Federal Changes to SNAP and Lessons Learned

Louise Hayes, CLS
Ann Sanders, Just Harvest

Agenda

- What’s going on with SNAP?
- Immigration rule changes
- Work reporting requirements
- Lessons learned for MA



What's going on with SNAP

What's Happening with SNAP

- HR1 (the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act") enacted the steepest cuts to SNAP in history, with most cuts started taking effect in the fall of 2025. Since then:
  - 10.7% drop in PA participation (more than 200k people)
  - 8.7% drop in PA child participation (almost 60k)

- Cuts caused by:
  - Immigrant eligibility changes
  - Work reporting requirements
  - Pressure to reduce "payment errors"

What's Happening with SNAP

- **Huge pressure on PA for SNAP payments to be accurate NOW**, or else pay $400-600M per year to keep SNAP operating starting Oct 2027.

- HR1 set states up to fail by creating burdensome & complicated work reporting rules while reducing funding for administration of the program.

- Extra scrutiny for all cases to make sure no errors – but not enough staff to do the work. **The "Payment Error Rate" penalizes faulty approvals, but does not penalize when benefits are stopped or denied incorrectly.**



Immigration rule changes

Immigrant Eligibility Restrictions

Eligible immigrants under OBBB:

- Lawful permanent residents (green card holders)
- Cuban-Haitian entrants
- Compact of Free Association citizens from the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau (COFA migrants)

No longer eligible:

- VAWA petitioners
- Asylees (unless also LPR)
- Refugees (unless also LPR)
- Those granted withholding of removal
- Trafficking victims
- Special immigrants from Iraq or Afghanistan
- People paroled into U.S. for at least 1 year

Went into effect Nov 1, 2025, impacts families at application or renewal.

Action Steps for Immigrants

- If you have a green card, make sure the County Assistance Office knows about it.

- If you have a path to a green card, apply for one.

- The following remain eligible as Cuban-Haitian entrants: Cubans and Haitians who (1) were granted parole (even if it has now expired), or (2) have applied for asylum, or (3) are in removal proceedings (but don’t have a final removal order).



Work Reporting Requirements

Work Reporting Requirements

To receive SNAP benefits for more than 3 months within a three year period. Adults ages 18-64 need to report that they:

- Have an exemption,
- work 20+ hours per week, or
- participate in an approved training program,
- or community service.

Three year period resets January 1, 2027

Work Reporting Exemptions

Age and Family Status	Under 18 or 65 or older
	In a household with a child under 14 years old
	Caring for a person who is ill or incapacitated
	Member of federally recognized American Indian or Alaska Native tribe

Work Reporting Exemptions

Employment and Income	Earning $217.50 or more/week (or $870 per month).
	Working 30+ hours/week.
	Applied for or getting unemployment benefits
Education and Training	In any recognized school, training program, or college program (enrolled at least half time) - but must be meeting the student rules.

Work Reporting Exemptions

Housing Situation	Homeless
	Will lose housing in next 14 days
Domestic Violence	Domestic violence/intimate partner violence with safety concerns that impact ability to work
Long Commute	Longer than 2 hours to get to job or training site

