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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 6520**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF TEMPORARY STATE SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill generally provides temporary assistance to domestic violence (DV) victims under (1) the following federally-funded programs, to the extent permissible under federal law: supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP); Care-4-Kids (C4K) childcare subsidy program; and temporary family assistance (TFA); and (2) state administered general assistance (SAGA).

The bill allows allegations of domestic violence to be substantiated in accordance with existing law (see BACKGROUND). It also makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

#### **§ 1 – SNAP BENEFITS**

The bill requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner to expedite SNAP eligibility determinations for domestic violence victims. It requires her to provide an eligible DV victim temporary SNAP benefits for a minimum of 90 days before redetermining benefit eligibility. When conducting an expedited eligibility determination, DSS must exclude the income of the victim's credibly accused spouse, domestic partner, or other household member from the victim's household income. DSS must take these actions to the extent permissible under federal law. (DV victims are not entitled to expedited SNAP benefits under current federal regulations, but may be otherwise eligible if they meet the established income standards; see BACKGROUND.)

SNAP, formerly or colloquially known as food stamps, is a federally-funded, state-administered program that provides electronic

benefit transfer funds to low-income households for food purchases.

## **§ 2 – C4K CHILDCARE SUBSIDY**

The bill requires the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Commissioner, to the extent permissible under federal law and within available appropriations, to waive C4K income standards when determining eligibility for at least 90 days for any alleged DV victim applicant. It requires OEC to redetermine eligibility based upon the program's income standards after this period. The bill also adds DV victims to the list of applicants who must be given priority in the C4K intake and eligibility process, to the extent permissible under federal law.

The C4K program subsidizes child care costs for low- and moderate-income families while a parent is working or attending a temporary family cash assistance approved education or training program (i.e., a Jobs First participant).

## **§ 3 – SAGA CASH ASSISTANCE**

Under the bill, in determining eligibility for SAGA cash assistance, the DSS commissioner must exclude the income of a DV victim's credibly accused spouse, domestic partner, or other household member for at least 90 days from the application date, within available appropriations. It allows DSS to redetermine SAGA eligibility based upon the program's income standards after the 90-day period.

In general, SAGA provides cash assistance to single or married childless individuals who have very low incomes, do not qualify for any other cash assistance program, and are considered "transitional" or "unemployable."

## **§ 4 – TFA CASH ASSISTANCE**

The bill requires the DSS commissioner to expedite TFA eligibility determinations for DV victim applicants. To the extent permissible under federal law, the commissioner must exclude the income of the applicant's credibly accused spouse, domestic partner, or other household member for a minimum of 90 days after the application

date. The commissioner may redetermine TFA eligibility after the 90-day period.

TFA is Connecticut's cash assistance program for low-income families, funded through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Substantiating Domestic Violence Allegations***

The law defines "victim of domestic violence" as a person who has been abused or subjected to extreme cruelty by:

- physical acts that resulted in, or were threatened to result in, physical injury;
- sexual abuse or being forced to participate in nonconsensual sexual acts or activities;
- sexual activity involving a child in the home;
- threats of, or attempts at, physical or sexual abuse;
- mental abuse; or
- neglect or deprivation of medical care.

By law, a DV victim's allegations may be sufficient to establish domestic violence where DSS has no independent, reasonable basis to find the applicant or recipient not credible. A victim may be required to provide a sworn statement or to submit to the department any available evidence including: (1) police, government agency, or court records; (2) documentation from a shelter worker, legal, medical, clerical, or other professional from whom the applicant or recipient sought assistance in dealing with domestic violence; or (3) a statement from someone with knowledge of the circumstances that provide the basis for the claim (CGS § 17b-112a).

### ***Expedited SNAP Benefits***

Under federal regulations, DSS must post expedited SNAP benefits

to the household's EBT card by the seventh calendar day following their application filing date (7 C.F.R. § 273.2(i)(3)(i)). This time limit would also apply to residents of shelters for battered women and children who are otherwise entitled to expedited service (7 C.F.R. § 273.2 (i)(3)(v)).

The following households are entitled to expedited service:

1. households with less than \$150 in monthly gross income, provided their liquid resources (e.g., cash, checking or savings accounts) do not exceed \$100;
2. migrant or seasonal farmworker households who are destitute, provided their liquid resources do not exceed \$100; and
3. households whose combined monthly gross income and liquid resources are less than the household's monthly rent or mortgage, and utilities (7 C.F.R. § 273.2(i)(1)).

### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/18/2021)