



Food and
Nutrition
Service

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Date: August 22, 2019

Bethany Caputo
SNAP Administrator
Rhode Island Department of Human Services
206 Elmwood Avenue
Providence, Rhode Island 02909

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

Dear Ms. Caputo:

This is in response to the Rhode Island State agency's request to waive the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) in 13 areas from September 1, 2019, through August 31, 2020.

The State agency's request meets the requirements for approval provided at 7 CFR 273.24(f) and relevant Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) guidance. Therefore, FNS is approving Rhode Island to waive the time limit in the 13 areas for the requested 12-month period. The approval amends and extends waiver number 2150035. 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.

As you may be aware, FNS has proposed regulations that would strengthen the standards by which areas can qualify for these waivers so that the statutory ABAWD work requirement is applied more broadly. The rule, once finalized, could change the qualifying areas and approval period for this waiver.

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.

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,

Sasha Gersten-Paal
Chief
Certification Policy Branch
Program Development Division

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Waiver Response

1. **Serial Number:** 2150035
2. **Request Type:** Amendment and extension
3. **Statutory Citation:** Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008
4. **Regulatory Citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
5. **State:** Rhode Island
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 Rhode Island State agency is requesting to waive the ABAWD time limit in 13 areas from September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020. The State agency has combined certain jurisdictions for consideration as combined areas based on the towns and cities sharing the same labor market area, while considering other jurisdictions individually. The State agency has supported its request based upon the areas having average unemployment rates 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of January 2016 through December 2017. During this time period the national average unemployment rate was 4.6 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 5.5 percent. As detailed in the following tables, the unemployment rate for each individual or combined area was at least 5.5 percent during the selected time period.

The State agency has grouped 11 towns and cities in the same New England City and Town Area (NECTA), as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, for consideration as a combined area and has supported its request based upon the combined area having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for a recent 24-month period.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2016 – December 2017*	
Providence-Warwick, RI-MA NECTA, RI part	
1. Central Falls city	
2. Charlestown town	
3. East Providence city	
4. Johnston town	
5. North Providence town	
6. Pawtucket city	
7. Providence city	
8. Scituate town	
9. Warren town	
10. West Warwick town	
11. Woonsocket city	
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.5%	
*Data extracted from Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment survey (http://www.bls.gov) on July 16, 2019.	

The State agency has supported its request for two individual towns based upon the individual areas having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for a recent 24-month period. As detailed in the following table, the unemployment rate for the individual area was at least 5.5 percent during the selected time period.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data January 2016 – December 2017*	
Individual Town	Unemployment Rate
1. New Shoreham town	10.8%
2. Westerly town	5.5%
*Data extracted from Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment survey (http://www.bls.gov) on July 16, 2019.	

- 9. 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 in the 13 areas because the jurisdictions meet 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:** September 1, 2019
- 12. Expiration Date:** August 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:**

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- 15. FNS Regional Office Contact Information:**

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