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256E.35 Family assets for independence.

Subdivision 1. Establishment. The Minnesota family assets for independence initiative is established to provide incentives for low-income families to accrue assets for education, housing, and economic development purposes.

Subd. 2. Definitions. (a) The definitions in this subdivision apply to this section.

(b) "Family asset account" means a savings account opened by a household participating in the Minnesota family assets for independence initiative.

(c) "Fiduciary organization" means:

(1) a community action agency that has obtained recognition under section 268.53;

(2) a federal community development credit union serving the seven-county metropolitan area; or

(3) a women-oriented economic development agency serving the seven-county metropolitan area.

(d) "Financial institution" means a bank, bank and trust, savings bank, savings association, or credit union, the deposits of which are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or the National Credit Union Administration.

(e) "Permissible use" means:

(1) postsecondary educational expenses at an accredited public postsecondary institution including books, supplies, and equipment required for courses of instruction;

(2) acquisition costs of acquiring, constructing, or reconstructing a residence, including any usual or reasonable settlement, financing, or other closing costs;

(3) business capitalization expenses for expenditures on capital, plant, equipment, working capital, and inventory expenses of a legitimate business pursuant to a business plan approved by the fiduciary organization; and

(4) acquisition costs of a principal residence within the meaning of section 1034 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 which do not exceed 100 percent of the average area purchase price applicable to the residence determined according to section 143(e) (2) and (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(f) "Household" means all individuals who share use of a dwelling unit as primary quarters for living and eating separate from other individuals.

Subd. 3. Grants awarded. The commissioner shall allocate funds to participating fiduciary organizations to provide family asset services. Grant awards must be based on a plan submitted by a statewide organization representing fiduciary organizations. The statewide organization must ensure that any interested unrepresented fiduciary organization have input into the development of the plan. The plan must equitably distribute funds to achieve geographic balance and document the capacity of participating fiduciary organizations to manage the program and to raise the private match.

Subd. 4. Duties. A participating fiduciary organization must:

- (1) provide separate accounts for the immediate deposit of program funds;
- (2) establish a process to select participants and describe any priorities for participation;
- (3) enter into a family asset agreement with the household to establish the terms of participation;
- (4) provide households with economic literacy education;
- (5) provide households with information on early childhood family education;
- (6) provide matching deposits for participating households;
- (7) coordinate with other related public and private programs; and
- (8) establish a process to appeal and mediate disputes.

Subd. 5. Household eligibility; participation. (a) To be eligible for state or TANF matching funds in the family assets for independence initiative, a household must meet the eligibility requirements of the federal Assets for Independence Act, Public Law 105-285, in Title IV, section 408 of that act.

(b) Each participating household must sign a family asset agreement that includes the amount of scheduled deposits into its savings account, the proposed use, and the proposed savings goal. A participating household must agree to complete an economic literacy training program.

Participating households may only deposit money that is derived from household earned income or from state and federal income tax credits.

Subd. 6. Withdrawal; matching; permissible uses. (a) To receive a match, a participating household must transfer funds withdrawn from a family asset account to its matching fund custodial account held by the fiscal agent, according to the family asset agreement. The fiscal agent must determine if the match request is for a permissible use consistent with the household's family asset agreement.

The fiscal agent must ensure the household's custodial account contains the applicable matching funds to match the balance in the household's account, including interest, on at least a quarterly basis and at the time of an approved withdrawal. Matches must be provided as follows:

(1) from state grant and TANF funds a matching contribution of \$1.50 for every \$1 of funds withdrawn from the family asset account equal to the lesser of \$720 per year or a \$3,000 lifetime limit; and

(2) from nonstate funds, a matching contribution of no less than \$1.50 for every \$1 of funds withdrawn from the family asset account equal to the lesser of \$720 per year or a \$3,000 lifetime limit.

(b) Upon receipt of transferred custodial account funds, the fiscal agent must make a direct payment to the vendor of the goods or services for the permissible use.

Subd. 7. Program reporting. The fiscal agent on behalf of each fiduciary organization participating in a family assets for independence initiative must report quarterly to the commissioner of human services and to the commissioner of education identifying the participants with accounts, the number of accounts, the amount of savings and matches for each participant's account, the uses of the account, and the number of businesses, homes, and educational services paid for with money from the account, as well as other information that may be required for the commissioner to administer the program and meet federal TANF reporting requirements.

HIST: 1Sp1998 c 1 art 1 s 6-12; 1999 c 205 art 4 s 8-10; 2000 c 489 art 1 s 23-25,46; 2003 c 130 s 12; 2005 c 98 art 1 s 24

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