



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

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**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-38
May 15, 2020**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From: Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: SNAP: ABAWD Time Limit Suspension

Overview

Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act temporarily suspended the ABAWD Work Rules. This suspension shall continue until further notice.

Based on this change, clients who are otherwise subject the ABAWD Work Rules must be given a temporary exemption: ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19). Additionally, clients who previously incurred a third strike or Ineligibility Strike are considered to have regained eligibility due to becoming exempt.

For a tutorial on the BEACON steps associated with these procedures, please see Attachment A at the end of this Transmittal.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of the temporary suspension of the ABAWD Work Rules, and the corresponding updates to BEACON and changes to certain Department notices.

Exemption Reason

During this suspension of the ABAWD Work Rules, clients who are otherwise subject to the rules must be coded in BEACON with the following exemption status:

ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19)

This status must be applied to all clients who would be subject to the ABAWD Work Rules if the rules were not suspended. However, if another exemption reason applies to a client, it should be used.

A batch update will automatically apply this exemption to clients in active cases who were granted the discretionary exemption under prior COVID-19 procedures or who have no exemption reason recorded in BEACON. In such cases, BEACON will enter a batch narrative indicating that this exemption reason has been applied. However, for non-active clients who are applying for benefits, case managers must apply this exemption manually.

At this time, case managers must not assign an end date for this status in the Work Requirements-FS page. BEACON will assign an end date once it becomes known.

Regained Eligibility

For the duration of the Department's COVID-19 temporary procedures, any active or pending client who previously incurred three strikes or an Ineligibility Strike before March 2020 is considered to have regained SNAP eligibility due to becoming exempt.

Case managers must select the appropriate exemption reason or, if none apply, ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19) in the Work Requirements-FS page and select Exempt as a Regain Eligibility reason in the ABAWD Clock Detail page for the application month.

Notices

During this temporary suspension of the ABAWD Work Rules, BEACON will suppress all notices related to the ABAWD Work Rules.

**Good Cause
Removal of
Negative
Actions for
March 2020**

Active clients who incurred a strike for March 2020 will have the strike automatically removed for **Good Cause – Family crises/emergency situation**. There will be a batch narrative indicating that the strike has been removed for this reason.

If a non-active client who incurred a strike for March 2020 reapplies for benefits (and the case manager cannot remove the strike for any other reason), the case manager must manually remove the strike for Good Cause – Family crises/emergency situation and document the action in the BEACON narrative.

Note: Do not remove strikes received before March 2020 for any Good Cause or exemption reasons related to COVID-19; staff must only remove these strikes if the client actually complied or had a different good cause/exemption reason during the applicable strike month. For strikes that were removed in April 2020 with the reason Good Cause – Family crises/emergency situation, BEACON will automatically replace the reason with a new strike removal reason: ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19).

**Work Rules
Suspension
End Date**

Once the end date of the ABAWD Work Rules suspension is known, BEACON will resume sending the ABAWD-related notices that were temporarily suppressed. BEACON will also send the applicable clients a revamped ABAWD Work Program Requirement notice, which shall be generated 20 days before the scheduled end date.

Additionally, BEACON will remove “ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19)” from the Work Requirements-FS page as an exemption reason and from the ABAWD Clock Detail page as a strike removal reason. All clients to whom this exemption/removal reason was applied will revert to their previous ABAWD Work Rules status.

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.

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

Attachment A- Temporary COVID-19 ABAWD Procedures (effective 5/8/2020)

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act suspended the time limit for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) effective April 1, 2020 until further notice. During this suspension clients who became ineligible for SNAP due to noncompliance with the ABAWD rules may receive SNAP if otherwise eligible.

Effective 4/8/2020, the COVID-19 temporary procedures for addressing applications containing ABAWDs are replaced with the process described below.

ABAWDs with fewer than 3 Strikes

When you encounter an applicant or active client who has fewer than 3 Strikes, you must determine if the client is exempt from the ABAWD Work Rules.

- If yes, enter the exemption reason on the **Work Requirements-FS page**. Enter the exemption end date if known.
- If no, apply the temporary exemption reason: **ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19)**. Leave the Anticipated end date blank.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Work Requirements - FS -- Webpage Dialog" with the URL "https://bcn3-web-qa.dta.state.ma.us/beacon/interview/template.html". The main content area is divided into two sections: "ABAWD Work Program" and "SNAP E&T".

