

**OHIO WORKS FIRST TIME LIMITS
HARDSHIP CRITERIA
VINTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES**

36 MONTH TIME LIMIT: Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code limits Ohio Works First (OWF) to thirty-six (36) months for families that include an adult head-of-household, a pregnant minor head-of-household, minor parent head-of household, or spouse of such head-of household.

20% EXEMPTION CRITERIA: Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code allows the local county department of job and family services to exempt up to 20% of the average monthly number of families receiving OWF from the time limit if it is determined the family suffers from a 'hardship'. The county department of job and family services defines hardship and determines if the OWF assistance group meets the criteria.

VCDJFS HARDSHIP CRITERIA: Ohio Works First (OWF) assistance groups who have reached the 36-month time limit for participation in the OWF program may be exempted from the time limit if a hardship exists. The family must meet all the criteria in Section I of this policy. The family must meet one or more of the hardship criteria described in Section II. The policy in Section III addresses limits on the number of months an OWF assistance group may receive benefits due to a hardship. Section IV addresses the treatment of an OWF transfer case. Section V explains the VCDJFS procedure for informing OWF assistance groups about the hardship exemption criteria.

SECTION I

The Ohio Work First assistance group must meet all the criteria in this section in order to meet the hardship exemption:

(1) The total gross income of the OWF assistance group and all other household members, including but not limited to individuals who are normally excluded from the OWF standard filing unit as per OAC Section 5101: 1-23-10, does not exceed the Ohio Works First Initial Eligibility Test (101-1-97) for the appropriate household size.

Household members, age 60 or older and not the natural or adoptive parents, or stepparents of a minor child(ren) in the OWF assistance group, and their income are excluded from this determination.

(2) The total available resources as defined in the Food Stamp Certification Handbook Section 5101:4-4-01 of the OWF assistance group and all other household members, including but not limited to individuals who are normally excluded for the OWF standard filing unit as per OAC Section 5101:1-23-10, does not exceed \$5000.00. Household members, age 60 or older who are not natural or adoptive parents or stepparents of a minor child in the OWF assistance group and their resources are excluded from this determination.

(3) OWF assistance group members who are required to cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) must be cooperating with the CSEA and must not have been sanctioned for failure to cooperate without good cause in the six (6) months prior to reaching the

36-month time limit.

(4) OWF assistance group members who are required to sign a self-sufficiency contract and required to participate in OWF Work Activities, or LEAP activities, must be actively and successfully participating in those activities as per their individual self-sufficiency plans and must not have been sanctioned for non-participation without good cause in the six (6) months prior to reaching the 36-month time limit.

SECTION II

The Ohio Works First adult assistance group member or the minor head-of-household subject to the 36-month time limit must meet one or more of these criteria in order for a hardship exemption to be considered:

- (1) The assistance group member is a pregnant woman who is physically unable to work due to her pregnancy.
- (2) The assistance group member is a single custodial parent of a child under three (3) months of age.
- (3) The assistance group member is 60 years of age or older.
- (4) The assistance group member is needed in the home to care for a child or other assistance group member who is disabled or terminally ill and other arrangements for the care of the disabled or terminally ill person are not available. Verification is required.
- (5) The assistance group member is residing in a domestic violence shelter.
- (6) The assistance group member is unable to work due to mental health issues and is currently receiving treatment. Verification is required.
- (7) The assistance group member is unable to work due to physical incapacity or disability and is currently receiving treatment. Verification is required.
- (8) The assistance group member is a single custodial parent and no child care is available. Verification is required. The unavailability of child care can not be due to the adult assistance group member's failure to make the appropriate child care payments.
- (9) The assistance group member has an active case with the VCDJFS Children's Services Unit and is satisfactorily participating with the case plan. This would include the OWF assistance group whose OWF assistance is continuing because of the 180-day reunification plan. Verification is required. VCDJFS CSB/IM/WA staff are required to coordinate self-sufficiency and employment opportunities with the family's CSB case plan requirements to assist the family find employment and establish family stability.
- (10) The assistance group member has language or literacy barriers to employment and is actively and successfully participating in the appropriate educational component.

