



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance*

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**Online Guide Transmittal 2015-67
November 20, 2015**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From: *AOS* Anne O'Sullivan, Assistant Commissioner for Change Management
Re: SNAP: Preparing for the Expiration of the Statewide ABAWD Waiver

Overview

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) requires able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWDs) to:

- comply with both the General SNAP Work requirements and the ABAWD Work Program (WP) requirement by:
- working for 20 hours per week averaged monthly; or
- participating in a qualifying Employment and Training (E&T) activity 20 hours per week; or
- volunteering at a community service site for a specified number of hours per month.

Non-exempt ABAWDs who fail to comply with the above requirement for any three months (which do not have to be consecutive) in a 36-month period are ineligible for SNAP benefits for the remaining months in the 36-month period unless they become exempt from or begin meeting the ABAWD Work Program (WP) requirement.

Massachusetts, like most other states, has operated under a statewide waiver of the ABAWD WP requirement and time limited benefits since June 2008.

The waiver will expire on December 31, 2015.

Who is Exempt from the ABAWD Work Program Requirement?

A SNAP recipient is exempt from the ABAWD Work Program requirement if he or she is:

- under 18 years of age or 50 years of age or older;
- physically or mentally unfit for employment, either temporarily or permanently;
- a pregnant woman at any stage of pregnancy;
- a TAFDC or EAEDC Work Program participant;
- an Unemployment Compensation applicant or recipient;
- a student in any recognized school, training program or institution of higher education at least halftime;
- a regular participant in a drug addiction or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program;
- working a minimum of 30 hours weekly or receiving weekly earnings equal to or greater than the federal minimum wage multiplied by 30 hours;
- the caretaker of a dependent child under age 6 or an incapacitated person, even if the child or incapacitated person does not live in the same household;
- living in a household where a household member is under age 18, even if the household member who is under 18 is not eligible for SNAP benefits; or
- living in an area of the state exempted by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Planning for the Expiration of the Statewide ABAWD Waiver

DTA estimates that as many as 25, 000 SNAP recipients may become subject to the ABAWD WP requirement and time limited benefits on January 1, 2016. Many of these clients qualify may for an exemption from the requirement.

In preparation for the expiration of the statewide ABAWD waiver, DTA has been working with members of the advocate community and holding informational meetings to educate stakeholders and other interested parties about the anticipated impact that reinstating the ABAWD Work Program Requirement will have on the ABAWD population and organizations that serve them.

**Planning for
the Expiration
of the
Statewide
ABAWD Waiver
(continued)**

Later this month, DTA will begin reaching out to potential ABAWDs through targeted mailings and robo-calls to let them know that they may soon become subject to the ABAWD WP requirement and how to report an exemption should one apply.

Two forms have been developed to help ABAWDs claim and document exemptions from the WP requirement and time limited benefits:

- *Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption*
- *ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report*

Additionally, as part of BEACON Build 48.1, automation that will help identify and record ABAWD WP exemptions will be effective on 11/23/15.

**BEACON Build
48.1: Changes
Related ABAWD
Work Program
Requirements**

As part of BEACON Build 48.1, scheduled for 11/23/15, BEACON will review and update the ABAWD Work Program exemption reason and requirement statuses of each household member on a nightly basis and whenever the case is wrapped-up. If not already selected, BEACON will automatically update each client's exemption reason to the the most permanent applicable reason. To do this, BEACON relies on data that is available in the case record.

