



SNAP Time Limit on Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs)

**Information Session for
Community Partners**

March 2016

ABAWD Rule

The ABAWD work requirement/time limit was created by Congress as part of welfare reform in 1996.

MA qualified for a statewide waiver since 2008.

This waiver expired December 2015.

What is the Work Requirement?

ABAWDs who are not exempt must:

- Work for 20 hours per week, including self employment (average of 80 hours/month);
- Participate in Employment & Training activities 20 hours per week (can include up to 9.5 hours job search); OR
- Volunteer in community service for up to 19 hours per month (average of 4.5 hrs/week).

What is the Time Limit?

ABAWDs who are not exempt must comply with the work requirement for 33 months in a three year period.

MA uses a fixed ABAWD clock which resets every three years. The current clock started on January 1, 2015 and ends on December 31, 2017.

Impact on ABAWDs

ABAWDs who fail to document exemption or comply with work requirements will lose up to \$194 per month in SNAP benefits.

IMPORTANT

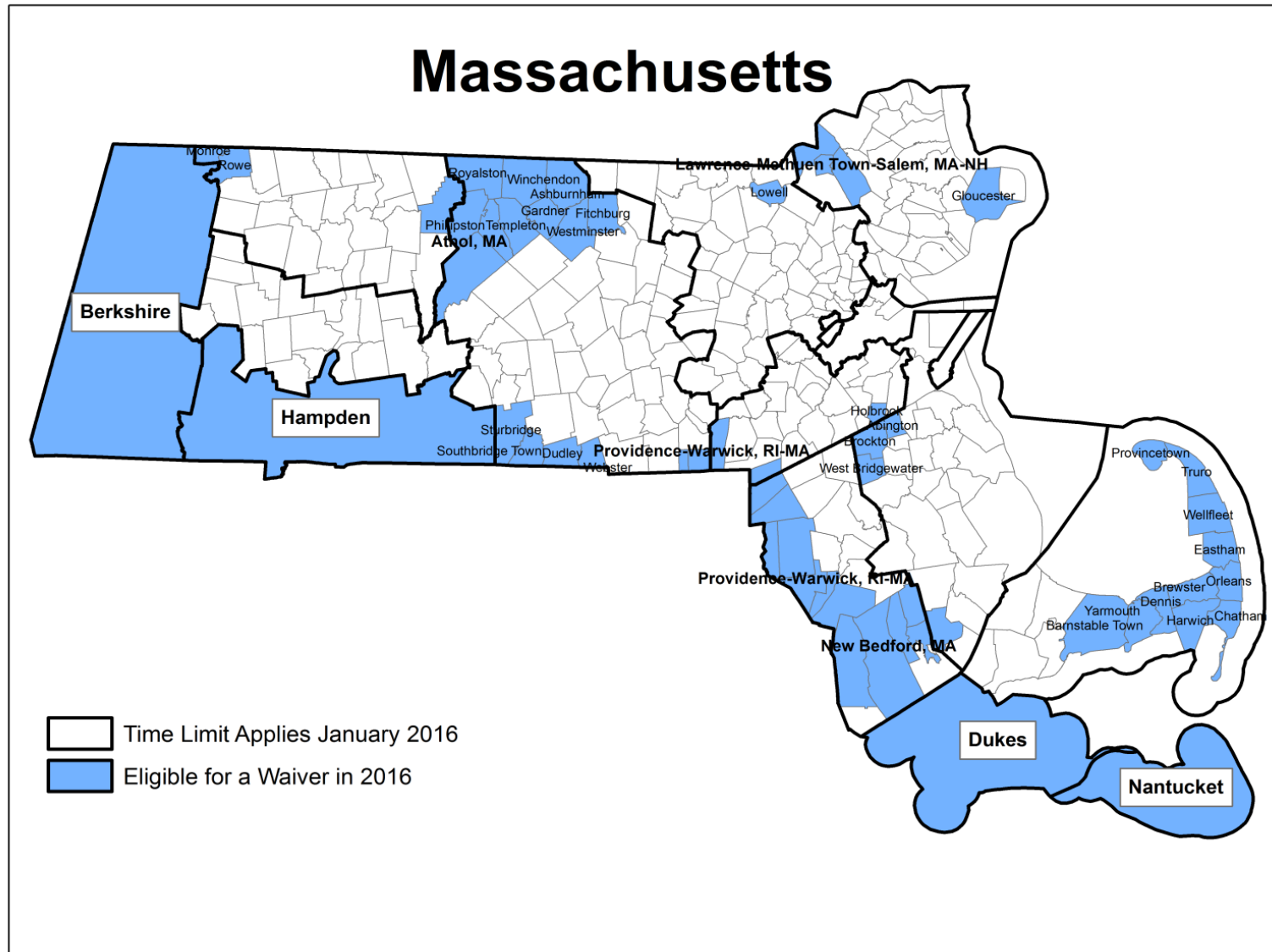
In Massachusetts, before the 2008 waiver, ABAWDs unable to meet work requirements did not regain SNAP eligibility during the 33 month period of disqualification.

