

Time limits in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) *Requirements for Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)*

Frequently Asked Questions

Time limits are put in place for some people in the SNAP food assistance program who do not meet special requirements. The time limit is for people who qualify as “Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents,” also known as “ABAWDs.”

Q1: Who is considered an ABAWD and subject to the time limit?

The time limit is for people that get food assistance through SNAP who:

- Are able to work;
- Are between the ages of 18 and 49;
- Do not have a child under the age of 18 living with them; and,
- Live in Multnomah or Washington Counties.

Q2: What are the special requirements?

People who are ABAWDs must do certain work-related activities to stay eligible for SNAP. You must be working or doing approved work activities for 20 hours a week or an average of 80 hours a month. Activities can include: Work for pay; work in exchange for goods or services; and, unpaid volunteer work.

Q3: What are the exemptions to the requirements?

If you qualify for one of the exemptions below, you do not have to do the work activities to keep getting food assistance. You will need to tell your DHS worker if you think you are exempt. The DHS worker must approve your exemption and may ask for proof to do so.

Exemptions:

- Your physical or mental health makes you unable to work.
- You are homeless and have been one of the following:
 - Homeless for more than six months;
 - Homeless more than once in the last year; or,
 - Unable to meet the basic necessities of everyday life.
- You are pregnant.
- You are working 30 hours a week or earning at least \$935.25 a month.
- You are self-employed and earning at least \$935.25 a month, if you have no costs for the business. If you have costs, you need to earn at least \$1870.50 a month.
- You are getting unemployment.
- You are participating in an alcohol or drug treatment program. This includes Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous programs.
- You are in school at least half-time.
- You are taking care of a disabled person who lives with you.

Q4: Are there any other reasons I may not have to do work-related activities?

The federal law is firm that the requirement is for 20 hours of work activities a week or an average of 80 hours a month. Still, your DHS worker has some flexibility to help you meet the requirements when something you didn't plan on comes up that stops you from finishing work activities.

If you have problems doing your work activities, talk to your DHS worker right away. If you have good cause, your DHS worker may offer different ways to help you meet the requirements. The next month, you'll need to go back to your regular work activities to meet the requirement.

Some examples of good cause are when you are sick, have a family emergency or your car breaks down.

Q5: How do I know how many hours of work-related activities I need to meet the requirement?

Your DHS worker will help you figure out what you need to do.

- If you are not employed, you need to do work activities for 20 hours a week.
- If you are employed less than 20 hours a week, you need to add enough work activities to get to a total of 20 hours a week.

You also can ask to be in the Workfare program. In Workfare, you are assigned to a public or private non-profit agency as a volunteer. You volunteer for five hours a week instead of doing 20 hours of work activities. Workfare spaces are limited so ask your DHS worker about it right away.

Q6: What kinds of work activities can I do?

Your DHS worker will get you started and may involve a local partner in looking at the choices with you. Together, you will decide which work activities are the best fit for you. There are several choices:

- Work 20 hours per week for pay, as a volunteer or in-kind;
- Do work search for up to 9 hours per week, plus other activities to get to a total 20 hours per week;
- Be in a program under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- Be in a displaced worker program under section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974;
- Be in an approved training program; or,
- Be in Workfare where you volunteer at a private or public non-profit agency for five hours a week.

Q7: Will I need to do any reporting?

Yes. There are extra reporting requirements for people who qualify as ABAWDs. You need to report to DHS when:

- Your work hours drop below 20 hours a week or 80 hours a month. You must report this change within 10 days of the date when the change happened. You may be asked to add work activities to reach the 20-hour a week requirement.

- You have any other change that affects your ability to do your work activities.

Q8: What happens if I don't meet the requirements?

You can get food assistance for only three months during a 36-month (3-year) period if you do not meet the requirements. Any month you do not meet the requirements will count toward the time limit as one of the three months.

When you do not meet requirements, you will get a "counting month" notice in the mail. You will have 90 days from the date on the notice to contact your worker and ask for it to be double-checked if you believe you met the work requirements for that month or qualified for an exemption for that month.

The three-month limit happens once every three years. The current three-year period is from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018.

This is a national requirement so your status in Oregon will follow you if you leave Oregon and apply for SNAP in another state. It also will transfer to Oregon for people who move here from another state.

Q9: What happens to other people in my household who get food assistance if I lose my SNAP eligibility because I don't do my work activities?

The amount of food assistance your household gets each month will be lower. The other people in your household will still need to qualify for food benefits to keep getting them. Your income and resources will still count in the household's eligibility determination.

Q10: If I lose my SNAP eligibility because I didn't do my work activities, do I get another chance to get food assistance?

Yes. There are two ways you may be able to start getting food assistance again:

- Your situation changes and you now qualify for an exemption to the time limit. See Question 3 above for a list of exemptions.
- You start doing the required work activities. You must finish 80 hours of work activities in a month before you can start getting food assistance again. You will need to keep doing the 80 hours of work activities a month. If you stop doing your work activities, the time limit will take effect and you can get food assistance for three months in a row and then it will stop. You can only receive this second set of three months of food assistance once.

Q11: Why is this requirement in place only in Multnomah and Washington Counties?

The ABAWD program is a federal requirement. Since 2006, our state has had a waiver that gave us permission to stop the program until the Oregon economy improved. That waiver has expired for Multnomah and Washington Counties because their local economies have improved and unemployment rates have dropped. Other Oregon counties will continue to be exempt until their economies improve.

Q12: What can I do if I don't think I'm an ABAWD or think a decision by my DHS worker was wrong?

If you do not agree with your ABAWD status or an action taken by your worker, you have the right to request a hearing within 90 days. There are three ways you can ask for a hearing: In person; by phone or by filling out a form called the Administrative Hearing Request Form (Form # DHS 0443). Contact your local DHS branch office to request a hearing. The branch staff can get you a form and help you fill it out. They also can answer your questions about the hearing.

You may call the Public Benefits Hotline at 1-800-520-5292 for advice and possible representation. The Public Benefits Hotline is a program of Legal Aid Services of Oregon and the Oregon Law Center.

Q13: Who do I call if I have questions about the ABAWD program?

If you live in Multnomah County, please call 971-673-2422 or 971-673-2333. If you live in Washington County, please call 503-693-4769.

Q14: How do I locate the closest DHS office?

You will want to contact a DHS Self-Sufficiency Program office. If you need help finding the office closest to you, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/Offices/Pages/Self-Sufficiency.aspx> to see a list. You also can contact 211Info for help finding a local office by:

- Dialing 2-1-1 on your phone;
- Visiting the website at 211info.org;
- Texting your zip code to 898211; or,
- Emailing to help@211info.org.