

**Wayne County Department of Job and Family Services
(WCDJFS)
Ohio Works First Time Limits
Hardship Criteria**

36 MONTH TIME LIMIT: Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code limits Ohio Works First (OWF) to thirty-six (36) months for families that include an adult head-of-household, a pregnant minor head-of-household, minor parent head-of-household, or the spouse of such head-of-household. Section 5107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code also allows a County Department of Job and Family Services to exempt not more than 20% of the average monthly number of OWF participants from the time limit if the Assistance Group (AG) meets the hardship.

Ohio Works First (OWF) Assistance Groups who have reached the 36-month time limit for participation in the OWF program may be exempted from time limit if a hardship exists. The applicant AG must meet one or more of the hardship eligibility criteria established by the Wayne County Department of Job and Family Services.

Upon notification from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services that the WCDJFS has or is in danger of exceeding the 20% limitation, all current AG's in receipt of Hardship Exemption Benefits will be reviewed by WCDJFS staff. Continued assistance will be determined based upon several factors including but not limited to: the nature of the hardship, the number of Hardship Exemption Benefit months already received, age(s) of the qualifying child(ren) in the AG.

To apply for a Hardship exemption the AG will need to complete a JFS 7200 or its equivalent, and complete the interview process within thirty days prior to the completion of the WCDJFS Request for Hardship Exemption form.

Eligibility

Wayne County Department of Job and Family Services retains the sole discretion to determine whether OWF Assistance Group members qualify for a hardship exemption. Such determination shall be made in accordance with the policy described within this policy and applicable law. Nothing in this policy shall be construed so as to require the WCDJFS to grant any request for a hardship exemption solely because it has not reached the 20% maximum.

In order to be eligible for Hardship Exemption Benefits, the applicant Assistance Group must meet the eligibility requirements necessary to participate in the OWF program, in addition to those outlined within this policy.

Hardship Exemption Benefits are not intended to be a supplement to income. All payments received by AG members, and in some instances non-assistance group members, are considered income for the purposes of determining eligibility for OWF Hardship Exemption Benefits.

The Assistance Group may not have any other income unless the income is considered to be exempt by the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code.

Applicant AG's containing any work eligible individuals who were sanctioned from the OWF program with an ending date within the previous twelve (12) months, starting with the month of application, are ineligible to receive Hardship Exemption Benefits. Applicant AG's containing any work eligible individuals who were sanctioned from the OWF program four (4) or more times during their thirty six (36) month time limit are not eligible for a Hardship exemption.

Prior to authorization of Hardship Exemption Benefits, each work eligible individual in the AG is required to participate in the appraisal/assessment process as well as enter into a written self sufficiency contract (SSC). Each individual in the AG, who is required to sign an SSC, must also complete a job search and job readiness applicant assignment prior to the authorization of the 1st months Hardship Extension. This assignment cannot be combined with any other assignments, and must also be completed within thirty (30) days from the date the AG submitted a JFS 7200 or its equivalent. If the assignment is not completed within the 30 day processing period the AG is subject to the OWF three-tier sanction policies outlined in OAC Rule 5101:1-3-15. Once Hardship Exemption Benefits are authorized, any subsequent failure to comply with the SSC established between the AG and WCDJFS will result in the loss of the hardship extension and termination of cash assistance.

OWF assistance groups in receipt of Hardship Exemption Benefits authorized by another CDJFS will have their hardship exemption determined by the criteria established in this policy. Approval of benefits by another county does not guarantee the approval or continuation of Hardship Exemption Benefits by WCDJFS.

Per OAC Rule, hardship exemption AG's may only receive 24 Hardship Exemption Benefit payments. The 24 payments need not be consecutive. In no event shall the WCDJFS contribute to the issuance of more than 18 consecutive months of Hardship Exemption Benefits. An AG that has received 18 consecutive months of Hardship Exemption Benefits, may be approved to participate in the program two months later if the county agency determines the AG is facing a hardship situation that is not expected to last for more than 6 months. These circumstances need not be different than those that good cause for a twenty-four month extension of OWF exists. WCDJFS reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

In general, Hardship Exemption Benefits will be issued for a maximum of six (6) months. In some instances the eligibility span may be longer or shorter than six (6) months to align redetermination intervals with other benefits being issued through the WCDJFS. Eligibility spans may also authorized for less than six months if the authorization conflicts with the 18 consecutive month rule outlined in the preceding paragraph. Renewal of Hardship Exemption Benefits is not automatic. A new Request for Hardship Exemption form must be completed along with a JFS 7200 or its equivalent, and the completion of the interview process as stated above. The hardship request need not be for a reason other than the original hardship request.

WCDJFS HARDSHIP CRITERIA

The parent or caretaker in an assistance group is unable to work due to an illness or condition which has been verified by a licensed physician and/or psychologist. The effected individual will be coming from employment and returning to employment. Verification that no income will be received during the short term disability and proof of return employment must be submitted.

#0401

The parent or caretaker is 60 years of age or older. The parent or caretaker must be assigned to and fulfilling his/her work activity requirements.

#0101

The assistance group member can provide verification of domestic violence which would result in hardship to member(s) of the household, and which would make it difficult or dangerous for the parent or caretaker to work, and the perpetrator of the domestic violence is not a member of the household. Verification may consist of one or more of the following: a police report, an active civil protection order, residence at a domestic violence shelter, pending criminal domestic violence charges against the perpetrator, a criminal conviction of the perpetrator for domestic violence against a member of the assistance group, a sworn affidavit by the victim of domestic violence alleging domestic violence, or retention of an attorney coupled with cooperative steps to resolve the situation. This extension criterion shall cease to apply if the perpetrator of domestic violence becomes a member of the assistance group or a member of the household.

#0501

The parent or caretaker is providing care for a disabled family member and other reasonable arrangements for the disabled member's care are not available or are inadequate. The medical necessity of the individual's presence to provide care for the family member must be verified by a physician's statement. WCDJFS reserves the right to secure and rely upon a second opinion from a medical provider of its choice.

#0301

The parent or caretaker is enrolled in an education or training program directly related to employment, which will not be completed by the expiration of the 36 month limit, but graduation and employment are anticipated within 6 months.

#0601

The parent or caretaker is a single custodial parent, caring for a child who is not yet 6 years old, loses access to childcare due to circumstances beyond the household's control and the lack of childcare prevents the parent or caretaker from pursuing, obtaining, and/or maintaining employment. The Assistance Group must provide documentation from at least five (5) recognized childcare providers indicating that childcare assistance was applied for and unavailable.

#0302

The parent or caretaker is not employed and is unable to obtain employment because of multiple felony convictions but is pursuing a course of action that will result in employment within six months.

#0701

The parent or caretaker has significant barriers to employment due to homelessness. The individual must be actively cooperating with other community agencies which provide case management services to secure permanent housing.

#0801

The parent or caretaker is experiencing extraordinary circumstances or recent catastrophe and imposition of the time limits would prevent the parent or caretaker of the child(ren) from completing the activities needed to reach a level of economic self-support. A review panel appointed by the director of CDJFS will determine if these circumstances make the participant eligible.

#0901