

# Work Requirements for Food Assistance

## Change to the Food Assistance Program in the Counties of Kent, Oakland, Ottawa and Washtenaw

Certain federal work requirements for able-bodied adults ages 18 to 49 without dependents go back into effect on Jan. 1, 2017, in the counties of Kent, Oakland, Ottawa and Washtenaw.

Able-bodied individuals may only receive food assistance benefits for up to three months within a 36-month period without meeting these work requirements. This is known as a time limit.

### How does an able-bodied individual meet the work requirements?

There are three ways an individual can meet the time limit work requirements:

- Work an average of at least 20 hours per week each month in unsubsidized employment.
- Participate 20 hours per week in an approved employment and training program, averaged monthly.
- Participate in community service by volunteering at a nonprofit organization.

You may be exempt from meeting work requirements if you meet any of the following federal criteria:

- Are physically or mentally unable to work 20 hours a week.
- Receive Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance due to disability or blindness, or receives Supplemental Security Income or State Disability Assistance.
- Receive or are an applicant for unemployment benefits.



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- Participate in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program.
- Attend training or college at least half-time and meet the student eligibility criteria to receive food assistance.
- Care for an incapacitated person or a child under age 6.
- Are pregnant.
- Are a victim of domestic violence.
- Reside in a household with a child under age 18.

## How does an able-bodied individual participate in community service?

- An able-bodied individual can choose to volunteer at a nonprofit. The number of hours required is determined by dividing the individual's household monthly food assistance benefit by Michigan's minimum wage (\$8.90 as of Jan. 1, 2017). MDHHS will determine the number of participation hours required.



## How does an able-bodied individual prove they are meeting work requirements?

- An able-bodied individual meeting the work requirements through unsubsidized employment must provide income verification as directed by MDHHS.
- An able-bodied individual participating in an Education and Training program will have their participation verified by a Michigan Works! Agency.
- An able-bodied individual must show proof of completing community service hours by turning in a completed Community Service Activity Report every month to avoid interruptions in benefits.

## Training programs are available

We want to help able-bodied individuals on their journey to self-sufficiency. Approved training programs are available through the Michigan Works! Agencies. Contact your MDHHS specialist for a referral.

## What else should you know?

An able-bodied individual can participate in a combination of unsubsidized employment and an employment and training program, but cannot combine either with community service to meet the minimum hour requirement.

The three months of benefits available without meeting an able-bodied individual exemption is cumulative, so participants can use their three months at any time during the 36 months. The non-working months do not have to be consecutive.

All participants will be able to receive benefits for another three months without meeting the work requirements on Jan. 1, 2020, no matter when they enroll in the Food Assistance Program prior to this date.

## Why are my benefits changing?

More than a decade ago, Michigan and other states received a federal waiver when the states' economies were struggling with high unemployment rates. The waiver removed some of the work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents. As Michigan's economy improves, some Michigan counties are no longer eligible for the federal waiver. Additional counties are being assessed and these work requirements will soon be phased in for other counties as well.

## Questions?

Contact your local MDHHS county office.  
[www.michigan.gov/ContactMDHHS](http://www.michigan.gov/ContactMDHHS)