The Build also includes the following ABAWD related BEACON changes:

*For Case
Managers*

- new ABAWD Work Program exemption reasons accessible via the Required status reason on the Work Requirements-FS page;
 - the ability to record an exemption reason end date when applicable and not available elsewhere in the BEACON record;
 - the automatic assignment of the ABAWD Work Program exemption reason *Unfit for Employment* based on a homeless client's responses to 5 screening questions on the new Work Requirements Screening page;
 - a new Job title: ABAWD In-Kind, available for selection from the Job title drop-down list when entering a self-employment record on the Earned Income page;
 - the following document types have been added to the Document type drop-down selection when creating a Document Cover Sheet or re-indexing a document:
 - *ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report*
 - *Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption*
 - *ABAWD Work Program Participation Report*
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*For Central
Office Staff*

- a popup message alerting Central Office Employment and Training (E&T) Specialists to the ABAWD Work Program requirement status of clients on the ESP Referral Disposition page; and
- a Qualifying Component checkbox on the ESP Referral Disposition and ESP Disposition pages for use by Central Office Employment and Training (E&T) Specialists indicating that a client has been referred to and/or is participating in an E&T program that fulfills the work requirement; and

**Changes
Related to
General SNAP
Work
Requirements**

Additionally:

- The **Required** indicator on the SNAP E&T portion of the Work Requirements-FS page will automatically default to **No**.
- The **Required status reason** will be populated with either:
 - Meets TAFDC/EAEDC; or
 - Voluntary Program;
- the voluntary checkbox will be enabled for all SNAP-only clients; and
- a popup message will appear when a Voluntary Quit sanction is initiated reminding the case manager that only clients who are subject to General SNAP Work requirements are subject to voluntary quit rules.

**Case Manager
Responsibilities**

To support this automation and ensure that exempt ABAWDs are not subjected to the ABAWD Work Program requirement and time limited benefits in January, when processing an application, recertification, or performing case maintenance, case managers must:

- explore all possible exemptions and review the Work Requirements-FS page, ensuring that the ABAWD WP requirement and exemption statuses reflect each household member's current circumstances;
 - enter any available ABAWD documents in BEACON as soon as they are received;
 - update all BEACON pages to reflect the most current information known about each client. BEACON will not recognize that a client is exempt from the ABAWD Work Program requirement based on pregnancy if the Pregnancy page is not completed. Likewise, BEACON will not recognize an exemption based on student status unless the School Status and Education pages have been updated; and
 - to ensure that the client will be credited with all hours worked, accurately enter the income and number of hours worked at all job types (including, but not limited to wages, in-kind work, earned rental income, and other self employment income).
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Updated Online
Guide Pages

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: General SNAP Work Requirements
(previously titled SNAP Employment & Training (E&T))
Page: General SNAP Work Requirements
(previously titled SNAP Employment & Training (E&T)
Requirements)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: General SNAP Work Requirements
Page: General SNAP Work Requirements Exemptions
(previously titled SNAP E&T Exemptions)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: General SNAP Work Requirements
Page: Entering General SNAP Work Requirements Data
(previously titled Entering SNAP E&T Data)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: General SNAP Work Requirements
Page: General SNAP Work Requirements Good Cause Criteria
(previously titled SNAP E&T Good Cause Criteria)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: General SNAP Work Requirements
Page: Preexisting SNAP E&T Sanctions
(previously titled SNAP E&T Disqualification Penalties
in BEACON)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: Voluntary Quit
Page: SNAP Voluntary Quit

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: Voluntary Quit
Page: Entering Voluntary Quit Data

**Updated Online
Guide Pages
(continued)**

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
(previously titled Work Program Requirements (WP))
Page: ABAWD Work Program Requirement Overview
(previously titled SNAP Work Program Requirements)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: ABAWD Work Program Exemptions
(previously titled SNAP Work Program Exemptions)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: Entering ABAWD Work Program Exemptions
(previously titled Entering SNAP Work Program Data)

**New Online
Guide Pages**

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: General SNAP Work Requirements
Page: Voluntary Employment and Training Program

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: Work Requirements Screening Page

Topic: SNAP
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Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report
Form

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption Form

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
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Page: ABAWD Work Program Participation

**New Online
Guide Pages
(continued)**

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: ABAWD In-Kind Work Hours

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: ABAWD Work Program Good Cause Criteria

Topic: SNAP
Book: Work Requirements
Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement
Page: ABAWD Work Program – Waived Areas

Questions

If you have any questions, please email the DTA Mailbox.
Systems questions should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
