

# Important Changes to SNAP Work Requirements

Starting May 1, 2026, DHS will begin implementing **new work requirements for “Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents” (ABAWDs)**. DHS will review everyone who receives or applies for SNAP benefits to see if they are meeting these requirements or qualify for an exemption.

## When do these new requirements start?

### Current SNAP recipients

These requirements will start at your next recertification after May 1, 2026.

### New applicants on or after May 1

DHS will screen you for work requirements when you apply for SNAP benefits.

## Do the new work requirements apply to me?

The new ABAWD work requirements apply if you are **18-64 years old and do not meet an exemption**.

## Who is exempt from the ABAWD work requirements?

You may be exempt if you:

- Have a physical or mental health condition that prevents work
- Are living in a SNAP household with a child under 14
- Are a caretaker for a child under 6 (in or outside the home)
- Are pregnant
- Are caring for someone who is ill or disabled (in or outside the home)
- Receive disability-related benefits such as SSDI, SSI, workers' compensation, or veterans' disability benefits
- Are receiving or applying for Unemployment Insurance (UI) compensation
- Are receiving TANF or cash assistance and are complying with the work requirements under that program
- Are in a substance abuse treatment program
- Are earning more than \$217.50 per week before taxes
- Meet the definition of Indian, Urban Indian, or California Indian

## If I'm not exempt, how do I meet the work requirements?

There are several ways to meet the ABAWD work requirements, including:

- Work (paid, unpaid, volunteer, or work done in exchange for goods and services) an average of at least 20 hours each week (or 80 hours each month).
- Participate in a DHS-approved work or training program for an average of at least 20 hours each week (or 80 hours each month).
- Do a mix of work and a work or training program for an average of at least 20 hours each week (or 80 hours each month).
- Participate in the SNAP Volunteer Program (also known as Workfare) for a certain number of hours each month. Hours depend on SNAP monthly benefit amount and can be determined by dividing your SNAP benefit amount by \$17.95, which is the DC minimum wage (for example, a person receiving \$298 in benefits would need to volunteer 16 hours per month).

## What happens if I don't meet the ABAWD work requirements?

**NOT EXEMPT AND NOT MEETING REQUIREMENTS = 3 MONTH SNAP LIMIT**

If you are not exempt from the ABAWD work requirements and fail to meet the requirements, you **CANNOT** receive SNAP benefits for more than 3 months during the period of May 1, 2026 through April 30, 2029.

If you fail to meet the work requirements in any month because you had a good reason (called "Good Cause"), you can report this to DHS through the SNAP Work Requirement Screening Form. Some examples of "good cause" for not meeting work requirements include illness, problems with transportation, and other emergencies.

## What can I do now?

- **Read all mail from DHS and respond to requests for more information.** DHS will send you a notice in the mail stating whether you must comply with work requirements or whether DHS thinks that you are exempt. If you believe they made the wrong decision, you can fill out a form explaining why you are exempt and submit it to DHS. You also have appeal rights (see below).
- 1. • **Be aware of appeal deadlines.** You have 90 days from the date on the notice from DHS to appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). If DHS tells you that you or someone in your household must meet ABAWD work requirements, and you believe you qualify for an exemption, you can appeal the DHS decision to OAH by filing online, by phone, fax, or in person.
- **If you believe you will NOT be exempt from the SNAP ABAWD work requirements,** you can take steps to ensure you can meet the work requirements after your next recertification date. If you need help finding a job, training program, or other way to reach the work requirements, you can reach out to [DHS' SNAP Employment & Training \(E&T\) program](#) for assistance.
- **If you have any questions about the new SNAP ABAWD work requirements or believe DHS made a mistake in your SNAP case,** you can apply for help with Legal Aid DC. Visit [legalaiddc.org/help](http://legalaiddc.org/help) for more information.