



Minnesota Family Investment Program

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Fast facts

- ▲ In 2008, almost 16,000 households in Hennepin received Minnesota Family Investment Program benefits.
- ▲ To be eligible for MFIP, a family's income must be below the federal poverty guideline (FPG). In 2008, for a family of two (a parent and child) the FPG was \$14,004; for a family of three (parent and two children), the FPG is \$17,604.
- ▲ Also, a family's asset level must be below \$2,000 and the family car cannot be valued at more than \$15,000.
- ▲ The monthly average MFIP support to a family of three with no income is \$1,005: \$532 in cash assistance and \$473 in food assistance. Hennepin issued more than \$79 million in MFIP grants in 2008 using both federal and state dollars.

What is the Minnesota Family Investment Program?

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) issues cash and food benefits to needy families who have children under the age of 18. The program has a 60-month – or five year – lifetime limit.

MFIP helps families work their way out of poverty by providing work incentives and supports, such as job training. If a family fails to comply with the work requirement, the family loses 10 percent of benefits the first month and 30 percent of benefits each following month.

How many are helped and at what cost?

In 2008, nearly 16,000 households in Hennepin received MFIP -- or less than 2 percent of its population. On average, 9,900 families receive MFIP monthly. Hennepin receives about 800 new applications for the program each month. About 41 percent of these applications are from families who have never used MFIP.

How does MFIP work?

- Families that are new to MFIP must first participate in a four-month Diversionary Work Program (DWP) before becoming eligible for MFIP. DWP is designed to provide intensive employment services to promote work and deter families from needing MFIP.
- Hennepin has a "work pays" policy that rewards work. The first 39 percent of a family's earned income does not count when determining benefits.
- Child care assistance is provided the first year the MFIP family is working and remains available on a sliding-fee scale as the family becomes more self-sufficient.
- Once a working family reaches income of 115 percent of the FPG – about \$19,500 for a family of three – the family leaves MFIP.
- Some families are able to continue receiving benefits even after reaching the 60-month limit by receiving an extension (see below). Families reaching the limit lose cash assistance, but they may still be eligible for Food Support, Medical Assistance, housing assistance, child care assistance if working, job services if they want to work, and other public and community supports.

What is the extension policy?

Families may have the 60-month timeline extended if they fall into one of the following categories:

- Ill or incapacitated, includes cases where an adult or a child is ill, incapacitated or receiving waived services.
- Hard-to-employ, includes cases where the adult meets a specific category, including mentally ill, mentally handicapped, learning disabled, low IQ or unemployable.
- Working 30 or more hours a week and earning less than 115 percent of the FPG.
- Domestic violence.
- Families with two adults when one has reached the time limit.