



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


CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS  
Secretary

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Lieutenant Governor

AMY KERSHAW  
Commissioner

**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-70  
October 8, 2020**

**To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff**  
**From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management**  
**Re: SNAP: Wright v DTA ABAWD Settlement**

**Overview**

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Wright v. DTA is a class action lawsuit brought by SNAP clients subject to the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work rules. These clients allege that the Department did not provide adequate notice before disqualifying them for SNAP benefits.

Plaintiffs and the Department have agreed to a settlement in Wright.

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this Transmittal is to advise staff of:

- who is part of the class;
  - a sample of the Settlement Notice, and
  - the mailing of the Settlement Notice
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**Class &  
Settlement**

SNAP clients who were closed or disqualified for failing to meet their work requirement between April 1, 2016 and July 14, 2019 are considered part of this class.

During the week of October 12th, 2020, class members will be sent a Notice of Settlement (Attachment A). This notice advises them of the lawsuit and their rights. The notice will also be posted to the Department's website.

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**Notice of  
Settlement**

If a client or former client makes contact about the lawsuit or has questions about the Notice of Settlement, staff are to instruct them to contact the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute at 1-888-343-6110 or [ABAWD@mlri.org](mailto:ABAWD@mlri.org). They can also find more information at [MassLegalHelp.org/SNAPtimelimit](https://MassLegalHelp.org/SNAPtimelimit).

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**Questions**

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to [DTA.Procedural Issues](mailto:DTA.ProceduralIssues).

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.

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**Notice of Settlement**  
**Lawsuit about Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)**  
**SNAP Termination Notices to ABAWDs**

**October 2020**

**The Lawsuit Settlement will give a month of back SNAP benefits to certain current and former SNAP recipients. You have the right to object to the Settlement.**

**You are NOT being sued.**

**Who will get a month of back SNAP under the Settlement?**

You will get a month of back SNAP if DTA terminated (cut off) your SNAP between April 1, 2016 and July 14, 2019 because DTA thought you did not meet the Work Rules for Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs).

**Do you need to do anything?**

- **You do not need to apply for or ask for this benefit.**
- If you do not get SNAP now, you can reapply at any time. **You may be eligible even if you are not meeting the ABAWD Work Rules.** To apply online or from a smartphone, go to **DTAConnect.com**. To learn about other ways to apply, visit **Mass.gov/SNAP**.
- If you do not want to apply for SNAP or you are not currently eligible, you will still get this benefit. You do not need to be getting SNAP to get this benefit.
- Read this notice. If you do not agree with this Settlement you have a right to object.

**When will you get the back benefit?**

- You will get a separate notice when DTA puts the benefit in your account. It may take one or two months. For more information, go to [MassLegalHelp.org/SNAPtimelimit](http://MassLegalHelp.org/SNAPtimelimit).

**What is the Lawsuit about?**

A SNAP client took DTA to court for himself and other ABAWDs who were cut off between April 1, 2016 and July 14, 2019. The Lawsuit said they should have gotten more notice before their SNAP stopped. This kind of Lawsuit is called a “class action”.

The agreement to end the Lawsuit is called a Settlement. This Settlement –

- Gives class members one-month of back SNAP benefits.
- Requires DTA to mail a notice with appeal rights at least 10 days before cutting off SNAP benefits for not meeting the ABAWD Work Rules.

**What if you do not agree with something in the Settlement?**

**If you do not agree with any part of the Settlement, you have the right to object. If you do not object by the date of the hearing, you cannot object later.**

The Judge will hold a hearing on October 28, 2020 at 12:00 PM to decide whether to approve the Settlement. The hearing may be in person or by telephone or video. **You do not have to come to the hearing.** For information on how the hearing will be held and how you can join, go to [MassLegalHelp.org/SNAPtimelimit](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mass-legal-help-org-snap-timelimit).

**If the Judge approves this Settlement and you are in the class:**

- You cannot take DTA to court to ask for more back benefits because you did not get enough time to appeal.
- You cannot object to anything else in the Settlement.

**If you want to object to the Settlement in writing:**

(1) Write a letter to the judge. Explain what you do not agree with in the Settlement.

Include:

- a. The name and number for the court case:  
Wright v. DTA, Suffolk Superior Court, No. 1984CV02307.
- b. The part of the Settlement you disagree with and why you disagree. For example, you might disagree because you are not going to get all the benefits you think you are due.
- c. Your name and address.
- d. If you want to say something at the hearing, say that you want to tell the judge something about this case.

(2) Send the letter by October 21, 2020 to:

Clerk, Civil F Session  
Suffolk Courthouse  
3 Pemberton Square  
Boston, MA 02108

(3) Send a copy by mail or email to Deborah Harris, Mass. Law Reform Institute:

Deborah Harris  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
40 Court Street, Suite 800  
Boston, MA 02108  
[ABAWD@mlri.org](mailto:ABAWD@mlri.org)

**How do the lawyers get paid?**

The lawyer in this case works for the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, an organization that provides free legal services to very low-income people. She started the case in July 2019. She has been working to get the Settlement since then. The state will pay the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute \$75,000.

**How can you get more information?**

- See a copy of the Settlement and learn more: [MassLegalHelp.org/SNAPtimelimit](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mass-legal-help-org-snap-timelimit)
- Call or email Massachusetts Law Reform Institute: 1-888-343-6110 or [ABAWD@mlri.org](mailto:ABAWD@mlri.org)