

# OWF Time Limits and Hardship Criteria for Morrow County

Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code limits participation in Ohio Works First (OWF) to 36 months and permits the county Job and Family Services to exempt up to twenty percent (20%) of OWF assistance groups who meet a hardship exemption. Extension of the time limit will be based on the assistance group submitting an application and providing documentation that a hardship exists. The County Job and Family Service agencies will follow all applicable Federal and State rules and regulations and will extend benefits to not more than 20% of its average caseload. At such time as the CDJFS approaches the 20% limit for the number of allowable hardship exemptions, the agencies will review all cases to re-determine exemptions to be allowed.

Every attempt will be made by the County Job and Family Service agencies to help the participant to overcome the employment/self-sufficiency barriers prior to the exhaustion of the 36-month time limit.

In order to be eligible for an exemption, the assistance group member(s) must have satisfactorily complied with his/her self-sufficiency contract and must not have been sanctioned within the previous 12 month period. They must also meet OWF cash eligibility requirements, and be able to verify at least one of the conditions listed below:

1. A parent or caretaker receiving OWF cash assistance who has a serious physical/mental illness or condition rendering them incapacitated for employment. The incapacity must be verified by a physician. SSI/SSD must be pending. The County DJFS reserves the right to secure and rely on a second opinion from a medical provider of its choice.
2. A parent or caretaker receiving OWF cash assistance who must provide medically necessary full-time care for an immediate family member (child or spouse) residing in their home. The medical necessity of remaining in the home to care for the disabled individual must be verified by a physician's statement. The County DJFS reserves the right to secure and rely on a second opinion from a medical provider of its choice.
3. A parent or caretaker receiving OWF cash assistance whose capacity to retain employment is being disrupted by domestic violence and is actively seeking help, as evidenced by residence in a spousal abuse shelter, a current protective court order, a police report or sworn affidavit coupled with steps to resolve the situation (such as retention of an attorney). This extension is not to exceed 6 month intervals and the adult caretaker must be performing any self-sufficiency assignment they are given.

Those granted a hardship exemption would have their exemption status reviewed every 6 months. A thorough review of the assistance group's situation including progress toward self-sufficiency and verification of compliance with all assignments of the self-sufficiency contract will be made. During the exemption period, the participant will be working with the agency in order to prepare for self-sufficiency. The exemption ceases when the reason for the exemption ceases.

When The County Department of Job and Family Services receives an application for exemption consideration, a committee comprised of management and case workers will review the application and family circumstances in order to determine if these assistance groups meet the criteria for exemption status. An application must be completed, approval by the Director, Administrator, or their designee is needed for individuals granted a hardship exemption.