Work Reporting Exemptions

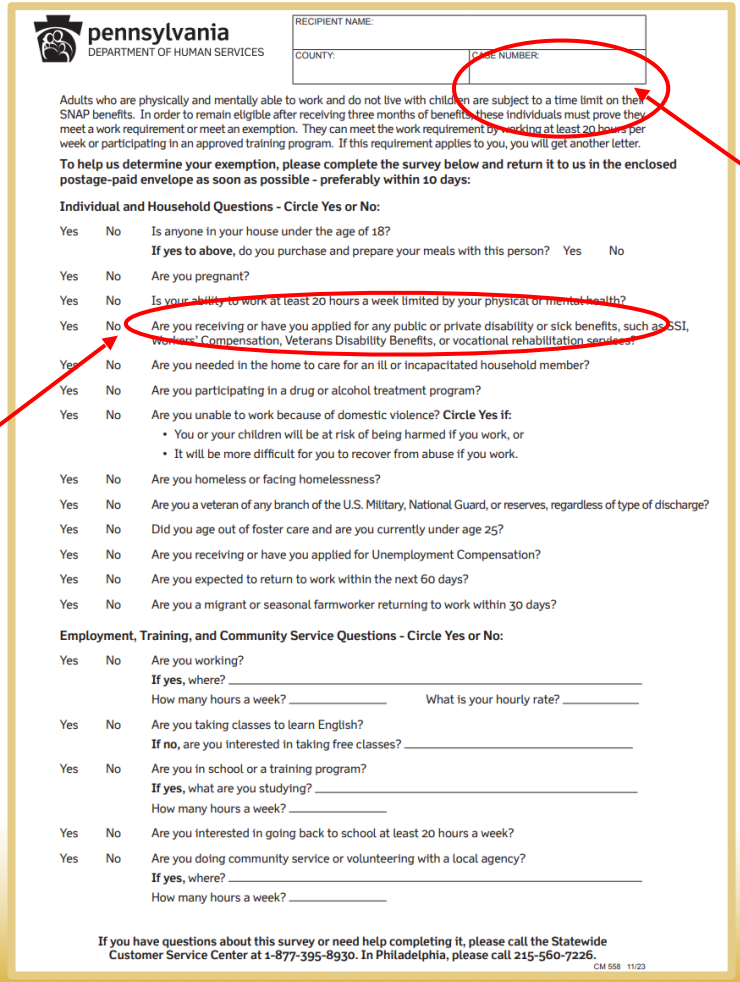
Health	Getting disability benefit (e.g. SSI, SSDI, VA, worker's comp, short term disability) ***may require award letter*
	Have a hard time working or can't work at least 20 hours/week due to short or long term health reasons (mental or physical)** *requires verification*
	Pregnant
	In substance use treatment program

How to report an exemption to DHS

- **Check *all* exemptions for every adult.** Life changes & DHS makes mistakes
- **Tell DHS as soon as possible about any exemption:**
  - Can report in writing or during the interview at application & renewal.
  - Complete this questionnaire and submit it by uploading to COMPASS or mailing, faxing, or dropping off at your local County Assistance Office.
  - Call (877) 395-8930 or (215) 560-7226
- **If exempt based on health, have this medical exemption form completed** and submit this also. Otherwise, DHS will follow up if they need any proof.

Claiming an exemption

Complete the questionnaire checklist



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

RECIPIENT NAME:

COUNTY: CASE NUMBER:

Adults who are physically and mentally able to work and do not live with children are subject to a time limit on their SNAP benefits. In order to remain eligible after receiving three months of benefits, these individuals must prove they meet a work requirement or meet an exemption. They can meet the work requirement by working at least 20 hours per week or participating in an approved training program. If this requirement applies to you, you will get another letter.

To help us determine your exemption, please complete the survey below and return it to us in the enclosed postage-paid envelope as soon as possible - preferably within 10 days:

Individual and Household Questions - Circle Yes or No:

Yes No Is anyone in your house under the age of 18?
If yes to above, do you purchase and prepare your meals with this person? Yes No

Yes No Are you pregnant?

Yes No Is your ability to work at least 20 hours a week limited by your physical or mental health?

Yes No Are you receiving or have you applied for any public or private disability or sick benefits, such as SSI, Workers' Compensation, Veterans Disability Benefits, or vocational rehabilitation services?

Yes No Are you needed in the home to care for an ill or incapacitated household member?

Yes No Are you participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program?

Yes No Are you unable to work because of domestic violence? **Circle Yes if:**
- You or your children will be at risk of being harmed if you work, or
- It will be more difficult for you to recover from abuse if you work.

Yes No Are you homeless or facing homelessness?

Yes No Are you a veteran of any branch of the U.S. Military, National Guard, or reserves, regardless of type of discharge?

Yes No Did you age out of foster care and are you currently under age 25?

Yes No Are you receiving or have you applied for Unemployment Compensation?

Yes No Are you expected to return to work within the next 60 days?

Yes No Are you a migrant or seasonal farmworker returning to work within 30 days?

Employment, Training, and Community Service Questions - Circle Yes or No:

Yes No Are you working?
If yes, where? _____
How many hours a week? _____ What is your hourly rate? _____

Yes No Are you taking classes to learn English?
If no, are you interested in taking free classes? _____

Yes No Are you in school or a training program?
If yes, what are you studying? _____
How many hours a week? _____

Yes No Are you interested in going back to school at least 20 hours a week?

Yes No Are you doing community service or volunteering with a local agency?
If yes, where? _____
How many hours a week? _____

If you have questions about this survey or need help completing it, please call the Statewide Customer Service Center at 1-877-395-8930. In Philadelphia, please call 215-560-7226.

