work focus

With a few exceptions, all adults in the family must focus on immediate employment.

- Before receiving any cash benefits through the Diversionary Work Program, parents must develop an employment plan with a job counselor.
- If parents do not comply with employment services, their families’ cash benefits end.
- The benefits resume if the parents come into compliance with program requirements.

Job supports

Families may receive cash benefits to meet critical needs and services to move quickly to work.

- The benefits are based on families’ housing, utility costs and personal needs — up to a maximum based on the number of people in each family. The county directly pays landlords and utility companies.
- Most families can also receive food, child care and health care benefits.
- Once participants begin work, cash benefits remain unchanged up to the end of the four-month period.