

ABAWD FAQs from DHS website for public use:

### **What is SNAP?**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the new name for the Food Stamp program. These benefits are used to buy food and help eligible low-income households in Pennsylvania obtain more nutritious diets by increasing their food purchasing power at grocery stores and supermarkets.

### **Who is an ABAWD?**

ABAWD stands for “Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents.” ABAWDs are benefit recipients, ages 18 through 49 with no dependents, who must work or participate in a work program to maintain eligibility for SNAP.

### **What is an ABAWD time limit?**

Since 1996, part of the law that governs SNAP has placed a limit on the amount of time an ABAWD can receive SNAP. ABAWDs can only get SNAP for three months in three years if they do not meet certain special work requirements.

To be eligible beyond the time limit, an ABAWD must work at least 80 hours per month, participate in qualifying education and training activities at least 80 hours per month, or participate in an approved program for 20 hours or more per week. There are different options to help meet the work requirement 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). Another way one to fulfill the ABAWD work requirement is through a SNAP Employment and Training Program.

The time limit does not apply to people who are unable to work due to physical or mental health reasons, pregnant, care for a child or incapacitated family member, or are exempt from the general work requirements.

Under the law, states can request to temporarily waive the ABAWD time limit when unemployment is high or when there are not enough jobs available. Due to the economic downturn, Pennsylvania qualified for and chose to waive time limits across the commonwealth. Even when ABAWD time limits are waived, general work requirements still apply.

### **What is happening with the ABAWD time limit?**

Starting on January 1, 2018, some parts of Pennsylvania will have waivers in place ([see waived areas here](#)). But, as the economy continues to improve, many places no longer qualify for time limit waivers, unless they have high unemployment or not enough jobs available. **Waived areas are reviewed and updated annually.**

Many ABAWDs participating in SNAP could soon lose their benefits unless they take steps to meet the special ABAWD work requirements.

### **When does the fixed three-year period begin?**

The current three-year period **begins** Jan. 1, 2018 and ends Dec. 31, 2020.

### **What happens if I don't meet the work requirements?**

ABAWDs that do not comply with the SNAP work requirements will only be able to receive three months of SNAP benefits during a fixed, three-year period.

### **To whom does the work requirement not apply?**

The work requirement does not apply to an individual who is:

- Under age 18 or age 50 or older
- Physically or mentally unable to work
- Receiving federal or state disability benefits
- Pregnant
- Residing in a SNAP household with a child under age 18
- Exempt under federal or state employment and training regulations
- Living in an area where the U.S. Department of Agriculture has waived application of the work requirements ([see waived areas here](#))

### **Regaining SNAP Benefits**

Ongoing SNAP benefits may be regained indefinitely if:

- The individual meets and maintains the work requirement
- The individual's circumstances have changed and he/she meets an exemption from the ABAWD work requirements

### **Who should I contact about these changes?**

[Your local county assistance office.](#)

### **What areas are exempt from the work requirements?**

The following areas do not need to meet ABAWD work requirements in order to continue receiving SNAP benefits. These areas are exempt because their unemployment rate is at least 20 percent above the national average.

Counties:

- **Adams**
- Armstrong
- Beaver
- Bedford
- **Blair**
- **Bradford**
- **Bucks**
- **Butler**
- Cambria
- Cameron
- Carbon
- Clarion

- Clearfield
- Clinton
- Columbia
- Crawford
- Dauphin
- Delaware
- Elk
- Erie
- Fayette
- Forest
- Franklin
- Fulton
- Greene
- Huntingdon
- Indiana
- Jefferson
- Juniata
- Lackawanna
- Lawrence
- Lebanon
- Lehigh
- Luzerne
- Lycoming
- McKean
- Mercer
- Mifflin
- Monroe
- Montour
- Northampton
- Northumberland
- Perry
- Philadelphia
- Pike
- Potter
- Schuylkill
- Snyder
- Somerset
- Sullivan
- Susquehanna
- Tioga
- Union
- Venango
- Washington
- Warren

- Wayne
- Westmoreland
- Wyoming

Cities:

- ~~Allentown City, Lehigh County~~
- ~~Bethlehem City, Northampton County~~
- ~~Easton City, Northampton County~~
- ~~Harrisburg City, Dauphin County~~
- Lancaster City, Lancaster County
- ~~Lebanon City, Lebanon County~~
- McKeesport City, Allegheny County
- Muhlenberg Twp., Berks County
- Penn Hills Twp., Allegheny County
- Pottstown Boro, Montgomery County
- Reading City, Berks County
- Springettsbury Twp., York County
- West Mifflin Boro, Allegheny County
- York City, York County
- York Twp., York County