

# Washington State ABAWD Policy & Work Registration Guide

January 2019

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## Washington State DSHS and programs within the Community Services Division.

The Community Services Division (CSD), a part of The Department of Social and Health Services offers a variety of programs to families and individuals in Washington State to help them reach their human potential, these programs include;

- **Basic Food Assistance (BFA)**
- **Cash**
  - TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
  - ABD (Aged, Blind or Disabled)
  - State Funded Assistance
  - Pregnancy Women’s Assistance
- **Medical Assistance programs** administered through the Community Service Division are often referenced as Classic Medicaid. Classic Medicaid programs provide health care coverage to individuals who are age 65 or older, blind or considered disabled by Social Security standards. In order to qualify for Classic Medicaid programs, an individual must meet income and resource limits as well as age or disability standards. Classic Medicaid programs include:
  - SSI-Related Categorically Needy (CN) Medical program. This program provides coverage to individuals who meet the SSI income and resource limits.
  - SSI-Related Medically Needy (MN) program. This program, also known as “spenddown”, provides MN coverage to individuals with income above the SSI income and resource limits. Individuals who qualify, become eligible for MN coverage after incurring medical costs equal to the amount of the household’s income that is above the SSI income standard.
  - Medicare Savings program (MSP). This program helps Medicare recipients pay for all or part of their Medicare premiums.
  - Medical Care Services (MCS). This program provides coverage to individuals who are found eligible for the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) or Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) Referral program but who are ineligible for Classic Medicaid and other medical assistance programs due to their citizenship status.
  - For all other individuals who do not meet this criteria, medical benefits (also known as Medicaid) may be offered through Washington Apple Health. You can apply for benefits at [www.wahealthplanfinder.org](http://www.wahealthplanfinder.org)
- **Adult Care with Home and Community Service**
- **Child Support through the Division of Child Support**

*How do clients apply for benefits?*

Individuals interested in applying for benefits can access the following:

- Visit [www.washingtonconnection.org](http://www.washingtonconnection.org)
- In person at any [DSHS Community Services Office](#)
- Call our Customer Service Contact Center at 1-877-501-2233.

## Washington Basic Food Assistance Program

Washington's Basic Food Program helps people buy groceries. Basic Food eligibility is based on income and citizenship status. People who receive help from the Basic Food Program also have the option to participate in employment and training activities through the Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program. Washington State also funds the Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants of the United States.

## Work Requirements Policy

Federal regulations require BFA recipients identified as Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) to meet work requirements to remain eligible for continued benefits. ABAWDS can only receive three months' of benefits in a 36-month period if they do not satisfy requirements. This period resets every 36-months, with the new period starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

### Who and what is an ABAWD?

ABAWD are a population of Basic Food recipients who:

- 1) Are ages 18 through 49
- 2) Do not receive any food benefits for minor children in their household
- 3) Have no exemptions and are not identified as an exempt work registrant (more under the section regarding exemptions on page
- 4) Are able to work and have no physical or mental disabilities, injuries or health issues that prevent them from working.

### What are the participation requirements?

If someone is identified as an ABAWD, they must satisfy the work requirement in one of three different ways:

#### ***Work***

Work at least 20 hours per week, or 80 hours in a month. This includes in kind work (work for goods and services, rental income based on the actual numbers someone can work).

#### ***Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET)***

Enroll, at least 20 hours per week, in Washington State's Basic Food Employment & Training program. BFET offers employment and training services to recipients of Basic Food. BFET partners with colleges and community based organizations across the state. Individuals can receive Job Training, Vocational Education, Basic Education (High School Diploma or G.E.D), and Job Search (can complete 9 hours per week only).

### ***Participate in Workfare***

An individual can volunteer at a non-profit organization contracted with DSHS. The number of hours is determined by the total number of benefits divided by the state or local (city) minimum wage.

### ***WIOA Funded Programs***

Participation can be met through any programs identified under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the nation's principal workforce development legislation, providing funds to address the employment and training needs of dislocated workers, and low-income adults and youth. The funding for WIOA comes from the US Department of Labor. DSHS will communicate with the ABAWD on how verification of enrollment and participation each month will be provided.

