

Richland County Department of Job & Family Services
OWF Time Limits & Hardship Determination Plan
Effective Date-September 1, 2000

Section 5107.18 of the Revised Code limits participation in Ohio Works First (OWF) to thirty six (36) months. This section also provides that a CDJFS may exempt not more than 20% of the average monthly number of OWF participants from the time limit due to hardship. The determination of hardship is solely a CDJFS decision.

The determination of whether the time limit is a hardship to the AG will be done when an AG requests a hardship exemption. An assistance group (AG) that participates in OWF due to a hardship exemption is an OWF AG subject to all OWF requirements. In all situations the AG must satisfactorily comply, or not fail without good cause, with the provisions contained in the self-sufficiency contract and plan in order to continue the hardship exemption.

An AG adult or minor head-of-household who has participated in Ohio Works First (OWF) for thirty six (36) months may be eligible for a hardship exemption if, upon reaching the 36th month of participation, one (1) or more of the following circumstances exists:

1. **The AG adult or minor head-of-household has a physical or mental illness or condition which renders him or her incapacitated for employment.** The incapacity must be verified by a licensed physician or psychologist. The individual who has been documented as having a long-term incapacity must be in the process of applying for disability benefits. (RCDJFS reserves the right to secure and rely upon additional opinions from licensed physicians or psychologists of the agency's choice.) During the exemption the AG parent or caretaker must continue to participate in developmental work activities.
2. **The AG adult or minor head-of-household has documentation from a licensed physician or psychologist that the adult in the home is required to care for an immediate family member living in the home who is diagnosed with a medical or psychological disability.** An immediate family member is defined as a child or spouse. The participant must be working with a case manager to explore and apply for all available respite care arrangements, waiver programs, community and/or family resources. During the exemption the AG parent or caretaker must continue to participate in developmental work activities.
3. **The AG adult or minor head-of-household is a victim of domestic violence who is actively seeking help from an established support provider which prevents him or her from pursuing, obtaining and/or maintaining employment.** Such an AG may receive an exemption of up to six (6) months. The participant must be actively seeking help, as evidenced by residence in or receiving services from The Shelter, a current protective court order, and/or a police report. A case plan must be in place to resolve the situation and maintain the safety of the victim and children. During the exemption the AG parent or caretaker must continue to participate in developmental or regular work activities.

4. **An open case plan exists with Richland County Children Services that prohibits the AG adult or minor head-of-household from working.** The exemption will be granted for the period of time that the case specifies the AG adult or minor head-of-household would be unable to work. The RCDJFS will work with RCCSB during this time. During the exemption the AG parent or caretaker must continue to participate in developmental work activities.
5. **The AG adult or minor head-of-household is enrolled in and will complete an educational or training program within six (6) months with no interruption which is directly related to and will prepare the individual for an employment opportunity, and the individual remains enrolled and in good standing as determined by the educational or training institution.** Verification of completion date from the school is required. The education or training program must, by itself or in combination with other assignments, meet the individual's work participation requirements. Such an assistance group may receive an exemption to complete the educational or training program.

AGs qualifying for a hardship exemption under these criteria will be evaluated every three (3) months to determine if the hardship exemption is still applicable and if the participant is complying with all provisions of the self-sufficiency contract and plan. An exemption period is 6 months. If an AG is found to be in noncompliance with their self-sufficiency contract and plan, the exemption period can be terminated prior to the 6 months. An AG which exhausts its initial exemption and which still meets the criteria for a hardship exemption may reapply for an extension. Extensions are not automatic; such requests will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

If the Richland County Department of Job and Family Services determines that these criteria should be amended, such amendments will be made public prior to their effective date whenever practical.

If Richland County approaches its 20% limit, a committee will review all those granted exemptions in order to make a determination on which cases remain on exemption status and which do not.