



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

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Online Guide Transmittal 2024-52
September 6, 2024

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Local Implementation and Special Populations

Re: **SNAP: Able-bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) Work Rules Screening Reminder**

Overview

To preserve as many discretionary exemptions as possible, staff are again reminded that **clients must be screened for exemptions from the ABAWD Work Rules at every application, recertification, and Interim Report.**

If a client meets a non-discretionary exemption, it is crucial that staff update the Work Requirements-FS page with the appropriate dropdown selection for Required Status reason and, if applicable, update the corresponding BEACON pages. For example, if the client self-declares they are pregnant, staff must select Pregnant for the Required Status reason and complete the Pregnancy page. No additional verification is needed.

As detailed in [Online Guide Transmittal 2024-36](#), the Department has increased its use of discretionary exemptions from the ABAWD Work Rules and is at risk of exhausting these exemptions sooner than expected.

In order to identify whether a client has an ongoing exemption, staff must screen any client who is:

- A new applicant, **or**
- At recertification or Interim Report and is listed as being exempt due to **Discretionary Exemption.**

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to:

- reiterate to staff the importance of screening SNAP clients for Work Rules exemptions;
 - advise staff of updates to Attachment A;
 - clarify the process for applying the Resident of Waived Area exemption.
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Updates To Attachment A

OLGT 2024-36 included [Attachment A: ABAWD Work Rules Exemption Screening Questions](#) to assist staff with the screening process until system enhancements are in place. Once again, staff are encouraged to use Attachment A whenever they screen clients for ABAWD Work Rules exemptions. Based on local office feedback, Attachment A has been updated to better facilitate the screening process.

Attachment A now includes a script that staff can read to the client during the screening process. This script aims to ensure that the client understands why they are being screened. Additionally, for clients with no exemption, this script aims to prepare them for the return of the ABAWD Work Rules when the discretionary exemptions run out and system enhancements are in place.

The script briefly explains why the questions must be asked, and what the client will eventually have to do if they are not exempt. It also briefly explains how they can regain eligibility if they get disqualified for not meeting the ABAWD Work Rules.

To streamline and align the screening questions with the script, the questions themselves have been rewritten in second person (i.e., with “you” pronouns). This is to support staff in refraining from referring to clients as “ABAWDs” when speaking to them.

For example: Did you serve in any branch of the US armed services (including the Reserves) regardless of how you were discharged?

**Clarification on
Waived Area
Exemption**

Clients who reside in waived areas (i.e., areas of the state with insufficient job opportunities and/or an unemployment rate above 10%) qualify for the exemption: Resident of a Waived Area.

Staff are reminded that BEACON will apply this exemption automatically if the zip code recorded in the Address page matches one of the zip codes listed in [Waived Areas](#). **There is no need for staff to check whether the client's address falls into one of the waived areas.**

Since BEACON automatically applies the exemption based on the information recorded in the Address page, staff must make sure that they enter the address correctly.

**Revised Online
Guide Pages**

Topic:	SNAP
Book:	Work Requirements
Chapter:	ABAWD Work Rules
Page:	Waived Areas

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@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:DTA.ProceduralIssues@massmail.state.ma.us).

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