

Ashtabula County Department of Job and Family Services Ohio Works First Good Cause Criteria

Per section 5107.18(B) of the Ohio Revised Code, an Assistance Group (AG) that has ceased to participate in Ohio Works First [OWF] due to the 36-month state time limit, may again become eligible to participate after serving at least a 24-month waiting period, if the AG is determined to have “Good Cause”. Good Cause criteria for Ashtabula County is included herein. This document includes all of the Good Cause provisions which apply in Ashtabula County.

Good Cause extensions are not countable toward the 20% limit for hardship extensions. Extensions due to good cause count toward the 60-month federal time limit, but extensions due to good cause cannot exceed the federal 60-month limit which also includes the number of months a state hardship extension was received. Any months of receipt of state hardship after the 36-month time limit count toward the federal 60-month limit, and reduce the amount of potentially available months under good cause.

Example: An assistance group received 36 months of OWF and OWF cash was terminated. Twelve (12) months later, the assistance group reapplies to participate. Because 24 months have not yet passed since the loss of eligibility due to the 36-month time limit, the assistance group is not yet eligible for a good cause extension. However, the county determines that the assistance group is eligible for OWF due to a hardship extension. The assistance group receives OWF due to the hardship extension for 6 months, and OWF is then terminated. The assistance group has received a total of 42 months, which are countable toward the federal 60-month time limit.

Six months later, the assistance group reapplies for assistance. It has been 24 months since the loss of OWF eligibility due to the 36-month time limit. The assistance group can now be determined to be eligible for OWF under the county’s good cause provisions. However, the amount of months available under good cause for this assistance group is 18 months, because the potential 24-month good cause durational limit is reduced by the 6 months of receipt of OWF under the hardship extension.

The 24-month waiting period does not mean that the AG must have a 24-month break in receipt of OWF cash assistance between the loss of OWF eligibility due to the 36-month time limit and the extension of OWF due to good cause, as a hardship extension during the 24-month waiting period does not interrupt the 24-month waiting period or delay the subsequent approval of good cause. Theoretically, a hardship extension which lasts the full 24-months could use up the total 60-month time limit and a good cause extension would not be available.

Good Cause in Ashtabula County shall be granted upon verification of one of the following:

- < Domestic Violence which has occurred within 45 days of the application for good cause
- < Loss of employment for reasons not the fault of the applicant
- < FMLA qualifying event when employment is temporarily interrupted (the employed person plans to return to work) and no income will be received during the absence from work
- < Age 60 or older
- < Teen parent(s) who received the first 36-months as minors with a child

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, as set forth in paragraph (B)(2) of rule 5101:1-23-01 of the Administrative Code. As a result, when entering a good cause extension in CRIS-E, the service representative will only enter a begin date for the start of the good cause extension. No end date for the good cause span is enterable because the CRIS-E system will calculate and display the correct end date, based on the number of months of previous receipt by the individual(s) in the assistance group. Refer to OWF/PRC Letter #48 for more detailed information.

As stated previously, once eligibility under good cause is established, no subsequent determination of good cause shall be made unless the assistance group becomes otherwise ineligible for OWF. When an assistance group becomes otherwise ineligible for OWF, there are two (2) exceptions in which no subsequent determination of good cause shall be made. They are:

1. When an assistance group loses OWF eligibility during a good cause extension due to the imposition of a sanction due to failure to comply with the provisions of the self-sufficiency contract. In these cases, the provisions set forth in ORC 5107.17 are applicable, and as a result, no new determination of good cause is necessary for the assistance group to resume OWF participation; and
2. When an assistance group loses OWF eligibility during a good cause extension for any other reason than a self-sufficiency contract failure AND there is not at least a one (1) day interruption in receipt of benefits, no new determination of good cause is necessary, as there is no interruption in benefits. [If there is at least a one (1) day interruption in benefits, then a new determination of good cause needs to be made.]

Benefits beyond the 60-month time limit

It is important to note that for federal time limit purposes, any month of receipt of TANF cash assistance up to the 60th month merely counts toward the 60-month time limit. Federal time limit policy does not recognize nor does it make any distinction regarding the receipt of TANF cash assistance as “hardship” or “good cause” prior to the 60th month. This means that an assistance group that received 36 months of OWF cash assistance and subsequently receives 12 months of OWF cash assistance under a state hardship provision [in any county] has a federal time limit count of 48 months, as the federal count makes no distinction between the initial 36 months and the subsequent 12 months.

Federal law permits states to extend assistance paid for by federal TANF funds beyond the federal 60 month limit for up to 20% of the average monthly number of families receiving assistance. This calculation of the 20% limit for OWF hardship is set forth in OAC 5101:1-23-01.1. Federal regulations provide that a state may extend assistance beyond the 60-month limit based on hardship, as determined by the state. Ohio has chosen to extend benefits beyond the federal 60-month limit due to hardship.

For federal hardship purposes, hardship is defined in paragraphs (H)(1)(a) to (H)(1)(b) of rule 5101:1-23-01. Essentially, paragraph (H)(1)(a) provides that hardship is defined as any circumstances under which the County Department of Job and Family Services [CDJFS] determines that the time limit is a hardship, and the CDJFS shall use the same grounds for determining federal hardship as it uses for determining state hardship. Paragraph (H)(1)(b) is the second part of the hardship definition, which is based on the fact that a family includes someone who is temporarily or permanently unable to work because the individual has been battered, or been subject to extreme cruelty. This paragraph further provides conditions under which someone can be determined to have been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty.

In accordance with rule 5101:1-23-01, each county’s federal hardship criteria must be the same as the county’s state hardship criteria. As a result, no changes are needed to Ashtabula County’s current hardship criteria, which will continue to be utilized if an assistance group applies for a federal hardship extension beyond the 60-month time limit.