CM 558 11/23

If someone's ability to work is limited by physical or mental health, they will need a Medical Exemption Form.

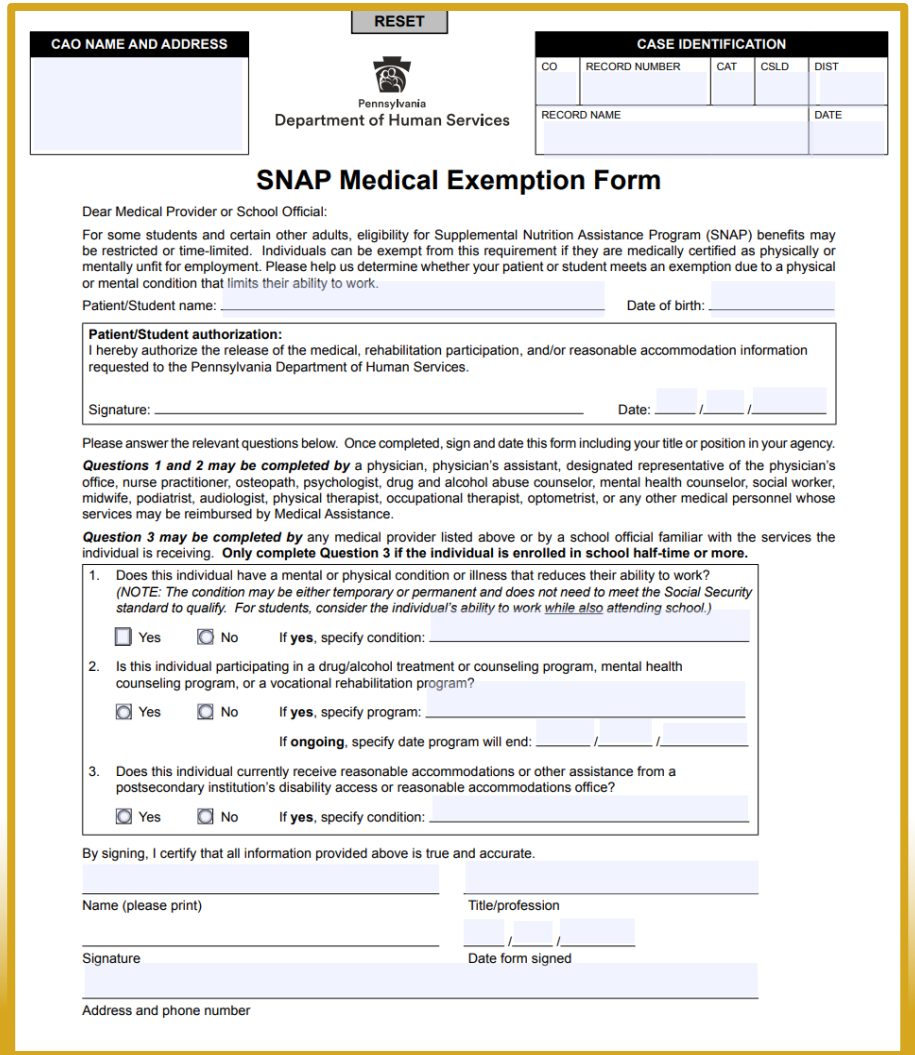
If someone cannot find their case number, include Social Security number.

Claiming an exemption

If necessary, complete the medical exemption form.

Can be completed by many providers including: physician, physician's staff, nurse practitioner, psychologist, counselor, social worker, *or* any provider who accepts Medicaid.

If the individual has no connection to a doctor, social worker, or other eligible professional who can sign the form, direct them to a Federally Qualified Health Center.



RESET

CAO NAME AND ADDRESS		CASE IDENTIFICATION				
		CO	RECORD NUMBER	CAT	CSLD	DIST
		RECORD NAME				DATE

Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

SNAP Medical Exemption Form

Dear Medical Provider or School Official:

For some students and certain other adults, eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits may be restricted or time-limited. Individuals can be exempt from this requirement if they are medically certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment. Please help us determine whether your patient or student meets an exemption due to a physical or mental condition that limits their ability to work.

Patient/Student name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Patient/Student authorization:
I hereby authorize the release of the medical, rehabilitation participation, and/or reasonable accommodation information requested to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Please answer the relevant questions below. Once completed, sign and date this form including your title or position in your agency.

