

## What if I can't meet the TAFDC work requirement?

**What if I can't start work or a program yet? Or if I can't always meet the required hours?** You may be able to get an "exemption," a "domestic violence waiver," or claim "Good Cause."

### What is an exemption?

An "exemption" means the TAFDC work requirement and time limit do not apply to you. If you can't work for one of the following reasons, ask your worker for an exemption:

- You have a physical or mental health problem
- You are caring for a family member with a health problem
- You are pregnant and within 120 days of your due date
- Your youngest child who is *not under the family cap* is under two years old
- You have a baby who is less than three months old
- You are sixty or older
- You are a relative (not parent) of the child and chose not to be in the grant
- You are a teen parent and are going to school

You can apply for an exemption at any time.

### What is a domestic violence waiver?

If you can't work because of current or past domestic violence, you may be able to get a "waiver" of the work requirement for a certain amount of time, such as six months or a year. If you have physical or mental health problems due to domestic violence, it is better to request an exemption, because exemptions give you more rights.

Tell your worker if you want to apply for a domestic violence waiver. You can apply for a waiver at any time. When it runs out, you can apply for another one.

### What if I don't qualify for an exemption or waiver?

If you have a good reason for needing to miss one or more days or weeks, or longer, of work or a program, or are not ready to begin work or a program, ask your worker to give you "Good Cause."

If DTA enters "Good Cause" or "Meets Compliance" into the computer for you, your family will not lose your benefits even though you are not meeting the work requirement.

### **What counts as Good Cause?**

The following reasons for missing work or a program count as good cause:

- **Child care** – If you are not able to find safe child care
- **Transportation** – If you do not have reliable transportation that you can afford
- **Housing search** – If you need to do housing search because you need to move
- **Lack of community service placement** – If DTA has not given you a community service placement that you can go to
- **Health** – If you or a family member is sick, hurt, or disabled
- **Illegal working conditions** – If the job you were offered pays less than minimum wage; discriminates against you because of age, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, or physical or mental disability; does not meet health and safety standards; or is not available because of a strike or lockout; or
- **All other good reasons** - A family crisis, an emergency or any other important situation that you can not control and that needs your attention during the hours you would normally be working or in a program.

### **How do I get “Good Cause”?**

Tell your worker that you need Good Cause and why. Also give your worker a note saying what your Good Cause reason is and ask that she enter it into the computer.

If DTA sends you a warning notice with a form listing Good Cause reasons, circle the Good Cause reasons that apply to you and get it to your DTA worker within 10 days.

If you have proof of your Good Cause reason, get a copy to your worker. If you need help getting proof and ask for help, your worker is required by law to help you.

### **What if DTA lowers or stops my benefits even though I said I have Good Cause?**

File an appeal asking for a hearing. There should be an appeal form on the back of the notice lowering or stopping your benefits. Fill it out and send it right away to DTA's Division of Hearings. Send it by fax, if possible. Call your local Legal Services for help.

### **What if I didn't ask for Good Cause *before* I got a notice lowering or stopping my benefits?**

It is best to ask for Good Cause right away, but you can ask for it even after DTA sends you a sanction notice lowering or stopping your benefits. Send in an appeal of the notice. Also contact your DTA worker or the duty worker to ask for Good Cause. If you need help, call Legal Services.

**Greater Boston Legal Services**  
(617) 371-1234, (800) 323-3205

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