

**WOOD COUNTY DEPARTMENT  
OF  
JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**OWF 36-MONTH HARDSHIP EXEMPTION CRITERIA**

It is the intent of the Wood County Department of Job and Family Services to assure that all families who have received 36 months of OWF assistance have been afforded the opportunity to realize self-sufficiency in that time frame. Under ORC Section 5107.18, a County Department of Job and Family Services may declare up to twenty percent (20%) of the 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.

To that purpose the following procedure has been adopted.

1. The “**NEW POSSIBILITIES**” program has been established in the social service unit. As described in the PRC guidelines, this program offers OWF recipients intensive case management which includes but is not limited to: employment skills evaluation, mental health assessment, basic needs assessment, Healthy Start and all other Medicaid, and Food Stamp, and child care services. Assistance is provided in locating employment, child care, and in developing budgeting skills. Transportation, parenting classes, and referral for legal service, etc. may also be arranged.

This program is offered to all OWF cash recipients who have received at least 18 months of OWF cash assistance. If they refuse this program, it will be offered again at the time the recipients reach 24 months of cash assistance. The recipients may request to participate at any point from 18-36 months of receipt of cash assistance.

If a recipient refuses to utilize the “**NEW POSSIBILITIES**” intense case management program, there will be no hardship waiver granted.

**2. SEVERE INCAPACITY**

The recipient may qualify for hardship exemption if:

- The recipient has a WCDJFS medical form completed by a licensed physician verifying the recipient’s severe incapacity, or
- The adult OWF recipient’s continuous presence is required to provide 24-hour care for another OWF assistance group member in the home due to severe incapacity, verified by a licensed physician on the required WCDJFS Medical Form.
- In either case, the severely incapacitated recipient must actively be pursuing SSI/SSA disability claims and/or cooperating fully with the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. Extensions for severe incapacity may be granted at 3 month intervals not to exceed 24 months.

### **3. TERMINAL ILLNESS**

If a recipient or a member of the OWF assistance group has been diagnosed by a licensed physician to be expected to live for 6 months or less and the assistance group has reached the 36-month OWF cash assistance limit, a hardship exemption may be granted. This will be reviewed at the end of the 6 months or upon the death of the assistance group member whichever comes first.

### **4. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

In order to qualify for a hardship extension under domestic violence:

- The recipient must have a history as a victim of domestic violence. This must not be a first occurrence coinciding with reaching the 36-month time limit.
- Police reports must have been made for previous domestic violence incidents and those reports must be made available to the WCDJFS.
- The recipient must utilize domestic violence counseling from an agency recognized as having domestic violence counseling specialists.
- The recipient must file a temporary protection order or civil protection order and continue follow-up with the court system. Ending pursuit of this action constitutes termination of hardship.
- The client must cooperate with the “NEW POSSIBILITIES” program.

Hardship exemption may be granted at 3-month intervals not to exceed 24 months.

**Under no circumstances will a hardship be granted to an OWF assistance group who has not fully cooperated with the Child Support Enforcement agency in establishing paternity and securing child support payments.**

### **5. 20% COUNTY LIMITATION**

Under federal and state law, only a limited number of persons may be exempted by the Wood County Department of Job and Family Services. At such time as the WCDJFS approaches 80% of the 20% limit for the number of allowable hardship exemptions, the agency will review all cases to re-determine exemptions.

### **6. APPLICATION FOR HARDSHIP WAIVER**

An OWF recipient who exhausts the 36-month time limit, and feels that a hardship may exist, may apply for an extension. Extensions are not automatically granted. The assistance group must file an application (see attached) and provide supporting documentation that the hardship exists. Such requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the hardship exemption criteria described in this policy.