

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

Effective 2-20-08

**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 child under 3 months old.
- 2) Single custodial parent of a special needs child and childcare is not available.
- 3) 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.)
- 4) Individual is over age 60.
- 5) 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.)
- 6) Individual is enrolled in an education/training program directly related to obtaining employment, which will not end prior to reaching the 36-month time limit. Must have not previously completed a degree program beyond high school or its equivalent. Must have completed 50 % of the program and be able to complete the program within the next 12 months. Must be a full time student.
- 7) Individual has applied for, or appealed a denial, for SSI or Social Security Disability and a decision is pending.
- 8) Circumstances involving domestic violence which make it difficult for the individual to comply.
- 9) 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.
- 10) Other Unique Personal Circumstances. The agency will make this determination based on:
  - A. The mandatory nature of the 36-month time limit;
  - B. The 20% exemption limitation;
  - C. The agency's duty to conduct required assessments and evaluations, to identify barriers and address them, to develop an appropriate self-sufficiency plan, and to make appropriate assignments;
  - D. The assistance group's personal responsibility to follow the self-sufficiency plan and to complete all assignments; and
  - E. The unique circumstances of the assistance group.

## **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)**

OWF assistance groups that are close to reaching the 36 months time limit will be identified. Notices are continually generated by the CRISE system notifying the assistance group of the number of months of OWF received. In addition to this, the county will send the household a manual notice prior to reaching the 36 month time limit. This notice will inform the assistance group of the number of months of OWF received, the number of months remaining and the projected date for OWF to end because of the 36 month limit. The notice will also notify the assistance group of an interview date to meet with agency staff to review the participant=s situation and their plans for when the 36 month time limit is reached. At this interview the assistance group will be informed of the county=s hardship criteria and will be given a copy of this policy on OWF Time Limits and Hardship Exemption Criteria.

Upon termination of OWF after reaching the 36 month time limit, the assistance group will be responsible for contacting their Family Support Worker to request an extension to continue OWF

benefits based on meeting exemption criteria and to provided any needed documentation of how they meet the criteria.