Questions 1 and 2 may be completed by a physician, physician's assistant, designated representative of the physician's office, nurse practitioner, osteopath, psychologist, drug and alcohol abuse counselor, mental health counselor, social worker, midwife, podiatrist, audiologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, optometrist, or any other medical personnel whose services may be reimbursed by Medical Assistance.

Question 3 may be completed by any medical provider listed above or by a school official familiar with the services the individual is receiving. **Only complete Question 3 if the individual is enrolled in school half-time or more.**

1. Does this individual have a mental or physical condition or illness that reduces their ability to work?
   (NOTE: The condition may be either temporary or permanent and does not need to meet the Social Security standard to qualify. For students, consider the individual's ability to work while also attending school.)
   ☐ Yes ◯ No If **yes**, specify condition: _____
2. Is this individual participating in a drug/alcohol treatment or counseling program, mental health counseling program, or a vocational rehabilitation program?
   ◯ Yes ◯ No If **yes**, specify program: _____
   If **ongoing**, specify date program will end: ____/____/____
3. Does this individual currently receive reasonable accommodations or other assistance from a postsecondary institution's disability access or reasonable accommodations office?
   ◯ Yes ◯ No If **yes**, specify condition: _____

By signing, I certify that all information provided above is true and accurate.

Name (please print) Title/profession

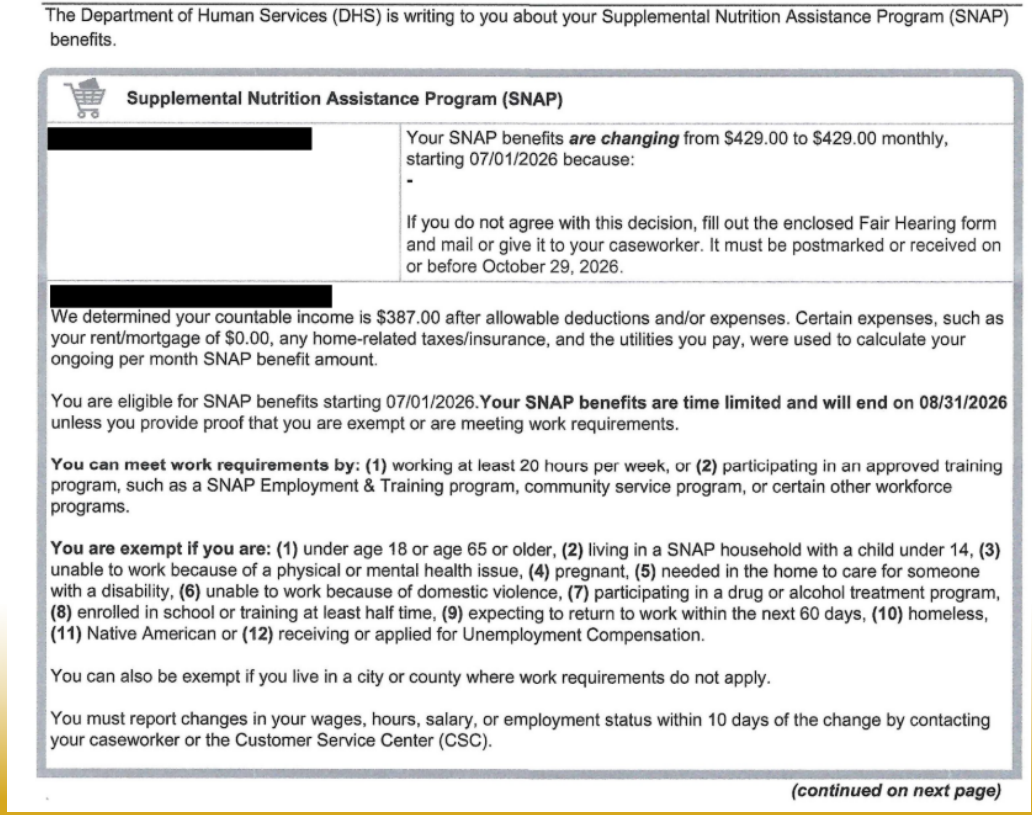
Signature Date form signed

Address and phone number

Check for exemptions first!

