

Changes to SNAP for “Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs”

Starting January 1, 2016 certain recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as food stamps, Oregon Trail or EBT) will be required to work at least 30 hours a week or perform volunteer and work search activities for an average of 20 hours a week. If they do not meet these work or volunteer/work search requirements they will be eligible for SNAP benefits for only three months in a 36-month period.

The change applies only to “able-bodied” Multnomah and Washington county SNAP recipients between the ages of 18 and 50, who do not have dependents (as defined below). The SNAP time limits will go back into effect for these two counties because of the loss of a federal program waiver related to high unemployment. The average unemployment rate in Multnomah and Washington Counties, measured individually over a two year period, no longer exceeds the national average. The remainder of Oregon’s counties can continue to operate under the waiver for the time being.

Who is an “Able-Bodied Adult without Dependents or ABAWD”?

A person is considered an “Able-Bodied Adult without Dependents or ABAWD” if:

- they are over 18 and not yet 50 years old; and
- they are not disabled;
- they are not pregnant; or
- they do not live in a household with a minor child for whom they receive SNAP benefits.

Approximately 25,000 people in the Multnomah County have been identified as meeting the ABAWD definition related to their SNAP benefits and have received notices (see attached) of the work or volunteer and work search requirements, the time limit and possible exemptions to those requirements from the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS).

Of those affected SNAP users:

- Approximately 1,200 are receiving services through ADVSD and can likely be exempted from the three-month time limits;
- Many will be able to claim a time limit exemption due a housing status or health related treatment, such as being homeless or in an alcohol or drug treatment program;
- Those who are not eligible for an exemption from the three-month time limits must meet the work or volunteer and work search requirements.

To Receive an Exemption Constituents Must Call DHS: If your constituents have any questions about the notices from DHS or believe they meet one of the circumstances for exemption (listed on page two), they must call their SNAP caseworker or one of the Multnomah County DHS processing centers at 971-673-2422 or 971-673-2333.

How to Assist Constituents Impacted by the changes for ABWADs Receiving SNAP

If a SNAP recipient has received either of the attached notices from DHS and they are not working 30 hours or more (including self employment and “in-kind” work), they must participate in work activities for 20 hours a week, as described in the DHS letter, unless they receive an exemption. Certain SNAP recipients can receive an exemption from the three-month time limit and work/work search requirements if they meet one of the exemption criteria described below.

To Receive an Exemption Constituents Must Call DHS: If your constituents have any questions about the notices from DHS or believe they meet one of the circumstances for exemption listed below, they must call their SNAP caseworker or one of the Multnomah County DHS processing centers at 971-673-2422 or 971-673-2333.

People may be exempted from the time limit if they are:

- working 30 hours or more per week, including self-employment or in-kind work;
- receiving a disability-based benefit (SSI/SSDI, VA pension, Worker Compensation)
- participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program including AA or NA or a mental health treatment program;
- pregnant (at any stage of pregnancy);
- determined to be “unfit” for employment for either physical or mental health reasons (This exemption may require written or verbal verification that they are “unfit to work,” which can be provided by a health care provider including: psychologists, nurses, nurse practitioners or a social worker);
- homeless or living on the streets (definition forthcoming);
- receiving or have applied for Unemployment Insurance (UI);
- a student enrolled at least half time in a high school or college (special rules may apply);
- living in a household with a child under 18 (Need not be their child, but must receive SNAP benefits together with the child; or
- providing care for a disabled person or an elder with whom they live.

If a constituent has been denied an exemption from the three-month time limit they may appeal DHS’s decision. Refer them to the Public Benefits Hotline for assistance with SNAP case benefits appeals: 1-800-520-5292 or www.oregonlawhelp.org.

211info Can Help

You can refer your constituents to 211info for more detailed information on this change and/or for assistance contacting DHS if they are not getting a response from the processing center, their caseworker or if their benefits have been interrupted.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact Robyn Johnson, Food Policy Coordinator, 503-988-0417 (ext. 8-0417).