

Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents: What you need to know

What is an ABAWD?

An ABAWD is a person age 18-49 years old who is able to work and does not have children under 18 years-old living in the SNAP household. People in this group will now need to meet a work requirement in order to receive more than three months of SNAP benefits in a three year period.

What is the ABAWD work requirement?

The ABAWD work requirement is working or participating in a work program an average of 20 hours a week. The work requirement can also be met by doing community service every week. The amount of time required in community service will depend on the amount of SNAP benefits you receive.

I don't think I can work. Can I be exempt from the work requirement?

It's possible. You may need to verify a physical or mental disability by having a doctor or other medical personnel complete a form. If you are pregnant, you may need to verify the pregnancy.

When does all this begin?

Beginning March 1, 2016, if you are not meeting the required 20 hours of work or participation a week or are not exempt or living in an area where ABAWD requirements are waived, your SNAP benefits will end on May 31, 2016.

Will the SNAP benefits just end, or will I have a renewal?

In your second month of benefits you will receive a renewal packet for a renewal in the third month. This will remind you that, in order for benefits to continue, you must show that you are meeting the work requirement or are exempt. You can discuss this with your caseworker at the scheduled renewal.

When does the three-year period end?

The three-year period is fixed, meaning that whether a waiver is employed or not, the period remains the same. In this instance, this three-year period actually began January 1, 2015, and will end December 31, 2017, which means there will only be one year and ten months left of this period once the requirement is reinstated.

Why is this starting now? I've been on SNAP benefits for a couple years and haven't had to do this.

There has always been a requirement to work, but many states including Pennsylvania were granted waivers, or exclusions from the work requirement, due to the recession. Now that the economy has improved, the requirement is being reinstated to encourage people to return to work and gain self-sufficiency.

Does this apply to everyone?

The ABAWD work requirement and time limit will not apply to people who are *exempt* or live in an area where requirements are *waived* because of high unemployment rates or other economic factors.

What are ABAWD exemptions?

You may be exempt from ABAWD requirements if you meet one of the reasons below. In some instances, you may be required to provide proof that you meet an exemption.

- Under 18 or 50 years of age or older, or
- Receiving SNAP benefits in a household with a child under age 18, or
- Receiving TANF cash assistance, or
- Working an average of 20 hours weekly, or
- Disabled, or
- Pregnant, or
- Homeless, or
- Needed in the home to care for a household member with a disability, or
- Receiving Unemployment Compensation or have recently applied, or
- Expected to return to work within 60 days, or
- Enrolled in school or training at least half-time, or
- A migrant or seasonal farmworker returning to work within 30 days, or
- A full-time VISTA Volunteer, or
- A victim of domestic violence, or
- Receiving Drug and Alcohol treatment, or
- Unable to work for reasons outside your control

What areas are waived from ABAWD requirements?

The ABAWD work requirement and time limit is waived in 24 counties and 12 cities in Pennsylvania. If you live in an area listed below, the ABAWD work requirement and time limit will not apply.

Counties: Bedford, Cambria, Cameron, Carbon, Clearfield, Clinton, Delaware, Fayette, Forest, Fulton, Huntingdon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Mifflin, Monroe, Northumberland, Philadelphia, Pike, Potter, Schuylkill, Somerset, Sullivan, Tioga, Wyoming

Cities: Allentown City (Lehigh), Berwick Borough (Columbia), Bethlehem City (Northampton), Easton City (Northampton), Harrisburg City (Dauphin), Lancaster City (Lancaster), Lebanon City (Lebanon), McKeesport City (Allegheny), New Castle City (Lawrence), Reading City (Berks), Williamsport City (Lycoming), York City (York)

I live in Philadelphia and thought this doesn't apply to me?

You are correct. People who live in Philadelphia or the other areas listed above will continue to be waived, or excused from the work participation requirement.

If I move from a waived area to a non-waived area, can I still get SNAP benefits?

Yes, but they will be time-limited if you are not exempt or do not meet the participation requirement.

If I move from a non-waived area to a waived area can I still receive SNAP benefits?

As long as you can prove that you are a resident of a waived area, you can continue to receive SNAP benefits without an exemption or meeting the participation requirement. You would need to provide verification of your address. Acceptable forms of verification are (but not limited to): rent or mortgage statement showing address, utility bill showing address, personal identification showing address, or any other document showing name and address.

I receive SSI benefits; do I still have to participate, or verify my disability?

No, you would be exempt, but if you have interest in obtaining employment, you can volunteer to participate.

I'm going to an outpatient drug and alcohol facility; would I be considered exempt?

You could be exempt if a medical professional determines that you are not able to work. If you believe you cannot work or participate, talk with your health care provider.

I take care of my grandmother, who is ill, so I can't work outside the home. What can I do?

Talk to your caseworker about how you can document that you are needed in the home to care for your grandmother.

What if I receive my three months of SNAP benefits but during that time I was disabled, so I really should have been exempt?

If your office had proof that you were disabled and didn't give you an exemption, those three months should not have counted against your time limit. Talk with your caseworker to see if you're eligible now.

I have a medical condition that requires me sometimes to miss work for a week at a time. Will I lose my SNAP benefits because of this?

Talk to your caseworker about requesting good cause. You may be given good cause, or an excuse, if the reason for not meeting your hours is beyond your control.

I would work but I can't seem to find a job. Is there any help available?

Yes! Talk with your caseworker about getting a referral to an approved program that can help you find a job.

What kind of programs can I participate in?

