

## LEGISLATIVE BILL 233

Approved by the Governor April 17, 2024

Introduced by Cavanaugh, J., 9; Hunt, 8; Conrad, 46; Cavanaugh, M., 6.

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to child support; to amend sections 43-512, 43-512.07, and 68-1713, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and section 68-1201, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022; to provide for a child support payment disregard; to provide for pass through of certain child support payments; to eliminate a portion of child support income for purposes of determining eligibility for the aid to dependent children program; to require implementation of a child support disregard policy; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original sections.

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

Section 1. Section 43-512, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

43-512 (1) Any dependent child as defined in section 43-504 or any relative or eligible caretaker of such a dependent child may file with the Department of Health and Human Services a written application for financial assistance for such child on forms furnished by the department.

(2) The department, through its agents and employees, shall make such investigation pursuant to the application as it deems necessary or as may be required by the county attorney or authorized attorney. If the investigation or the application for financial assistance discloses that such child has a parent or stepparent who is able to contribute to the support of such child and has failed to do so, a copy of the finding of such investigation and a copy of the application shall immediately be filed with the county attorney or authorized attorney.

(3) The department shall make a finding as to whether the application referred to in subsection (1) of this section should be allowed or denied. If the department finds that the application should be allowed, the department shall further find the amount of monthly assistance which should be paid with reference to such dependent child. Except as may be otherwise provided, payments shall be made by unit size and shall be consistent with subdivisions (1)(p), (1)(q), (1)(t), and (1)(u), and (1)(v) of section 68-1713. Beginning on August 30, 2015, the maximum payment level for monthly assistance shall be fifty-five percent of the standard of need described in section 43-513.

No payments shall be made for amounts totaling less than ten dollars per month except in the recovery of overpayments.

(4) The amount which shall be paid as assistance with respect to a dependent child shall be based in each case upon the conditions disclosed by the investigation made by the department. An appeal shall lie from the finding made in each case to the chief executive officer of the department or his or her designated representative. Such appeal may be taken by any taxpayer or by any relative of such child. Proceedings for and upon appeal shall be conducted in the same manner as provided for in section 68-1016.

(5)(a) For the purpose of preventing dependency, the department shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations providing for services to former and potential recipients of aid to dependent children and medical assistance benefits. The department shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations establishing programs and cooperating with programs of work incentive, work experience, job training, and education. The provisions of this section with regard to determination of need, amount of payment, maximum payment, and method of payment shall not be applicable to families or children included in such programs. Income and assets described in section 68-1201 shall not be included in determination of need under this section.

(b) If a recipient of aid to dependent children becomes ineligible for aid to dependent children as a result of increased hours of employment or increased income from employment after having participated in any of the programs established pursuant to subdivision (a) of this subsection, the recipient may be eligible for the following benefits, as provided in rules and regulations of the department in accordance with sections 402, 417, and 1925 of the federal Social Security Act, as amended, Public Law 100-485, in order to help the family during the transition from public assistance to independence:

(i) An ongoing transitional payment that is intended to meet the family's ongoing basic needs which may include food, clothing, shelter, utilities, household goods, personal care items, and general incidental expenses during the five months following the time the family becomes ineligible for assistance under the aid to dependent children program, if the family's earned income is at or below one hundred eighty-five percent of the federal poverty level at the time the family becomes ineligible for the aid to dependent children program. Payments shall be made in five monthly payments, each equal to one-fifth of the aid to dependent children payment standard for the family's size at the time the family becomes ineligible for the aid to dependent children program. If during the five-month period, (A) the family's earnings exceed one hundred eighty-five percent of the federal poverty level, (B) the family members are no longer working, (C) the family ceases to be Nebraska residents, (D) there is no

longer a minor child in the family's household, or (E) the family again becomes eligible for the aid to dependent children program, the family shall become ineligible for any remaining transitional benefits under this subdivision;

(ii) Child care as provided in subdivision (1)(c) of section 68-1724; and

(iii) Except as may be provided in accordance with subsection (2) of section 68-1713 and subdivision (1)(c) of section 68-1724, medical assistance for up to twelve months after the month the recipient becomes employed and is no longer eligible for aid to dependent children.

