

ASSEMBLY HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 2363

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 12, 2022

The Assembly Human Services Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2363 (1R).

This bill, would require the Department of Human Services (department), to the maximum extent permissible under federal law, to establish a training program for each employee of a county board of social services who assists individuals with the SNAP enrollment and recertification process. The purpose of the training will be to educate employees on current federal laws, regulations, and standards concerning SNAP, and standard best practices to comply with federal SNAP requirements. The department will review the training program and curriculum at least once every six months and will modify the training program from time to time, as necessary, to incorporate any changes to the federal laws, regulations, and standards concerning SNAP. Participation in the training program will be mandatory for all employees of a county board of social services who assist individuals with the SNAP enrollment and recertification process. Each county board of social services will be responsible for ensuring that all required employees complete the training program, at least once in each calendar year.

This bill also requires the department to publish county-level case tracking data on SNAP on its Internet website that includes, but is not limited to: application approval rates, reasons for application denial, and average application approval time.

Finally, the bill requires the department, to the maximum extent permissible under federal law, to establish a one-year pilot program that would conduct focused outreach efforts about eligibility for SNAP benefits and would provide application assistance to certain populations. The bill specifies that the purpose of this program is to increase enrollment among certain underserved populations of eligible participants in SNAP. These underserved populations include, but are not limited to, college students, immigrants, and older adults. The Commissioner of Human Services (commissioner) will select one county board of social services in each of the northern, central, and southern regions of the State to participate in the pilot program. The pilot program may include, but shall not be limited to, the following elements:

(1) the creation and dissemination of videos to educate older adults about SNAP and the application process;

(2) grassroots outreach about SNAP through senior centers, hospitals, doctor's offices, houses of worship, and other place where older adults may congregate;

(3) the provision of application assistance by telephone for older adults;

(4) the development of a social media campaign for college students that raises awareness about SNAP;

(5) the formation of partnerships with institutions of higher education and the higher education community, such as school administrators, professors, counselors, student health offices, campus food pantries, and financial aid officers, to raise awareness about SNAP among students and to provide students with the necessary information to apply for SNAP;

(6) the establishment of campus representatives at institutions of higher learning who can educate students about SNAP and refer students to a local county board of social services;

(7) the promotion of SNAP outreach and application materials in different languages through organizations and faith-based communities that serve immigrants; and

(8) outreach through social and traditional media, especially non-English media, to reach immigrant populations.

At the conclusion of the pilot program, the commissioner will be required to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature on the implementation, outcomes, and effectiveness of the pilot program. The report will include the commissioner's recommendation on the advisability of the program's continuation and expansion to additional county boards of social services in the State. The commissioner will also be required to apply to the Food and Nutrition Service within the United States Department of Agriculture for any necessary waivers or approvals to implement the provisions of this act.