



Food and
Nutrition
Service

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Date: November 9, 2018

Brittany Mangini
SNAP Director
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02111

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Massachusetts Request to Waive Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents Time Limit – Partial Approval

Dear Ms. Mangini:

This is in response to the Massachusetts State agency's August 29, 2018, request to waive the SNAP time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents in 49 towns and cities from January 1, 2019, through December 31, 2019. After careful review of the requested areas and supporting data, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is partially approving the State agency's request.

FNS is approving the State agency to waive the time limit in 48 of the requested areas for a 12-month period. The request for these 48 areas meets the requirements for approval provided at 7 CFR 273.24(f) and relevant Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) guidance. FNS is denying the State agency's request to waive the time limit in Nantucket because the data provided by the State does not adequately support an approval.

The Massachusetts State agency supported its request to waive the time limit in Nantucket town/county based on a 3-month average unemployment rate over 10 percent. While a 3-month average unemployment rate may potentially be sufficient support for waiver approval, it is not sufficient in this instance because it does not indicate an early signal of a labor market with high unemployment. FNS reviewed the 3-month data reference period (January 2018 through March 2018) the State used to support its request, as well as months before and after that period and FNS found that the unemployment rate for Nantucket was much lower in the months before January 2018 and the months after March 2018. Based on this analysis, FNS determined that the data from January 2018 through March 2018 demonstrates a seasonal or short term aberration rather than an early signal of a labor market with high unemployment.

FNS reminds the State agency that it has the option to use the State's 15 percent exemptions for ABAWD households living in Nantucket, or it may consider submitting another waiver request if the State believes this area qualifies under a different criterion.

The attached waiver response includes the approved areas, the supporting evidence used, and the conditions of approval. Please contact your FNS Regional Office with any questions.

FNS is reviewing its policies regarding waivers of the SNAP time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents. Moving forward, FNS will be taking actions to support the Administration's priority to provide able-bodied Americans a path to self-sufficiency. This goal requires that we establish a clear and mutual commitment to moving SNAP participants to meaningful employment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sasha Gersten-Paal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sasha Gersten-Paal
Chief
Certification Policy Branch
Program Development Division

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Waiver Response

1. **Serial Number:** 2150057
2. **Request Type:** Extension and amendment
3. **Statutory Citation:** Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008
4. **Regulatory Citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
5. **State:** Massachusetts
6. **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Region:** Northeast
7. **Requirement:** Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and regulations at 7 CFR 273.24 provide that no individual shall be eligible to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as a member of any household if the individual received program benefits for more than 3 months during any 3-year period in which the individual was subject to but did not comply with the ABAWD work requirement. Section 6(o) and 7 CFR 273.24 also provide that, upon the request of the State agency, the Secretary may waive the applicability of the 3-month ABAWD time limit for any group of individuals in the State if the Secretary makes a determination that the area in which the individuals reside has an unemployment rate of over 10 percent, or does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the individuals.
8. **Requested Area(s) and Support:** The Massachusetts State agency has requested to waive the ABAWD time limit in 49 towns and cities from January 1, 2019, through December 31, 2019. The State agency has grouped certain towns and cities for consideration as seven respective combined areas, while considering three towns individually.

The State has supported its request for each combined area based upon each respective combined area having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for a recent 24-month period. The State agency selected June 2016 through May 2018 for six of these combined areas. During this time period the national average unemployment rate was 4.4 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 5.3 percent. As shown in the following tables, the aggregate unemployment rates for the requested areas were at least 5.3 percent during the selected time period.

Table 1: Combined Area 1 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data June 2016 through May 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Edgartown town
2. Oak Bluffs town
3. Tisbury town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.4%

Table 2: Combined Area 2 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data June 2016 through May 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Acushnet town
2. Berkley town
3. Dartmouth town
4. Fairhaven town
5. Fall River city
6. Freetown town
7. Lakeville town
8. Mattapoisett town
9. Middleborough town
10. New Bedford city
11. Rochester town
12. Somerset town
13. Swansea town
14. Westport town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.3%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on September 26, 2018

Table 3: Combined Area 3 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data June 2016 through May 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Adams town
2. Cheshire town
3. Clarksburg town
4. North Adams city
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.3%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on September 26, 2018

Table 4: Combined Area 4 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data June 2016 through May 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Lawrence city
2. Methuen town city
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.7%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on September 26, 2018

Table 5: Combined Area 5 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data June 2016 through May 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Agawam Town city
2. Chicopee city
3. Granville town
4. Holyoke city
5. Ludlow town
6. Palmer Town city
7. Russell town
8. Southwick town
9. Springfield city
10. West Springfield Town city
11. Westfield city
12. Wilbraham town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.3%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on September 26, 2018

Table 6: Combined Area 6 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data June 2016 through May 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Chatham town
2. Dennis town
3. Eastham town
4. Falmouth town
5. Harwich town
6. Provincetown town
7. Truro town

Towns and Cities
8. Wellfleet town
9. Yarmouth town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.3%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on September 26, 2018

The State agency has also supported its request for the 7th combined area and two individual areas based upon each area having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for a recent 24-month period. The State agency selected January 2016 through December 2017 for these areas. During this time period the national average unemployment rate was 4.6 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 5.5 percent. As shown in the following tables, the unemployment rates for the requested areas were at least 5.5 percent during the selected time period.

Table 7: Combined Area 7 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2016 through December 2017)

Towns and Cities
1. Monroe town
2. Rowe town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.6%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on September 26, 2018

Table 8: Individual Towns (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2016 through December 2017)

County	Unemployment Rate
1. Gosnold town	6.0
2. New Ashford town	7.3
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on September 26, 2018	

9. **FNS Action and Justification:** FNS is approving the State agency to waive the ABAWD time limit in the 48 areas cited in item 8, as these areas meet the requirements for approval provided at 7 CFR 273.24(f) and relevant FNS guidance.

FNS is denying the State's request to waive the ABAWD time limit for Nantucket based on a recent 3-month average unemployment rate over 10 percent. While a 3-month average unemployment rate may potentially be sufficient support for waiver approval, it is not sufficient in this instance because it does not indicate early signal of a labor market with high unemployment. FNS reviewed the 3-month data reference period (January 2018 through March 2018) the State used to support its request, as well as months before and after that period and FNS found that that the

unemployment rate for Nantucket was much lower in the months before January 2018 and the months after March 2018. Based on this analysis, FNS determined that the data from January 2018 through March 2018 demonstrates a seasonal or short term aberration rather than an early signal of a labor market with high unemployment. SNAP rules state, "the State agency must show that the basis for the waiver is not a seasonal or short term aberration." In addition, current SNAP rules state, "a State agency could provide evidence that an area has 10 percent unemployment if it has: (1) A recent 12 month average unemployment rate over 10 percent which indicates a period of sustained high unemployment rates; (2) a recent three month average unemployment rate over 10 percent which indicates an early signal of a labor market with high unemployment; or (3) an historical seasonal unemployment rate of over 10 percent."

10. Authority: The waiver is approved pursuant to section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and 7 CFR 273.24(f).

11. Implementation Date: January 1, 2019

12. Expiration Date: December 31, 2019

13. Information Required for Amendment or Extension: To receive an amendment or extension the State agency must provide FNS with a formal request supported by data or other information as described in 7 CFR 273.24(f). Any request based upon unemployment rates must include data spreadsheets and supporting documentation.

14. State Agency Contact Information:

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15. FNS Regional Office Contact Information:

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