



Food and Nutrition Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

June 3, 2025

Jessie Counts
Executive Director
Department of Public Health and Human Services
Post Office Box 202925
Helena, Montana 59620

RE: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Montana Request to Waive Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents Time Limit – Initial – Approval

Dear Executive Director Counts:

This is in response to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services' (DPHHS) May 2, 2025, request to waive the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). The attached waiver response includes the approved areas, the supporting evidence used, and the conditions of approval.

The Food and Nutrition Service (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 agency must continue tracking so that the State agency will be ready to transition off the waiver when it expires and reintroduce the time limit.

FNS also reminds DPHHS of the clear expectation that SNAP participants who can work, do work. ABAWDs may fulfill the ABAWD work requirement in several ways, including by engaging for at least 80 hours a month in a work program. The SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program is one of many ways that ABAWDs can meet this requirement and helps SNAP participants gain skills and find work that moves them toward self-sufficiency. Connecting participants to DPHHS' SNAP Employment and Training Services program supports our shared goal to lift millions of Americans out of dependency and into hopeful futures.

Please contact your Regional Office representative with any questions.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Sasha Gersten-Paal
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Sasha Gersten-Paal
Director
Program Development Division
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Enclosure

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**ABLE-BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS (ABAWD)
WAIVER RESPONSE**

- 1. Request Type:** Initial
- 2. Statutory Citation:** Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008
- 3. Regulatory Citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
- 4. State:** Montana
- 5. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Region:** Mountain Plains
- 6. 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.
- 7. Requested Area(s) and Support:** The State agency requested to waive the ABAWD time limit in 6 reservation areas from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.

The State agency supported its request for the 6 reservation areas based up the areas each having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of November 2022 through October 2024. During this period, the national average unemployment rate was 3.8 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 4.5 percent. The average unemployment rate for the requested reservation areas was 5.3 percent or greater during the 24-month period (Table 1).

Table 1: Reservation Areas (2023 American Community Survey and Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, November 2022 – October 2024)

Reservation Areas	Unemployment Rate
Blackfeet Indian Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land	6.1%
Crow Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land	6.9%
Fort Belknap Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land	12.4%
Fort Peck Indian Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land	5.3%
Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land	6.6%
Rocky Boy's Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land	7.0%

Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> and <https://data.census.gov> on May 6, 2025.

- 8. FNS Action and Justification:** FNS is approving the State agency's request to waive the ABAWD time limit. The State agency's request meets the requirements for approval provided at 7 CFR 273.24(f) and relevant FNS guidance.
- 9. Authority:** The waiver is approved pursuant to section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and 7 CFR 273.24(f).
- 10. Implementation Date:** July 1, 2025
- 11. Expiration Date:** June 30, 2026
- 12. Information Required to Submit a Modification, Extension, or New Waiver:** To receive a modification, extension, or submit a new waiver to replace the current waiver, 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.
- 13. State Agency Contact Information:**
 Name: Leah Burnham
 Email: leah.burnham@mt.gov
- 14. FNS Regional Office Contact Information:**
 Name: Kristina Medina
 Phone: 303-844-0379
 Email: kristina.medina@usda.gov