



## Diversionsary Work Program (DWP)

### What is DWP?

Almost all new applicants eligible for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) go into the Diversionsary Work Program (DWP) for 4 months before they get regular MFIP.

### What's good about DWP?

- You may get more benefits if you start a job while you are on DWP.
- Your months on DWP don't count on your time limit for MFIP.
- You get a job counselor and Employment Plan (EP) faster than on MFIP.
- You may get day care faster.

### What benefits do I get on DWP?

DWP benefits include:

- vendor payments for housing costs- like rent, mortgage, and utilities
- food benefits – make sure you check the box to apply for SNAP at the same time
- day care assistance
- you might get \$35 for phone services



The amount that is vendor paid is not more than an MFIP cash grant for the same size household, not counting the \$110 MFIP Housing grant. If there is money left after your housing costs and utilities are vendor paid from your DWP grant, each person in the family can get up to \$70 for personal needs.

### How do I start?

Go to your county welfare office and fill out an application or apply online at <https://mnbenefits.mn.gov/>.

The county must give you an intake meeting within 5 working days after it gets your application. If you need childcare, the county has to help you apply for childcare at the intake meeting.

You should be referred for childcare assistance once you get a job counselor. You should get a job counselor within 1 day after the county decides that you can get DWP.

You should meet with your job counselor within 10 working days to make an Employment Plan (EP). **You won't get cash benefits until your Employment Plan is approved.**

It's a good idea to write everything down— keep track of it. Start a DWP/MFIP notebook. Keep all the papers you get.

### **Does everyone have to do DWP?**

Some people don't go into DWP. You go right into MFIP if:

- you are applying for benefits for your children only, not yourself. For example: you get SSI, you are undocumented, or you are a relative other than a parent and you choose to get benefits for the children only.
- you are 18 or 19 years old and want to finish high school or get your GED (in a 2-parent household, you both must qualify)
- you are 17 years old or less and haven't finished high school or gotten your GED (in a 2-parent household, you both must qualify)
- you are a single parent and have a child under 12 months old. You can only use this once in your life.
- you already got DWP in the last 12 months (in a 2-parent household, you both must qualify)
- any parent in the household got MFIP in the past 12 months
- any parent in the household got MFIP for 60 months or more



**You can also skip or switch out of DWP and get MFIP when you show that at least 1 parent in the household:**

- can't work because of an illness or injury that will last more than 30 days, including pregnancy
- is needed at home to care for an ill or injured household member
- has a pending application for SSI or RSDI
- has a learning disability or low IQ and this condition limits the ability to work
- is age 60 or older, or
- has been in the United States less than 12 full months after the month of entry

**Or if any member of the household:**

- is eligible for special medical services, like a PCA or mental health case manager
- is a victim of family violence

### **How many hours do I have to spend working or on job activities?**

- 1 parent households must spend 130 hours a month (30.23 hours a week)  
(if you have a child under 6 you must spend 87 hours a month or 20.23 hours a week)
- 2 parent households must spend at least 55 hours per week total  
(add the 2 people's hours together)

## What is an Employment Plan (EP)?

It is a written plan that states the things you do to:

- get ready for work,
- find a job,
- and keep it.

You have rights about what goes into your EP. Your job counselor should help you apply for childcare assistance and help with transportation, like bus or gas cards.

In a two-parent family, one parent of a child aged 12 months or less may be exempt from having an EP, but only once in a lifetime.

## EP and Education

In a DWP employment plan, no more than half of your required hours can be adult basic education, English as a Second Language (ESL), or GED classes. Higher education counts only if you finish it in 4 months. These rules change once you switch to MFIP.

If you don't do what you agreed to in your EP, you lose your benefits for the rest of the 4-month DWP period.

## How do I switch to MFIP at the end of 4 months?

The county should send you a short form. You must send it in within 30 days of the end of your 4th month of DWP, or you have to start over with a new application.



## Can I skip job activities?

You can get up to 12 months off after the birth of a child. These months can be split between parents and births but can't total more than 12 months in your lifetime.

