

**SNAP Time Limit for ABAWDs:**

**What Community Groups Should Know**

The federal SNAP (food stamp) time lime limits for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) goes into effect April 1, 2020 in almost all of Pennsylvania – including Philadelphia. Individuals considered “ABAWDs” may only receive SNAP benefits for a total of 3 months within a 36 month period – unless the person meets an “exemption” or complies with certain work requirements. Previously, most of the state was not subject to this rule because of high unemployment; starting April 1, those areas can no longer be protected.

***Who is an ABAWD?***

An ABAWD is an able-bodied adult between 18 and 49 years old who is not disabled, pregnant, or living in a household with minor children. Persons under age 18 or age 50 or older are not subject to this rule.

***Who is exempt from the time limit?***

The 3 month SNAP limit **does not apply** if the ABAWD meets any of the following:

* Working 20 hours or more per week, including self-employment or in-kind work;
* Receiving a disability-based benefit (SSI, social security disability, VA pension, Worker’s Comp);
* Certified as physically or mentally “unfit” for employment by a health professional;

*DHS has a special SNAP Time Limit Medical Exemption Form, form number PA 1921, that can be signed by a wide range of health care providers, including any whose services are paid for by Medicaid*

* Is homeless;
* Is receiving – or has applied for – Unemployment Compensation (UC);
* Is participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program or a mental health treatment program;
* Is a student enrolled at least half time in an education program;
* Lives in a household with any child under 18 – does not need to be the child of the ABAWD;
* Is pregnant – at any stage of the pregnancy;
* Is providing care for a disabled person or a frail elder;
* Lives in Forest County (probably)

***How can an ABAWD meet the work requirements?***

If not exempt, there are three ways an ABAWD may be able to meet the SNAP work requirements:

1. Working for pay at least 80 hours/month – roughly 20 hours/week;
2. Participating in an eligible job training program for at least 20 hours/week; **OR**
3. Volunteering through community service a few hours a week to “work for benefits.”

***What is “community service” and how many hours are required?***

* Community service is unpaid or volunteer work at a non-profit or religious organization or government site. An ABAWD may qualify for SNAP if volunteering enough hours each month to qualify.
* The number of volunteer hours required is based on the ABAWD’s monthly SNAP benefit divided by the state minimum wage - $7.25 per hour. For example, an ABAWD receiving $194 in SNAP per month must volunteer 26 hours/month – or 6 ½ hours/week
* DHS can provide “special allowances” to pay for ABAWDs’ transportation to a community service site.
* The community organization needs to sign the Community Service Agency Agreement (form PA 1694)

***What if my client had a good reason for missing work?***

* An ABAWD can claim “good cause” for not meeting the work or community service hours if he or she has a job or community service slot but missed work hours for reasons beyond his or her control.

***What else should I know?***

* An ABAWD who was cut off may always reapply and get SNAP back by showing that he or she is exempt, lives in a waived area, or is meeting the work requirement.
* After receiving the initial 3 months’ worth of SNAP benefits, an ABAWD whose SNAP was cut off because he or she was not exempt or meeting the work requirement may qualify for a second 3-month period of SNAP. The ABAWD must meet certain criteria, such as having worked for 80 hours for one month.
* The 36 month time clock, during which ABAWDs can only get 3 months of benefits unless they are exempt or working or volunteering, started 1/1/18. All ABAWDS will requalify on 1/1/21.
* More information and forms are available at [www.clsphila.org/abawds](http://www.clsphila.org/abawds).

***Are there appeal rights?***

* YES! Every SNAP applicant or recipient has the right to ask for a fair hearing if DHS denies or cuts off SNAP benefits for alleged failure to meet an ABAWD exemption, or a work or volunteer requirement. If you appeal a cutoff within 12-15 days from the date of the notice, the SNAP benefits should continue while you wait for a hearing. Legal Services programs can help. To find the local office, go to [www.palegalaid.net](http://www.palegalaid.net).