### ***Limited English Proficiency Pathway***

The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Pathway serves refugees and immigrants receiving public assistance (TANF, SFA, or RCA) as well as refugees who are not receiving cash assistance and have resided in the U.S. for five years or less. The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) partners with Washington State colleges and community based organizations to provide culturally and appropriate language services statewide.

### ***Other State Approved Employment & Training Programs.***

Alternative employment and training participation opportunities are evaluated by DSHS Policy staff. If you are aware of a program that you would like considered to meet work requirements please email [ABAWD@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:ABAWD@dshs.wa.gov)

### **What happens if an ABAWD is terminated?**

If an ABAWD uses all three months of food benefits without participating, termination notice is sent in the final month of benefits. This letter outlines their eligibility of BFA due to exhausting all benefit months with inadequate participation, in addition to how to requalify for benefits, which requires re-applying in addition to the following:

- Participation for those employed must be verified and include a total 80 hours monthly. Once verified, ABAWDS are eligible for benefits based on the date the department verifies 80 hours has been reached.
- If an ABAWD elects to enroll in Workfare, their benefits are effective the date of application after enrollment is verified.
- ABAWDS cannot requalify for BFA through the BFET program. Eligibility for BFET requires individuals to be active on BFA

## Subsequent benefits after closing.

If an ABAWD requalifies for BFA, but then stops participating, they are eligible for a subsequent three month period of benefits. The ABAWD specialized team will attempt to re-engage. If an ABAWD uses this second period of BFA and does not meet work requirements, they will no longer be eligible for BFA. If an ABAWD re-applied and requalified for BFA, eligibility is approved monthly.

### Example case

- *Maurice is identified as an ABAWD, and receives BFA without a qualifying activity or exemptions and lives in King County. He is identified as a non-participating ABAWD and receives his first three non-qualifying months in **January, February and March.***
- *Despite communication attempts by the ABAWD team, Maurice does not engage and his benefits close at the **end of March. In April,** he reapplies and reports working. After verifying he's worked 80 hours and ongoing employment, he requalifies for BFA in April. He is now a participating ABAWD.*
- ***In early May,** he reports that he's no longer working and has no exemptions. He is then identified as non-participating ABAWD again, beginning in June. His subsequent period begins a full month after being identified as non-participating, which is **July, August and September.***
- *During this period, if Maurice does not further engage and does not either report employment, enroll in a qualified activity, become an exempt work registrant (such as having a child in his home and claiming benefits for), or declares a temporary incapacity then his case will close at the **end of September.***
- ***In October,** he attempts to reapply but is informed of the requalification rules, as such he will be eligible on a **monthly basis** and will not receive another subsequent period. If he requalifies but stops meeting requirements, his benefits will close at the end of the respective month.*
- *His non-qualifying months will remain coded on his case until the 36-month period resets. At that time, if he his case closed, he may be notified to reapply for benefits.*
- ***Please note the following.***
  - *The timeline above is just an example. Actual timeframes may vary.*
  - *Non-qualifying months may not also be in a consecutive order.*
  - *Changes reported after the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month will not change benefits until the month following the next due to regulations requiring DSHS to notify clients of any changes at minimum of 10 days before updates are made.*