A BAWD Population and Exemptions

DTA identified approximately **62,000** potential SNAP ABAWDs. About **35,000** SNAP clients are exempt due to:

- disability,
- receipt of cash assistance,
- living with a child,
- caring for a child or disabled person,
- working 30 hours,
- pregnancy,
- living in certain geographic waived areas

A BA WDs Living in Waived Areas



Characteristics of ABAWDs

The ABAWDs are some of the most vulnerable and poorest individuals in Massachusetts.

- They include the homeless – men and women, and homeless veterans.
- The chronically unemployed.
- Many lack regular health care.
- Most cannot navigate the disability benefit process.

What is “*Unfit for Employment*”

Individuals with a long or short term disability or impairment that “*reduces their ability to financially support*” themselves may be “*unfit for employment*”. This is a lower standard than “disabled” for the purpose of SSI and other benefits.

- A health care provider must verify the individual’s “*reduced capacity to financially support*” him or herself.
- A wide range of health care providers are considered *Competent Medical Authorities* who can sign DTA form.

Who can sign the Medical Report form?

Competent Medical Authority

- Physician,
- Physician's assistant,
- Designated representative of the physician's office,
- Nurse practitioner,
- Osteopath,
- Licensed or certified psychologist,
- Drug and alcohol abuse counselor,
- Certified mental health counselor,
- Licensed independent clinical social worker,
- Licensed certified social worker, and
- Certified midwife.

Note: To verify an individual's participation in a rehab or counseling program, the form can be signed by the Program Director or the individual's Counselor.

Chronic Homelessness Exemption

DTA has developed a homeless screening for questions for clients who indicate they are homeless. Questions can be answered on DTA/s Homeless Exemption Form or clients can call DTA Assistance Line for screening. Based on the answers, the client is automatically exempted from the ABAWD rule.

- Q1 Do you lack current night time residence?
 - If YES, no need for additional questions
- Q2 - Q5
 - 2 additional trigger answers will exempt client

DTA Implementation

27,000 SNAP clients received mailings about the ABAWD work requirement/time limit.

Three DTA forms to help ABAWDs claim and document exemptions:

- ABAWD Request for Work Program Exemption form - screening form, additional proof may be needed
- ABAWD Work Program Medical Report form - must be signed by Competent Medical Authority
- ABAWD Homeless Exemption Forms - signed by client or screening over the phone

Implementation Plan

November and December 2015:

- Mailings and Robo-call to nonexempt ABAWDs
- Processing of ABAWD forms
- Expansion of E&T sites to serve ABAWDs
- Establishment of Community Service sites
- BEACON changes with participation tracking functionality, warning notices and sanction letters
- Waiver expires on 12/31/18

January 2016 - March 2016:

- Participation tracking begins
- 1st & 2nd Month Noncompliance notices mailed

April 2016:

- First ABAWD noncompliance closings initiated

ABAWD Numbers



November 2015:	27,000 required ABAWDS
Early January 2016:	24,000 required ABAWDS
End of January 2016:	17,000 required ABAWDS 15,355 Strike 1
End of February 2016:	15,000 required ABAWDS 1,598 Strike 1 10,964 Strike 2
3 rd week in March 2016:	14,407 required ABAWD

Summary on DTA ABAWD Review

DTA reviews all individuals age 18-49 to determine category he/she is in:

Exempt

- Has a child under 18 in the SNAP household
- Disabled or receives federal or state disability
- Is pregnant
- Is homeless
- Lives in waived area
- Meets other exemption

Meeting ABAWD requirements

- Works at least 20 hrs/week
- Participates in an approved education or training program 20 hours/week
- Volunteers or performs community service at least 19 hours/month

Is not exempt and has not met ABAWD requirements

- The 3-month time limit applies
- Strike or closing notice will be sent

Impact on Community Partners

Community groups and service providers count on SNAP as a resource for their clients.

