



## Council for Lifelong Learning Learnfare Program

## Fact Sheet

September 2001

1. What is the Learnfare Program?	The Learnfare Program (Learnfare) was established in 1993 as part of the Welfare Reform Act and requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to reduce the temporary cash assistance (TCA) for recipients who fail to comply with the program's requirements.
2. What are the program's two requirements?	The program requires (1) that each recipient with a school aged child attend a conference with a school official once each semester and (2) that a recipient's school aged child, or a teenage recipient, remain in school and not become a "habitual truant" or dropout.
3. What is the sanction for noncompliance with these two requirements?	Learnfare requires a reduction in the temporary cash assistance if a recipient fails to comply. The reduced portion is that amount allotted to the truant or dropout child, or the amount allotted to the parent or guardian if he or she is not participating in the required conferences.
4. When is the temporary cash assistance reinstated?	(1) For a student who has been identified as a habitual truant, the temporary cash assistance must be reinstated after a subsequent grading period in which the child's attendance has substantially improved. (2) For a student who has been identified as a dropout, the temporary cash assistance must be reinstated after the student enrolls in a public school, receives a high school diploma or its equivalency, enrolls in preparation for the General Educational Development Tests, or enrolls in other educational activities approved by the district school board. (3) For a parent or guardian who has failed to attend a conference, the temporary cash assistance is reinstated after the participant attends the conference with the appropriate school official and that conference is documented by the school and reported to DCF.
5. What is a habitual truant?	A habitual truant is defined by statute as a student who has accumulated 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days.
6. What if a parent disagrees with the sanction?	Learnfare provides that the parent or teenage participant can file an appeal within 10 days of being notified of the sanction, and no sanction will be imposed until that appeal is resolved.
7. With whom can the parent have the required conference?	Since the purpose of the conference is to discuss the child's academic and attendance progress, it should be someone who has that information, such as a teacher, guidance counselor, or principal. DOE rules require each school board to adopt a policy, which addresses the criteria for determining who is an

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	"appropriate school official."
8. What is considered a school conference?	The conference can be either face-to-face or a telephonic conversation.
9. How are the conferences set up and verified?	The TCA recipient is responsible for setting up the conference. After the conference, the recipient is responsible for filling out the School Conference Verification Form provided by DCF and returning it to the public assistance specialist.
10. Who needs to participate in these conferences?	Because the purpose of the conference is to enhance parental involvement, every temporary cash assistance recipient with a school aged child, not just those whose child has been identified as a habitual truant or dropout, must participate in the conferences.
11. How does the school know that it has Learnfare participants?	In 2001, the Legislature required DCF to develop an electronic data transfer system to streamline the flow of information between the school and the DCF. In order to ensure accountability and assess the effectiveness of the Learnfare program, the electronic data transfer system must include at least the following information: the number of students and families reported by school districts as out of compliance, the number of students and families sanctioned as a result, and the number of students and families reinstated after becoming compliant. The information compiled must be submitted in the form of an annual report to the presiding officers of the Legislature by March 1 of each year.
12. What are the applicable statutes?	Section 414.1251, F.S. -- Learnfare Program. Section 228.041(28), F.S. -- Definition of habitual truant. Section 228.041(29), F.S. -- Definition of dropout.
13. Where can I get additional information?	<p>Florida Department of Education Office of Intervention and Prevention Services (850) 488-6726 <a href="http://www.firn.edu/doe/">www.firn.edu/doe/</a></p> <p>Florida Department of Children &amp; Families Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency (850) 488-3271 <a href="http://www.state.fl.us/cf_web/services.html">www.state.fl.us/cf_web/services.html</a></p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on Education Innovation (850) 488-7451</p>