## Does everyone have to do an EP?

All parents on DWP **MUST** do an EP. **This is called universal participation.** But you may have the right to a modified Employment Plan. A modified EP can have:

- Less work or work search hours
- Special things to do because you or your child are disabled, or a victim of family violence.
- If you qualify for a modified EP, you are switched from DWP to MFIP the next month

## Can I Get a Modified EP?

Only some people can get a modified EP. For example, if you are a victim of family violence you have a right to a modified plan that includes a family violence waiver. You should meet with a family violence advocate and your job counselor to:

- Apply for a waiver, and
- Make an Employment Plan with a safety plan.

If you are disabled or live with someone with a disability who you need to take care of, you can get a modified Employment Plan. You can also get help from your workers to “accommodate” the disability. This means they help you make a modified Employment Plan and help you to get the services you need to be able to follow the plan.

## When your EP is done:

- You should get vendored benefits in 2 working days.
- You also get food stamps and childcare.

## You have the right to change your EP as your life changes.

Call your Job Counselor about:

- personal and family things that make it hard for you to get and keep a job
- trouble speaking or understanding English
- family violence issues
- involvement in social service programs
- involvement in the legal system

If your worker won't change your Employment Plan, you can appeal.



### Remember:

If you start a job during the 4-month DWP, you still get the same vendor payments.

The money you earn from a job any time during those 4 months doesn't lower your grant.

## What if I don't follow my EP?

If you have a good reason for not following your Employment Plan, tell your job counselor right away. If you don't follow your EP, and don't talk to your worker about problems and changes, you will be disqualified. **This means you WON'T GET cash benefits for the rest of the 4 months.** You can make changes to your EP or show your worker you have “good cause” and avoid disqualification.

“Good cause” can be:

- Lack of childcare or transportation
- No jobs available
- Illness
- Family violence
- An emergency

If your worker doesn't agree, appeal.

## What if I get turned down or disqualified?

You can appeal a decision by the county or your job counselor if you don't agree with it.

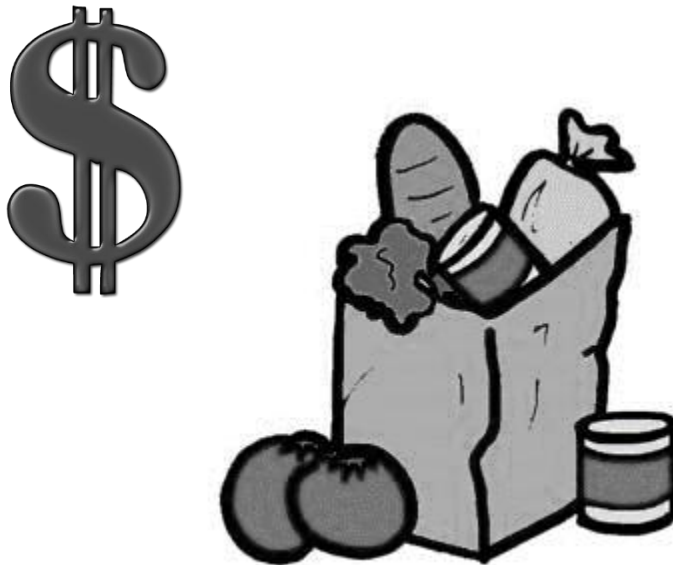
For more information on how to appeal, see our fact sheet, [Benefits Appeals to DHS](#).

## What happens when the 4 months are up?

When the 4-month DWP is done, you can ask to get regular MFIP benefits. It doesn't matter if you have a job or not.

On regular MFIP you can get:

- The money sent right to you as a cash grant
- \$110 as a housing grant – except for some families in subsidized housing
- Food support (the amount may be different from what you get in DWP)
- Childcare



**Fact Sheets are legal information NOT legal advice. See a lawyer for advice.**

*Don't use this fact sheet if it is more than 1 year old. Ask us for updates, a fact sheet list, or alternate formats.*

© 2025 Minnesota Legal Services Coalition. This document may be reproduced and used for non-commercial personal and educational purposes only. All other rights reserved. This notice must remain on all copies. Reproduction, distribution, and use for commercial purposes are strictly prohibited.