

# **HOCKING, ROSS AND VINTON COUNTY POLICY ON OWF TIME LIMITS AND HARDSHIP EXEMPTION CRITERIA**

Effective April 1, 2012

## **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 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.

## **GENERAL CONDITIONS**

1. No exemption from the OWF time limits can be granted more than 30 days prior to the expiration of the initial 36 month eligibility period.
2. A face-to-face interview to discuss the reasons for the hardship request will be conducted prior to the granting of any exemption. A hardship exemption review form must be completed to document the request.
3. There must be ongoing participation in OWF work activities.
4. Exemptions will be reviewed a minimum of once every three months and can be removed at any time. It should be noted that any months in which an exemption is granted **does** count against the 5 year federal limits.
5. All adults in the household must meet an exemption
6. Hardship will not be considered if there has been a self-sufficiency contract failure in the previous 12 months.

## **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 County Department of Job and Family Services 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

1. A pregnant woman in her last trimester who is physically unable to work due to her pregnancy. A physician's statement is required. **Up to three months of additional benefits.**
2. A single parent of a child less than 3 months old. **This exemption will be granted for one (2) month period.**

3. A caretaker relative aged 60 or older. The participant would be encouraged to seek work through Title V (Mature Services) and other senior employment and training.
4. The assistance group member is needed in the home on a 24-hour basis to care for a child or other immediate family member who is severely disabled or terminally ill and no other adult in the home or other arrangements for the care of the severely disabled or terminally ill person are available. Immediate family member is defined as an individual's spouse, child, adopted or step child.
  - a. A statement must be provided by a licensed physician that indicates the need for 24 hour care.
  - b. All supportive services must be explored and utilized if available. These services include services through the County Board of DD, Waiver, Passport, Court Systems, etc.
  - c. For school aged children, verification from the school and the physician must be received stating the child is unable to attend school and there are no other supportive services available.
5. The assistance group member is unable to work for at least (3) months due to mental health issues and has been and is currently receiving treatment on an ongoing, continuous basis with a mental health expert. Verification is required from a psychiatrist or psychologist. The caseworker will encourage all AG members that allege mental disabilities to apply for SSI/SSDI.
6. The assistance group member is unable to work for at least (3) months due to physical incapacity or disability and has been and is currently receiving treatment. Verification is required by a physician. The caseworker will encourage all AG members that allege physical disabilities to apply for SSI/SSDI.
7. The assistance group member has an active case plan with the Children Services Board and is satisfactorily participating in the case plan. Monthly verification is required from the CSB. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

### **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. The OWF assistance group exemption may be reviewed by County Department of Job and Family Services staff prior to the required three/six months as needed.

The hardship exemption shall not exceed twenty-four (24) months. No more than two extensions in any one category shall be granted.

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 County Department of Job and Family Services 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. Upon reaching the 36 month time limit for OWF, the assistance group will be responsible for contacting their JOBS One-Stop Worker to request an extension to continue OWF benefits based on meeting exemption criteria and to provide any needed documentation of how they meet the criteria.

Case managers will meet with customers who have exhausted between 24 months to 30 months of OWF. Families will be reminded there are many services offered at the County Department of Job and Family Services, however; they are ultimately responsible for their own well-being and self sufficiency.