ABAWD Work Program:

- Required:** Radio buttons for "Yes" and "No" (selected).
- Meets compliance:** Radio buttons for "Yes" and "No".
- Required status reason:** A dropdown menu is open, showing a list of reasons: Meets TAFDC/EAEDC Requirement, Noncitizen Disqualified, Ineligible HH Member, Resident of Waived Area, Unfit for Employment - Disabled, Residing with Person < 18, Unfit for Employment - ABAWD Medical Report, Pregnant Woman, Employed at least 30 hrs/wk, Student - at least Half-Time, UC Applicant/Recipient, Unfit for Employment - Temporary Disabled, Unfit for Employment - Based on Screening, Caretaker Incapacitated Person, Addict/Alcoholic in Treatment, Refugee Training Program Participant, and **ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19)**.
- Start:** A date field.
- Anticipated end:** A date field.
- Community Service:** A date field.
- Obligation Hours:** A date field.
- Report:** A date field.
- Compliance reason:** A dropdown menu.
- Compliance end:** A date field.
- Entered:** A date field.
- Report:** A date field.

SNAP E&T:

- Required:** Radio buttons for "Yes" and "No".
- Required status reason:** A dropdown menu with the same list of reasons as above.
- Start:** A date field.
- Compliance:** Radio buttons for "Yes" and "No".
- Compliance reason:** A dropdown menu.
- Compliance end:** A date field.
- Entered:** A date field.
- Voluntary participant:** A checkbox.

Attachment A- Temporary COVID-19 ABAWD Procedures (effective 5/8/2020)

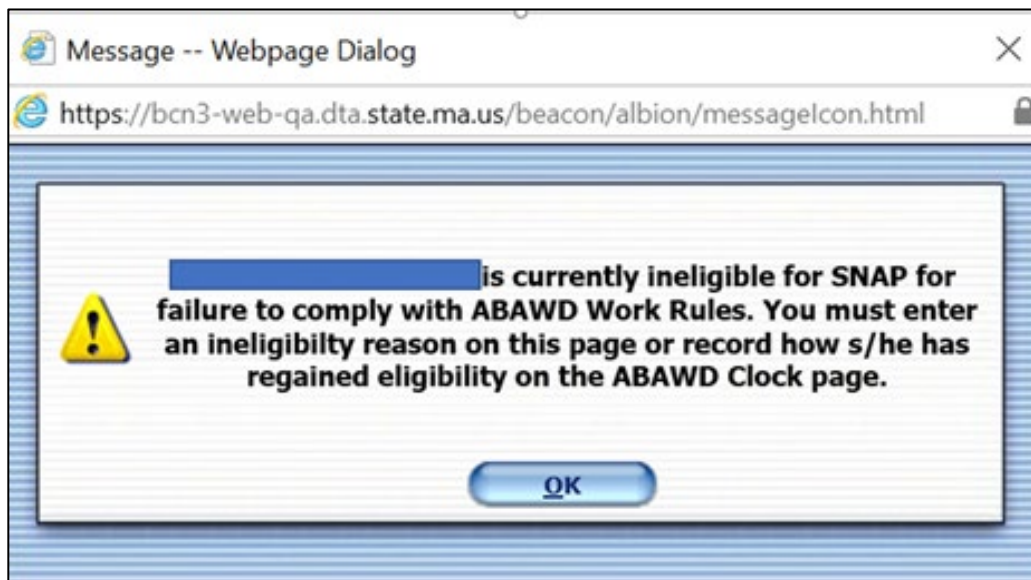
ABAWDs with 3 or More Strikes

When you encounter an applicant, who became ineligible for SNAP due to noncompliance with the ABAWD Work Rules, you must:

- Determine if any of the past strikes can be removed because the client was exempt, meeting or had good cause for not meeting for that strike month.
- If all strikes are valid, determine if the client is exempt from the requirement now. (Regained eligibility through exemption). If yes, update the Regained Eligibility reason (Exempt) on the ABAWD Clock page and enter the exemption reason on the Work Requirements-FS page.
- If not exempt, determine if the client has regained eligibility by meeting the requirement (80 hours of work in a month, in qualifying training program 20 hours per week or did required # of hours of volunteer work). If yes, you will need to update the Regained Eligibility reason (Participation) on the ABAWD Clock page.
- If none of the above are true, apply the temporary exemption reason: **ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19)** on the Work Requirements-FS page.

