

FACT SHEET

Ohio Works First

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OhioWorks First was established to provide time-limited cash assistance to eligible families through Ohio's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program which emphasizes employment, personal responsibility and self-sufficiency. Applications are completed and processed at county departments of job and family services and cash assistance is provided to eligible families for up to 36 months. For child-only cases, there are no time-limits for cash assistance.

Each county agency develops its own policies for hardship and good cause extensions. After a 36 month time-limit, cash assistance is not available unless the county department of job and family services approves an extension. A family may apply for a hardship extension at any time after their 36 month time-limit has ended. A family may apply for a good cause extension after a 24 month waiting period following the 36 month time-limit

Who is Eligible?

Ohio Works First eligibility requirements include:

- A minor child in an assistance group or a pregnant woman at least six-months pregnant.
- Children must reside with a parent, specified relative, legal guardian or a legal custodian.
- Unmarried minor parents and pregnant minors must be in an approved adult-supervised living arrangement, or live with a parent, legal guardian, specified relative or legal custodian.
- Adults and minor heads-of-household who apply for or receive benefits must sign a self-sufficiency contract.

Failure to comply with the contract without good cause can result in sanctions affecting entire family. Failure to sign the self-sufficiency contract by an adult or minor head-of-household results in denial or termination of benefits. The contract explains requirements for the participant, the county department of job and family services, the child support enforcement agency and the public children services agency. Adults and minor heads-of-households are required to participate in work activities.

Who is Not Eligible?

Persons not eligible include assistance groups with an individual who

- does not sign the self-sufficiency contract, or
- does not comply with the terms of the contract, or
- terminates employment without just cause while receiving transitional Medicaid or child care benefits, or
- has income that exceeds the amount for the assistance group size, or
- has received benefits fraudulently, or
- receives Supplemental Security Income, or
- receives adoption assistance payments or federal, state or local foster care maintenance payments.

Other individuals who are not eligible include

- fugitive felons
- probation/parole violators
- individuals convicted for fraudulent misstatement of residence in order to receive benefits.

Income, Resources and Disregards

There is no resource limit for Ohio Works First because resources are not considered in determining eligibility. Families with earned income who do not currently participate in Ohio Works First, and have not participated at least one out of the previous four months must meet a gross income test for eligibility to be determined. Gross monthly income includes unearned income and earned income before taxes. The gross income limit for a family of three is currently \$734, but increases annually. When a member secures employment, the gross income test does not have to be met in a participating family, or a family that has participated at least one out of the last four months.

Families must meet the gross income test which means \$250, plus one-half of a family's remaining income is deducted from the total gross earned income. If the family member works and pays for child care, the actual verified child care cost paid by the family can be deducted. Unearned income is deducted from the payment dollar-for-dollar.

Currently an Ohio Works First payment for a family of three is \$434. If the family is not paying child care, they could earn up to \$1097 in monthly gross income and qualify for \$10 in cash assistance. But if the family is eligible for a benefit of less than \$10, a check is not issued because the state does not issue checks for less than \$10.

Benefits are currently issued through a paper warrant or deposited directly into a checking or savings account. Beginning February 1, 2009, families can also receive benefits on a prepaid branded debit MasterCard® called the Ohio Eppicard™.