Participating in an approved program for 20 hours or more per week will meet the work requirement so you can receive more than three months of SNAP benefits. There are different options, such as job skills programs, community service or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, Adult Basic Education Literacy classes, GED classes, college classes, work experience, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program. Talk to your caseworker about programs available in your area.

What is community service?

Community service is helping or working for the benefit of the public. By performing community service you will both meet your participation requirement and improve your community. The amount of time required in community service will be equal to your monthly SNAP benefit amount divided by minimum wage- which generally is lower than 20 hours a week. Examples of community service include: cleaning up a city park, helping prepare meals for the elderly, or volunteering at a local school, but the opportunities will vary in each county. Talk to your caseworker about community service opportunities in your area.

The community service agency I want to work with requires child abuse history and criminal history clearances, and I can't afford the fees. What help is available?

On July 25, 2015, Governor Wolf waived the fees for clearances for volunteers and reduced the cost of each clearance for employment purposes from \$10 to \$8. If you have questions regarding the clearance process, please visit www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov. If you are not eligible to have the fee waived, talk to your caseworker about your eligibility for a Special Allowance to pay the fee.

Can I do the job search from home on my computer?

We must be able to track the hours you spend in an activity, and it would not be possible to do so if you are participating from home. Federal regulations require that all ABAWDs participate in an approved activity, or work, 20 hours or more per week, and these hours must be verified through pay stubs or activity logs signed by an activity's designated representative.

I don't think I would like any kind of job program. What if I start it and want to drop out?

It is your responsibility to meet the required hours each week and follow the rules of the program unless you have good cause (such as a verified illness) that would keep you from attending. If you stop participating, the time limit will apply.

I'm going to beauty school part-time. Will that count?

Talk to your caseworker about your program and whether your hours meet the requirement.

I'm a full time college student; does that meet the participation requirement?

ABAWDs attending college full-time typically do not qualify for SNAP; only ABAWDs attending college less than half-time (as defined by the school) would be eligible for SNAP benefits. Talk to your caseworker for more information.

I work but it's only 10 hours a week. What are my options?

Talk to your caseworker; you may be referred to a job search or other program to help you meet the 20 hour per week requirement and increase your employment. If circumstances outside of your control limit your work hours, talk to your caseworker about good cause.

I babysit my sister's kids 35 hours a week, for which she pays me \$100. I'm meeting the requirement, right?

Yes; you will be required to provide documentation of the arrangement. Talk to your caseworker about what may be needed.

I'm self-employed, and my work is seasonal. If I have a couple good months I'll be over the income limit, but then if I have no work, I won't be able to get SNAP benefits?

Your caseworker will look at the sum of your yearly hours worked and average it monthly, which will increase the likelihood that you will be eligible year-round. If your annual hours worked is averaged at less than 80 hours per month, you will need to participate in an approved program to meet the requirement.

I work, but some weeks its 15 hours and other weeks it's 30 hours.

As long as you work an average of 80 hours or more per month, you will be considered to be meeting the requirement.

I was laid off my job and now receive unemployment compensation. Do I have to participate?

No, you would be considered exempt, but you can volunteer to participate in a program or look for work on your own.

I work for a temp agency; sometimes I have an assignment of 40 hours a week for six weeks, then no work for six weeks. If I've used up my three months, does that mean I can't ever get SNAP benefits again when I'm not working?

You can receive SNAP again at any time if you start meeting the work requirement, become exempt, or move to a waived area. If you start then stop meeting the work requirement – but worked a minimum of 80 hours within 30 days or less, and can verify it – you may be eligible for a one-time three-month receipt of SNAP benefits.

When will I be able to requalify for SNAP benefits?

If you have already used your initial three months of SNAP benefits, you can:

- as in the example above, work a minimum of 80 hours in a 30 day period (since your last issuance) to become eligible for another one-time only three months of SNAP;
- be working at the time of application at least 20 hours per week;
- be referred to an approved program,
- move to a waived area

- meet criteria for an exemption.

Otherwise, the next three year period begins January 1, 2018; at that time you will become eligible once again to receive the initial three months of SNAP benefits.

I am homeless and don't see how I can participate. What happens in my case?

You would be exempt from participation, but you would need to talk to your caseworker about a plan to regain permanent housing. Homelessness is considered a short-term condition in need of a quick resolution.

I just moved in with my cousin and her child. They have their own SNAP case, and I have my own. Can I continue to receive SNAP benefits beyond the three months since I now live in a household with a child?

Not in this case, because the child is not included in your SNAP household. If you all purchased your food together as one SNAP household (closing one case and combining all members on the other case), your eligibility would continue.

Concerning the above question: If I get added to my cousin's case so I can continue to receive SNAP benefits, can I have my own case back if I get employment of 20 hours or more per week?

No. There would need to be a substantial change in circumstances (such as serious illness requiring a drastic change in diet) in order to show that you no longer purchase and prepare meals together as one unit.

What if I receive Expedited SNAP benefits? Do they count toward the three months?

Expedited SNAP benefits are not included in the three-month count.

I live in Maryland in the summer months and will receive SNAP benefits there. If I use up three months there and move back to Pennsylvania in September, can I get another three months?

Your caseworker will contact your worker in the other state to verify months used and whether the area was waived or not, and can explain your options for continued eligibility.

If I have more questions, who should I call?

You can call your caseworker, or the Customer Service Center: in Philadelphia, 1-215-560-7226; Statewide, 1-877-395-8930.