BEACON Steps:

1. When you click Finish or Next on the **AU Composition Results page**, the following popup message will appear if a household member is currently ineligible for SNAP due to noncompliance with the ABAWD rules:



2. Click **OK**
3. Click **Cancel** to exit the page.
4. On the **ABAWD Clock page**:
 - a. select the appropriate household member from the member list.
 - b. click the **Detail icon** for the benefit month for which the client will receive benefits.

Attachment A- Temporary COVID-19 ABAWD Procedures (effective 5/8/2020)

Benefit	SNAP	ABAWD WP Required	ABAWD WP Compliance	Detail	Strike	Reason	Description
May 2020	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Apr 2020	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Mar 2020	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Feb 2020	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jan 2020	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

5. The ABAWD Clock Detail page will open. In the **Regained Eligibility** field, select the applicable reason:
 - a. **Participation** if the client has verified that s/he has met the work rules in a 30-day period; or
 - b. **Exempt** if the client is now exempt from the work rules or if you will be applying the temporary exemption reason: ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19).

ABAWD Clock Detail

Period: 01/01/2018 - 12/31/2020 Benefit: May 2020

ABAWD Required: ABAWD Compliance:

Strike: Reason:

Regain Eligibility: **Participation** (selected), Exempt

Description:

Last Updated: 04/30/2020 12:46:35.035 AM By: ABAWDCLO

Attachment A- Temporary COVID-19 ABAWD Procedures (effective 5/8/2020)

NOTE	If the Regained Eligibility reason field is not enabled, check the previous month. It may be enabled there instead (based on BEACON release date schedule).
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6. Click **Save**.
7. You will see the regained reason that you entered in the **Regain Eligibility column** on the ABAWD Clock page (scroll to the right).
8. Click **Finish**.

Period <input type="text" value="01/01/2018 - 12/31/2020"/>				
te	Reason	Description	Regain Eligibility	Last Updated
			Exempt	05/07/2020 05:32:49.04
				03/31/2020 02:24:02.00
				02/26/2020 11:43:37.03

IMPORTANT	Strikes should not be removed unless they are invalid because the client was exempt, meeting or had good cause for that strike month.
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9. Return to the **AU Composition Results page**.
10. Update as appropriate and click **Next** or **Finish**.

NOTE	The reason that the regained eligibility reason needs to be entered on the ABAWD Clock page is because BEACON expects an ineligibility reason to be entered on the AU Composition Results page if no regained reason has been entered since the last 3 rd or other in ineligibility strike.
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11. Continue with the application workflow following current policy and procedures.
12. When you get to the **Work Requirements-FS page**:
 - a. Enter the known exemption reason if applicable. Enter the exemption end date if known.
 - b. If there are no known exemptions, apply the temporary exemption reason: **ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19)**. Leave the Anticipated end date blank.

Attachment A- Temporary COVID-19 ABAWD Procedures (effective 5/8/2020)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying <https://bcn3-web-qa.dta.state.ma.us/beacon/interview/template.html>. The page content is divided into two main sections: 'ABAWD Work Program' and 'SNAP E&T'. Each section contains a form with various input fields and dropdown menus.

ABAWD Work Program

- Required: Yes No
- Meets compliance: Yes No
- Required status reason: ABAWD Rules Suspended (COVID-19) (dropdown)
- Compliance reason: (dropdown)
- Start: 04/01/2020 (calendar icon)
- Compliance end: (calendar icon)
- Anticipated end: (calendar icon)
- Entered: (calendar icon)
- Community Service Obligation Hours: (text input)
- Report: (dropdown)
- Report: (calendar icon)

SNAP E&T

- Required: Yes No
- Meets compliance: Yes No
- Required status reason: Meets TAFDC/EAEDC Requirement (dropdown)
- Compliance reason: (dropdown)
- Start: 05/08/2020 (calendar icon)
- Compliance end: (calendar icon)
- Voluntary participant:
- Entered: (calendar icon)

Additional information about the ABAWD Clock page can be found in the Online Guide which can be accessed remotely via mass.gov: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/the-department-of-transitional-assistance-online-guide>

See Online Guide pages:

SNAP -> Work Requirements -> ABAWD Work Rules -> The ABAWD Clock Page

SNAP -> Work Requirements -> ABAWD Work Rules -> Regaining Eligibility after ABWAD Work Rules Noncompliance

SNAP -> Work Requirements -> ABAWD Work Rules -> Entering and Removing ABAWD Work Rules Strikes