



Arkansas Department of Human Services

Division of County Operations

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Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-1437
TDD (501) 682-8275

March 9, 1999

Esther Phillips
Regional Director
Food Stamp Program
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
1100 Commerce Street, Room 5-C-30
Dallas, Texas 75242-1005

SUBJ: Food Stamp Program – Request to Amend Waiver # 980013

Dear Ms. Phillips:

By this letter we are requesting that we be allowed to amend waiver # 980013. This waiver gives the State permission to waive the work requirement for able-bodied adults without dependent children in 34 labor surplus areas in the State. We would like to add Conway County to the list of waived counties because two companies have announced plant closings. These closings have the potential to idle over 1,000 workers within the next 60 days.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Mr. Quranner Cotledge, Manager, Food Stamp Program, (501) 682-8276.

I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruth Whitney", is written over the typed name.

Ruth Whitney
Director

RW:RK:QC/bh

Attachment – Waiver Request

cc: Roy D. Kindle, Jr., Assistant Director, OPPD
file

WAIVER REQUEST

Date of Request: March 9, 1999

Type of Request: Amendment

Regulatory Citation: Section 6(o) of the Food Stamp Act as amended by Section 824 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193) commonly known as PRWORA.

State: Arkansas

Region: Southwest

Regulatory Requirements: Under Section 824 of PRWORA, any able-bodied, non-exempt individual between the ages of 18 and 50 shall be ineligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program as a member of any household if, during a designated thirty-six month period, the individual received food stamps for any three months during which he or she did not work for 20 hours or more per week or participate in and comply with a work program as defined under this act. Section 824 of the PRWORA also allows each State to request that the Secretary of Agriculture waive the applicability of this provision for areas with an unemployment rate over 10 percent and for areas without a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for affected food stamp recipients.

Proposed Alternative Procedures: Arkansas proposes to exempt from this requirement individuals who live in Conway County, Arkansas.

In Conway County, two plants, one operated by Arrow Automotive Industries, Inc. and one operated by Levi Strauss and Company, will be closing within 60 days. The closing of the Arrow plant will affect about 500 workers. The closing of the Levi Strauss plant will affect 700 to 800 workers.

Copies of pertinent newspaper articles are attached. Also attached is the request for assistance submitted by the Conway County DHS Office.

Morrilton, Arkansas, where these plants are located is the county seat and the largest town in Conway County with a population of 6,551. As of January 1999, there were 988 food stamp cases in Conway County. In December 1998, the unemployment rate in Conway County was 5.4%, which was one point above the State average of 5.3%. We have contacted the Arkansas Employment Security Department; however, for various reasons this Department cannot anticipate how the plant closings will affect the unemployment rate in Conway County.

Morrilton is in a fairly rural area 51 miles from Little Rock. Although the town is actively seeking employers for the displaced workers, the loss of two major employers is bound to adversely impact the job market for all job seekers in the county.

WAIVER REQUEST

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Anticipated Impact On:

- A. Households:** Extending this waiver to individuals living in Conway County will allow the people impacted by these plant closings to participate in the Food Stamp Program, if they are otherwise eligible. Food assistance is a basic human need. Food stamp benefits should not be reduced or terminated if certain household members, through no fault of their own, cannot locate gainful employment.
- B. State Agency Operations:** Extension of this waiver will provide for more efficient operation of the Food Stamp Program. The State will not have to use an undue proportion of its 1999 allocation of the ABAWD exemptions in Conway County.

Anticipated Implementation Date: We would like to implement this waiver on May 1, 1999.

Time Period for Which Waiver is Needed: We request this waiver be approved for the remainder of the calendar year of 1999.

Proposed Quality Control Review Procedures: No special procedures will be necessitated by this waiver.