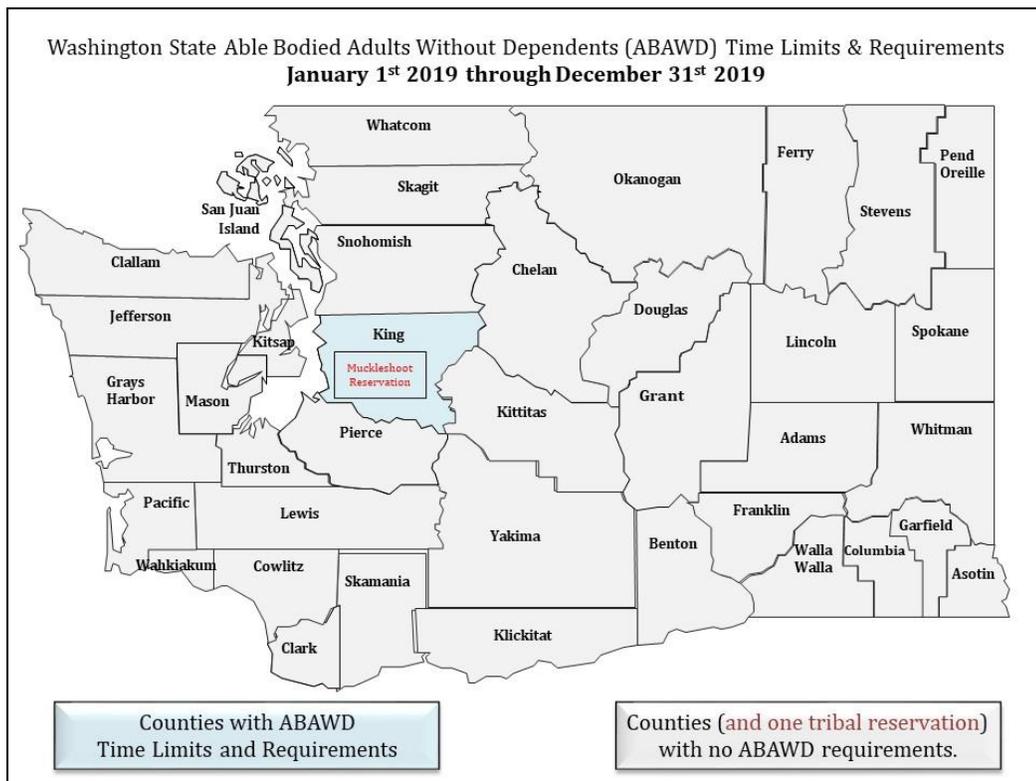
- *During application, clients may qualify for expedited benefits while still needing to provide any necessary verification. Depending on the date of application, they may receive benefits for up to two months while they provide the required information. If they do not, they will deny for failing to provide this information.*

## What areas of Washington are required to participate?

Each year, Washington works with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) to identify areas in the state to waive work participation requirements, based on a comparison of national and local unemployment rates.

Are there exemptions to this requirement?

There are special circumstances where ABAWDs are exempt from work participation requirements. At any time during certification, an ABAWD can notify DSHS of why they feel they cannot participate. The following exemptions are listed below:



- Living outside of King County or on the Muckleshoot reservation
- Living in an assistance unit (getting benefits on the same case with a minor child)
- Pregnancy
- Care for a disabled or elderly person who cannot care for themselves
- Participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program
- Physically and mentally unable to work 20 hours a week.
  - *Documentation may be requested to verify what issues are impairing an ABAWD to work. Documentation can be provided by a physician, physician's assistant, nurse, nurse practitioner, designated representative of the physician's office, licensed or certified psychologist, social worker, or any other medical personnel the department determines appropriate.*
- Are enrolled in school as a student at least half time in High School or College
- Are applying for or receiving unemployment benefits
- Receiving veteran's disability benefits on any level.
- Are receiving disability benefits such as Social Security Disability (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD), Workers Compensation, etc.
- Receiving Refugee Cash Assistance or Matching Grant funds.

## Operation of ABAWD Policy

The work requirements policy involves collaboration from different supporting DSHS staff and programs. It is important to ensure that ABAWDs receive communication, opportunities and resources once they are identified as required participants. Communication and engagement are important areas of focus to offer different options and prevent benefit closure. Throughout the timeline of benefit certification, ABAWDs are communicated with in a few ways.

### Application and issuance of Benefits

Individual approved for BFA, typically receive a one-year certification period. To remain eligible after their certification period, an Eligibility Review is required. Work registration status is part of this process. If identified as an ABAWD, the individual is informed of policy and work requirements. Internal communication is made to the ABAWD team who is charged with making contact with the client to discuss participation options.

