



## **SNAP (FOOD STAMPS) WORK REQUIREMENTS START MARCH 1, 2016**

### **Will Affect Thousands in Allegheny County**

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What you need to know to maintain your benefits!

**Many able-bodied adults will soon have to be working to continue to receive food stamps.**

Starting March 1, 2016, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) who are not meeting federally defined work requirements will only be eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (or “food stamps”) for 3 months in a 3-year period. Individuals meeting work requirements will continue to be eligible for food stamps.

#### ***Who is in the able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD) category?***

You will be affected by the ABAWD rules if you are between the ages of 18-49, do not have a physical or mental disability that would prevent you from working, and are not caring for a child or incapacitated household member.

#### ***Are there exceptions to the SNAP work requirements?***

Yes! You will not be subject to the food stamps work requirement if you are:

- Age 17 or younger, or age 50 or older
- Earning at least \$218 per week, averaged monthly (working any number of hours)
- Mentally or physically “unfit” for work  
*The mental or physical condition(s) must be documented and signed by a licensed medical practitioner unless you are eligible for SSI, social security disability, Medicaid disability, VA needs-based pension payments, or other government benefits due to an inability to work.*
- Living with a child in your SNAP household (does not have to be your own child)
- Caring for an ill or incapacitated household member or relative
- Pregnant
- In a drug or alcohol treatment program (including Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous)
- Receiving or have applied for Unemployment Insurance
- Enrolled as a higher education student at least half-time (*meeting student eligibility requirements*)
- Enrolled as a student in an education program, such as GED readiness, at least half-time
- Homeless (lacking a fixed or regular residence)
- A victim of domestic violence
- Expecting to return to work within 60 days
- Living in an area that is exempt. In Allegheny County the only exempt area is McKeesport.

#### ***What are the SNAP work requirements?***

Able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) must either be working (paid, unpaid, in-kind, or self-employment) or participating in a job training program at least 80 hours per month (an average of 20 hours per

week), or volunteering with a community service provider for a certain number of hours (see below for details and required number of hours) to continue receiving food stamps for more than three months. Individuals may also do a combination of work, work program, and community service activities to meet the 20 hours per week requirement.

***If I am in the ABAWD category, how can I make sure to keep my SNAP benefits?***

**Work Programs:**

If you are working but are working less than 20 hours per week, talk to your employer to see if you can increase your work hours. You can also participate in an eligible job training or work program for at least 20 hours per week. You can also combine work hours or hours in a job training program with community service to meet the 20 hour requirement. If you are in the ABAWD category, talk with your PA Department of Human Services (DHS) caseworker to learn more about your options.

**Education:**

If you are enrolled at least half-time as a student, you are exempt from the ABAWD requirement. This includes higher education, as well as courses such as GED readiness, continuing education, or other education programs.

**Community Service (or “Workfare”):**

Volunteer at an eligible non-profit or community organization. The required hours are found by dividing your total SNAP benefit by the state minimum wage, of \$7.25 per hour. For example, if you are receiving the maximum SNAP benefit amount of \$194 for a single person, you will need to serve an average of 26 hours per month ( $\$194 / \$7.25 = 26$  hours per month or about 6-7 hours per week). You must provide your DHS caseworker with documentation of your community service time.

**Just Harvest in partnership with 211 of the United Way is putting together a network of organizations that will host individuals needing to do community service to meet the ABAWD requirements. Starting March 2016, just call 211 for a list of organizations near you, or visit [justharvest.org](http://justharvest.org) starting February 2016.**

***Is there help with things like transportation and clothing for individuals required to do community service?***

Yes. The Department of Human Services (DHS) can provide you with what is called Special Allowances (SPALs) to help you meet the requirement. SPALs include things like:

- money for transportation (public and private)
- clothing (if specific clothing is necessary for the work program)
- books
- tools
- or any other supplies needed for education, work or community service.

These allowances must be requested and approved before their purchase, and verification (receipts) must be provided.

**Contact Just Harvest at (412) 431-8960 x602  
for more information.**

[www.justharvest.org](http://www.justharvest.org)   /JustHarvest