



United States Department of Agriculture

OCT 26 2015

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Park Office
Center

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria
VA 22302

Ms. Babs Roberts
Community Services Division Director
Department of Social and Health Services
PO Box 45440
Olympia, Washington 98504-5440

RE: SNAP – Washington Request to Waive Able-bodied Adults without
Dependents Time Limit – Extension and Modification – Approval

Dear Ms. Roberts:

This is in response to the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' request to extend and modify waiver number 2150021, which would allow the State to exempt able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) in 36 contiguous counties and two cities from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) time limit at 7 CFR 273.24 for calendar year 2016.

Washington State has supported its request to waive the time limit in the 36 contiguous counties based upon the combined area having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for a recent 24-month period. The State has also requested to waive the time limit in Lakewood City and Tacoma City based on each area having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for a recent 24-month period. The waiver request effectively applies to the entire State, except for King County, Snohomish County and Pierce County (notwithstanding Lakewood City and Tacoma City, which are both located in Pierce County).

The Food and Nutrition Service is approving the State agency's request to waive the ABAWD time limit in the 36 counties and two cities for 12 months, effective January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016. The detailed waiver response is attached. If you have any questions, please contact Maribelle Balbes at maribelle.balbes@fns.usda.gov or Walter Zaumseil at walter.zaumseil@fns.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Sasha Gersten-Paal
Chief
Certification Policy Branch
Program Development Division

WAIVER RESPONSE

1. **Waiver serial number:** 2150021
2. **Type of request:** Extension and Modification
3. **Primary regulation citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
4. **State:** Washington State
5. **Region:** Western
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 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' has requested to waive the ABAWD time limit at 7 CFR 273.24 in 36 contiguous counties and two cities from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

Washington State has supported its request to waive the time limit in the 36 contiguous counties based upon the combined area having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2013 through January 2015. During this time period the national average unemployment rate was 6.7 percent; 20 percent above this is 8.0 percent. As detailed in the following table, the combined 36 county area had an aggregate average unemployment rate of 8.0 percent for the selected time period.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2013 through January 2015*		
County	Labor Force Total	Unemployment Total
Adams	202,867	16,104
Asotin	233,596	14,275
Benton	2,162,399	178,558
Chelan	977,246	66,730
Clallam	650,717	59,503
Clark	4,998,849	397,610
Columbia	42,338	3,335
Cowlitz	1,049,046	94,715
Douglas	458,285	35,113
Ferry	59,449	7,470
Franklin	918,801	82,584
Garfield	23,283	1,686
Grant	1,064,937	87,389
Grays Harbor	666,176	74,269
Island	761,068	54,806
Jefferson	270,490	23,847
Kitsap	2,720,250	183,214
Kittitas	482,334	35,966
Klickitat	232,528	20,035
Lewis	748,725	74,200
Lincoln	121,517	7,923
Mason	559,747	51,935
Okanogan	507,135	40,645
Pacific	192,813	20,514
Pend Oreille	111,579	12,317
San Juan	185,816	10,332
Skagit	1,359,095	108,077
Skamania	119,664	11,022
Spokane	5,425,535	413,316
Stevens	423,754	43,128
Thurston	2,951,500	209,669
Wahkiakum	31,887	3,369
Walla Walla	679,972	46,066
Whatcom	2,448,444	171,504
Whitman	531,013	30,776

Yakima	2,859,933	270,974
Combined Area Total	37,232,788	2,962,976
Combined Area Unemployment Rate	8.0%	
20% Above National Average Unemployment Rate Threshold	8.0%	

*Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on August 26, 2015

The State has also requested to waive the time limit in Lakewood City based on the area having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2013 through January 2015. As detailed in the following table, Lakewood City had an average unemployment rate of 8.2 percent for the selected time period.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data February 2013 through January 2015*		
City	Labor Force Total	Unemployment Total
Lakewood	596,115	48,963
Unemployment Rate	8.2%	
20% Above National Average Unemployment Rate Threshold	8.0%	

* Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on August 26, 2015

Lastly, the State agency supported its request to waive the time limit in Tacoma City based on the area having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of May 2013 through April 2015. During this time period the national average unemployment rate was 6.4 percent; 20 percent above this is 7.7 percent. As detailed in the following table, Tacoma City had an average unemployment rate of 7.7 percent for the selected time period.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data May 2013 through April 2015*		
City	Labor Force Total	Unemployment Total
Tacoma	2,322,691	179,799
Unemployment Rate	7.7%	
20% Above National Average Unemployment Rate Threshold	7.7%	

*Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on September 25, 2015

8. **Action and reason for approval or denial:** The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is approving the State agency's request to waive the ABAWD time limit in the 36 counties and two cities because the areas meet the requirements for approval provided at 7 CFR 273.24(f) and relevant FNS guidance.
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 Washington State agency.
14. **Date of national office action:** OCT 26 2015
15. **Date of State agency's request:** July 20, 2015
16. **Date of regional office transmittal of request:** July 22, 2015
17. **Implementation date:** January 1, 2016
18. **State agency contact:**
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19. **FNS regional contacts:**
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