



United States Department of Agriculture

JUL 20 2015

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Park Office
Center

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria
VA 22302

Christine Ruggieri
SNAP Administrator
Rhode Island Department of Human Services
600 New London Avenue, Building #57
Cranston, Rhode Island 02920

RE: SNAP – Rhode Island Request to Waive Able-bodied Adults without Dependents
Time Limit – Extension – Approval

Dear Ms. Ruggieri:

This is in response to the Rhode Island Department of Human Services request to extend waiver number 2150035, which would allow Rhode Island to exempt able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) throughout the State from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program time limit at 7 CFR 273.24 for calendar year 2016. Rhode Island's current ABAWD time limit waiver is effective Statewide through December 31, 2015. Rhode Island has supported its extension request based upon the State having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2013 through January 2015. The Bureau of Labor Statistics data provided by the State agency demonstrates that Rhode Island's average unemployment rate reached 20 percent above the national average for the selected 24-month period.

Therefore, the Food and Nutrition Service is approving the State agency's request to extend its Statewide ABAWD time limit waiver for 12-months, effective January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016. The detailed waiver response is attached. If you have any questions, please contact Martha Cavanaugh at Martha.Cavanaugh@fns.usda.gov or (617) 565-6402.

Sincerely,

Sasha Gersten-Paal
Chief
Certification Policy Branch
Program Development Division

Attachment

WAIVER RESPONSE

1. **Waiver serial number:** 2150035
2. **Type of request:** Extension
3. **Primary regulation citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
4. **State:** Rhode Island
5. **Region:** Northeast
6. **Regulatory requirement:** Federal regulations at 7 CFR 273.24 provide that no able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD) 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. Regulations at 7 CFR 273.24(a) provide that fulfilling the work requirement means: working 20 hours or more per week, averaged monthly; participating in and complying with the requirements of a work program at least 20 hours per week; any combination of working and participating in a work program for a total of 20 hours per week; or participating and complying with a workfare program.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.24(f) also provide that, upon the request of a State agency, the Secretary may waive the applicability of the above provision 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.

7. **Description of proposed alternative procedures:** The Rhode Island State agency has requested to waive the ABAWD time limit at 7 CFR 273.24 throughout the State from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016. Rhode Island has supported its request based upon the State having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2013 through January 2015. During this 24-month period the national average unemployment rate was 6.7 percent; 20 percent above this is 8.0 percent. As detailed in the following table, Rhode Island's average unemployment rate for the selected 24-month period reached 8.3 percent.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data		
February 2013 through January 2015*		
	Labor Force Total	Unemployment Total
Rhode Island	13,314,144	1,108,412
State Average Unemployment Rate	8.3%	
20% Above National Average Unemployment Rate Threshold	8.0%	

*Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on July 1, 2015

8. **Action and reason for approval or denial:** The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is approving the Rhode Island State agency's request to waive the ABAWD time limit Statewide because the State meets the requirements for approval provided at 7 CFR 273.24(f) and relevant FNS guidance. Rhode Island qualifies for the waiver based upon having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2013 through January 2015.
9. **Regulatory or legislative basis for action:** The waiver is approved pursuant to 7 CFR 273.24(f).
10. **Conditions and reasons:** None.
11. **Information required for extension:** To receive an extension the State agency must provide FNS with a formal waiver request supported by data or other information as described in 7 CFR 273.24(f). If the State requests an extension based upon unemployment rates, it must provide FNS with all supporting documentation, including data spreadsheets.
12. **Expiration date:** The waiver extension is effective January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.
13. **Limitation, if any, on regional office approval of like requests:** The waiver is limited to the Rhode Island State agency.
14. **Date of national office action:** JUL 20 2015
15. **Date of State agency's request:** May 18, 2015
16. **Date of regional office transmittal of request:** May 20, 2015
17. **Implementation date:** January 1, 2016

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18. State agency contact:

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(401) 462-2256

19. FNS regional contact:

Martha Cavanaugh
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(617) 565-6402