- Benefits are safe for the full recertification period, even if the exemption ends.
- Even if you are working or job searching, reporting an exemption keeps your benefits safe if your hours are cut or if your job search takes longer than you hoped for.
- Most exemptions (except the medical exemption) only need to be verified “if questionable.”

What notices to expect



The Department of Human Services (DHS) is writing to you about your Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

[redacted]

Your SNAP benefits ***are changing*** from $429.00 to $429.00 monthly, starting 07/01/2026 because:

-

If you do not agree with this decision, fill out the enclosed Fair Hearing form and mail or give it to your caseworker. It must be postmarked or received on or before October 29, 2026.

[redacted]

We determined your countable income is $387.00 after allowable deductions and/or expenses. Certain expenses, such as your rent/mortgage of $0.00, any home-related taxes/insurance, and the utilities you pay, were used to calculate your ongoing per month SNAP benefit amount.

You are eligible for SNAP benefits starting 07/01/2026.**Your SNAP benefits are time limited and will end on 08/31/2026** unless you provide proof that you are exempt or are meeting work requirements.

You can meet work requirements by: (1) working at least 20 hours per week, or **(2)** participating in an approved training program, such as a SNAP Employment & Training program, community service program, or certain other workforce programs.

You are exempt if you are: (1) under age 18 or age 65 or older, **(2)** living in a SNAP household with a child under 14, **(3)** unable to work because of a physical or mental health issue, **(4)** pregnant, **(5)** needed in the home to care for someone with a disability, **(6)** unable to work because of domestic violence, **(7)** participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program, **(8)** enrolled in school or training at least half time, **(9)** expecting to return to work within the next 60 days, **(10)** homeless, **(11)** Native American or **(12)** receiving or applied for Unemployment Compensation.

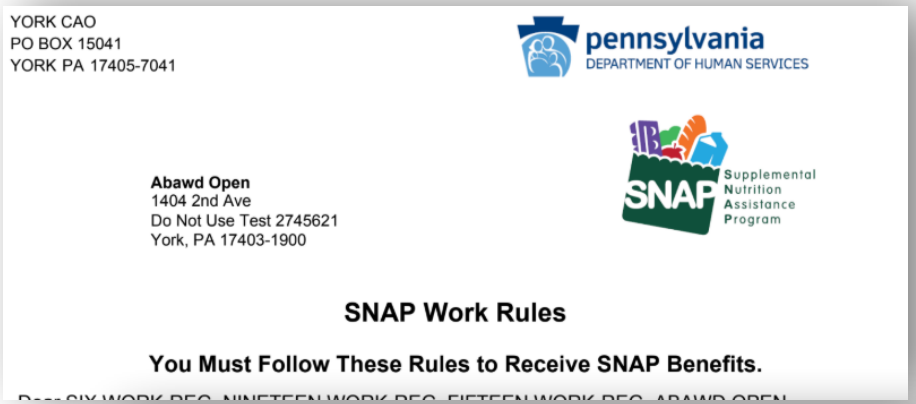
You can also be exempt if you live in a city or county where work requirements do not apply.

You must report changes in your wages, hours, salary, or employment status within 10 days of the change by contacting your caseworker or the Customer Service Center (CSC).

(continued on next page)

When your benefits are approved, underneath the benefit amount it will list if a household member's benefits will expire in 3 months.

What notices to expect



YORK CAO
PO BOX 15041
YORK PA 17405-7041

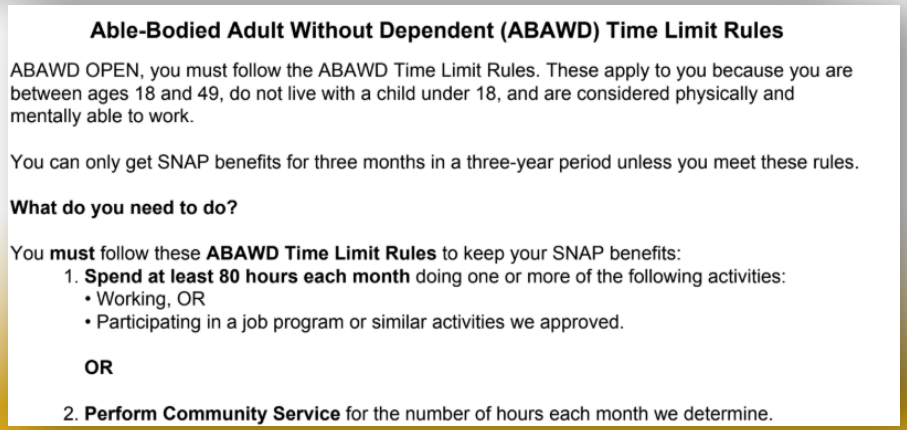
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Abawd Open
1404 2nd Ave
Do Not Use Test 2745621
York, PA 17403-1900

SNAP Work Rules

You Must Follow These Rules to Receive SNAP Benefits.



Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependent (ABAWD) Time Limit Rules

ABAWD OPEN, you must follow the ABAWD Time Limit Rules. These apply to you because you are between ages 18 and 49, do not live with a child under 18, and are considered physically and mentally able to work.

You can only get SNAP benefits for three months in a three-year period unless you meet these rules.

What do you need to do?

You **must** follow these **ABAWD Time Limit Rules** to keep your SNAP benefits:

1. **Spend at least 80 hours each month** doing one or more of the following activities:
   - Working, OR
   - Participating in a job program or similar activities we approved.

   OR

2. **Perform Community Service** for the number of hours each month we determine.

When your benefits are approved,
this notice is included in with information about your benefits - may be AFTER the pages about Lifeline free phone service.

- A **description** of work rules and **who** needs to meet them
- A list of **exemptions** you can claim to pause the three month time clock**.**

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Complying with Work Requirements

If you are not exempt, you must either:

- **work** (unpaid work counts) for 20 hours a week
- do **job training** for 20 hours a week
- A combination of work and training for 20 hours a week
- OR
- You can also **volunteer** to meet the work rules.

Complying by work



You can maintain SNAP benefits by participating at least 20 hours/ week on average, or 80 hours/month.

Reminder - exempt if earning $217.50/week!

Includes self-employment & in-kind or unpaid work. *For example:* unpaid internship or apprenticeship, work in exchange for rent, unpaid work for a faith-based organization, unpaid childcare for a family member or neighbor.

Can combine with SNAP training program to total 20 hours/week.

Combining work and unpaid work

Examples:

Rasheed drives for Uber and also takes cares of his nieces and nephews afterschool for his sister for free. He would need to document his income and hours with Uber, as well as get a letter from his sister saying how many hours a week he is watching her kids.

Jessica works 15-20 hours a week in retail at minimum wage and volunteers at her local library 5 hours a week. She would need to provide her paystubs as well as a letter or community service form from her library documenting her hours.

Complying by training

You can maintain SNAP benefits by participating in training for 20/hours per week, or combine with hours worked for a total of 20 hours/week.

You can ask for a referral to a SNAP Employment and Training program from your caseworker.

- Or, you can find programs EARN, KEYS, and JETS programs on this map & reach out to them directly.

Transportation, child care, and other supportive services can be provided to help you participate in training.

Learn more about Employment Training for SNAP

Complying by community service

You can maintain SNAP benefits by volunteering. The number of hours required per month: Household's monthly SNAP benefit divided by $7.25 (current PA minimum wage).

For one person getting maximum SNAP benefits, that would be 41 hours a month.

Cannot combine with work/training.

Use PA Navigate to find volunteer opportunities, and use a Community Service Verification form to show regular hours.

Time-limited adults should talk with their CAO caseworker, especially if they would like supportive services to help them complete their volunteer hours.

RESET FIELDS

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Community Service | Volunteer Verification Form

MAIL OR FAX THIS FORM TO:
CAO or Work Ready Name

CAO / CONTRACTOR USE ONLY	
CO / REC:	
MONTHLY HOURS:	

INSTRUCTIONS: Please mail or FAX the completed form within 10 days of receipt to the office listed above.

See reverse for detailed directions. Questions? Call the Statewide Customer Service Center at 1-877-395-8930.

SECTION I. Volunteer | Agency Information

Name of volunteer: _____ Birthdate: _____ Last 4 digits of SSN: _____

Address of volunteer: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Name of agency: _____ Agency Phone Number: _____

Address of agency: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

SECTION II. Community Service Activity Information

Start Date of Service	
Expected End Date of Service*	
Transportation Provided by Agency at No Cost?	YES ☐ NO ☐ (Circle one)

Monthly Schedule of Service	Estimated Weekly Hours
Week 1	
Week 2	
Week 3	
Week 4	
Total Monthly Estimated Hours	

Description of Tasks Performed:
1.)
2.)
3.)

