

Geauga County Job and Family Services Geauga County Extension of Benefits Policy

The Geauga County Department of Job and Family Services is required by Ohio statute to adopt a policy establishing the criteria the agency will follow to determine if a hardship exists for a particular assistance group in order to provide additional Ohio Works First benefits up to twenty-four additional months. This policy is not intended over turn eligibility requirements for Ohio Works First benefits but is solely for the county department to determine if a hardship exists which warrants continued benefits.

This policy will be called the *Geauga County Extension of Benefits Policy*. Assistance groups having received 36 months of Ohio Works First benefits followed by a 24 month waiting period may apply for an additional 24 months of Ohio Works First benefits under the *Geauga County Extension of Benefits Policy*. Each assistance group will be reviewed for a hardship condition based upon it's own merits. However, the following criteria is used to determine potential good cause under this policy and to ensure a fair and equal treatment of all applicants by the county department.

Conditions Contributing to a Determination of Hardship

1. The assistance group has recently lost employment not as a result of a voluntary quit and has been unable to obtain new employment.
2. The assistance group has recently been disrupted by divorce or separation and as a result has experienced a reduction in income and is in need of financial assistance and employment and training assistance to achieve self sufficiency.
3. A member of the assistance group has been exposed to domestic violence and as a result is in need of additional services.
4. The assistance group is currently active with the county child protective services agency. There is a there is a court-ordered case plan which requires full participation by the adult member(s) of the assistance group to ensure the health and safety of the children/child.
5. Unique personal circumstances exist that limits the assistance groups ability to be self-sufficient. These circumstances are not limited to the following: transportation barriers, disability, homelessness, participation in a substance abuse program.
6. A contributing condition not previously known or addressed as part of the individuals self sufficiency plan has been discovered. This would include the discovery of a learning disability not previously identified or addressed.
7. Any other unique condition which creates a hardship for the assistance group which can justify the extension of OWF benefits up to an additional twenty-four months.

An assistance group must apply for an Ohio Works First benefit extension by completing a *Geauga County Extension of Benefits Policy* request form along with the standard application for Ohio Works First benefits. An assistance group must also provide verification acceptable to Geauga County Job and Family Services that the assistance group had employment during the period the assistance group was not participating in OhioWorks First along with the amount and sources of the assistance group's income during that period. If a hardship condition is established, the assistance group will be eligible for the remaining months of Ohio Works First benefits up to the 60 month federal assistance time limit, as long as the assistance group continues to meet eligibility requirements of the Ohio Works First program.

An assistance group eligible for OWF benefits pursuant to this policy which subsequently loses it's OWF eligibility may reapply subject to the provision of this policy. Assistance groups ineligible for an extension of benefits pursuant to this policy will be advised of the agency's decision in writing and will be afforded all state hearing rights.

The Geauga County Department of Job and Family Services maintains the right and discretion to amend and manage this policy. The effective date of this policy is February 20, 2003.

Executive Director, GCJFS

Date

