

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
HUMAN SERVICES**

DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

**SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**

**2016 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
Program/Able-Bodied Adults Without
Dependents Report**

JANUARY 2016 – DECEMBER 2016

NJ Department of Human Services

2016 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents Report

This report is prepared pursuant to P.L.2016, Chapter 11, which requires the Department of Human Services' (DHS) Commissioner to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature annually for the next three years regarding: (1) the number of New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants in each county who are subject to the benefit time limit for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs); (2) the number of participants whose benefits were terminated in the past year as a result of the benefit time limit; (3) a description of the review of available data on labor and employment in the State; and (4) details of any action taken by the Commissioner related to a request for a waiver of the benefit time limit for ABAWDs.

Background

SNAP gives monetary assistance to needy individuals and families to buy food and groceries by way of a restricted Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. The benefits are totally funded by the federal government. The Division of Family Development (DFD), within DHS, controls the program; however, the program is administered by the County Welfare Agencies. The state and the counties share the administrative costs.

ABAWDs are SNAP recipients between the ages of 18-50, who are not living with a minor in the SNAP household, and who are generally considered to be employable. To remain eligible for SNAP, an ABAWD must be working, or participating in a work activity, 20-hours per week. Should a recipient fail to meet the 20-hour requirement averaged over a month, an ABAWD cannot receive SNAP benefits for more than three months in a given three-year period.

ABAWD time limit provisions were federally enacted in 1997, and have always allowed for a state to request geographic waivers based on labor market data (e.g., Unemployment rate greater than 10%, or a Labor Surplus Area). Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the ABAWD policy on time limits for SNAP benefits was suspended from 2009 to 2015 through a statewide waiver.

In January 2016, states were no longer eligible for the statewide waiver of the ABAWD provisions.

In March 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approved a staggered implementation schedule of the ABAWD time limits for New Jersey. The staggered schedule was as follows:

Staggered Implementation Schedule for 2016:

January 1	February 1	May 1	August 1
Hunterdon	Bergen	Burlington	Atlantic
Morris	Monmouth	Camden	Cape May
Somerset	Warren	Cumberland	Essex
Sussex		Hudson	Gloucester
		Mercer	Passaic
		Middlesex	Union
		Ocean	
		Salem	

In January 2016, there were 880,826 people receiving NJ SNAP benefits. It is estimated that ABAWDs represent about 7% of the NJ SNAP population (roughly 60,000 recipients). Many ABAWDs were/are not impacted by the federal time limit, either because they already were/are meeting the 20-hour per week requirement or because they fell/fall into a federal exemption category.

ABAWD time limits do not apply if the following conditions or criteria are met:

- The individual is under age 18 or 50 or older;
- The individual is certified as physically or mentally unfit for work;
- The individual is receiving Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB);
- The individual is pregnant;
- The individual is living with and caring for a child or an incapacitated household member;
- The individual is a regular participant in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program; or
- The individual is enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education.

Discussion Points

1. Participants Subject to the Three-Month Time Limit

The number of SNAP participants in each county that are subject to the federal benefit time limit for ABAWDs as of September 2016 are as follows:

COUNTY	ABAWDs
ATLANTIC	3137
BERGEN	1597
BURLINGTON	1787
CAMDEN	4655
CAPE MAY	568
CUMBERLAND	1635
ESSEX	8340
GLOUCESTER	1449
HUDSON	5387
HUNTERDON	214
MERCER	1679
MIDDLESEX	2540
MONMOUTH	1639
MORRIS	801
OCEAN	1698
PASSAIC	6796
SALEM	513
SOMERSET	524
SUSSEX	249
UNION	2492
WARREN	432
STATE TOTAL	48132

2. Terminations

The number of participants whose benefits were terminated in the past year as a result of the federal time limit are as follows:

2016 SNAP HOUSEHOLDS CLOSING FOR EXHAUSTION OF ABAWD TIME LIMIT REPORT													
COUNTY	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL TO DATE
ATLANTIC											0	71	71
BERGEN					237	18	6	117	57	121	66	51	673
BURLINGTON								5	34	74	68	44	225
CAMDEN								10	93	177	75	129	484
CAPE MAY											0	1	1
CUMBERLAND								0	21	13	4	7	45
ESSEX											1	222	223
GLOUCESTER											0	7	7
HUDSON								15	135	242	202	157	751
HUNTERDON				0	0	1	0	32	21	7	20	21	102
MERCER								0	0	1	12	28	41
MIDDLESEX								0	24	16	12	13	65
MONMOUTH					0	2	0	19	16	16	14	11	78
MORRIS				0	0	10	0	14	4	5	3	1	37
OCEAN								23	16	29	32	41	141
PASSAIC											0	4	4
SALEM								0	7	5	3	3	18
SOMERSET				1	1	41	20	75	45	52	34	29	298
SUSSEX				0	0	0	0	1	1	3	5	4	14
UNION											0	70	70
WARREN					0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
STATE TOTAL	0	0	0	1	238	72	26	311	475	761	551	915	3350

3. Description of the Review

Federal policy acknowledges that employment conditions are in a constant state of flux; therefore, FNS rules pertaining to the time limit waivers are based on a review of current economic conditions. Section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 allows states to request waivers of the federal benefits time limit for the entire state or parts of the state if the requested area(s) demonstrates high unemployment or lack of employment opportunities. Specifically, waivers may be requested in areas in which the unemployment rate is significantly above the national average.

DHS-DFD examined federal and state labor market data over a 24-month period to get an average unemployment rate in New Jersey. The New Jersey numbers then were compared to the national unemployment rates. That comparison allowed staff first to identify which counties could be eligible for an ABAWD waiver. The analysis of the unemployment data revealed three New Jersey counties that had a 24-month average unemployment rate greater than 20 percent above the national average. Those three counties also had other extenuating circumstances, such as the limited availability of ABAWD work activity slots maintained by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJ LWD), the closing of several casinos and the anticipated loss of an estimated 370 jobs due to the closure of a large food processing plant in the summer of 2017. These factors provided support to request a waiver for those three counties as demonstrated below.

September 2014 –August 2016		
County	Total Unemployed	Total Labor Force
Atlantic County, NJ	274,923	3,056,577
Cape May County, NJ	124,721	1,181,015
Cumberland County, NJ	136,313	1,614,050
Combined Unemployment Rate		9.3%
20% Above National Average Threshold		6.3%

4. Action Taken

On December 27, 2016, a request to allow New Jersey to waive the ABAWD time limit provision for the above-mentioned counties for calendar year 2017 was submitted to FNS for approval and approved on January 6, 2017.

In addition, staff from DHS/DFD have been working with staff from the NJ LWD to expand the supply of work activities and to strengthen business processes between the County Welfare Agencies and the One-Stop Career Centers.