



Food and
Nutrition
Service

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Date: December 6, 2019

Melissa Pullin
Acting Commissioner
Department of Transitional Assistance
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
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. Pullin:

This is in response to the Massachusetts State agency's November 22, 2019, request to waive the SNAP time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents in 83 areas from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. Although the State requested a 12-month waiver, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is approving the waiver for 3 months due to new regulatory requirements governing the approval of ABAWD waiver requests at 7 CFR 273.24(f). The attached waiver response includes the approved areas, the supporting evidence used, and the conditions of approval.

FNS has finalized [regulations](#) that strengthen the standards by which areas can qualify for these waivers so that the statutory ABAWD work requirement is applied more broadly. All waivers must be approvable under the new regulatory standards by April 1, 2020. Therefore, if the State agency wishes to waive the SNAP time limit for ABAWDs in any areas beyond March 31, 2020, it must submit a new waiver request. FNS will evaluate any such requests under the new regulatory requirements at 7 CFR 273.24(f). Please contact your FNS Regional Office with any questions.

FNS notes that the State agency requested to waive the time limit in 2 combined areas that include 13 towns with populations below 1,000. The State agency supported its request for these 13 towns using State-produced data, rather than U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data. As of January 2018, BLS no longer publishes Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) for towns and cities in 6 New England states with 2010 Census populations below 1,000. However, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) continues to produce labor force and unemployment estimates for these small towns.

Consistent with SNAP regulations, to support waiver requests based on unemployment rates or labor force data, States must submit data that relies on standard Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data or methods. Because BLS-published data are no longer available for towns with populations below 1,000 in Massachusetts, FNS acknowledges the need for the State agency to utilize an alternative data source for these small towns. Additionally, FNS acknowledges that the Massachusetts EOLWD is a BLS-cooperating agency that utilizes BLS methodology to produce labor force and unemployment data for its towns and cities. For these reasons, FNS is permitting the Massachusetts State agency to utilize data published by EOLWD to support its request to waive the time limit in combined areas that include towns with

populations below 1,000. EOLWD data was provided only for those towns for which BLS no longer publishes LAUS data. FNS still requires State agencies to utilize data from BLS to support ABAWD waiver requests, when such data are available.

FNS also reminds the State agency that it must measure the 3-year period and track ABAWDs on a continuous basis, even in areas under a waiver. The State must continue tracking so that the State will be ready to transition off-of the waiver when it expires and reintroduce the time limit.

Sincerely,

Miles Patrie

Miles Patrie
Acting Chief
Certification Policy Branch
Program Development Division

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Waiver Response

1. **Serial Number:** 2150057
2. **Request Type:** Extension
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 requested to waive the ABAWD time limit in a total of 83 areas from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. The State agency grouped towns and cities in 4 combined areas and requested one city individually. The State agency supported its request based upon these areas having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of January 2017 through December 2018. During this time period the national average unemployment rate was 4.1 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 4.9 percent. The unemployment rate for the combined and individual areas were at least 4.9 percent (areas listed in tables below).

Table 1: Individual City (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2017 through December 2018)

Individual City	Unemployment Rate
1. Southbridge Town city	5.0%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on November 22, 2019	

Table 2: Combined Area 1 (Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2017 through December 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Adams town
2. Agawam Town City
3. Becket town
4. Blandford town
5. Brimfield town
6. Charlemont town
7. Cheshire town
8. Chester town
9. Chicopee city
10. Clarksburg town
11. East Longmeadow town
12. Florida town
13. Granville town
14. Hampden town
15. Hancock town
16. Hinsdale town
17. Holland town
18. Holyoke city
19. Longmeadow town
20. Ludlow town
21. Monroe town
22. Monson town
23. Montgomery town
24. New Ashford town
25. North Adams city
26. Otis town
27. Palmer Town city
28. Rowe town
29. Russell town
30. Savoy town
31. Southwick town
32. Springfield city
33. Tolland town
34. Wales town

Towns and Cities
35. Ware town
36. Warren town
37. Washington town
38. West Springfield Town city
39. Westfield city
40. Wilbraham town
41. Windsor town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 4.9%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov and http://lmi2.detma.org/ on November 22, 2019

Table 3: Combined Area 2 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2017 through December 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Lawrence city
2. Methuen Town city
3. Middleton town
4. North Andover town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 4.9%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on November 22, 2019

Table 4: Combined Area 3 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2017 through December 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Acushnet town
2. Berkley town
3. Dartmouth town
4. Dighton town
5. Fairhaven town
6. Fall River city
7. Freetown town
8. Halifax town
9. Lakeville town
10. Mattapoisett town
11. Middleborough town
12. New Bedford city
13. Plympton town

Towns and Cities
14. Raynham town
15. Rochester town
16. Somerset town
17. Swansea town
18. Taunton city
19. Westport town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 4.9%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov on November 22, 2019

Table 5: Combined Area 4 (Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2017 through December 2018)

Towns and Cities
1. Aquinnah town
2. Brewster town
3. Chatham town
4. Chilmark town
5. Dennis town
6. Eastham town
7. Edgartown town
8. Falmouth town
9. Gosnold town
10. Harwich town
11. Mashpee town
12. Oak Bluffs town
13. Provincetown town
14. Tisbury town
15. Truro town
16. Wellfleet town
17. West Tisbury town
18. Yarmouth town
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 4.9%
Data extracted from http://www.bls.gov and http://lmi2.detma.org/ on November 22, 2019

- 9. FNS Action and Justification:** FNS is approving the State agency to waive the ABAWD time limit as requested. The State agency's request meets the requirements for approval provided at 7 CFR 273.24(f) and relevant FNS guidance.
- 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, 2020
- 12. Expiration Date:** March 31, 2020
- 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:**
 - Name: Cynthia Zabin
 - Phone Number: 617-348-8464
 - Email: cynthia.zabin@state.ma.us
- 15. FNS Regional Office Contact Information:**
 - Name: Kevin Pasquaretta
 - Phone Number: 617-565-5402
 - Email: kevin.pasquaretta@usda.gov