- Food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens can expect a sustained increase in food requests.
- Shelters may see an increase in need as some people forgo rent payments to buy food.
- Health care providers may need to know when a patient's food budget is slashed to manage medications and other treatments.
- Job training programs may find that clients have even fewer resources as they look for work.

How Community Partners Can Help

- Raise awareness of ABAWD rules.
- Display posters and distribute flyers.
- Communicate with other stake holders.
- Help SNAP clients complete the ABAWD exemption screening form and homeless form.
- Help SNAP clients get medical provider to sign off on ABAWD medical report form
- Refer SNAP clients who need assistance verifying the screening form or medical report to stakeholders or DTA.

ABAWD Closings

Approximately 9,000 clients who received the ABAWD Second Strike Notice in March (for February) will not receive SNAP benefits for April unless DTA receives proof that they:

- were exempt from the requirement in March;
- met the requirement in March; or
- had Good Cause for not meeting the requirement in March.

ABAWD Closings (Continued)

If DTA does not receive proof that the client was meeting or exempt by the closing date associated with the last digit of the grantee's SSN, the Third Strike will be applied and the ABAWD will become ineligible.

Note: If the ABAWD is the only person in the household, the case will close. Households with additional people will have their benefits reduced or closed.

If the closing is stopped because the client proves that s/he met the requirement in March, each month that s/he gets SNAP while not exempt, becomes a new potential Third Strike month.

Review of the ABAWD Strike History

When a SNAP client contacts DTA **within 30 days** of closing due to noncompliance with the ABAWD WP requirement, staff will determine if the client was correctly closed.

Did the client:

- meet the work requirement;
- have Good Cause for not meeting requirement; or
- qualify for an exemption during any strike month?

The client must verify exemption/meeting before the strike(s) will be removed and benefit restored.

ABA WD Applications After Closing

If the client was correctly closed or if it has been **more than 30 days** since the closing, a new application is needed to determine future SNAP eligibility.



Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
SNAP Benefits Application



Source: (please check one)
 CEO Project Bread DMH
 DMR BMC Food Pantry
 MRC Other _____

1. Information About You (Answer all boxes.) If you are a noncitizen who chooses NOT to apply for SNAP benefits, you do not need to tell us your Social Security number or immigration status.			
Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Social Security Number - -
Is this name your (check one)	<input type="checkbox"/> Name at Birth <input type="checkbox"/> Prior Marriage Name	<input type="checkbox"/> Maiden Name <input type="checkbox"/> Alias	<input type="checkbox"/> Married Name

Regaining Eligibility

If previous strikes cannot be removed, to become eligible for SNAP again during the current 36-month period, a client must provide proof that s/he:

- is now exempt from the ABAWD work program requirement;
- has worked at one or more jobs (paid or unpaid) for a total of 80 hours during a 30 consecutive day period;

Regaining Eligibility (Continued)

- has participated in a qualifying Employment and Training (E&T) activity for 80 hours during a 30 consecutive day period;
- has worked at an approved community service site for a specified number of hours per month determined by dividing the anticipated monthly SNAP allotment by the state minimum wage; or
- *will meet* the WP requirement within a 30 day period.

Regaining Eligibility (Continued)

After regaining, the client may remain eligible for the balance of the three-year period as long as s/he continues to comply with or is exempt from the requirement.

There is no limit as to number of times that an ABAWD can regain eligibility for SNAP following disqualification.

Regaining Eligibility (Continued)

An ABAWD who is closed for failure to comply with the work requirement is **NOT ELIGIBLE FOR EXPEDITED** SNAP benefits unless DTA has proof that s/he has become exempt or is meeting the ABAWD WP requirement.

Questions



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