

Henry County
Department of Job and Family Services

OWF Hardship Criteria Plan

Effective October 1, 2000

Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code limits participation in Ohio Works First (OWF) to 36 months. An assistance group is ineligible for OWF if the assistance group includes an adult who has participated in OWF for 36 months, regardless of whether those months were consecutive. This regulation also allows counties to extend OWF benefits to assistance groups through a hardship plan. The determination of hardship is solely a CDJFS decision and allows for not more than 20% of the average monthly number of OWF assistance groups from the time limit due to hardship.

Procedure for requesting a hardship exemption

This CDJFS shall not exempt an OWF assistance group from the OWF time limits until the assistance group has exhausted the 36 months of benefits. The 36-month period does not have to be consecutive.

Assistance groups that wish to be considered for an exemption shall make their request in writing. The assistance group only needs to submit a statement to the agency requesting their OWF benefits be reviewed for extension due to a hardship. The exemption request may be filed by a member of the assistance group after receiving at least one of the warning notices. The agency shall verify the 36-month time period for correctness.

A face-to-face appointment shall be held between an assistance group member and the current eligibility referral specialist to review all related circumstances. The assistance group seeking the hardship exemption must provide the County with any required documentation and cooperate with the self sufficiency plan during the hardship exemption review and during any hardship exemption extension granted. Failure of an assistance group to cooperate in any aspect of the hardship process shall be just and sufficient cause to deny a hardship request or to revoke a request that may have been previously granted.

The County shall make a ruling on the hardship exemption status within 30 days of the date of the hardship extension request. If the required documentation is not provided within 30 days of the receipt of the request, the County may deny the request for a hardship exemption. When the County denies a request for a hardship exemption, CRISE will provide the assistance group seeking the exemption with a notice of denial.

OWF hardship exemptions

Priority 1:

An assistance group whose parent or caretaker's capacity to pursue, obtain and/or maintain employment is being disrupted by domestic violence. The parent or caretaker will need to provide documentation (i.e., police report, court appearance) of the domestic violence and that steps are being taken to resolve the situation (such as family counseling, separation proceedings, etc.). This extension is for a period not to exceed three months and the adult caretaker must be participating as assigned in the Self-Sufficiency Plan. CRISE screen TLRU code 0501 corresponds with this exemption.

Priority 2:

An assistance group whose parent or caretaker has a serious physical/mental illness or condition rendering them incapacitated for employment. A physician must verify the incapacity. SSI must be pending at a level 2 appeal (hearing by an administrative law judge) or higher and the individuals must be participating as assigned in the Self-Sufficiency Plan. The maximum length of time for this extension is until the SSI determination or the federal 60 month time limit has been reached, whichever is earlier. CRISE screen TLRU code 0402 corresponds with this exemption.

Priority 3:

An assistance group whose parent or caretaker must provide medically necessary full-time care for an assistance group member who is experiencing an emergency medical situation. This extension continues until the assistance group member is stabilized or the need no longer exists, whichever is earlier. Medical documentation will be required and the adult caretaker must be participating as assigned in the Self-Sufficiency Plan. CRISE screen TLRU code 0403 corresponds with this exemption.

Priority 4:

Families involved with child protective services and experiencing a family crisis. A PCSA case plan and Self-Sufficiency Plan are required and families must be actively working to resolve the identified problem. Ongoing communication between the eligibility referral specialist and social service case manager must occur. This extension continues until HCDJFS determines the family situation is stabilized. CRISE screen TLRU code 0204 corresponds with this exemption.

An assistance group which exhausts its initial exemption and which still meets the criteria for a hardship extension may reapply for an exemption. Such requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. **Extensions are not automatic.**

The CDJFS retains the authority to prioritize which assistance groups are entitled to receive a hardship exemption. If the County reaches the 20% limit and is at risk of exceeding this limit, extensions will be granted first to those with a Priority 1 exemption,

second to those with Priority 2, third to those with Priority 3, etc. When not all assistance groups in any priority group can be given an extension due to the 20% limitation, priority within that group will be given to those who have received the lesser number of months of OWF assistance since October 1, 1997. All participants will be afforded due process prior to extension closure. The CDJFS reserves the right to amend this plan at any time determined necessary by the agency.