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ODJFS Will Help Food Assistance Recipients Find Work

COLUMBUS, OH – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has asked the federal government to waive work requirements for low-income Ohioans on federal food assistance in 16 counties still struggling with especially high unemployment. In Ohio's 72 other counties, where the economy is recovering more quickly, ODJFS will work with county departments of job and family services to ramp-up efforts to help able-bodied adults without dependents find work.

"It is important that we do more than just provide a monetary food assistance benefit," said ODJFS Director Michael Colbert. "As the economy improves, we owe it to adult Ohioans to provide job training and work experience that will lead to a career and a pathway out of poverty."

According to federal law, able-bodied adults without dependents may receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for only three months in any three-year period, unless those individuals work or attend job training for at least 20 hours each week. The 20-hour-a-week requirement was waived in Ohio during the recession, but as the economy recovers and the job market improves, ODJFS will reinstitute that requirement in most counties. The change will affect approximately 134,000 Ohioans out of the more than 1.8 million who receive food assistance.

The work requirement applies to adults between 18 and 50 years old who are physically and mentally fit for work and who are neither pregnant nor have children younger than 18.

The 16 counties in which the work requirement will be waived are Adams, Brown, Clinton, Coshocton, Highland, Huron, Jefferson, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Ottawa, Perry, Pike and Scioto.

Beginning on Oct. 1, county departments of job and family services will have three months to ensure that able-bodied adults without dependents are attending a qualifying work or training program for at least 20 hours each week. Individuals who are not meeting the 20-hour-a-week requirement after three months risk losing their SNAP benefits.

SNAP is a federally funded program that provides approximately 1.8 million Ohioans with an average benefit of \$132 per month. More than 40 percent of recipients are children. SNAP benefits can be spent only on eligible food items and cannot be spent on alcohol, tobacco, restaurant food or other prohibited items.

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