

**OHIO WORKS FIRST TIME LIMITS  
HARDSHIP CRITERIA  
JACKSON 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.

**JCDJFS 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 one or more of the hardship criteria described in Section I. The policy in Section II addresses limits on the number of months an OWF assistance group may receive benefits due to a hardship. Section III addresses the treatment of an OWF transfer case. Section IV explains the JCDJFS procedure for informing OWF assistance groups about the hardship exemption criteria.

**SECTION I**

All 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 their allowable, alternative or developmental activities per their individual self-sufficiency plans.

The Ohio Work First assistance group 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 in her last trimester who is physically unable to work due to her pregnancy. **A physician’s or psychologist’s statement is required. Up to three months of additional benefits.**
- (2) The assistance group member is a single custodial parent of a child under three (3) months of age. **Up to three months of additional benefits.**
- (3) **The assistance group member is 60 through 64 years of age.** The participant would be required to seek work through Title V and other senior employment and training

programs. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

(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 from a licensed physician or psychologist that indicates the need for 24 hour care. **Extenuating circumstances which prevent the adult or child self-care on a 24-hour basis must be documented. Physician/psychologist statements shall include verification that services such as LifeLine, pre-prepared lunch or supper and medication schedules could not be utilized.**

B.) For school age children, verification from both the school and the physician that the child is unable to attend school must be provided and no other adult or supportive service is available. All supportive services must be explored and utilized if available. **These include services through the County Board of Mental Retardation, Buckeye Community Services, court systems, etc. This is not to be interpreted to allow statements from physicians/psychologists to allow parents to seek an exemption for home-schooling, unruly children, hyperactive children, etc.**

C.) During the exemption period, all resources will be explored and applied for, including waiver services, to meet the child's care and educational need or adult's need, while enabling the adult caretaker to seek and maintain employment.

Verification is required. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

(5) The assistance group member is a victim of domestic violence or is residing in a domestic violence shelter. Documentation must be provided to JCDJFS that the court appearance has been kept by the individual and or a case management plan has or will be developed which will have as the goal to remove the family from danger and maintain the members in a safe living environment. The case plan will be developed in conjunction with agencies that are involved with the treatment and recovery of the family. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

(6) The assistance group member is unable to work due 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 either a psychiatrist or psychologist. The participant must have applied for SSI and any other program (i.e., Social Security Disability, Veteran's, etc.) **for which they may qualify by the 30<sup>th</sup> month unless the participant can show he/she has a new, severely disabling condition with should or would receive CMS approval. Up to three months of additional benefits.**

(7) The assistance group member is unable to work due to physical incapacity or disability and has been and is currently receiving treatment. Verification is required by a physician. The participant must be actively participating with the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. The participant must have applied for SSI and any other program, (i.e., Social Security Disability, Veteran's, etc.) by the 30<sup>th</sup> month **unless the participant can**

show he/she has a new, severely disabling condition or one in conjunction with their other condition(s) make the individual severely disabled and the conditions would or should receive CMS approval. **Up to three months of additional benefits.**

(8) The assistance group member is a single custodial parent and no child care, Head Start or other community or social program 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. **Up to three months of additional benefits.**

(9) The assistance group member has an active case with the JCDJFS Childrens' 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. JCDJFS 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. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

(10) The assistance group member has language barriers to employment and is actively and successfully participating in the appropriate educational component. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

(11) The assistance group member is enrolled in a full-time education/training program which does not facilitate any type of employment and 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.**

(12) The assistance group member has significant and multiple social barriers to employment such a local labor surplus, high unemployment, underemployment, homelessness, and a 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, JCDJFS or WIA partners contracted transportation services, ride sharing, etc. Verifications are required and this exemption requires the Director's approval. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

In the event underemployment is considered as one of the multiple barriers claimed for a 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 under-employed for a period of six (6) 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 accept a bona-fide offer of employment without good cause; or (2) failed to apply for or accept, without good cause, any employment opportunities recommended by JCDJFS staff or other WIA partners.

(13) The adult assistance group member has a severe substance abuse problem which renders him/her unemployable and the adult assistance group member has been and is currently participating satisfactorily in a treatment program prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> month. **All avenues of treatment, including residential treatment, must be utilized** Verification is required. **Up to three months of additional benefits.**

(14) The assistance group member is actively pursuing SSI eligibility prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> month and is working with JCDJFS staff to establish eligibility. **The 30<sup>th</sup> month requirement can be waived if the participant can show a new, severely disabling condition or coupled with their other condition should or would receive CMS approval.** Verification is required. **Up to six months of additional benefits.**

(15) **A minor head of household who is satisfactorily participating in the Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program. The minor parent head of household shall not have extensions exceeding 24 months. Upon obtaining their high school diploma or equivalency the minor head of household may have up to a six month extension - not exceeding the 24 lifetime extension. This would allow a graduate an opportunity to obtain employment after graduation without undue hardship.**

(16) **The assistance group member is age 65 or older. Up to 24 months of additional benefits.**

## **SECTION II**

The hardship exemptions that are grant based on Section I are subject to the time and review specified in this section. The OWF assistance group's hardship exemption will be reviewed a minimum of every three (3) months to determine if the assistance group continues to meet the exemption criteria. The OWF assistance group exemption may be reviewed by JCDJFS staff prior to the required three months as needed.

The JCDJFS shall grant the extension only to the extent it covers the particular hardship time period needed and not for a period exceeding the designated time per category.

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

## **SECTION III**

Ohio Works First assistance groups that transfer to Jackson 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 and III. Exemption status will no longer be determined by the previous county's criteria.

**SECTION IV**

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, JCDJFS Workforce Development and Income Maintenance, Child Support and Social Service units 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 JCDJFS policy is effective 9-15-00.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lynn Rice, Director      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Commissioner