

SNAP ABAWD

Time Limit Checklist

Determine if a person is exempt from the ABAWD rule and how to ensure SNAP benefits are not interrupted.

The federal **Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD)** time limit rule limits how long some adults can receive SNAP benefits if they are not working. Unemployed, non-disabled adults ages 18 to 64 in households without a child under age 14 can only receive SNAP benefits for a total of three full months in a 36-month period unless they live in an area with a waiver, meet an exemption, or meet work requirements. New York State does not have any ABAWD waivers in effect at this time.

The current 36-month period began on October 1, 2023, and ends on September 30, 2026. A new 36-month period will begin on October 1, 2026. New York State uses a “fixed statewide clock,” which means that the 36-month period has the same beginning and end dates in all counties for all ABAWDs.

Exemptions to the ABAWD Time Limit Rule

People who meet an exemption should tell their SNAP office right away. SNAP offices must accept a person’s self-attestation that they meet an exemption unless the information is questionable. For questionable information, SNAP offices must review each case individually and use all available information, including data from other public assistance programs, before requiring proof to qualify for an exemption. Recipients have at least 10 days to provide verification, if needed.

You are exempt if you are:

Under age 18 or 65 years or older

The month a person turns 18 does not count, unless they turn 18 on the 1st of a month. A person is exempt from the ABAWD rule in the month that they turn 65.

CLIENT ACTION → Provide proof of your age to your SNAP office.

Living with a child under age 14 who is part of your SNAP household

This can be the SNAP recipient’s own child, sibling, or the child of a family they live with, even if the child is not eligible for SNAP benefits (such as an ineligible non-citizen child).

CLIENT ACTION → Inform your SNAP office that you live with a child who is under 14 and part of your SNAP household.

Pregnant

Any stage of pregnancy, including the month the child is born.

CLIENT ACTION → Inform your SNAP office that you are pregnant. A statement is sufficient unless the SNAP office finds it questionable. Visit otda.ny.gov/abawd for an ABAWD medical statement template.

Indian, Urban Indian, and California Indians, or other Indian eligible for the Indian Health Care Act

CLIENT ACTION → A statement is acceptable unless the SNAP office finds the information questionable.

Medically certified as physically or mentally “unfit for employment”

A physical or mental health condition that prevents a person from working 20 hours per week (80 hours/month) qualifies as an exemption if the person is:

Receiving disability benefits from a public or private source

Private benefits include, but are not limited to, Workers’ Comp, disability insurance, certain disability retirement pensions, or other sick pay benefits. Public disability benefits include, but are not limited to, Social Security, SSI, VA benefits based on a disability, and disability benefits provided by the NYS Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. All individuals in receipt of VA disability compensation or Worker’s Comp, regardless of the percentage, are exempt.

CLIENT ACTION → Tell your SNAP office about disability benefits you currently receive. The SNAP office may ask for proof.

Physically or mentally unable to work at least 20 hours per week

A person is considered physically or mentally “unfit for work” if they are injured, ill, or have a temporary or permanent mental or physical limitation that prevents them from working 20 hours per week (80 hours/month). Being determined “unfit for work” is a broader exemption than being disabled. Some have impairments that prevent them from working at all, while some may be able to work, but not 20 hours per week. This does not require a diagnosis or medical records.

CLIENT ACTION → Provide a medical form or statement from a medical or mental health provider stating that you are not able to work 20 hours per week. The statement should include the medical professional’s contact information, and can come from any of the following:

- Doctor
- Nurse or nurse practitioner
- Doctor’s assistant
- Licensed or certified psychologist
- Representative of a doctor’s office
- Social worker

Visit otda.ny.gov/abawd for an ABAWD medical statement template.

Obviously physically or mentally unfit for employment

The SNAP office must exempt a person if it is obvious to the caseworker that they are unfit for work. Caseworkers are required to speak with the individual about their fitness and ability to work 80 hours per month. If they are physically, mentally, or emotionally unable, they should qualify for this exemption. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Having a walking boot, neck cast, or cast on a leg/arm
- Using an oxygen tank
- Struggling to walk or stand
- Demonstrates an intellectual disability
- Unable to work due to domestic violence

CLIENT ACTION → None needed.

