

256J.26 PERSONS INELIGIBLE; VENDOR PAYMENTS.

Subdivision 1. **Person convicted of drug offenses.** (a) An individual who has been convicted of a felony level drug offense committed during the previous ten years from the date of application or recertification is subject to the following:

(1) Benefits for the entire assistance unit must be paid in vendor form for shelter and utilities during any time the applicant is part of the assistance unit.

(2) The convicted applicant or participant shall be subject to random drug testing as a condition of continued eligibility and following any positive test for an illegal controlled substance is subject to the following sanctions:

(i) for failing a drug test the first time, the residual amount of the participant's grant after making vendor payments for shelter and utility costs, if any, must be reduced by an amount equal to 30 percent of the MFIP standard of need for an assistance unit of the same size. When a sanction under this subdivision is in effect, the job counselor must attempt to meet with the person face-to-face. During the face-to-face meeting, the job counselor must explain the consequences of a subsequent drug test failure and inform the participant of the right to appeal the sanction under section 256J.40. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, the county agency must send the participant a notice of adverse action as provided in section 256J.31, subdivisions 4 and 5, and must include the information required in the face-to-face meeting; or

(ii) for failing a drug test two times, the participant is permanently disqualified from receiving MFIP assistance, both the cash and food portions. The assistance unit's MFIP grant must be reduced by the amount which would have otherwise been made available to the disqualified participant. Disqualification under this item does not make a participant ineligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Before a disqualification under this provision is imposed, the job counselor must attempt to meet with the participant face-to-face. During the face-to-face meeting, the job counselor must identify other resources that may be available to the participant to meet the needs of the family and inform the participant of the right to appeal the disqualification under section 256J.40. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, the county agency must send the participant a notice of adverse action as provided in section 256J.31, subdivisions 4 and 5, and must include the information required in the face-to-face meeting.

(3) A participant who fails a drug test the first time and is under a sanction due to other MFIP program requirements is considered to have more than one occurrence of noncompliance and is subject to the applicable level of sanction as specified under section 256J.46, subdivision 1, paragraph (d).

(b) Applicants requesting only SNAP benefits or participants receiving only SNAP benefits, who have been convicted of a drug offense that occurred after July 1, 1997, may, if otherwise eligible, receive SNAP benefits if the convicted applicant or participant is subject to random drug testing as a condition of continued eligibility. Following a positive test for an illegal controlled substance, the applicant is subject to the following sanctions:

(1) for failing a drug test the first time, SNAP benefits shall be reduced by an amount equal to 30 percent of the applicable SNAP benefit allotment. When a sanction under this clause is in effect, a job counselor must attempt to meet with the person face-to-face. During the face-to-face meeting, a job counselor must explain the consequences of a subsequent drug test failure and inform the participant of the right to appeal the sanction under section 256J.40. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, a county agency must send the participant a notice of adverse action as provided in section 256J.31, subdivisions 4 and 5, and must include the information required in the face-to-face meeting; and

(2) for failing a drug test two times, the participant is permanently disqualified from receiving SNAP benefits. Before a disqualification under this provision is imposed, a job counselor must attempt to meet with the participant face-to-face. During the face-to-face meeting, the job counselor must identify other resources that may be available to the participant to meet the needs of the family and inform the participant of the right to appeal the disqualification under section 256J.40. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, a county agency must send the participant a notice of adverse action as provided in section 256J.31, subdivisions 4 and 5, and must include the information required in the face-to-face meeting.

(c) For the purposes of this subdivision, "drug offense" means an offense that occurred during the previous ten years from the date of application or recertification of sections 152.021 to 152.025, 152.0261, 152.0262, 152.096, or 152.137. Drug offense also means a conviction in another jurisdiction of the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance, or conspiracy to commit any of these offenses, if the offense occurred during the previous ten years from the date of application or recertification and the conviction is a felony offense in that jurisdiction, or in the case of New Jersey, a high misdemeanor.

Subd. 2. Parole violators. An individual violating a condition of probation or parole or supervised release imposed under federal law or the law of any state is disqualified from receiving MFIP.

Subd. 3. Fleeing felons. An individual who is fleeing to avoid prosecution, or custody, or confinement after conviction for a crime that is a felony under the laws of the jurisdiction from which the individual flees, or in the case of New Jersey, is a high misdemeanor, is disqualified from receiving MFIP.

Subd. 4. Disqualification for fraudulently misrepresenting residency. An individual who is convicted in federal or state court of having made a fraudulent statement or representation with respect to the place of residence of the individual in order to receive assistance simultaneously from two or more states is disqualified from receiving MFIP for ten years beginning on the date of the conviction.

Subd. 5. Vendor payment; uninhabitable units. Upon discovery by the county that a unit has been deemed uninhabitable under section 504B.131, the county shall immediately notify the landlord to return the vendor-paid rent under this section for the month in which the discovery occurred. The county shall cease future rent payments for the uninhabitable housing units until the landlord demonstrates the premises are fit for the intended use. A landlord who is required to return vendor-paid rent or is prohibited from receiving future rent under this subdivision may not take an eviction action against anyone in the assistance unit.

History: 1997 c 85 art 1 s 16; 1997 c 203 art 12 s 10; 1997 c 245 art 4 s 1; 1998 c 407 art 6 s 52-55; 1999 c 159 s 82-85; 1999 c 245 art 6 s 29; 1Sp2001 c 9 art 10 s 17; 2002 c 379 art 1 s 113; 1Sp2003 c 14 art 1 s 106; 2005 c 136 art 7 s 21; 2012 c 247 art 3 s 16,17; 1Sp2019 c 9 art 1 s 42