

## **Morrow DJFS Hardship Exemption Criteria to HB 408 time limits**

Under ORC § 5107.18 a county Department of Job and Family Services can declare up to twenty percent (20%) of its average caseload during the prior Federal Fiscal Year to be under a “hardship” and grant such assistance groups an exemption in order to continue assistance. Prior to the expiration of an assistance group’s thirty-six (36) months of assistance, the assistance group will be reviewed to determine potential eligibility for a hardship exemption. Morrow County DJFS, at its sole discretion, will extend benefits to not more than twenty percent (20%) of its average caseload under the circumstances described below.

Hardship exemptions are only available to assistance groups who have complied with all aspects of the self-sufficiency contract and have not been sanctioned within the last 12 months for noncompliance under ORC § 5107.16. If the AG head of household feels the sanction excluding the AG from consideration for a hardship exemption was invalid or in error, and should not effect the AG, the AG can request to review the circumstances of the sanction with the OWF team for a waiver from this provision.

Exempted individuals must continue to participate in an OWF Work Activity. Final decisions as to whether an assistance group meets the hardship exemption criteria will be made by a team consisting of the OWF team, and the Unit administrators. The county director will authorize each case whether exempted or denied exemption. The DJFS management team will review each family due to lose assistance within 60 days of the end of benefits. With the exception of those specified below, families granted exemptions will be reviewed monthly by the OWF teams.

### **Present Exemptions**

1. **Severely Disabled Assistance Group Member:** Morrow County DJFS will exempt from the 36-month time limit, those cases of parents with one or more severely disabled case members in the home and for whom there is no appropriate care available or the cost of care would be prohibitive. The DJFS will exempt those AGs where it is economically more efficient and/or emotionally more beneficial for the disabled member to receive care in the home. Documentation of disability provided by a licensed medical practitioner shall be in the case record. These exemptions will be reviewed annually at redetermination.
2. **Medical/ Mental Health:** The individual has documented medical and/or mental health issues, and/or has applied for SSI six months prior to the exhaustion of the OWF cash benefits and is actively awaiting SSI determination.
3. **Pregnancy/Newborns:** A time limited exemption will be granted to a pregnant woman documented by her physician to have serious medical complications restricting her from work.

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We will consider exemptions for a pregnant individual in the last trimester and until the child is three months old. This exemption will be a one time only exemption. The expectant mother must fulfill the requirements of the physician and cooperate with Child Support unless relieved of this responsibility by the conditions contained in OWF regulations. (In documented cases of domestic violence and rape, the mother is not required to establish paternity.) Exemptions will be reviewed four weeks after the birth.

4. **Age:** The required participant is more than 60 years of age. These exemptions will be reviewed every six months, and in the case of Workers Compensation or Social Security recipients, every year. (Not sure why we want to do this review as they will not grow younger?)
5. **Domestic Violence:** The individual is a documented victim of domestic violence and is cooperative with the law enforcement and court system as appropriate to assist in removing the family from danger and maintaining the family in a safe condition. Must be actively participating in a plan that is closely monitored by the appropriate service agency including self-esteem rehabilitation and movement toward self sufficiency. These exemptions will be reviewed every three months.
6. **Child Protection Services:** A family actively complying with a reunification plan with Children Service or the parent is needed in the home to prevent the involvement of Child Protective Services.
7. **Substance/ Alcohol Abuse:** Exemption will be granted when one of the adult heads of household is participating in an *inpatient* alcohol or substance abuse program or an intensive outpatient program. The exemption will continue for 60 days after discharge from the intensive outpatient program or after discharge from a halfway house with an employment plan in place.
8. **Low Income/ Working:** A working family where the hours of work for each adult are the equivalent of full time (32-40 hours/week) but combined income does not remove them from OWF cash. These exemptions will be reviewed at redetermination, every three months.
9. **Parents in School or Training for Employment:** Families currently involved in classes which will lead to self-sufficiency in a short period of time, may have benefits continued in order to complete the classes and a job search.
10. **Unemployable:** Assistance group's parent or caretaker has complied with all aspects of the SSC, has not been previously sanctioned and is unemployable as determined by MCJFS, upon the expiration of benefits

11. **Intentional Program Violation:** The OWF team and unit manager will review exemption requests from assistance groups with Intentional Program Violations on a case by case basis if repayment has been made in full.

The hardship exemption will be documented in CRIS-E running record comments where the type of exemption will be identified.

In the event that the MCJFS is in jeopardy of reaching the 20% maximum fro exemptions, exempted assistance groups will be reviewed beginning with the highest exemption number and working upward. Exemption priority, in other words, is from one to 11 with number one being the highest priority.

MCJFS reserves the right to amend this plan as necessary to comply with Ohio Department of Job and Family Services regulations.

Morrow County Commissioner

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Date

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Date

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Date

Director, Morrow County Job and Family Services

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Date