SECTION III. Agency Certification

COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCY CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that our organization is a nonprofit with 501(C)(3) or 501(C)(4) status, a federal, state, or local government agency, or a church/place of worship that meets all applicable federal, state, and local laws and the above-named volunteer is registered with our agency to complete community service for the hours and period indicated above. I understand that this form is used to verify up to six months of community service participation. I also understand that our agency must report failure by a participant to meet the required monthly hours to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services within 10 days from the date the change occurred.

X _____ Signature of Site Manager

_____ Name of Site Manager (please print)

_____ Date

SECTION IV. Reporting Changes (Complete this section if updating an existing form.) Mail or fax within 10 days from date change occurred.

Actual End Date	Other Changes (Please explain below)	Signature of Site Manager	Name of Site Manager	Date
		X		

* No more than six months from start date. If community service is expected to continue beyond six months, enter six months from start date. A new form is required every six months.

PA 1938 3/20

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JUST HARVEST EST. 1986

What happens if someone doesn't comply with the work requirement?

- If current SNAP recipient and not exempt - must report immediately to CAO once hours drop
- Become subject to the time limit - 3 months of SNAP in 3 years
  3 months can be used nonconsecutively
- Same set 3-year period for **everyone**
- Current period: **January 2023 - December 2026**
- Next period: January 2027 – December 2029

Terminations

- If a SNAP household of 1: Case will close after 3 months of noncompliance. This usually happens with a renewal being due after 3 months.
- If in a household with others who continue to get SNAP, notices will be mailed – should be 15 days – prior to benefits changing.
  - Become an ineligible household member
  - Rest of the SNAP household's benefit will decrease
  - Ineligible member's income & shelter expenses become pro-rated

Getting back on SNAP

If benefits closed at renewal: complete the renewal form or submit a new application right away. Make sure you complete an interview and report an exemption.

If benefits closed for some members of the household, file an appeal within 15 days of the date on your notice to keep getting SNAP until your hearing.

It takes about 2 months to schedule a hearing. Use this time to work with the CAO to show that you are exempt or meeting the work rules.

You can re-apply while waiting for hearing if you miss the 15 day deadline to keep your SNAP open.

Quick recap:

- Check your mail and read anything from DHS right away.
- If you have a smart phone or access to the internet, use COMPASS if possible to report changes, complete renewals, and upload documents.
- Check for exemptions and be sure to report them!
- If you don't have an exemption, ask about employment and training options or community service to keep your benefits.
  - You can find them on this map & reach out to them directly if you can't reach your caseworker.
- If benefits are stopped before your renewal, appeal!
- If benefits are stopped at your renewal, turn in your renewal packet or reapply right away.

Questions?



Lessons learned for upcoming Medical Assistance changes

Lessons learned

- Many people will not know about the work requirement -- the more messengers, the better. Share information with your networks.
- Have flyers, questionnaires, and medical forms accessible to individuals.
- The best things nonprofits can do to help is to screen folks for exemptions or compliance, and help with renewals.
- Emphasize exemptions first. Many if not most people will be exempt. This is a reporting requirement – not necessarily a work requirement.

Lessons learned

- Cutoffs happen at renewals, so people may not understand that the work requirement is why they are being cut off.

- People may think their cutoff it is simply a problem with paperwork not being processed, and then reapply without reporting the needed exemption or compliance information.

Lessons learned

- Currently, not all exemptions are asked about directly in COMPASS. Use the notes section in COMPASS or include a paper with an application to report an exemption – don't rely solely upon a thorough interview with caseworkers.

- The CAO will make mistakes. Be prepared to push back.

- If working with dual SNAP/ MA households – the rules for SNAP and MA are similar but not 100% aligned. If they are exempt for SNAP but not MA, they can still volunteer for SNAP employment and training programs to meet MA requirements if need be.

Sign up to learn more!

- Webinar on **Best Practices for Assisting with Public Benefits Applications,** August12 at 2 pm:

  https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_D5hQ0VtjT2KJN3wpS2Bvew

- Sign-up link for future **Benefits Access Coalition** webinars and updates:

  https://pahealth.salsalabs.org/BenefitsAccessCoalitionSignUp2026/index.html

  Sign up for the invitation to our webinar on **Deep Dive Into Medicaid Work Requirement Rules**, September 16 at 2 pm.

Questions?