### Physical notifications and letters

Clients who are identified as ABAWDs receive informational letters outlining work requirements, this communication includes the following:

1. **Initial Notice of ABAWD requirements.** This notices outlines ABAWD participation requirements and how to communicate with the ABAWD team.
2. **Notice Two – Non-participation.** If an ABAWD is not participating, they will receive notification of program requirements in addition to outlining remaining months of BF eligibility.
3. **Notice Three – Usage of the third and final month without participation.** If participation has not been verified, this notice outlines that benefits will close in the following month.
4. **Notice Four – Benefits closure.** If participation has not been verified, this letter outlines that the benefits will close at the end of the month. This letter also outlines requalification options and how to reapply.
5. **Additional letters** may also be sent in the following circumstances:
  - a. Referrals made to ABAWD and verification of hours
  - b. Verification of employment
  - c. Verification of exemption to participate as well as a request for additional documentation such as (but is not limited to):
    - i. Inability to physical or mentally work, including medical verification
    - ii. Verification of caretaking of a disabled adult
    - iii. Household composition

### Changes in Policy

When there are changes in federal regulations that affect participation requirements, such as the change of areas required to participate; mass communication is mailed to any potentially affected ABAWD.

## Roles of ABAWD Staff within DSHS

**The ABAWD Specialized team** primarily focuses on engaging ABAWDS to assist with eligibility for BFA. This team consists of financial workers and a supervisor. The team is notified when someone is identified as an ABAWD and contacts them to offer referrals to Workfare sites, and/or employment and training programs. In addition to engagement, the team reviews participation status and updates cases with any necessary actions including cases with temporary incapacity that exempts clients from participation.

**The ABAWD Policy Team** within DSHS Headquarters consists of an Employment & Training Administrator, a Program Manager, and a Program Consultant. This team is responsible for the management of the ABAWD / Work Registration policy including Workfare. They ensure;

- The Federal policy pertaining to ABAWDs and Work Requirements are correctly interpreted and implemented in Washington State.
- Coordinate with both DSHS Operations and Policy staff to ensure correct procedures are in place with the given policy.
- Plans for alternative ways ABAWDS can meet participation requirements and coordinates with other states to find strengths in their own programs.

### Other contributing staff

ABAWD Policy also receives contributions from IT staff, Regional Employment & Training Coordinators, Employment and Training Program Managers, Program Consultants and Community Partners.

### DSHS Contacts for ABAWD related topics

|                              |  |                     |  |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| Shavana Howard               | BFET Administrator                                 | 360-725-4338        | <a href="mailto:Shavana.Howard@dshs.wa.gov">Shavana.Howard@dshs.wa.gov</a>       |
| Charleen Anderson            | BFET Lead Program Manager                          | 360-725-4649        | <a href="mailto:Charleen.Anderson@dshs.wa.gov">Charleen.Anderson@dshs.wa.gov</a> |
| Glenn Haynes                 | ABAWD Policy Program Manager                       | 360-725-4556        | <a href="mailto:Glenn.Haynes@dshs.wa.gov">Glenn.Haynes@dshs.wa.gov</a>           |
| Troy Burgess                 | Program Consultant                                 | 360-725-4651        | <a href="mailto:Troy.Burgess@dshs.wa.gov">Troy.Burgess@dshs.wa.gov</a>           |
| Cindy Stallsworth            | ABAWD Team Supervisor                              | 425-339-0004        | <a href="mailto:Cindy.Stallsworth@dshs.wa.gov">Cindy.Stallsworth@dshs.wa.gov</a> |
| Raksmey Lim                  | Interim Region 2 Employment & Training Coordinator | 425-401-4633        | <a href="mailto:Raksmey.Lim@dshs.wa.gov">Raksmey.Lim@dshs.wa.gov</a>             |
| ABAWD Specialized Team Email |  | Jobhelp@dshs.wa.gov |  |
| ABAWD Policy Team Email      |  | ABAWD@dshs.wa.gov   |  |

### DSHS Resources

Additional resources about the ABAWD policy and Work Requirements can be found at the following website, [www.dshs.wa.gov/ABAWD](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ABAWD).