

No. 1987-65

AN ACT

HB 4

Authorizing the Department of Public Welfare to establish a grant program for projects which provide employment opportunities for certain individuals.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Employment Opportunities Act.

Section 2. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Chronically needy general assistance recipient.” A person classified as chronically needy under the provisions of section 432(3)(i) of the act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31, No.21), known as the Public Welfare Code.

“On-the-job training.” A program in which the training necessary to perform a job is provided by the employer after the employee is hired and designed for individuals who do not have the related education, training or specific work experience required for the job.

“Supported work.” A program in which employers make a commitment to hire individuals with little or no work history who are provided with counseling and assistance to ensure their transition to a fully functioning employment status. Such counseling is provided at the worksite to the extent possible. Assistance may involve helping the individual perform the job for a short period of time if deemed necessary and may include a wage subsidy for the employer.

“Transitionally needy general assistance recipient.” A person classified as transitionally needy under the provisions of section 432(3)(iii) of the act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31, No.21), known as the Public Welfare Code, including homeless individuals who have exhausted their eligibility for cash assistance.

“Work experience.” A program which meets the specifications of work experience under the Federal Job Training Partnership Act (Public Law 97-300, 96 Stat. 1322), that is designed to enhance a participant’s employability by helping him develop good work habits and basic skills needed for the work environment through employment in the public sector for up to three months. The program is designed for individuals who have never worked or who have been unemployed for a considerable length of time.

Section 3. Grants for projects to provide employment opportunities for transitionally needy welfare recipients.

The Department of Public Welfare is hereby authorized to establish a program of grants to any private industry council or designated administra-

tive entity, public or private school, institution of higher learning, business enterprise or nonprofit organization for the implementation of projects to provide employment opportunities for transitionally needy general assistance recipients.

Section 4. Persons to be served.

Projects which receive funding under this act shall serve transitionally needy general assistance recipients and chronically needy general assistance recipients who are participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program who cannot be placed directly in an employment search program and who have barriers to employment or have special needs which include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Persons with an educational grade level under the sixth grade.
- (2) Persons with limited or no fluency in the English language.
- (3) Persons with few or no marketable occupation skills.
- (4) Persons who lack a recent employment history.
- (5) Persons with drug or alcohol abuse history.
- (6) Victims of domestic violence.
- (7) High school dropouts.
- (8) Minority persons ages 18 through 25 without full-time employment experience.
- (9) Displaced homemakers.
- (10) Ex-offenders.
- (11) Homeless persons.

Section 5. Types of programs eligible for funding.

Grants may be awarded to fund the following types of programs:

(1) Work experience projects which meet the specifications of the Federal Job Training Partnership Act (Public Law 97-300, 96 Stat. 1322) and do not exceed three months' duration per participant. Such projects shall include intensive job-readiness and personal counseling services and job-placement services which aim to place participants in unsubsidized full-time jobs by the time the work experience component is completed. Wages at the applicable State or Federal minimum wage shall be subsidized for participants in this component. The grantee may subcontract for some or all of the services required or make use of services already available in the community. Work experience projects may be combined with skill-specific literacy training or adult basic education, general equivalency diploma preparation or English as a second language programs.

(2) Integrated training projects which effectively combine adult basic education, general equivalency diploma preparation or English as a second language; vocational or technical training; and job-readiness services which together prepare participants for identifiable jobs within the community. Job-readiness services must occur concurrently with vocational training or be limited to 30 days. Such projects shall include provision of job-placement services upon completion of training. The grantee may subcontract for the services required or make use of services already available in the community. Projects shall provide needs-based payments or services in lieu of needs-based payments for participants without other sources of

income to enable them to participate. These payments or services shall be sufficient to cover basic personal needs of participants while in training. Needs-based payments are not to exceed the applicable cash assistance grant and shall be limited to six months. Payments shall be disallowed for days of training for which the participant fails to attend.

(3) On-the-job training projects, including support services and job-readiness counseling. If on-the-job training does not result in permanent employment for participants, the grantee shall provide job-placement services which aim to place participants in unsubsidized full-time employment by the time the on-the-job training is completed. Wages are paid to the participant by the employer. The employer may receive a subsidy from the Commonwealth of up to 50% of the wages paid in compensation for the costs associated with training participants for up to six months. The grantee may subcontract for some or all of the services required or make use of services already available in the community.

(4) Supported work projects for up to six months. These projects may be combined with skill-specific literacy training or other basic education programs.

Section 6. Support services.

(a) Types.—Projects shall provide support services, including, but not limited to:

- (1) Day care.
- (2) Transportation.
- (3) Ongoing supportive counseling services.
- (4) Provision of needs-based payments.

(b) Duration.—Support services, except for needs-based payments, may continue to be provided for a period not to exceed six months after entrance into unsubsidized employment. Pursuant to this act, program operators must demonstrate that any support services provided after entrance into unsubsidized employment are essential for the client to remain in employment. Program operators shall demonstrate that local resources are fully utilized prior to providing supportive services under this act.

Section 7. Selection of projects.

The Department of Public Welfare, with the cooperation of the Department of Labor and Industry, shall evaluate the proposals submitted and select grantees for operation of this program using the following criteria:

- (1) Linkage with and participation of the local county board of assistance and coordination with the private industry councils.
- (2) The level of locally available support services.
- (3) That funding will result in the creation of permanent job opportunities for participants.
- (4) That the training will provide substantial likelihood of job placement.

Section 8. Conversion of welfare benefits.

The cash benefits of participants eligible for cash assistance may be converted into wage subsidies for work experience projects, supported work and on-the-job training projects.

Section 9. Program report.

The Department of Public Welfare, with the cooperation of the Department of Labor and Industry, shall submit a report to the General Assembly within six months of the completion of the projects which shall include the following information:

- (1) Number of persons served.
- (2) Number of persons completing training.
- (3) Number of persons obtaining full-time employment.
- (4) Number of persons who have obtained training-related jobs.
- (5) Average cost per participant.

Section 10. Effective date.

This act shall take effect July 1, 1987.

APPROVED—The 13th day of July, A. D. 1987.

ROBERT P. CASEY