



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Requirements Announced to Maintain SNAP Benefits

ERIE, Pa., May 3, 2016 --- Erie, PA – On March 1, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamp) time limits took effect for able-bodied adults, between ages 18 and 49, without dependents. As of this date, individuals may only receive SNAP benefits for a total of three full months within a 36-month period unless the person meets an exemption or complies with certain work requirements.

Although no one will be cut off from SNAP benefits until June 1, it is strongly advised that individuals affected by this change take steps to be found exempt or comply with work requirements as soon as possible.

It is important to note:

- This time limit does NOT apply to persons under age 18 or age 50 or older.
- This time limit does NOT apply to people living in Forest, Clearfield, or Cameron counties. These three counties have waivers that make the entire population exempt from the time limit.

Also, the time limit does not apply if individuals meet any of these exemptions:

- Works 20 hours or more per week, including self-employment
- Receives a disability-based benefit (SSI, social security disability, VA pension, or Workers Compensation)
- Is certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment by a health professional (*The PA Department of Human Services has a SNAP Time Limit Medical Exemption Form (PA 1921) that can be signed by a wide range of health care providers, including any whose services are paid by Medicaid*)
- Is homeless
- Receives or has applied for Unemployment Compensation
- Participates in a drug or alcohol treatment program or a mental health treatment program
- Is a student already receiving SNAP benefits who is enrolled at least half-time in an education program
- Lives in a household with any child under 18
- Is pregnant
- Provides care for an ill or incapacitated person or a frail elder in the same home

There are three ways for individuals to meet the work requirement:

1. Work for pay for at least 80 hours/month (average of 20 hours/week)
2. Participate in an eligible job training program for at least 20 hours/week
3. Volunteer through community service (hourly requirement based on monthly SNAP benefit amount received)

If an individual is interested in meeting SNAP requirements through the community service option:

- Community service/volunteer work is unpaid work at a non-profit or religious organization or government site. A person may qualify to continue to receive SNAP benefits past the three month time period if volunteering enough hours each month.
- The number of volunteer hours required is based on the individual's monthly SNAP benefit divided by the state minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. For example, someone receiving \$194 in SNAP per month must volunteer 26 hours per month.
- The community organization must verify the individual's community service. *The PA Department of Human Services has a Community Service/Volunteer Verification Form (PA 1694) that can be used to verify volunteer participation for up to 6 months.*
- The PA Department of Human Services can provide special allowances to pay for transportation to a community service site.

Individuals affected by this change and interested in taking steps to be found exempt or comply with requirements utilizing community service option by volunteering at Second Harvest may contact Genevieve Mattern at (814) 459-3663 x 106 or email gmattern@NWPAfoodbank.org.

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About the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania

The mission of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania is to provide food to those in need within 11 counties of northwest Pennsylvania while creating awareness and educating the community on the realities of hunger. Last year, Second Harvest distributed nearly 13 million pounds of food to 298 member agencies, 144 distribution sites for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program for low-income seniors.

Second Harvest serves the following 11 counties in northwest Pennsylvania:
Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Venango and Warren.