(6) For purposes of sections 43-512 to 43-512.18:

(a) Authorized attorney shall mean an attorney, employed by the county subject to the approval of the county board, employed by the department, or appointed by the court, who is authorized to investigate and prosecute child, spousal, and medical support cases. An authorized attorney shall represent the state as provided in section 43-512.03;

(b) Child support shall be defined as provided in section 43-1705;

(c) Medical support shall include all expenses associated with the birth of a child, cash medical support as defined in section 42-369, health care coverage as defined in section 44-3,144, and medical and hospital insurance coverage or membership in a health maintenance organization or preferred provider organization;

(d) Spousal support shall be defined as provided in section 43-1715;

(e) State Disbursement Unit shall be defined as provided in section 43-3341; and

(f) Support shall be defined as provided in section 43-3313.

Sec. 2. Section 43-512.07, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

43-512.07 (1) Any action, payment, aid, or assistance listed in this subsection shall constitute an assignment by operation of law to the Department of Health and Human Services of any right to spousal or medical support, when ordered by the court, and to child support, whether or not ordered by the court, which a person may have in his or her own behalf or on behalf of any other person for whom such person receives such payments, aid, or assistance:

(a) Application for and acceptance of one or more aid to dependent children payments by a parent, another relative, or a custodian;

(b) Receipt of aid by or on behalf of any dependent child as defined in section 43-504; or

(c) Receipt of aid from child welfare funds.

The assignment under this section is the right to support payments that become due while the person is receiving payments, aid, or assistance listed in this subsection. The department shall be entitled to retain such ~~child,~~ spousal, or other support up to the amount of payments, aid, or assistance provided to a recipient. For purposes of this section, the right to receive child support shall belong to the child and the assignment shall be effective as to any such support even if the recipient of the payments, aid, or assistance is not the same as the payee of court-ordered support.

(2) After notification of the State Disbursement Unit receiving the child, spousal, or other support payments made pursuant to a court order that the person for whom such support is ordered is a recipient of payments, aid, or assistance listed in subsection (1) of this section, the department shall also give notice to the payee named in the court order at his or her last-known address.

(3) Upon written or other notification from the department or from another state of such assignment of child, spousal, or other support payments, the State Disbursement Unit shall transmit the support payments received to the department or the other state without the requirement of a subsequent order by the court. The State Disbursement Unit shall continue to transmit the support payments for as long as the payments, aid, or assistance listed in subsection (1) of this section continues.

(4) Any court-ordered child, spousal, or other support remaining unpaid for the months during which such payments, aid, or assistance was made shall constitute a debt and a continuing assignment at the termination of payments, aid, or assistance listed in subsection (1) of this section, collectible by the department or other state as reimbursement for such payments, aid, or assistance. The continuing assignment shall only apply to support payments made during a calendar period which exceed the specific amount of support ordered for that period. When payments, aid, or assistance listed in subsection (1) of this section have ceased and upon notice by the department or the other state, the State Disbursement Unit shall continue to transmit to the department or the other state any support payments received in excess of the amount of support ordered for that specific calendar period until notified by the department or the other state that the debt has been paid in full.

(5) Beginning July 1, 2027, the department shall pass through an amount not exceeding one hundred dollars per month, or in the case of a family with two or more children, an amount not exceeding two hundred dollars per month, to the recipient of any payments, aid, or assistance listed in subdivision (1)(a) of this section, from the current child support collected pursuant to the assignment. Such pass-through amounts shall not be considered income for the purpose of calculating a recipient's eligibility for assistance. The department shall disregard the amount of child support passed through to the recipient in calculating the amount of the recipient's monthly assistance payment.

Sec. 3. Section 68-1201, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, is amended to read:

68-1201 (1) In determining eligibility for the program for aid to

dependent children pursuant to section 43-512 as administered by the State of Nebraska pursuant to the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, 42 U.S.C. 601 et seq., for the low-income home energy assistance program administered by the State of Nebraska pursuant to the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005, 42 U.S.C. 8621 to 8630, for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program administered by the State of Nebraska pursuant to the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, 7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq., and for the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 68-1202, the following shall not be included in determining assets or income:

(a) ~~(1)~~ Assets in or income from an educational savings account, a Coverdell educational savings account described in 26 U.S.C. 530, a qualified tuition program established pursuant to 26 U.S.C. 529, or any similar savings account or plan established to save for qualified higher education expenses as defined in section 85-1802;

