

GEAUGA COUNTY JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES HARDSHIP EXEMPTION CRITERIA

Under ORC 5107.18 a County Department of Job and Family Services may declare up to twenty percent (20%) of its average caseload during the prior Federal Fiscal Year to be under a “hardship” and grant such assistance groups an exemption in order to continue assistance beyond the 36th month limit. Accordingly, an Assistance Group residing in Geauga County may meet the hardship exemption criteria after the expiration of the thirty-six (36) month time limit. In accordance with this statute prior to the expiration of the Assistance Group’s thirty-six (36) months of assistance, Geauga County Job and Family Services will conduct a face to face interview with the Assistance Group to determine potential eligibility for a hardship exemption. There is no application for a hardship exemption however an application will be required to determine OWF eligibility based on the hardship exemption.

To determine if a hardship exemption exists, the case will be reviewed to determine if the Assistance Group meets three preliminary criteria which are:

1. Household Income is less than the OWF payment standard for the Assistance Group size.
2. The Assistance Group includes an adult or minor head of household who has participated in OWF for thirty-six (36) months.
3. The Assistance Group has been in full compliance with their self-sufficiency agreement for the twelve months prior to the expiration of the 36th month time limit or had good cause for not meeting the requirements of the self-sufficiency agreement.

If the Assistance Group meets all three of these criteria, the Assistance Group will be reviewed for one or more of the primary exemptions. An Assistance Group may be eligible for a “hardship exemption” for a period not to exceed twenty-four (24) months based on the family’s circumstances if, upon reaching the thirty-sixth (36th) month of participation, one or more of the following four exemptions are found to exist:

Exemption 1:

The parent/caretaker is pending SSI/SSD for a mental or physical disability and has been unable to participate in an assigned work activity due to the disability as verified by a licensed physician. The individual must have applied for SSI/SSD eligibility more than six (6) months prior to the expiration of the time limit or within sixty (60) days of the onset of the disabling condition. GCJFS reserves the right to secure and rely upon additional opinions from medical providers of its choice.

Exemption 2:

The parent/caretaker is providing care for a disabled immediate family member living in the home and other arrangements for the disabled member’s care are not available as verified by the GCJFS and their presence precludes them from obtaining or maintaining employment. The immediate family member must be enrolled in SSI/SSD or pending SSI/SSD. The parent/caretaker must provide evidence that an application for SSI/SSD has been pending for at least 90 days prior to the expiration of the 36th month time limit and must notify GCJFS of any change in pending status. Upon denial of a pending SSI/SSD application, this exemption will no

longer be considered as cause to extend assistance under this policy. An immediate family member is defined as a spouse, child, parent, sibling, or grandparent. GCJFS reserves the right to secure and rely upon additional opinions from medical providers of its choice.

Exemption 3:

The parent or caretaker is enrolled full-time and in good standing in an education or training program that, by itself or in combination with other assignments, meets their work participation requirement and will lead to self sufficiency. The individual must have been enrolled in the education or training program for at least six (6) months prior to the expiration of the time limit and must complete the education or training program within six (6) months of the expiration of the time limit.

Exemption 4:

The individual is a caretaker who is over sixty (60) years of age. Assistance Groups qualifying for a hardship exemption under these criteria will be evaluated on a monthly basis to determine if the hardship exemption is still applicable.

If, at any point, GCJFS can no longer grant hardship exemptions to all qualifying Assistance Groups due to the statutory requirements of the 20% limitation, priority will be given to those Assistance Groups which qualify under Exemption #1 (disabled pending SSI or SSDI) above, then to those which qualify under Exemption #2 (care of disabled family member) above and then to those who have received the least total number of months of OWF assistance since October 1, 1997.

Revised Effective September 1, 2011