

Ohio Works First (OWF) Time Limits: Good Cause Extension

ORC 5107.18(B) establishes the legal basis for these extensions as follows: *An assistance group that has ceased to participate in Ohio Works First pursuant to division (A) of this section for at least twenty-four months, whether consecutive or not, may reapply to participate in the program if good cause exists as determined by the county department of job and family services. Good cause may include losing employment, inability to find employment, divorce, domestic violence considerations, and unique personal circumstances.*

The Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services (FCDJFS), in accordance with ORC 5107.18, is establishing the Good Cause Extension Criteria listed below:

1. The individual has a loss of employment. The individual must document that (s)he has been employed while not receiving OWF benefits. The customer is required to participate in Job Search and apply for unemployment compensation benefits. If the loss of employment is due to a job quit, the customer must show that the job quit was due to an illness of the customer or family member, lack of supportive services, discrimination, unreasonable work demands, or unsuitable conditions.
2. Inability of the customer to find fulltime employment due to documented barriers, such as lack of education, felony conviction, physical or mental impairment, drug or alcohol addiction, or domestic violence. The customer is required to cooperate in overcoming these barriers.
3. The household documents loss of earned or unearned income due to a change in the household composition (e.g., divorce or death of a spouse).
4. The agency may determine that a good cause extension be authorized due to unique personal circumstances, which is reviewed with the Center Director, who must agree creates good cause for the family to have be reapply to participate.

Key Points

Once eligibility under good cause is established, no subsequent determination of good cause shall be made as long as all other OWF eligibility requirements continue to be met.

If an assistance group loses OWF eligibility while receiving a good cause extension due to failure to comply with the terms of the self-sufficiency contract, no new application, nor determination of good cause, is necessary to re-establish OWF eligibility due to good cause once the assistance group complies and the minimum sanction period has expired.

If an assistance group loses OWF eligibility while receiving a good cause extension for any reason other than a self-sufficiency contract failure and there is at least an interruption in assistance, a new determination of eligibility for OWF under good cause must be made if the assistance group subsequently reapplies to participate.

An assistance group who is continuing to receive benefits under a hardship extension (i.e., the 36-month time-limit created a hardship for the family) need not reapply for a good cause extension, unless they lose their eligibility for the hardship criteria.

Good cause extensions are limited to a total of 24 months, but months in receipt of benefits due to a hardship extension will reduce the number of months of eligibility for good cause extensions. Total months of a combination of original benefits, hardship benefits and good cause benefits can not exceed 60 months, unless a hardship benefit extension continues to be in place.

Assistance groups who are determined to be eligible for OWF due to a good cause extension are OWF recipients and as such are subject to all OWF eligibility requirements.