



Hoa Pham
Deputy Secretary
Office of Income Maintenance
Department of Human Services
P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

RE: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Pennsylvania Request to Waive Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents Time Limit – Rescission and Reissue (Partial Approval)

Dear Deputy Secretary Pham:

This is in response to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' (DHS) June 28, 2024, 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.

DHS submitted four separate waiver requests on June 28, 2024. The four requests proposed waiving ABAWD time limits in a variety of geographic areas and for two different time periods. FNS approved requests 1A (one-year waiver) and 1B (two-year waiver) on August 20, 2024, and considered requests 2A and 2B withdrawn.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has reevaluated its policy surrounding two-year ABAWD waiver approvals to align with FNS' clear expectation that those who can work, do. To align with this policy, FNS is no longer approving two-year ABAWD waivers. Additionally, FNS is rescinding all two-year waivers and reissuing them as one-year waivers. This includes rescinding Pennsylvania's current two-year waiver (request 1B), approved for September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2026, and reissuing it as a one-year waiver, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025. FNS' approval of request 1A remains unchanged.

By limiting the length of ABAWD waivers to a timeframe explicitly provided for by regulation, FNS can better ensure waivers do not extend beyond the circumstances that initially justified them.

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 DHS' SNAP E&T program supports our shared goal to lift millions of Americans out of dependency and into hopeful futures.

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.

Please contact your Regional Office representative with any questions.

Sincerely,

Sasha Gersten-Paal
Director
Program Development Division

Enclosure

Enclosure

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

- 1. Request Type:** Initial - Rescission and Reissue
- 2. Statutory Citation:** Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008
- 3. Regulatory Citation:** 7 CFR 273.24
- 4. State:** Pennsylvania
- 5. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Region:** Mid-Atlantic
- 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:** In request 1A the State agency requested to waive the ABAWD time limit in 58 counties, two balances of county, and four civil subdivisions from September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025. In request 1B, the State agency also requested to waive the ABAWD time limit in two civil subdivisions from September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2026. FNS initially approved request 1A for 12-months, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025, and request 1B, for two-years, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2026. The previous approval of request 1A, issued August 20, 2024, remains unchanged. However, FNS is rescinding the previous approval of request 1B and reissuing a one-year approval, effective September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025.

The State agency supported its request 1A based upon the combined area of 12 contiguous counties and one contiguous balance of county having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2021 through January 2023. During this period, the national average

unemployment rate was 4.4 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 5.2 percent. The average unemployment rate for the combined area was 5.2 percent during the 24-month period (Table 1).

Table 1: Combined Area 1 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data, February 2021 – January 2023)

Combined Area 1
Berks County
Bucks County
Balance of Cumberland County
Dauphin County
Delaware County
Franklin County
Lehigh County
Monroe County
Montour County
Northampton County
Northumberland County
Philadelphia County
Schuylkill County
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.2%

Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on July 31, 2024.

Note: The Balance of Cumberland County is Cumberland County excluding Hampden Township.

The State agency supported its request 1A based upon the combined area of 44 contiguous counties having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of May 2021 through April 2023. During this period, the national average unemployment rate was 4.0 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 4.8 percent. The average unemployment rate for the combined area was 4.8 percent during the 24-month period (Table 2).

Table 2: Combined Area 2 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data, May 2021 – April 2023)

Combined Area 2
Allegheny County
Beaver County
Bedford County
Blair County
Bradford County
Cambria County
Cameron County

Carbon County
Clearfield County
Clinton County
Columbia County
Crawford County
Elk County
Erie County
Fayette County
Forest County
Fulton County
Greene County
Huntingdon County
Indiana County
Jefferson County
Juniata County
Lackawanna County
Lawrence County
Luzerne County
Lycoming County
McKean County
Mercer County
Mifflin County
Perry County
Pike County
Potter County
Snyder County
Somerset County
Sullivan County
Susquehanna County
Tioga County
Union County
Venango County
Warren County
Washington County
Wayne County
Westmoreland County
Wyoming County
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 4.8%

Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on July 31, 2024.

The State agency supported its request 1A based upon the combined area of two contiguous counties and one contiguous balance of county having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of May 2021 through April 2023.

During this period, the national average unemployment rate was 4.0 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 4.8 percent. The average unemployment rate for the combined area was 4.8 percent during the 24-month period (Table 3).

Table 3: Combined Area 3 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data, May 2021 – April 2023)

Combined Area 3
Armstrong County
Balance of Butler County
Clarion County
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 4.8%

Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on July 31, 2024.

Note: The Balance of Butler County is Butler County excluding Cranberry Township.

The State agency supported its request 1A based upon the combined area of three contiguous municipalities having an aggregate average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of February 2021 through January 2023. During this period, the national average unemployment rate was 4.4 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 5.2 percent. The average unemployment rate for the combined area was 5.8 percent during the 24-month period (Table 4).

Table 4: Combined Area 4 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data, February 2021 – January 2023)

Combined Area 4
Springettsbury Township
York City
York Township
Combined Area Unemployment Rate: 5.8%

Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on July 31, 2024.

The State agency supported its request 1A based upon the one municipality having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 24-month period of January 2021 through December 2022. During this period, the national average unemployment rate was 4.5 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 5.4 percent. The average unemployment rate for the requested area was 5.4 percent during the 24-month period (Table 5).

Table 5: Municipality (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data, January 2021 – December 2022)

Municipality	Unemployment Rate
Municipality of Norristown	5.4%

Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on July 31, 2024.

The State agency also supported its request 1B to waive the ABAWD time limit in two individual civil subdivisions from September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2026, based upon the two areas having an average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the 36-month period of April 2021 through March 2024. During this period, the national average unemployment rate was 4.0 percent; 20 percent above that rate is 4.8 percent. The average unemployment rate for the requested area was 4.8 percent or greater during the 36-month period (Table 6). FNS initially approved request 1B for a two-years, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2026. However, FNS is rescinding this approval of request 1B and reissuing a one-year approval, effective September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025.

Table 6: Municipalities (Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Data, April 2021 – March 2024)

Municipalities	Unemployment Rate
Lancaster city	4.8%
Lebanon city	5.2%

Data extracted from <http://www.bls.gov> on July 31, 2024.

8. **FNS Action and Justification:** FNS initially approved request 1A for 12-months, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025, and request 1B, for two-years, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2026. The previous approval of request 1A, issued August 20, 2024, remains unchanged. However, FNS is rescinding this previous approval of request 1B and reissuing a one-year approval, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025. The State agency's request meets the requirements for approval of a 12-month waiver 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:** September 1, 2024
11. **Expiration Date:** August 31, 2025
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.

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