(11) The assistance group member is enrolled fulltime (minimum 12 credit hours) in an education/training program that is directly related to obtaining employment and the program will not end prior to reaching the 36-month time limit. This exemption criteria is allowable for no more than six (6) additional months or until the educational/training program is completed whichever occurs first. The assistance group member must be in good standing (maintaining a grade point average of 2.0) with the education/training program and must have a grade point average of 2.0 or better the previous grading period.

(12) The assistance group member is not employed or is employed with a wage which would render the member cash-eligible were it not for the time limits and has not been given the opportunity to participate due to the lack of an appropriate work activity leading to self-sufficiency for the last twelve (12) months.

(13) The assistance group member has significant social barriers to employment such a local labor surplus, high unemployment, underemployment, homelessness, felony convictions and/or lack of available supportive services. The lack of available transportation may be considered a significant social barrier if the adult assistance group member has exhausted all accessible transportation opportunities such as PRC assistance, VCDJFS or WIA partners contracted transportation services, ride sharing, etc.

For the purpose of the hardship exemption, underemployment is defined as employment that is not full-time (30 hours per week or less). Underemployment will not be considered if the assistance group member has been underemployed for a period of twelve (12) months or more.

In addition, in the six month period prior to the OWF time-limit expiration, the adult assistance group member must not have: (1) failed to report to a job interview; (2) accept a bona-fide offer of employment; (3) quit a job without good cause; (4) missed a scheduled work activity appointment without good cause; or (5) failed to apply for or accept any employment opportunities recommended by VCDJFS staff or other WIA partners.

(14) The adult assistance group member has a substance abuse problem which renders currently him/her unemployable and the adult assistance group member is currently participating satisfactorily in a treatment program. Verification is required.

(15) The assistance group member is actively pursuing SSI eligibility and is working with VCDJFS staff to establish eligibility. Verification is required.

(16) The assistance group member is has other barriers to employment that are short-term (3 or less months) and is working with VCDJFS staff to resolve the barriers. Verification is required and this exemption requires Director approval.

SECTION III

The hardship exemptions that are grant based on Section I and Section II are subject to the time

and review specified in this section. The OWF assistance group's hardship exemption will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as needed; some cases will be reviewed every (3) months and some cases will be reviewed every (6) months to determine if the assistance group continues to meet the exemption criteria. The review period will be determined by the Workforce Development Unit with approval of the VCDJFS Director. The OWF assistance group exemption may be reviewed by VCDJFS staff prior to the required three/six months as needed.

The hardship exemption shall not exceed twenty-four (24) months.

If the number of OWF assistance groups receiving benefits due to a hardship exemption exceeds the allowable 20% as defined in ORC 5107.18; the OWF assistance group with the highest number of months of OWF hardship benefits issued will be terminated.

SECTION IV

Ohio Works First assistance groups that transfer to Vinton County from another county shall have their hardship exemption reviewed and continued eligibility for benefits will be determined by the hardship criteria defined in Sections I, II, and III. Exemption status will no longer be determined by the previous county's criteria.

SECTION V

Each Ohio Works First assistance group receives ODJFS notices explaining the 36-month time limit regulation; how many months of OWF eligibility have been used and how many OWF eligibility months are remaining. In addition, VCDJFS Workforce Development and Income Maintenance units and the VCDJFS Ombudsperson have combined interviews with the OWF assistance group adult member(s) that reviews the time-limits regulations; reviews the number of remaining eligibility months and reviews the plan for self-sufficiency. Each OWF assistance group will have an appointment scheduled to review the hardship criteria six (6) months prior to the end of the 36-month time limit.

The OWF assistance group can apply for continuing OWF benefits based on meeting the hardship exemption criteria after their assistance has been terminated. The OWF assistance group will be responsible for contacting their IM eligibility worker for an eligibility appointment and the assistance group will be responsible for providing all required verification.

This VCDJFS policy is effective 10-1-04.

Jody Walker, Director Date

OHIO WORKS FIRST INITIAL ELIGIBILITY TEST STANDARDS (10-1-97)

ASSISTANCE GROUP SIZE

OWF INITIAL ELIGIBILITY TEST

1	\$423.00
2	\$537.00
3	\$630.00
4	\$750.00
5	\$858.00
6	\$942.00
7	\$1038.00
8	\$1139.00