(b) ~~(2)~~ Income from scholarships or grants related to postsecondary education, whether merit-based, need-based, or a combination thereof;

(c) ~~(3)~~ Income from postsecondary educational work-study programs, whether federally funded, funded by a postsecondary educational institution, or funded from any other source;

(d) ~~(4)~~ Assets in or income from an account under a qualified program as provided in section 77-1402;

(e) ~~(5)~~ Income received for participation in grant-funded research on the impact that income has on the development of children in low-income families, except that such exclusion of income must not exceed four thousand dollars per year for a maximum of eight years and such exclusion shall only be made if the exclusion is permissible under federal law for each program referenced in this section. No such exclusion shall be made for such income on or after December 31, 2026; and

(f) ~~(6)~~ Income from any tax credits received pursuant to the School Readiness Tax Credit Act.

(2) In determining eligibility for the program for aid to dependent children pursuant to section 43-512 as administered by the State of Nebraska pursuant to the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, 42 U.S.C. 601 et seq., passed-through child support as described in section 43-512.07, shall not be included in determining assets or income.

Sec. 4. Section 68-1713, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

68-1713 (1) The Department of Health and Human Services shall implement the following policies:

- (a) Permit Work Experience in Private for-Profit Enterprises;
- (b) Permit Job Search;
- (c) Permit Employment to be Considered a Program Component;
- (d) Make Sanctions More Stringent to Emphasize Participant Obligations;
- (e) Alternative Hearing Process;
- (f) Permit Adults in Two-Parent Households to Participate in Activities Based on Their Self-Sufficiency Needs;
- (g) Eliminate Exemptions for Individuals with Children Between the Ages of 12 Weeks and Age Six;
- (h) Providing Poor Working Families with Transitional Child Care to Ease the Transition from Welfare to Self-Sufficiency;
- (i) Provide Transitional Health Care for 12 Months After Termination of ADC if funding for such transitional medical assistance is available under Title XIX of the federal Social Security Act, as amended, as described in section 68-906;
- (j) Require Adults to Ensure that Children in the Family Unit Attend School;
- (k) Encourage Minor Parents to Live with Their Parents;
- (l) Establish a Resource Limit of \$4,000 for a single individual and \$6,000 for two or more individuals for ADC;
- (m) Exclude the Value of One Vehicle Per Family When Determining ADC Eligibility;
- (n) Exclude the Cash Value of Life Insurance Policies in Calculating Resources for ADC;
- (o) Establish the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program as a Continuous Benefit with Eligibility Reevaluated with Yearly Redeterminations;
- (p) Establish a Budget the Gap Methodology Whereby Countable Earned Income is Subtracted from the Standard of the Need and Payment is Based on the Difference or Maximum Payment Level, Whichever is Less. That this Gap be Established at a Level that Encourages Work but at Least at a Level that Ensures that Those Currently Eligible for ADC do not Lose Eligibility Because of the Adoption of this Methodology;
- (q) Adopt an Earned Income Disregard described in section 68-1726 in the ADC Program, One Hundred Dollars in the Related Medical Assistance Program, and Income and Assets Described in section 68-1201;
- (r) Disregard Financial Assistance Described in section 68-1201 and Other Financial Assistance Intended for Books, Tuition, or Other Self-Sufficiency Related Use;
- (s) Culture: Eliminate the 100-Hour Rule, The Quarter of Work Requirement, and The 30-Day Unemployed/Underemployed Period for ADC-UP Eligibility;
- (t) Make ADC a Time-Limited Program; ~~and~~
- (u) Adopt an Unearned Income Disregard described in section 68-1201 in the ADC Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and the Child Care Subsidy Program established pursuant to section 68-1202; and -

(v) Adopt a child support disregard described pursuant to section 43-512.07.

(2) The Department of Health and Human Services shall (a) apply for a waiver to allow for a sliding-fee schedule for the population served by the caretaker relative program or (b) pursue other public or private mechanisms, to provide for transitional health care benefits to individuals and families who do not qualify for cash assistance. It is the intent of the Legislature that transitional health care coverage be made available on a sliding-scale basis to individuals and families with incomes up to one hundred eighty-five percent of the federal poverty level if other health care coverage is not available.

Sec. 5. Original sections 43-512, 43-512.07, and 68-1713, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and section 68-1201, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, are repealed.