Chronically Homeless

To be exempt, homelessness must impact a person’s ability to get ready for work, keep a job, or engage in work or work activities for 80 hours/month. The SNAP office can exempt a person if they have no fixed or regular nighttime residence and no regular access to laundry or shower facilities.

CLIENT ACTION → Inform your SNAP office that you meet this exemption. SNAP offices cannot require a statement or verification from a medical professional.

Exemptions from the General Work Rules

If a person is exempt from SNAP general work rules, they are also exempt from the ABAWD rule, **except for people aged 60 to 64**, who are exempt from general work rules but subject to the ABAWD time limit rule unless they qualify for an exemption. A person is exempt from general work rules if they are:

A student

- Enrolled in high school and 18 years old or older, **or**
- Enrolled at least half-time in job skills training, college, or any other recognized institute of higher education **and** meeting the student eligibility criteria to receive SNAP

CLIENT ACTION → Provide your SNAP office with proof of your enrollment.
Additional information may be needed.

Meeting TANF work requirements

CLIENT ACTION → Inform your SNAP office that you meet TANF work requirements.

Receiving or applying for unemployment benefits

CLIENT ACTION → Provide proof that you receive or have applied for unemployment benefits.

Participating in a drug addiction or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program

CLIENT ACTION → Provide proof that you are a regular participant in a substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation program. There is no minimum weekly amount of time that a person must attend a program, but Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) alone does not meet this exemption.

Caring for a child under 6

CLIENT ACTION → Inform your SNAP office that you care for a child under 6.
Additional proof may be needed.

Caretaker for a person with a disability or a frail senior (60 years old or older)

They do not need to live in the SNAP household.

CLIENT ACTION → Inform your SNAP office that you care for a person with a disability or a frail senior. Additional proof may be needed.

SSI applicant or recipient

CLIENT ACTION → Provide proof that you receive or have applied for SSI benefits.

Qualifying Work Activities

If a person is working, participating in a qualifying work/training program, volunteering, or **any combination** of these activities, they may meet the time limit rule work requirement and be able to receive SNAP beyond the three-month limit.

Working at least 20 hours per week on average or earning \$217.50 (30 times the federal minimum wage) or more per week

Includes self-employment and in-kind work (working for goods and/or services).

CLIENT ACTION → Provide your SNAP office with one of the following:

- Last four weeks of pay stubs
- A signed and dated statement on employer's letterhead with anticipated weekly hours and pay per hour
- Proof of your self-employment
- A signed and dated statement concerning your in-kind/volunteer work, including the number of hours worked each week

In an eligible work-training program for at least 20 hours per week

This may include:

- Job search, job readiness activities, skill training, and adult education and literacy activities.
- Job skills training programs and/or educational activities, including college courses, certifications, or credentialed programs that help prepare people for work.

CLIENT ACTION → Provide proof of your participation. The SNAP office must approve this activity.

Work Experience Program (WEP) or volunteer work at a public or non-profit organization, including faith-based organizations

Calculate the number of required hours per month by dividing the amount of your SNAP benefit by the number of adult SNAP recipients in the household. Then divide by the NYS minimum wage in your area (as of Jan. 1, 2026):

- NYC, Long Island, and Westchester: \$17.00
- Rest of state: \$16.00

CLIENT ACTION → Provide your SNAP office with a letter from the place where you do volunteer work. The letter must include:

- Name, phone number, and address where you volunteer
- Number of hours (on average) that you volunteer each month
- Signature of a staff person and the date

This activity must be approved by the SNAP office. Additional information may be required.

Ways to Provide Documentation to the SNAP Office

- NYDocSubmit, an app available in many counties, allows SNAP clients to submit documentation directly to the SNAP office.
- In certain counties, clients can use the myBenefits.ny.gov SNAP application, recertification, or change report.
- New York City clients can use the Access HRA website or mobile app.
- Visit the social services district office and provide a hard copy or scan via a kiosk.
- Mail.

Additional Resources

Find your local SNAP/HRA office

Visit otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies/dss.asp, or call:

Outside New York City 800-342-3009

In New York City 311

NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Visit otda.ny.gov/abawd for ABAWD information and resources

HungerSolutionsNY.org/ABAWD

Information and resources for screening and working with SNAP recipients.

Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP)

NOEP Coordinators provide free and confidential help with SNAP.

Find a local NOEP Coordinator at FoodHelpNY.org

