

Geauga County Job and Family Services Ohio Works First Hardship Criteria

Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code makes an assistance group ineligible for Ohio Works First if an assistance group includes an adult who has participated in Ohio Works First for 36 months regardless of whether those months were consecutive, except as provided in Revised Code Section 5107.18(B), (C), (D) and (E).

There may be some months that are excluded from the counting of the 36 months. Those exceptions are set forth in divisions (C) and (D) of section 5107.18 of the Revised Code and in rule 5101:1-23-01 of the Ohio Administrative Code (O.A.C.).

Section 5107.18 (E) of the Ohio Revised Code also provides that the Geauga County Job and Family Services may exempt not more than twenty per cent of the average Ohio Works First participants from the time limit established by this section on the grounds that the Geauga County Job and Family Services determines that the time limit is a hardship. In the case of the time limit established by 5107.18 (A) of the Revised Code, the Geauga County Job and Family Services may not exempt an assistance group until the group has exhausted its thirty-six months of cash assistance.

When considering conditions that the department would consider to be a hardship, the department will consider the Black's Law Dictionary definition of "hardship" which is "in general, privation, suffering, or adversity. The hardship exemption applies to recipients, and former recipients of Ohio Works First.

The Department will conduct a face to face interview with participants subject to the 36 month ban three months prior to the 36th month of cash assistance. During this interview the case manager will discuss barriers and solutions, along with the county hardship criteria. The participant will be given the application to request a hardship exemption.

In order to obtain and maintain a hardship exemption, the Ohio Works First participant must: 1) Make application for a hardship exemption 2) be in compliance with all elements of their self-sufficiency contract and 3) continue to comply with all requirements of the Ohio Works First program. Failure to comply with the self-sufficiency contract established between the participant and the agency will result in the utilization of the three tier sanction process.

The duration of the exemption will be evaluated on a case by case basis, based on the specific reasons that a hardship is determined to exist. The participants hardship exemption will be reevaluated as often as necessary but at a minimum every 6 months.

A review panel composed of the Director of the Social Services Division, Director of the Human Services Division and a Family Service Team Facilitator will review each application to determine whether the participant's employment barriers meet a condition as specified in the hardship criteria. The participants case manager will present the case to the panel, making available the application, case record, and any other relevant documentation.

The following criteria is utilized, in descending order, to determine potential hardship. Once all of the hardship exemption slots have been allocated, the department reserves the right to end a hardship exemption for a criteria that is less severe as based on the descending order of criteria as listed below. The Geauga County Job and Family Services reserves the right and discretion to manage the exemption slots available, and to deny or terminate an exemption as necessary to remain in compliance with the law. The agency maintains its right to modify the criteria as necessary.

1. A mental health, or medical condition that causes the participant to be unemployable, as documented by a mental health professional, or licensed medical professional. The participant must be complying with a recommended treatment plan and must apply for Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Benefits. The individual must follow up with the appeal process for any denial of assistance for these benefits.
2. A medical condition of a child that prevents the child from being placed in a licensed day care facility as documented by a physician. This results in the adult care giver in the assistance group being required to be in the home to provide care, making employment activities unrealistic.
3. Based on a recommendation from the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services that there is no remediation that will make employment realistic for the participant. Hardship will be granted while efforts are being made to continue pursuit of eligibility for benefits administered by the Social Security Administration.
4. The adult care giver is participating in training, alternative, developmental, or counseling, services whose completion is necessary to reach a level of economic self-support. This category also includes an individual who has been battered or subject to extreme cruelty. These services must have a completion date identified, and imposition of the time limits would harm the individuals efforts to become self-sufficient.
5. Employed individuals with documented handicaps or conditions who are working to their capacity as documented by an appropriate professional evaluation and determined by the Geauga County Job and Family Services, who continue to qualify for Ohio Works First assistance.
6. Adults actively participating in substance abuse treatment programs in which a designated completion date is identified. The department will determine if such condition renders the participant to be unemployable.
7. Transportation barriers that have not been resolved through the use of public transportation or through his or her application for Prevention Retention and Contingency.