

**PICKAWAY COUNTY
POLICY ON OWF TIME LIMITS AND
HARDSHIP EXEMPTION CRITERIA**

Effective 4-1-14

Ohio 36 Month Time Limit/5 Year Federal Time Limit

Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code limits participation in Ohio Works First (OWF) to 36 Months, for families that include an adult head-of-household or a spouse of the head-of-household, or a pregnant minor head-of-household, minor head-of-household, or spouse of such head-of-household. In addition to the 36 month time limit, federal law limits receipt of OWF or TANF benefits to 5 years. A family may reapply for participation in OWF, 24 months after losing eligibility for OWF due to the 36 month time limit, if good cause exists.

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 on the grounds that they determine that the time limit is a hardship. The determination of hardship criteria is a county determination. The county will determine whether the 36-month time limit is the specific cause of discomfort or suffering, as poverty, pain or a thing hard to bear, or if the time limit creates privation, suffering, or adversity. Any participant granted an extension beyond 36 months, continues to use months counting toward the 5-year federal limit.

Pickaway County's Hardship Criteria

Assistance groups who have reached the 36-month time limit for participation in the OWF program may be exempted from the time limit if one or more of the criteria in Section A are met. Section B addresses limits on number of months an assistance group may receive OWF benefits due to a hardship and frequency of reviews for assistance groups meeting a hardship exemption. Section C addresses how OWF assistance groups that transfer in from other counties or states will be treated. Section D addresses how households reaching the 36-month time limit will be informed about the exemption criteria.

Section A (The OWF adult or minor head-of-household, subject to the time limits must meet one or more of these criteria.)

- 1) Single custodial parent of a special needs child and childcare is not available.
- 2) An assistant group has a single caretaker who is required in the home full-time to care for another household member who is disabled and other arrangements for the care of the disabled person is not available. (Medical documentation is required.)
- 3) Individual is over age 60.
- 4) Mental, physical, or psychological incapacity prevents the individual from participating in Work Activities or LEAP. (Medical documentation is required. Must be keeping all medical and/or counseling appointments and complying with treatments recommended by physician or mental health provider.) PCJFS reserves the right to request a second medical opinion.
- 5) An Assistant Group whose parent or caretaker's 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 a sworn affidavit, coupled with steps to resolve the situation (such as counseling or retention of an attorney).
- 6) Has an active case with the Public Child Welfare agency and is satisfactorily participating in the Child Welfare case plan. This would include OWF assistance groups whose OWF assistance has been continued because of a 180-day reunification plan.

Section B (Hardship exemptions granted, based on Section A are subject to the time limits and review specified in this section.)

An OWF assistance group's hardship exemption will be reviewed every 3 months to determine if the assistance group continues to meet the exemption criteria or whenever the agency is aware that the assistance group no longer meets the exemption criteria.

Failure to participate, without good cause, in assigned activities listed in the participant's self-sufficiency plan or addendum, during the extension period will result in a tiered sanction as per OWF sanction policy. If the assistance group requests further extension of OWF benefits after serving the minimum sanction period and after meeting compliance, a review of their circumstances will be reviewed to determine if they meet the exemption criteria to extend OWF.

In no event, shall an assistance group continue to receive OWF benefits for more than 24 months based on state hardship.

In the event that the number of assistance groups exempted from the 36 month time limit, exceeds the allowable 20% amount for the county, OWF assistance groups with the highest number of months of benefits issued, after reaching the 36 month time limit will lose their hardship exemption.

Section C (Transfer-In cases from other counties or states)

All OWF assistance groups that transfer in to Pickaway County, from other counties or states, will have their hardship exemption determined by the criteria in Section A, and B, and exemption status will no longer be determined by the previous county's or state's criteria.

Section D (Informing households of exemption criteria)

Upon termination of OWF after reaching the 36 month time limit, the assistance group will be responsible for contacting their 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 to advise them when they have used 24 months and 30 months of assistance. Case managers working with customers with less than 12 months of remaining eligibility will intensify efforts to help the family meet their responsibility to become self-sufficient before the time limit is reached. Families will be reminded that although there are many services PCJFS can offer as supports, they are ultimately responsible for their own well-being and self sufficiency.