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HEADLINE: Welfare recipients may have to work

BYLINE: Dennis O'Brien, Sun Staff Writer

BODY:

Under a pilot welfare reform proposal by Gov. Parris N. Glendening, some welfare parents in Baltimore and Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties would have to work to keep receiving payments from the state.

The program would require parents with school-age children in those jurisdictions to find a job, perform community service or enroll in a job-training program within three months of going on the welfare rolls.

Mr. Glendening offered the proposals over the weekend in the form of amendments to a welfare reform bill in the House of Delegates. A House Appropriations subcommittee adopted the amendments Saturday and plans to present them to the full committee early this week, legislative sources said.

Governor Glendening is expected to discuss these measures and other details of his welfare reform proposal this morning at a news conference in the State House.

The plan also calls for some parents in the three jurisdictions to receive help finding a job and getting to work, as well as counseling in areas such as child care and family planning, say state legislators who discussed reforms this weekend.

The proposal and related bills in the General Assembly are designed to encourage and help welfare recipients to find jobs and become self-sufficient, administration and legislative officials say. Administration officials met with a Senate panel Friday and a House subcommittee Saturday to discuss the bills.

"It's a very positive approach to making welfare a temporary situation, instead of the permanent fixture in people's lives that it's become," said Sen. Jean W. Roesser, a Montgomery County Republican who is on the Senate's welfare reform work group.

Under the proposals being discussed by the governor's staff -- and under legislation introduced in the House and Senate -- teen-age parents who receive welfare would have to live with their parents, unless there is evidence of domestic violence or abuse, legislators said.

The governor also has proposed studying the feasibility of providing money to establish supervised group homes for minor parents on welfare.

Participants in the pilot program would continue to receive Medicaid and child care assistance for up to two years, legislators said. Family planning counseling would not be required in homes where there are religious objections, said Del. Samuel I. "Sandy" Rosenberg, a Baltimore Democrat who chaired the House subcommittee.

The reforms could eliminate rules that disqualify families from receiving welfare if someone in the home works more than 100 hours per month. Critics have charged that the requirement breaks up families by encouraging fathers who have jobs to leave home.

Sen. Martin G. Madden, a Howard County Republican who chaired the Senate group, said proposed House and Senate measures would achieve many of the governor's goals.

But Ms. Roesser said she remains concerned that participants in the pilot program find appropriate jobs and that their children receive adequate day care.

Under one proposal by the governor, two administrators, six mid-level supervisors and 29 case workers would be hired by the Department of Human Services to administer the pilot program, she said.

The governor is still likely to face a battle over whether to limit benefits for welfare families that continue to have children. The absence of a family cap was part of the reason then-Gov. William Donald Schaefer vetoed the General Assembly's 1994 welfare reform package.

Mr. Rosenberg said his subcommittee is considering a family cap that would deny additional welfare benefits to recipients who have more children, but would allow the recipients' newborn children to receive Medicaid and food stamps.

"Glendening does not want a family cap, but the feeling is that he probably wouldn't veto a bill with a family cap in it," Mr. Rosenberg said.

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