

PPL POSITION PAPER: MFIP/JOB TRAINING

Project for Pride in Living (PPL) is a non-profit organization with a 34 year history dedicated to assisting lower income families toward greater self-sufficiency. Recognizing the complex nature of self-sufficiency, PPL offers an integrated approach that includes programs in affordable housing, employment readiness, and support services. By integrating our services, PPL is able to offer multifaceted assistance to further facilitate and strengthen the capabilities of our participants while addressing the many challenges they face.

Through our role as an employee service provider of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), PPL has learned what works in helping families to achieve self-reliance. Child care, housing, and job training are critical tenets of success for families and individuals. The nation's economic slow down has had severe consequences for the low-income participants PPL serves. The diminishing number of available jobs has been compounded by dramatic rollback in state support for programs that provide essential financial assistance and job training. The progressively harmful cuts in funding, eligibility, and subsidies for "safety net" programs augment the risks and obstacles our participants face. Our state must show its commitment to individual and state progress by reinvesting in key programs such as child care, housing, and job training as well as reevaluating MFIP requirements to ensure that MFIP participants are able to become self sufficient and important contributors to the Minnesota economy.

MFIP Requirements: Some of the provisions of MFIP serve only to cut cost in the short-term while negating the primary purpose of the program. Minnesota Department of Human Services states MFIP is intended to encourage families to "move to work and focuses on helping families." In order to fulfill this, the following must be removed:

- ✓ Subsidized Security Income Penalty: By penalizing MFIP recipients with disabled family members or who are disabled themselves, the state effectively undercuts a family's progress by taking away funds necessary to make ends meet.
- ✓ 20 hour/week Work Requirement: This requirement, especially when coupled with under funded child care assistance, is a disservice to those individuals attempting to receive education and job training essential to finding a living wage position that would lead to self-sufficiency. Making education opportunities contingent upon this level of participation inhibits access to such options.
- ✓ Family Cap: The family cap cripples the ability of parents to provide for children born during the time a family is receiving MFIP assistance. Given only an additional food portion, the family is left otherwise unassisted and unable to pay for the additional costs incurred. This punishes the children and further straps a family attempting to manage housing, health care, child care, and other additional costs.

Jobs Training: Skilled workers are more productive and self-sufficient members of our community. Job training, advanced education, and employment readiness programs all work to ensure more skilled and self-sufficient workforce. This helps the Minnesota businesses remain competitive. In order to continue providing the training that provides positive steps towards self-sufficiency, short term job training programs need additional funding

Child Care: Child care works hand-in-hand with MFIP work participation. Put simply, the more accessible and affordable child care is for our participants, the more likely they are to succeed in maintaining livable wage jobs, thus staying off welfare. A May 2004 survey of applicants to

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Minnesota's welfare-to-work program showed that the number one reason parents applied for cash assistance was high child care costs. Child care allows for greater work participation and job training. In addition, in order to comply with new Federal level work participation requirements, Minnesota *needs* additional child care assistance.

Housing: Housing is the single largest cost for most families and a lack of stable, quality housing options can lead to chronic problems finding or maintaining employment. Funding for housing and redevelopment projects as well as fair property tax valuation of rent restricted properties ensures our organization's ability to offer affordable alternatives to families and individuals who otherwise may be unable to find a reliable place to live.

Each of these elements is crucial to reaching the goal of self-sufficiency for our participants. Recognizing the role these participants play in the state economy and each of their individual integrity, Minnesota needs to demonstrate that the success of lower income Minnesotans is a priority and reevaluate both the requirements and funding of these programs.

Contact the Public Policy Team for more information: publicpolicy@ppl-inc.org